

ETUC Press release

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**THE EU BUDGET MUST SUPPORT
EMPLOYMENT AND GROWTH**

8 May 2012

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

The European Parliament is currently finalising its position on the legislative package proposed by the Commission for the future cohesion policy, linked to the proposed Multiannual Financial Framework for 2014-2020. The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) considers that there are several positive elements in the Commission's proposals. However, the ETUC expresses strong concerns about a number of issues, such as the amount and distribution of Funds and more specifically the macroeconomic conditionalities.

The ETUC strongly rejects the Commission's proposal concerning the application of financial sanctions and incentives regarding Structural Funds, linked to the Stability and Growth Pact. These sanctions would penalise already weak Member States, regions and localities. The result would be the impoverishment of the people of the European Union and thus contrary to the basic principles of economic, social and territorial cohesion policy as reaffirmed in the Lisbon Treaty.

The extraordinary context of the economic crisis requires an EU budget strictly aimed at supporting economic and employment growth and a proper and strengthened involvement of social partners in discussions regarding the new Regulations of the Structural Funds.

Luca Visentini, ETUC Confederal Secretary declared: *"The European Social Fund must be the instrument used for implementing the European Employment Strategy, and for ensuring and reinforcing European solidarity. It is thus essential that Member States respect minimum shares for the European Social Fund (ESF) first of all, by allocating at least 25% of the Cohesion envelope for the ESF in the less developed regions".*

In addition, it is highly important that the ESF continues to support the development of social dialogue by improving the capacity building of the social partners. This commitment should be compulsory and ensure that 2% of ESF resources are allocated to activities undertaken by the social partners.

The ETUC strongly believes that social partners have a key role to play in ensuring that measures related to the EU Structural Funds function properly. The "European Code of Conduct on Partnership", proposed by the Commission, is needed and has to be precisely defined and supported in the negotiations with the Member States.

The 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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