

ETUC Press release

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**ETUC GENERAL SECRETARY MEETS
EU COUNCIL PRESIDENT-IN-OFFICE**

16 March 2012

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

The General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation, Bernadette Ségal, met the Danish Prime Minister, and current President-in-Office of the Council of the European Union, Helle Thorning-Schmidt on 13 March. Essentially the discussions focused essentially on the current economic situation. For the ETUC, the way out of the crisis is through sustainable growth, not austerity.

During her meeting with the current President-in-Office of the EU Council, Bernadette Ségal wanted to make the voice of the European trade union movement heard. The ETUC General Secretary expressed her gravest concern about the deterioration of the economic and social situation and its disastrous consequences for workers. Austerity has proved to be completely ineffective. It is creating more job insecurity and inequality and presents a challenge for the social model. The Danish presidency must take this reality into consideration and bring its full weight to bear to give another direction to Europe, if the European project is to remain credible in the eyes of its citizens.

The ETUC has pointed out to the Danish presidency that, unlike growth, the austerity measures fell under very precise, short-term provisions. Bernadette Ségal nonetheless acknowledged that growth was henceforth to be taken into consideration in the European vocabulary, but that it was still broached in too vague a manner. It has been accorded no precise objective. The ETUC calls for a stimulus plan for sustainable growth and quality jobs. Particular attention must be focused on employment for young people who are paying the highest price for the crisis.

The ETUC General Secretary was also concerned about the delays with certain European legislative initiatives relating to the single market (employee posting directive and Monti II). The President-in-Office of the EU Council was reminded that these proposals had to contain strong social provisions and clarify the relationship between economic freedoms and fundamental social rights. These proposals must also concur with the commitments of the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso. He had actually come out in favour of fundamental social rights and had undertaken to adopt a legal framework to fight against social dumping in Europe. The ETUC is still expecting words to be turned into deeds.

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) exists to speak with a single voice, on behalf of the common interests of workers, at European level. Founded in 1973, it now represents 85 trade union organisations in 36 European countries, plus 12 industry-based federations.

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