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

Employment policy won't create jobs without an end to collective austerity

5 September 2012

On the eve of the European Commission's major employment policy conference Jobs for Europe the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) appeals to European policy makers to face up to the failure of austerity and adopt an alternative approach. As politicians, EU and international officials, academics, experts and the social partners gather to discuss how to build on the Commission's Employment Package and in what way employment policies can assist Europe's recovery, the ETUC reiterates that employment policy cannot compensate for failing economic policies.

The latest EU unemployment statistics are disastrous: unemployment has increased virtually every month for the past year reaching record levels. Over 25 million people are now out of work and behind the statistics are individual and collective stories of frustration, anger, loss, despair and, increasingly, personal tragedy. Worse is yet to come – the economic outlook is also bleak as the eurozone edges closer to a double-dip recession confirming the ETUC's warnings that collective austerity and too ambitious deficit reduction would stifle the economy and lead to further job losses.

While the ETUC believes that some of the proposal set out in the Employment Package^[1] warrant further discussion, European policy makers continue to focus on the wrong target. Structural labour market reforms in the form of deregulation of employment protection legislation, undermining or even dismantling collective bargaining structures, promoting ever more flexible labour markets and policies that increase precarious work will not create sustainable new jobs. Instead they will substitute quality jobs with poor jobs and make Europe's workers even more insecure.

The situation is urgent: the ILO's latest Global Employment Outlook^[2] confirms the bleak employment prospects for young jobseekers. We must wage war on the ticking time bomb of youth unemployment

and rising unemployment generally. We must also renew our efforts to remove barriers to employment encountered by women, older workers, disabled people, migrant worker and other disadvantaged groups. But the focus must be the quality and sustainability of the jobs created and for this we need investment: in the economy, in people, in companies and in our long term future. The ETUC has proposed a Social Compact for Europe^{iii[3]} setting out our alternative vision for Europe. We call on all who want to see a better, fairer and more social Europe to engage with us in a discussion on this proposal.

ETUC General Secretary Bernadette Segol who will speak at the conference said: "*It's time our leaders faced up to the facts: austerity is killing jobs and no amount of discussion on reforming employment policy will disguise that basic fact. The European trade union movement stands ready to face up to the challenge and our responsibilities: we call on our employer social partners at European and national level to do the same. Europe's workers demand and deserve nothing less*".

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 10 industry-based federations.

The ETUC is also on [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) and [Flickr](#). If you would like to subscribe to the [ETUC newsletter](#), please [click here](#).

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^{ii[1]} See *The Employment Package: the ETUC's response to the European Commission's Communication Towards a job-rich recovery* <http://www.etuc.org/a/10047>

^{ii[2]} ILO Global Employment Outlook : Bleak Labour Market Prospects for Youth, September 2012

^{ii[3]} ETUC A Social Compact for Europe <http://www.etuc.org/a/10024>