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

MAY DAY: EUROPE'S FUTURE CANNOT BE BASED ON PRECARIOUS WORK

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On the occasion of International Workers' Day, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) affirms

**European Trade Union Confederation [ETUC]
Confédération européenne des syndicats [CES]**

that Europe's future cannot be based on precarious work. The main challenge facing the EU and Member State governments is to focus on the quality of employment, promote social inclusion and reduce growing inequalities, particularly in a context of globalisation that is toppling the existing economic and social order.

ETUC General Secretary John Monks commented: *"In this economic crisis European workers must increasingly cope with unemployment and precarious job situations, which are aggravated by the brutality of the economic crisis we are experiencing. Precarious jobs, often the only type of employment available to young people, are also spreading to segments of society that until now were not affected by this phenomenon. Inequalities are increasing as huge fortunes continue to be amassed. Precarious work cannot represent the future of the European Union. It undermines people, society and democracy. Over the longer term, we are headed towards widespread impoverishment that downgrades Europe both economically and politically."*

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. The challenge is tremendous, particularly in a context of aggressive globalisation and large government deficits in Europe. But the challenge has to be met, which is why Europe has to be given sufficient resources, particularly budget resources"*, added John Monks.

With the centre of gravity of global growth having shifted to Asia and Latin America, the ETUC calls on the European Union to develop strong industrial policies. These can no longer be based on intergovernmental cooperation, but must function on a dynamic of Community industrial coordination that transcends intra-European divisions and the perverse effects of requirements of short-term profitability for industrial investments.

Investments in people are also vital. Education and training - still the best defence against long-term unemployment - must be accessible to all citizens. Vocational training and lifelong learning are vital factors for 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 working paper of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development notes, the school-to-work transition must be facilitated through a commitment by the public authorities and the business world.

The quality of employment must be the objective. Quality jobs ensure a decent life and sustainable economic and social development.

Active solidarity policies are also necessary to provide support for individuals and countries in difficulty, but also to stimulate activity and social cohesion. The ETUC has repeatedly

called for a New Deal, a pro-active policy to produce a more sustainable economy and a system of solidarity and social justice. Focusing on slashing public spending and social protection schemes at a time when the economy still needs to be shored up is a mistake that is sure to have serious consequences. Without investments, without solidarity measures, society as a whole will be shaken.

Throughout Europe, trade unions will be on the march to express their rejection of this shift towards a lowest-bidder approach to social protection and will issue a loud and clear call for solidarity and cohesion for the future of workers.

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) speaks with a single voice on behalf of the common interests of workers, at European level. Founded in 1973, it now represents 82 trade union organisations in 36 European countries, plus 12 industry-based federations.

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