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Figure of the month

124 billion dollars

124 billion dollars... These are the bonuses granted by the biggest American banks...
124 billion dollars... It is the same amount as official aid from the richest to the poorest countries...

(Source: Jean-Marcel Bouguereau's editorial, La République des Pyrénées of 23 April).

Note



Dear Readers,

These are hard times for Europe.

The situation in Greece illustrates Europe's current failure to rise to the situation. Rarely has it been this disappointing. European solidarity crumbled as soon as Greece asked for help. Wolfgang Münchau wrote in the *Financial Times* on 25 April: "This week will be the most important in the 11-year history of European monetary union". It is to be hoped that the EU meets and overcomes this challenge. I have written to the President of the European Council, the Spanish Presidency, the President of the Commission, the European Central Bank and the European Parliament to express our dismay at the abject failure, so far, of the European authorities to act decisively to stabilise the situation. Every day that passes sees the Greek problems becoming worse, and the risk of contagion to other countries increasing.

The ETUC maintains its solidarity with its Greek members and denounces the speculation against Greece, with institutions like Goldman Sachs acting as both judge and judged. On May 5, the Greek unions have called a general strike and I intend to go there to demonstrate ETUC solidarity with the workers of Greece and to discuss the position of the Greek unions with their leaders. I have asked our affiliates to meet their own Governments, and the EU permanent representative in their countries, to convey our support for a decisive EU aid and intervention in Greece and a fair deal for Greek workers.

It is more vital than ever to develop European economic governance and a sustainable financial system that is not based solely on short-term strategies.

What is happening risks weakening the European Union, which on the contrary needs to strengthen its position in the international arena. The situation is also a risk for the millions of citizens who all too often end up paying the bill for irresponsible behaviour. After the failure of the Copenhagen Summit, Europe's performances are once again anything but impressive.

In addition to financial problems is the matter of public debt and how to finance it. Our mobilisation will consist of ceaselessly recalling that government deficits must not be reduced at the expense of social policies.

We continue to pay close attention to unemployment figures, particularly youth unemployment. Last January, more than 5.5 million young people were jobless, a 15% increase compared with January 2009. There is a real risk of seeing a lost generation. The trade union movement is convinced that youth employment must be the priority of any European recovery plan. A change of course and determined political action are crucial, because a society that fails to invest seriously in its younger generations is a society that places its own future in danger. Here too, we expect strong proposals from the European executive.

May Day will be an opportunity for all of us to reiterate our commitment to solidarity and social justice, and best May Day greetings to you all.

John Monks

General Secretary

European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)

Boulevard du Roi Albert II, 5 | B-1210 Bruxelles (Belgique)

Téléphone: +32 (0)2 224 04 11 | Fax: +32 (0)2 224 04 54

E-mail: media@etuc.org | www.etuc.org



[ETUC in action]

May Day : Europe's future cannot be based on precarious work

28/04/2010 – On the occasion of International Workers' Day, ETUC affirms that **Europe's future cannot be based on precarious work**. For the European trade union movement, the EU and Member State governments should focus on the **quality of employment, promote social inclusion** and reduce growing inequalities. To remedy the deteriorating employment situation, the EU must develop investment policies through an **EU recovery plan equivalent to 1% of Europe's gross domestic product** and designed to deliver new, innovative and job-creating industrial policies. 'By investing in the longer term, Europe can safeguard the permanence of its model' declared John Monks.

[ETUC press release](#)

Condolences with the people of Poland

12/04/2010 – Following the tragic plane crash at Smolensk, John Monks wrote to the General Secretaries of Solidarnosc and the OPZZ, the two Polish affiliates of the ETUC, to express the ETUC's deep sympathy and **condolences with the people of Poland**. "Many of the people who died were associated with, and known to the Polish trade union Movement" said John Monks. "The tragedy is intensified by the fact that those on the plane were to attend the scene of another Polish tragedy, the massacre at Katyn of members of the Polish 'elite' during the Second World War. Tragedy has been piled on top of tragedy."

[ETUC press release](#)

EMF and EMCEF mobilisation for employment in the metalworks industry

22/04/2010 – The European Metalworkers' Federation (EMF) and the European Mine, Chemical and Energy Workers' Federation (EMCEF), organized an [action day in Brussels](#) in support of employment in the metalworks industry. The trade union movement demands the development of an industrial policy in Europe and quality jobs in line with the policy of combating climate change and reducing CO₂ emissions without penalising energy-intensive industries. Józef Niemiec, ETUC Confederal Secretary, participated in the action day on behalf of the ETUC.

