

# [ ETUC newsletter ]



## CONTENTS



**2 ETUC in action**

**3 Trade Union Agenda**

**4 Dossier:  
Employment: top priority**

**6 EU Agenda**

**7 Focus on the EU and trade  
union positions**

## Figure of the month

**1,1 billion**  
people in the world  
are unemployed or live  
below the poverty line

According to a report from the International Labour Organisation (ILO), one worker in every three – around 1.1 billion people – is unemployed or lives below the poverty line in 2011.

(Source : Les Echos)

## Note



**Dear Readers,**

The European Summit on 30 January finalised the international agreement on European economic governance. This treaty lays down strict budgetary rules, setting budgetary austerity in stone. The ETUC opposes this new treaty because we believe that the proposals in the treaty will weaken Europe rather than strengthening it. Increasing austerity will serve only to exacerbate a social situation which is already unbearable in many countries. What we need is a recovery plan targeting employment and sustainable growth. That has to be the number one priority.

The process for negotiating this treaty ignored the democratic control that should normally characterise any reform of the Union. The negotiations were intense and conducted in semi-secrecy. The European trade union deplores this undemocratic process and warns of the consequences that it might have at national level.

European integration will be a success if it constitutes a positive project which delivers social progress, more jobs and quality jobs. Yet the worsening economic and social situation is being used, at European level, as a stick with which to beat industrial relations, impose downwards pressure on pay, weaken social protection and privatise public services. The ETUC opposes such attacks, which threaten to dismantle a social model that has no equal in the world.

Enough is enough! In the face of such a situation, the ETUC urges a decentralised European Day of Action on 29 February, on the eve of the European Council. By means of a series of actions, Europe's trade unions will demand that employment and social justice be placed at the heart of political priorities.

Budgetary belt-tightening is not the right answer. The European Union needs a strong social dimension. It needs to put in place a recovery plan geared towards investments in favour of sustainable growth, quality jobs, social justice and the fight against inequalities.

**Bernadette Ségo,  
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](mailto:media@etuc.org) | [www.etuc.org](http://www.etuc.org)



# [ETUC in action]

## ETUC CAMPAIGNS

### 'Enough is enough'

#### ETUC calls for a European day of action on 29 February

25/01/12 – Faced with a [worsening economic and social situation](#) and the ever-tougher austerity measures being imposed as the only solution by Europe's leaders, the **ETUC calls for a European day of action on 29 February**, the eve of the European Council. Trade unions will mobilise across Europe to have jobs and social justice placed at the heart of political priorities. *'Enough is enough. Austerity measures are not the only answer to the crisis. On the contrary, they cause tremendous social damage. Balanced budgets are necessary but austerity alone exacerbates imbalances. A policy of stimulation of the economy through investments should be the solution of choice'* said Bernadette Segol at the [press conference](#) announcing this day of action.



ETUC press release : <http://www.etuc.org/a/9590>

'Enough is enough' – ETUC campaign against austerity: <http://www.etuc.org/r/1786>

## MAJOR MEETINGS

### ETUC Steering Committee

25/01/12 – The ETUC Steering Committee met in Brussels, where the crisis and the negative impact of austerity measures on European workers were the main issues addressed. On the eve of the European Summit on 30 January, the Steering Committee adopted a declaration on the "[Treaty on stability, coordination and governance in the economic and monetary union](#)".

Declaration: <http://www.etuc.org/a/9591>

### ETUC's solidarity with Greek workers

09/01/12 – The ETUC reaffirmed its **support for Greek workers, who are enduring unbearable conditions imposed by the Troika's brutal attacks** on social protection, employment and the minimum wage. For the European trade union movement, **austerity measures are not solving anything, rather they are pushing the country further into crisis**. The ETUC also condemns the arrest of [GENOP/DEI trade unionists](#) who were protesting against austerity.

ETUC press release: <http://www.etuc.org/a/9508>

### Support for TURK-SEN public sector workers fighting privatisation

18/01/12 – The ETUC expressed full support for its affiliate TURK-SEN and its members in the telecommunications and electricity industries who have called an **indefinite strike against privatisations** in the North of Cyprus.

ETUC press release: <http://www.etuc.org/a/9548>



## [ETUC in action]

### Community strategy on health and safety at work: the role of trade unions

12-13/12/11 – The ETUC organised an important conference in Krakow, dedicated to the community strategy on health and safety at work. Several speakers emphasized the key role of the trade unions in this area.

