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ETUC Press release

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**EPSCO: THE EU URGENTLY NEEDS A SOCIAL AMBITION COMMENSURATE WITH ITS CITIZENS' EXPECTATIONS**

27 February 2013

***On the eve of the meeting of the European Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO), the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) has a clear message for the ministers: in an economic and social context where whole swathes of Europeans' population are being hit by the disastrous effects of austerity policies, the belief that the European Union will continue to exist without having a strong social ambition at the service of its citizens and workers is an illusion.***

At present, some countries in the European Union are combining recession and low growth. Austerity policies are driving down, or even preventing social mobility, which is exacerbating poverty and social inequalities.

Bernadette Ségol, ETUC General Secretary, has stated: *"The time for dithering is gone. The situation has become too serious for many European countries. Europe cannot go on existing as a project if it does not have a social dimension. One need only listen to the recent political messages coming from the people. If this social dimension is to be able to exist, the economy has to put itself at the service of the population, without our men and women being the variable used to balance the economy. How many times do we have to repeat that the current policies are a social failure? In a democracy, it is not enough just to satisfy the markets".*

What we need are structural policies designed to achieve high levels of employment and social protection. Short-term measures based simply on budgetary rigour must be abandoned.

The EPSCO also needs to agree on a guarantee for young people. The ETUC welcomes this initiative. European trade unions quickly urge the EPSCO to rapidly adopt a 'European quality framework on internships'.

*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 10 industry-based federations. The ETUC is also on [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) and [Flickr](#).*

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