[ETUC press release](#)

[Trade Union Agenda]

April – May 2010

09–10/04/2010	CMKOS Congress (Prague)	Congress programme
28/04/2010	Meeting of the Group II 'Workers' of the European Economic and Social Committee (Brussels)	
04–05/05/2010	EU–Latin America Trade Union Forum (Madrid)	
05–08/05/2010	CGIL Congress (Rimini)	Congress Programme
16–20/05/2010	DGB Congress (Berlin)	Congress Programme
26/05/2010	Meeting of the Group II 'Workers' of the European Economic and Social Committee (Brussels)	
27–28/05/2010	OPZZ Congress (Warsaw)	Congress Programme



[Dossier]

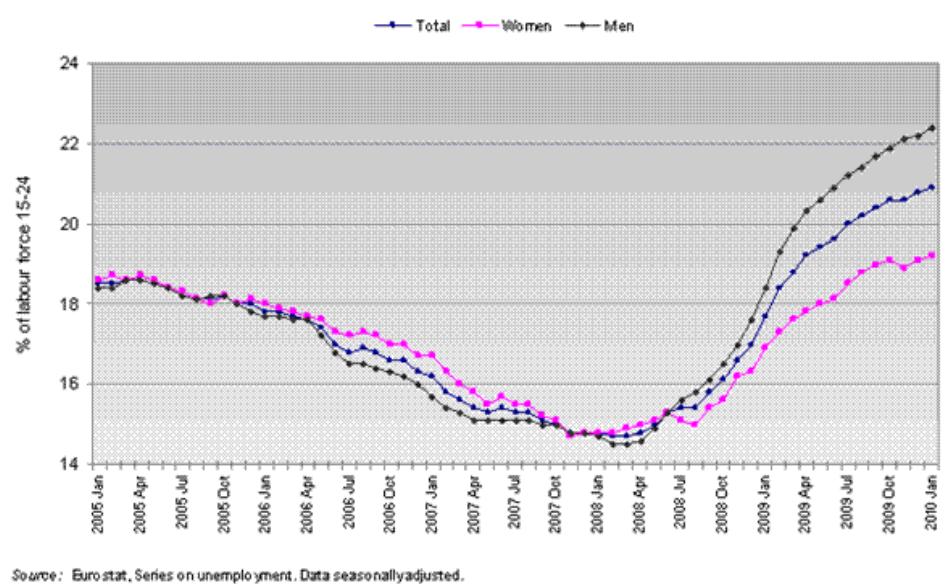
YOUTH EMPLOYMENT: a lost generation?

The employment situation for young people in Europe is extremely alarming. The latest statistics published by the European Commission show a clear rise in youth unemployment. Last January, more than 5.5 million young people were unemployed, a 15% increase compared with January 2009.

To sum up, in 2009, another 700,000 young people became jobseekers. In Europe, one jobseeker in five (see table) is a young person and this trend is on the increase. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), in its latest [working paper on youth and employment](#), speaks openly of a group "at risk of becoming a lost generation" and of "rather gloomy" prospects. Obviously, the crisis has made an impact on employment, but the extremely negative situation in which young people find themselves today is due to the **insecurity of their employment contracts**, which are not renewed when they end. Indeed, for two thirds of young Europeans, work means fixed-term contracts, mandatory part-time work, temporary work, seasonal jobs and undeclared work. Furthermore, these jobs often go hand in hand with difficult working conditions, low pay, lack of training and low levels of social protection and career prospects.

This situation has consequences on young people's daily existence: increasing financial dependence on the state or their parents (or even grandparents), independence at a later age, postponement of relationships and starting a family, loss of hope, etc. **Young people do not choose precarity. They are forced to accept it.** [The latest EUROSTAT statistics](#)

show that in most cases **young people employed under a fixed-term contract have not voluntarily chosen this type of contract**. In the 25-29 age group for example, 65% of young workers declared that they had a fixed-term contract because they



could not find a permanent job. This table clearly shows that **young people are paying the price of the economic and social crisis**. A change of course and determined political action are imperative, because a society that does not seriously invest in its younger generations is a society that puts its future in danger.

Options for action and trade union commitment

Youth employment is a priority for the ETUC. According to the European trade union movement, **the principles of stability, security and quality must replace precarity and instability**. Achieving these objectives will require active labour market poli-



[Dossier]

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT: a lost generation? (following)

cies, developed with input from the social partners. These policies must **prevent all risk of social exclusion and discrimination against young people**. The ETUC is therefore convinced that the prevailing approach of placing flexicurity at the heart of the options to be explored to address the issue of youth employment is risky and must be reversed.

In a context where flexibility is imposed unilaterally, emphasis should be placed first and foremost on the security aspect in order to strike a balance between living and working conditions. It is essential to combine policies and aid measures in order to improve young people's situation and especially to develop measures through **consultation and ongoing dialogue with the social partners**, and more specifically with the trade union organisations. Indeed, the French experience with the initial employment contract for young people, where the government ended up having to withdraw its proposal (which was neither debated nor negotiated) due to a large-scale mobilisation by thousands of young people, with the backing of trade union organisations, is a good illustration of the need to involve workers' representatives in this type of measure. Education and training remain the best protection against long-term unemployment and access to them must be guaranteed to all citizens. Measures must also be put in place to keep young people from becoming early school leavers. Furthermore, **vocational training and lifelong learning are vital factors** of the adaptation of European workers to a constantly changing environment. The knowledge-based society offers new prospects to everyone, but to avoid creating new categories of victims of social exclusion, it must ensure that everyone can acquire the new knowledge, skills and qualifications that make it possible to remain part of the workforce in a rapidly changing labour market.