Conference's agenda and speakers' introductions: <http://www.etuc.org/a/9456>

### The ETUC meets a tripartite Palestinian Authority delegation

25/01/12 – Bernadette Ségal met with a Palestinian tripartite delegation headed by Labour Minister Dr Ahmed Madjalani. The main focus of the meeting was the promotion of social dialogue.

ETUC press release: <http://www.etuc.org/a/9594>

### The ETUC supports democratic transition in Egypt

29/01/12 – Bernadette Ségal attended the congress of the Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions (EFITU) in Cairo. She reiterated the ETUC's support for the Egyptian trade union movement in its efforts to bring democracy to Egypt.

ETUC press release: <http://www.etuc.org/a/9598>



## [Trade Union Agenda] January – February 2012

18/01/12/2011	Meeting of the Group II 'Workers' of the European Economic and Social Committee (Brussels)	
25/01/2011	ETUC Steering Committee (Brussels)	
26-28/01/2011	CGTP-IN Congress (Lisbon)	<a href="#">More information</a>
22/02/2012	Meeting of the Group II 'Workers' of the European Economic and Social Committee (Brussels)	
29/02/2012	ETUC European Day of Action (Europe)	<a href="#">More information</a>



# [Dossier]

## Employment: top priority

**According to the latest economic statistics, Europe is bordering on a recession. The economic and financial crisis affecting the continent since 2008 is triggering a major social crisis. Factory shutdowns, massive job losses and declining investments are daily front page news in the European press. The European trade union movement regrets that Europe's political leaders continue to prefer budget discipline over action to promote growth and employment. The increase in unemployment is alarming and is affecting a growing number of European citizens. The figures below are eloquent and make perfectly clear the need for a strong and rapid reaction.**

### Employment: damning statistics

The [latest quarterly analysis](#) of the social and employment situation in the European Union (EU), carried out by the European Commission, highlights the sharp rise in unemployment during the latter half of 2011. The analysis shows that this worsening trend obliterated all progress made on employment, modest though it may have been, during the first half of the year. Consequently, on the employment front, after a very partial recovery, the European Union is back to square one and is simultaneously facing the bleak prospect of recession. At the end of 2011, unemployment in the European Union (EU) stood at 9.9%, while euro zone unemployment reached 10.4%. This means that **more than 23 million people were unemployed in the 27 EU countries**, of whom more than 16 million were in the 17 states of the euro area. Among the countries hit hardest

by unemployment are Spain (22.9%) and Greece (19.2%). As a result of the worsening crisis, the **rate of long-term unemployment in the EU has exploded**. In 2011, 43% of the jobless in Europe had been out of work for more than a year, a 3-point increase over the 2010 rate of 40%.

### Austerity goes hand in hand with poverty

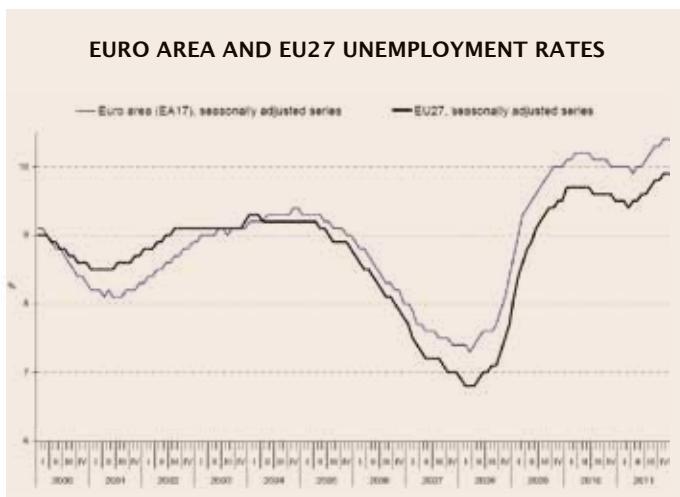
According to the latest figures, the risk of slipping into poverty has risen significantly in several EU member states, in particular the Baltic States, Spain and Ireland. This tendency is a clear reflection of the negative impact of the crisis on European citizens and is even present in countries that have been less affected by the economic and financial crisis. This phenomenon strikes certain groups more than others, namely young people, families with children and especially single parents. **In 2010, the share of children and working-age adults living in jobless households reached an average of 10%**, a one-point increase over 2008. This share now exceeds 12% in countries like Spain, Ireland, Belgium, Portugal, Slovakia and the Baltic States.

The European Commission's analysis also reviewed the impact of austerity measures on citizens. It reveals that in the majority of cases, austerity measures, in particular the weakening of social protection systems, salary cuts in the public sector or increases in VAT rates, have had regressive effects on most European citizens. In such a context, a growing number of households acknowledged that they had experienced financial difficulties in 2011, particularly the neediest.

