

## ETUC Executive discusses Future of European Union with Commission President Juncker



(7 November 2016) The European Union is facing many challenges. To offer a perspective the ETUC has developed a platform on [the Future of Europe](#). It discussed this with a series of political figures during an Executive Committee meeting and had a long session with Commission President Juncker. The first speaker was Maria Rodriques, Vice-president of the social democrats in the European Parliament. She is the rapporteur on the proposals of the European Commission for an EU pillar of social rights. ETUC raised a [series of concrete proposals with her](#). The Swedish Minister of EU and Trade Anne Lindhe raised the importance of social rights for all in the EU. Key is to address social dumping. The Swedish government is further advocating for a [Global Deal](#), a global initiative for social dialogue and better conditions in the labour market. She was asked about the situation in [Turkey](#) in which 110.000 public employees have been dismissed and suspended and more and more trade union members are losing their job. The European Commission will publish its Progress report on Turkey in relation to the negotiations for membership of the EU soon. The European Parliament is discussing the Customs union and mandate for negotiations on a trade agreement. Visa

liberalization, adaptation of the Turkish anti-terror law and the deal between the EU and Turkey will be on the agenda in December. The Swedish minister made clear her concerns about the arrests of parliamentarians of the pro-Kurdish party HDP. Introduction of the death penalty by Turkey, a point repeatedly raised by Turkish president Erdogan, will end negotiations between the EU and Turkey, reiterated by EU Commission President Juncker later in the discussion with the ETUC Executive Committee.

Members of the Executive discussed with Commissioner Pierre Moscovici responsible for Economic and Financial Affairs, Taxation and Customs, the Commission's macro-economic policy. ETUC underlined its opposition to the austerity measures advocated by the Commission and the Eurogroup in particular, stressing the negative impacts on working people and families with cuts in public services and how these policies hold back economic growth. The Commissioner continued to underline the importance of fiscal consolidation and structural reforms. The first session ended with the Italian ambassador to the EU Giovanni Pugliese who welcomed that the ETUC will hold its mid-term conference in Roma, 29-31 May 2017 and Udo Bullmann, German member of the socialist group and of the European Parliament's Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee.

EU Commission President Juncker gave a short intro followed by a sometimes agitated discussion. Some issues:

- The European Fund for Strategic Investment. Importance of a focus on countries that are less well-off and on social infrastructure.
- Pillar of social rights. It will contain parts that are legally binding while other parts are recommendations for Member States. There will be a revision of health and safety legislation "to modernize". Mr. Juncker strongly supports bargaining. "No social market economy if there is no collective bargaining. It is the essence of social market economy." The Commission supports the Swedish proposals for a Global Deal.
- The Commission President defended the proposals for the Posted Workers Directive and repeated that he stresses equal pay for the same work at the same place. Mr. Juncker was concerned about precarious work. Short term jobs do not give the perspective working families need to plan the future. He can support a European minimum wage related to economic levels of the Member States to ensure the dignity of people at the place of work. "People should earn enough to live decently and not need 2 or 3 jobs". 22 Member States

already have a legal minimum wage. He also supports the idea of minimum income.

- The Commission representative defended the International trade agreements, a point on which the unions and Mr Juncker sharply disagree regarding CETA, TTIP and TISA which are a new generation of trade agreements. The Commission does understand that the social partners should be better involved in the negotiations.
- He recognized that Greece, Portugal, Ireland, Spain and other countries have made enormous efforts to address their budgetary situation and that it is important for the EU to assist and ensure these countries remain in the Euro. We are not kicking those on the ground. Respect for the deals made is expected, repeating the Commission policies of fiscal consolidation, structural reform and role of EU investment.
- ETUC wants to see a better mainstreaming of gender equality in the Commission's work and progressive proposals. Mr. Juncker says the proposals of the Commission to address the work-life balance do this.
- He defended the importance of the Commission proposals regarding refugees and the need to assist Italy and Greece. The EU has to stand in solidarity. It is not done for Member States to agree how to assist and then not stand by their commitments.
- Asked about respect for the results of the outcomes of the sectoral social dialogue, the Commission President faced sharp critique over his opposition to the hair-dressers agreement and the way the Commission is handling this.

Members expressed support for the [trade union position](#) on climate change, just transition and the need for funding to make it happen during the Executive. Over 100 countries have now ratified the agreement.

The ETUC Executive Committee met in extra-ordinary session on 7 November 2016, Brussels. EPSU vice-president Francoise Geng and EPSU General Secretary participated.

 [Türkiye](#)

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