As the latest OECD working paper also notes, the **school-to-work transition must be facilitated** through a commitment by the public authorities.

The ETUC seeks a "Youth Guarantee"

The ETUC is concerned about the real risk of seeing an entire generation of young people sacrificed on the altar of the crisis. Accordingly, in the framework of its **"Fight the crisis: put people first" campaign** and its appeal for a **new social deal in Europe**, the ETUC requests a "Youth Guarantee" to ensure the availability of quality training and jobs for young people, with measures to encourage their hiring. The ETUC, through its Youth Committee, will also hold a three-day conference on "More and better jobs for young people in Europe" in Madrid from 26 to 28 August¹. This event will bring together 100 young trade union members from a large number of European countries and representatives of the European institutions and academia.

The participants will have the opportunity to analyse **young people's place in the labour market and to discuss the strategies already in place as well as activities and policies to be developed**. Special attention will be given to the **role of the social partners, particularly the trade unions, and the specific measures they can develop (separately or jointly) for young people**. A report and a declaration are also expected to be adopted.

SOURCES:

- Youth Committee section of the ETUC website: <http://www.etuc.org/r/50>

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- Juliane Bir, ETUC adviser with responsibility for young people, among other policies: jbir@etuc.org

¹ Following the volcanic eruption in Iceland and the shutdown of airspace in northern Europe due to the cloud of ash, this conference, initially scheduled for 22–24 April, had to be postponed to 26–28 August.



[UE Agenda]

April – May 2010

13/04/2010	Informal Education Ministers meeting (Madrid)	Meeting Agenda
16–18/04/2010	Informal Meeting of Economics and Finance Ministers (Madrid)	Meeting Agenda
18–20/04/2010	Informal meeting of Ministers of Telecommunications (Granada)	Meeting Agenda
19–22/04/2010	Plenary Session at the European Parliament (Strasbourg)	
23–24/04/2010	Council of Justice and Home Affairs (Luxembourg)	Council Agenda
26–27/04/2010	General Affairs and External Relations Council (Luxembourg)	Council Agenda
28–29/04/2010	Plenary Session at the European Economic and Social Committee (Brussels)	
05/05/2010	Summit EU–Canada (Brussels)	Summit Agenda
05–06/05/2010	Mini–Plenary Session at the European Parliament (Brussels)	
10–11/05/2010	Education, Youth and Culture Council (Brussels)	Council Agenda
10–11/05/2010	General Affairs and External Relations Council (Brussels)	Council Agenda
16/05/2010	EU–Mexico Summit (Santander)	Summit Agenda
17/05/2010	Eurogroup Meeting (Brussels)	Meeting Agenda
17–20/05/2010	Plenary Session at the European Parliament (Strasbourg)	
18/05/2010	ECOFIN Council (Brussels)	Council Agenda
18–19/05/2010	EU–Latin America and Caribbean Summit (Madrid)	Summit Agenda
25–26/05/2010	Competitiveness Council (Brussels)	Council Agenda
26–27/05/2010	Plenary Session at the European Economic and Social Committee (Brussels)	
31/05/2010	Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council (Brussels)	Council Agenda



[Focus on the EU and trade union positions]

Financial Transaction Tax : ETUC urges ECOFIN's support

09/04/2010 – In the perspective of the informal ECOFIN Council meeting, ETUC urged ministers of economic and finance in the EU to **support the Financial Transaction Tax**. According to John Monks, *“It is only right and fair that speculations that account for a majority of many financial transactions should pay tax on their activities. The EU should urge the G20 to introduce such a tax urgently so that it can be used to contribute towards the heavy costs being incurred in combating the financial crisis.”*

[ETUC press release](#)
[ETUC letter to the ECOFIN](#)



Decent Work: ETUC met EU Trade Commissioner

13/04/2010 – John Monks met Karel De Gucht, the EU Trade Commissioner, to discuss **how the EU's trade policy can contribute to the promotion of decent work**. Special attention was given to the multilateral trade negotiations and ongoing bilateral trade negotiations including with Korea, India and Colombia. At the meeting, ETUC expressed deep concerns about **the human rights situation in Colombia** and wished to maintain the pressure on the Colombian authorities to improve the situation.

[Joint ETUC-European Commission press release](#)

European Commission publications

The following reports are now available:

- [Cohesion policy's achievements assess](#) (19/04/2010)
- [Work programme for 2010](#) (31/03/2010)

Editorial team

MANAGING EDITOR: **John Monks**
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: **Patricia Grillo**
EDITOR **Daniele Melli**

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