### Young people and migrants: the main victims of the crisis

The latest statistics confirm that **young people are the principal victims of this crisis**. Last November, 5.6 million young people – 22.3% – were unemployed in Europe, an increase of 1.3 points compared with 2011 and 7 points higher than in 2008. **The situation is dramatic in certain countries like Spain and Greece, which have registered rates of 49.6% and 46.6% respectively**.

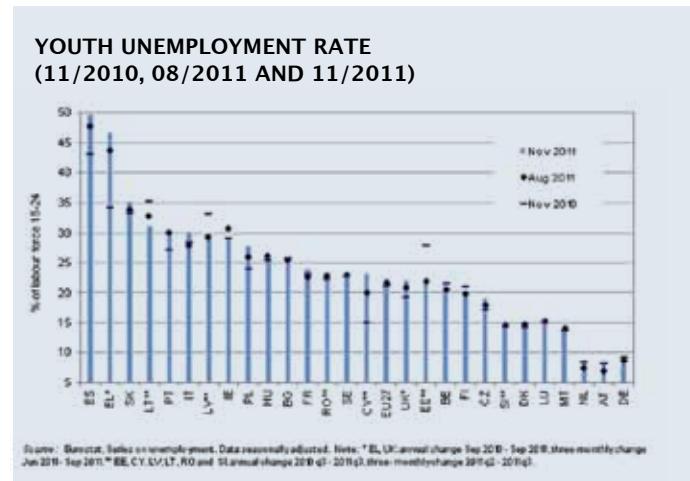
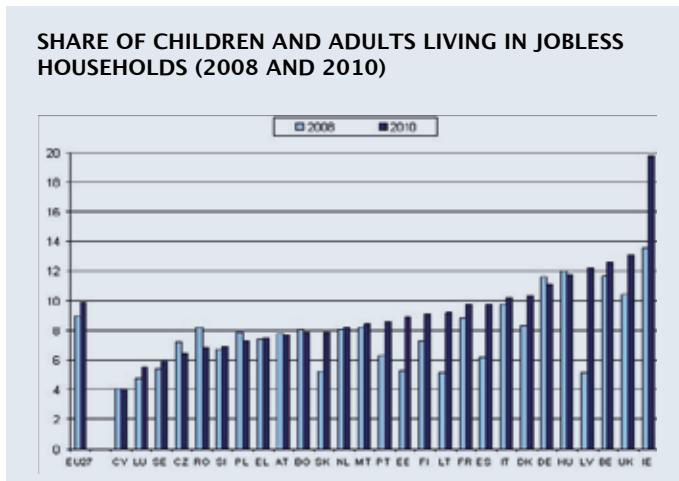
The situation of migrant workers is also serious. The recession has widened the employment gap with local workers. In 2011, around 20% of migrant workers were jobless, a **rate that exceeds 30% for young migrants**. The construction sector has been hit hardest by this loss of jobs. A final set of very telling statistics concerns the unemploy-





# [Dossier]

## Employment: top priority (following)



ment rate for low-skilled individuals, which rose from less than 9% in 2008 to around 15% in 2011. The lack of skills also increases the risk of poverty: **in 2010, 40% of low-skilled persons were at risk of poverty and social exclusion**, an increase of 1.6 points over the previous year.

### The ETUC calls for large-scale action to boost employment

The figures discussed above evidence the gravity of the situation and reflect the concerns of millions of European citizens. Since the start of the crisis, the ETUC has alerted political leaders to the risk of seeing Europe enter into recession and lose hundreds of thousands of jobs. Unfortunately, little has been done to stop this haemorrhaging. Policy-makers have preferred to focus on ever-greater austerity, seen as the only way to remedy the sovereign debt problems and tame the crisis. But budget orthodoxy without measures to stimulate growth and investment has plunged countries deeper into crisis. Unemployment is the price that millions of people in Europe are paying for three years of austerity and the absence of stimulus measures. Even worse, the international agreement launched at the European Council on 9 December 2011 strengthens austerity even further without offering growth prospects. Once again, the ETUC condemned this approach and called for large-scale action in favour of employment, which remains the priority for Europeans and the key to living in dignity and being able to plan for their future. It is consequently imperative to rely on investments in support of a sustainable economy, quality jobs, social justice and the fight against inequalities.

