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ETUC Press release

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**28 APRIL 2013, WORLD DAY FOR SAFETY AND HEALTH AT WORK:  
THE ETUC DEMANDS THE ADOPTION OF AN AMBITIOUS EUROPEAN STRATEGY**

22/04/2013

***The World Day for Safety and Health at Work falls on 28 April. The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) is using this occasion to emphasise the point that health at work is an essential priority for the trade union movement. A European strategy in this field urgently needs to be adopted.***

The figures from the International Labour Organization are dramatic. Every day, 6,300 workers around the world die from the consequences of poor working conditions. In 5,500 of those cases, the victims suffer from diseases, and in particular cancers, caused by exposure to chemicals. Europe is far from exempt from this tragedy. The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work estimates that there are some 160,000 deaths per year.

The European trade unions note that the European Union has still not adopted a strategy in this crucial area for the period 2013-2020, despite demands from the European Parliament and a sizeable majority of the Member States. No date has yet been set by the European Commission for the adoption of such a strategy.

*“We do not accept that poor working conditions should become a factor in competition between the countries of Europe. The current context of crisis further reinforces the necessity to adopt a European strategy. This will allow for the pooling of efforts by the various countries”,* stated Bernadette Ségol, ETUC General Secretary.

To improve working conditions, it is important to have a coherent legislative framework which applies to all businesses, of whatever scale. The ETUC has for years been demanding the adoption of a directive on the prevention of musculoskeletal disorders, which affect almost a quarter of workers in Europe. Likewise, it is also calling for more effective legislation against occupational cancers and drawing attention to the psychosocial risks associated with poor organisation of work.

Every State also has a responsibility. In particular, it is important to improve the capacities of the factories' inspectorates, without which no legislation is credible. In every country in Europe, trade union organisations are staging activities linked to the date of 28 April. The ETUC welcomes these convergent actions, and urges the European Union to lose no time in defining an ambitious strategy.

*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 [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) and [Flickr](#).*

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