

EU Macro-economic dialogue at political level considers economic developments

(15 February 2016) There was measured optimism that the economic recovery experienced in several EU countries will continue. The European Commission foresees modest growth in its [winter economic forecasts](#). The [trade unions](#) made clear that unemployment remains high in the EU. And the recovery is fragile. The developments of the Chinese and other large economies are a cause for concern.

To strengthen economic recovery trade unions underline the need for public investment and wage increases. Instead, continuing austerity puts pressure on wages while cuts in public expenditure and services undermine stability and only serve to depress demand. The ETUC investment plan provides a clear path to more growth and jobs.

In contrast, the European Commission and the corporate employers of BusinessEurope argue that countries that have had structural reforms of the labour market demonstrate higher levels of economic growth. But [evidence is mounting](#) that the structural adjustment policies prescribed do not work. The experience of Ireland which is going through a period of higher economic growth, cannot be easily transferred to other countries. The [lessons from Ireland](#) show the importance of a public entity that coordinates development policy.

Employers would like to see the European Commission be more firm on countries implementing reforms of the National Reform Plans and the Country Specific Recommendations. They supported the creation of national competitiveness boards. ETUC has been opposed as the proposals of the Commission. The Commission indicated that such boards would consider wages (unit labour costs). Employers fully agree that there should be European benchmarking of wages. They do agree with the ETUC that the autonomy of the social partners is to be respected. The Boards should not intervene with bargaining.

Employers, trade unions and the representatives of the European institutions meet every half year to consider the state of the European economy. They also exchange views on the measures that are needed to deal with the current economic problems.

The macro-economic dialogue brings together the President of the Council of Ministers for Economy and Finance, the president of the Eurogroup, the president of the European Central Bank, the representatives of the Commission, and the social partners. The three European cross-sectoral employer organisations [CEEP](#), BusinessEurope and UEAPME were represented. EPSU's General Secretary was part of the ETUC delegation.

Other representatives came from the EU Economic Policy Committee and from the EU Employment Committee. Both are made up of Member States representatives. The Slovak State Secretary for Finance and the Maltese Minister for Finance were also present. The meeting took place on 11 February 2016, Brussels

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