The European trade unions are firmly convinced that a special effort has to be made for young people, because there is a real risk of seeing an entire generation sacrificed. Access to employment and the development of quality training should be the two main priorities of all political action targeting young people. This effort cannot be postponed indefinitely. It is also fundamental to seriously address the problem of restructuring operations, one of the leading sources of job destruction in Europe. In this connection, the European trade union movement cannot conceal its disappointment following the recent publication of a new European Commission green paper on restructuring and the anticipation of restructuring. As economic prospects grow dim and unemployment rises, it is inconceivable for the European Commission to equivocate any longer rather than adopting tangible measures on restructuring and the anticipation of it. In spite of the damning data it provides in its analyses, it is regrettable that the dogma of austerity continues to be the rule for the European Union and continues to dictate the European policy agenda on employment.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- Józef Niemiec, ETUC Deputy General Secretary with responsibility for employment: [jniemiec@etuc.org](mailto:jniemiec@etuc.org)

#### USEFUL LINKS:

- Section of the ETUC website dedicated to employment: <http://www.etuc.org/r/6>



# [EU Agenda] January – February 2012

16-19/01/2012	Plenary Session of the European Parliament (Strasbourg)	
18-19/01/2012	Plenary Session of the European Economic and Social Committee (Brussels)	
23/01/2012	Eurogroup meeting (Brussels)	<a href="#">More information</a>
24/01/2012	ECOFIN Council (Brussels)	<a href="#">More information</a>
26-27/01/2012	Informal meeting of Ministers for Justice and Home Affairs (Copenhagen)	<a href="#">More information</a>
30/01/2012	Informal Meeting of Heads of State and Governments (Brussels)	<a href="#">More information</a>
01-02/02/2012	Mini–Plenary Session of the European Parliament (Brussels)	
10/02/2012	Education Council (Brussels)	<a href="#">More information</a>
13-16/02/2012	Plenary Session of the European Parliament (Strasbourg)	
14/02/2012	Energy Council (Brussels)	<a href="#">More information</a>
17/02/2012	Employment and Social Affairs Council (Brussels)	<a href="#">More information</a>
20/02/2012	Eurogroup meeting (Brussels)	
20-21/02/2012	Conseil Compétitivité (Bruxelles)	<a href="#">More information</a>
21/02/2012	ECOFIN Council (Brussels)	<a href="#">More information</a>
22-23/02/2012	Plenary Session of the European Economic and Social Committee (Brussels)	
27/02/2012	Foreign Affairs Council (Brussels)	<a href="#">More information</a>
28/02/2012	General Affairs Council (Brussels)	<a href="#">More information</a>



# [Focus on the EU and trade union positions]

## Council fails to deal with sustainable growth and jobs

31/01/12 – The informal summit of 30th January 2012, promoted as a summit on growth and employment, did not deliver. **Contrary to the ETUC's demands, no concrete or specific commitment on sustainable growth and jobs was taken.** Instead, the summit ended with the **"fiscal compact" already announced at Council in December**, which is intended to strengthen austerity. For Bernadette Ségal *"Plans to restore balanced public accounts must address, as a priority, the question of sustainable growth. Austerity is killing growth and jobs. What we really need is a social compact to give fresh impetus to the European Union and restore the confidence of its workers and citizens"*.

ETUC press release: <http://www.etuc.org/a/9605>

## Restructuring: it's time for action

10/01/12 – The European Commission published a new Green Paper on Restructuring and Anticipation. After a decade of consultations, **the ETUC did not hide its disappointment with even more procrastination from the European Commission** which decided to return to a full-scale public consultation rather than addressing concrete steps for anticipation and restructuring. *"We demand concrete anticipation measures today not in another 10 years. It is only through consistent and stronger worker participation that change can be managed in a socially acceptable manner, trust can be nurtured and anticipation policies can develop"* stressed Judith Kirton-Darling, ETUC Confederal Secretary.

ETUC press release: <http://www.etuc.org/a/9549>

## The ETUC condemns the nationalistic turn being taken by Hungary

10/01/12 – The European trade union movement **condemns the nationalistic and authoritarian turn being taken by the government in Hungary**. The new Constitution stifles public and private liberties. These measures follow the **reform of the Labour Code which harms workers' rights**, particularly those of the most vulnerable workers. The ETUC stands shoulder to shoulder with the Hungarians who came out in their thousands in early January to protest against this government. According to Bernadette Ségal *'The European Union must act to ensure that fundamental rights are fully respected. The initiatives taken by President Barroso must be bolstered'*.

ETUC press release: <http://www.etuc.org/a/9515>

**Editorial team:** MANAGING EDITOR: Bernadette Ségal • EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: Patricia Grillo • EDITOR: Daniele Melli

**Please pass this newsletter on to your colleagues and contacts**