



European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)
Confédération européenne des syndicats (CES)

ETUC Declaration to the Tripartite Social Summit 1 March 2012

For a true commitment to young people's future: providing them with quality jobs must be our top priority.

The ETUC is urgently highlighting the dire situation faced by young people in Europe today. More than 5.5 million youngsters are unemployed and almost half of them only have precarious jobs. This situation is exacerbated by economic and social decline caused by the crisis. This state of affairs is untenable. Young people need guarantees to safeguard their future. Political measures have to be taken to improve the situation facing young people and especially to ensure the availability of quality jobs. Such policies must be accompanied by the allocation of adequate financial resources. The European trade union movement rejects the inevitability of a lost generation: there *are* alternatives. What is needed are active labour policies implemented jointly with the social partners. The very future of Europe's societies is at stake.

ETUC Declaration:

For a true commitment to young people's future: providing them with quality jobs must be our priority.

If we are to get to grips with the question of youth employment and hence young people's autonomy it is essential that we focus on their main concerns. Gaining access to jobs and combating unemployment are major worries for young Europeans, and justifiably so, since these factors will condition the future course of their life.

The approach taken by young people is pragmatic, logical and makes common sense. They want to make the most of themselves, gain qualifications, and have both quality jobs and somewhere to live. Yet the reality they face (now) falls well short of these aspirations. Indeed, more than **5.5 million young people are unemployed** and almost half of them occupy **precarious jobs**. Their situation, which the ETUC has been denouncing for many years, has been aggravated by the crisis.

In 2010, 42.1% of young Europeans had short term contracts; 30% were working part time involuntarily; and 12% were deemed poor.

Against this backdrop, **the ETUC welcomes the European Commission's initiative as a first step in the right direction**. However, any policy aimed at young people needs sufficient funding to take the necessary steps. Young people cannot content themselves with mere statements of good intentions.

At a time when young people are massively mobilising in indignant movements across Europe, the ETUC reiterates that they cannot and must not be regarded as a labour market 'adjustment variable'.

The three principles of job security, stability and, above all, quality must once again become the pillars underpinning any measures taken.

What is needed are active labour policies implemented jointly with the social partners. These policies must guarantee the creation of quality jobs and avert any risk of social exclusion for young people or discrimination against them.

Furthermore, it is vital to ensure access to high-quality education that is genuinely open to everyone. For even though adequate training and a degree (or equivalent qualification) do not prevent unemployment among young people, they remain the best defence against it.

At the same time, those active labour market policies must meet the essential call for solidarity between generations and not set one group against another or favour one to the detriment of another.

The ETUC is convinced that the approach intent on making 'flexicurity' a key element of ways of dealing with the segmentation of the labour market for this age group is not just risky, but also misguided. Indeed, the situation described above merely lists the various difficulties and instabilities faced by young people. In a context in which flexibility is unilaterally imposed on them, the emphasis needs to be placed first and foremost on security if balance is to be restored to their living conditions and job situation.

Moreover, it is crucial to adopt both policies and measures designed to improve the situation of young people and above all to envisage those policies and measures in consultation and in constant dialogue. Accordingly, it is imperative that initiatives like the European Youth Pact (backed by the social partners) or Youth on the Move and now also the Youth Initiative should not be allowed to wilt on the vine. Instead, the Member States must be induced to take practical steps to apply them, and suitable funding must be deployed.

Consequently, the ETUC believes we need to:

- put in place measures designed to **prevent young people from dropping out of school**;
- induce all governments to **guarantee access to high-quality education** that is genuinely open to all citizens without discrimination;
- boost **support aimed at providing guidance** for young people, to enable them to choose a path and a career in full possession of the facts. Young people must be able to find out what their prospects are before they embark on a career path;
- promote and remain committed to **the charter of quality for traineeships and apprenticeships** in Europe, supported by the ETUC;
- establish a **guarantee for young people** in Europe by making sure that every young person is offered training or a job within a set period of time;
- guarantee **the creation of quality jobs** for young people;
- **secure funding** for such initiatives via the **European Social Fund without requiring cofinancing from countries in difficulty, but ensuring real monitoring**.

The ETUC cannot reconcile itself with terms like “lost, sacrificed or expendable generation”.

All the relevant actors must take action and meet their responsibilities. The young generation (and the hopes we must pin on it) is not part of the problem, but rather its solution.

In the **European social partners’** Work Programme for 2012-2014, the ETUC reiterated the urgency of the situation, committing itself alongside the employers and pledging to make a priority of negotiating a **framework of actions on employment for young people**.

Banking on young people must not be a threat to European construction, but rather constitute a **guarantee** for its success!

**As Socrates put it: “Nothing is too difficult for young people”.
But we must make sure that they have the means!**