

ETUC Press Release

Media@etuc.org

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To: Veerle Solia



ETUC: Council of Europe rightly condemns Greek labour law reforms

Brussels, 26/10/2012

The ETUC welcomes the decisions of the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR), the main supervisory body to the Council of Europe Social Charters, which were made public on 18 October. In the ECSR's opinion, certain labour law reforms recently implemented in Greece under the Memorandum of Understanding it has with the European Commission (EC) - European Central Bank (ECB) - International Monetary Fund (IMF) Troika are a clear violation of workers' rights.

The decisions, following collective complaints to the ECSR by Greek public sector unions (including ETUC affiliate ADEDY), concerned two measures adopted in 2010 that extended the "trial period" during which workers can be dismissed without notice to one year and cut the minimum salary for workers under 25 years of age to two-thirds of the national minimum wage which meant that young Greek workers fell below the poverty line of 580 euros a month.

"The ETUC fully supports these decisions by the ECSR, an authoritative body in the field of fundamental social rights protection, that budgetary readjustments decided in the framework of the global economic crisis should definitely not lead to an erosion of workers' rights", ETUC General Secretary Bernadette Segol said. "The ETUC agrees with the ECSR that measures to force greater employment flexibility, combat unemployment, limit public expenditure and/or relieve constraints on business activity, as they are taken now throughout practically all Member States even independently of direct pressure from the Troika, cannot be taken at any price and should not deprive broad categories of employees of their fundamental rights in the field of labour law. Conversely, fundamental social rights must be respected in order to protect the human dignity of all workers in general but also protect them against arbitrary decisions by their employers or against the negative effects of economic fluctuations."

The ETUC recalls that not only are all the EU Member States bound by one of the two European Social Charters, but also that these Charters are at the basis of the social rights enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. All EU institutions, and in particular the EC and the ECB forming part of the Troika, are thus bound by the EU Charter and should therefore also respect and promote fundamental social rights in the drafting and the recommending of any future social legislative or policy measures in respect of EU member states and candidate countries.

The ECSR's decisions also form a welcome first indication in respect of the five Greek cases which are still pending before it. Those cases deal with the reduction of pension benefits and will be

decided soon.

For more information on the ECSR Decisions:

http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/socialcharter/Complaints/Complaints_en.asp (English)

http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/socialcharter/complaints/complaints_FR.asp (French)

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.

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For more information :

Patricia Grillo.

ETUC Head of Press and Communications

+ 32 (0)2 224 04 30

+ 32 (0)477 7 7 0 1 64

E-mail : Pgrillo@etuc.org

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