

European Federation
of Building
and Woodworkers



Enough of *their* crisis- back to *our* Future!

Ahead of the European elections in May 2014, Europe still finds itself in the midst of a crisis triggered by reckless financial speculators. The EU institutions have thus far failed root out the cause for the ensuing economic turmoil but instead installed 'austerity measures' that have slashed budgets, discouraged investment and caused social hardship throughout the whole continent. As a result, economic growth continues to be sluggish and the situation on the European labour market remains dire. Especially the young generation is paying the price for a crisis they did not cause: Young workers are twice or thrice as likely to be unemployed than any other age group. The severity varies depending upon the different national scenarios but the trend is undeniable. In an age of historic unemployment in Europe of roughly 11%, the EU average for youth unemployment is more than twice as high and goes up to almost 60 % in some countries (e.g. Greece: 57.3%, Spain: 56%). The wellbeing and livelihood of a whole generation is severely threatened.

Yet instead of reforming a failing economic and financial system by investing in sustainable quality jobs that provide young workers with a perspective, Europe's governments have placed pressure on wages and working conditions in search for a quick fix. The EU's only response thus far has been the creation of a so-called Youth Guarantee – an assurance that every worker under 25 entering the labour market will receive a concrete offer for employment or training within 4 months. The concept looks good on paper but is hopelessly underfunded and has yet to deliver any results. A mere € 6 billion have been set aside over a seven year period, while the International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimates the costs of setting up an effective Youth Guarantee at € 21 billion per year. The current economic loss in the EU of having 7.5 million young people out of work or education or training is estimated at over € 150 billion by the European Foundation of Living and Working Conditions. As of today failing banks have received more than € 160 billion. The victims of the crisis are getting pennies while the culprits are offered the keys to the vault.

Our future is at stake, and it is not for sale! The youth organisations of Europe's Trade Union Federations stand united in their demand for immediate action from EU policy makers. It is our common understanding that:

Creation of quality jobs has to be the number one priority of the newly elected Parliament and Commission!

The threat of unemployment or precarious working conditions is a constant factor for young people when beginning their working lives, exiting from university, higher education or apprenticeships, and often also thereafter. From the entrance into the labour market on, the right of young people to quality jobs and fair, respectful working conditions must be upheld. We deserve opportunities for job progression and decent livelihoods instead of permanent uncertainty and incomes that do not pay the bills.

Respect for Social Partners' agreements!

Constructive Social Dialogue safeguards jobs and employment. Strong social partnerships are a core competence of the EU labour market and have a key role to play in integrating young workers into the labour market. The EU institutions are expected to actively support Social Partners in their role and refrain from blocking any Social Partners' agreements.

Mobility should be a choice and not a necessity for finding work!

Freedom of movement is one of the biggest accomplishments of the European Union. However, social cohesion amongst Europe's member states must be advanced before accepting that there will be winners and losers in the competition for skilled workers. Many skilled young people are forced to take their search for work outside of the EU altogether, devastating their home communities and families and leaving a skills vacuum in the EU. Every EU citizen should have the possibility to find a decent job in his or her home country.

Stop precarious work!

Young workers – especially women and migrants - are abnormally and unacceptably concentrated in precarious forms of employment, often becoming trapped in a vicious cycle of dead-end, low-paid, fixed-term and poorly protected jobs and internships. Whilst companies boost their profits, the economic costs of increasingly precarious work for the EU are enormous and undermine public social security and health care systems and endanger the European social model.

Access to education and training is a universal right that should not depend on somebody's financial means!

The skill needs of the labour market are changing more quickly in the age of globalisation. Access to life-long learning programs and advanced education should depend on somebody's qualification and not on one's ability to pay for them. The attractiveness of the European Union as a location for industry highly depends on the qualification of its workforce. Only by investing in training of the employees can Europe's innovation potential be fully exhausted.

Recruiting young people to the labour force should always be a key component of Collective Bargaining!

Trade Unions have a particular responsibility for giving a voice to those who are struggling to be heard. We call on our Social Partners to include the issue of creating quality jobs for young workers as a priority in Collective Bargaining negotiations.

Internships are for fixed-term training, not for life!

Young workers are not a cheap temporary labour force; precarious internships are no substitute for quality and permanent jobs. Internships should be a mean to decent work for young people, not an end in itself.

Investment in new technologies requires investments in new skills!

Changing communication and information technologies as well as technologies for mitigation and adaptation to climate change offer enormous potential for growth and social improvements; to stay competitive, Europe's economy must get ready by investing in skilling its workforce in due time. Moreover, Europe must skill young people – its future workforce – to adequately address the radical changes that may transform Europe's economies and societies as a result of climate change.

The European Federation of Building and Woodworkers (EFBWW) is the European Industry Federation for the construction industry, the building materials industry, the wood and furniture industry and the forestry industry. The EFBWW has 72 affiliated unions in 31 countries and represents a total of 2,350,000 members.

EFFAT is the European Federation of Trade Unions in the Food, Agriculture and Tourism sectors representing 2.6 million members from 120 national trade unions from 35 European countries

EPSU is the European Federation of Public Service Unions and comprises 8 million public service workers from over 265 trade unions.

The European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) represents more than 2.5 million transport workers from 243 transport unions and 41 European countries, in the following sectors: railways, road transport and logistics, maritime transport, inland waterways, civil aviation, ports & docks, tourism and fisheries.

industriAll European Trade Union represents 7.1 million workers across supply chains in manufacturing, mining and energy sectors on the European level.

UNI Europa unites national trade unions organising in service and skills sectors in 50 different countries. With 320 affiliated trade union organisations, UNI Europa represents 7 million workers.