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**The European Trade Union
Confederation opens its
12th Congress in Athens
denouncing the burden
that European workers are
forced to carry because of
the crisis and wrong political decisions**



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

Brussels, 16 May 2011

The 12th Congress of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) takes place in a crucial moment when European leaders are deciding the fate of Greece, Portugal and other countries that are experiencing economic difficulties. The ETUC Congress is the occasion for this organization representing millions of European workers to reassert its rejection of austerity and of the economic governance pursued by the European Commission and the Council.

More than 500 delegates from 36 countries gather in Athens today to discuss the strategy that the European trade union movement has to put in place to counter the brutal attack that is ongoing in Europe against workers' rights and conditions.

Wages and the autonomy of collective bargaining are directly threatened by the mechanisms of the "Euro plus pact": the unit labour cost is to become the benchmark to push towards lower wages and lower purchasing power for workers.

The pressure to further flexibility, to abolish the wage indexation systems and to shift the collective bargaining from national level to enterprise level complete the worrying picture.

The EU must combat the rise of the Eurosceptic and nationalist right who will wreck the EU if it ever comes to power. And, in democracies, that means the EU must work for the benefit of workers, not just bring grim news and impose harsh discipline.

John Monks, General Secretary of ETUC, said "*The ETUC Congress, which takes place every 4 years, is an important appointment for the European trade union movement. Workers from all over Europe know that there is an alternative to austerity and the European Commission economic governance. We want to see European politicians finally decide to raise the taxes on the wealthy, to issue Eurobonds especially to help countries with sovereign debt problems and to adopt a plan for young people employment. Another major demand from the unions is the introduction of a European financial transaction tax. In this respect, we urge the Commission not to ignore the hundreds of thousands of replies in favour of such a tax which came out of the consultation on the financial sector taxation. These are going to be the priorities for the Secretariat which is going to lead the ETUC for the next four years.*"

- Speech of John Monks : [Moving from austerity to prosperity](#)

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