



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

ETUC DECLARATION ON GREECE

Adopted at the Executive Committee on 7 March 2012

The ETUC Executive Committee meeting on 7 March 2012, expresses its full solidarity with the working people of Greece who are gravely and irreversibly affected by losses of jobs and income that erodes their ability to address the negative impact of the crisis.

The ETUC declares its support for the Greek trade unions in their struggle against the unprecedented IMF–EU–ECB onslaught that methodically dismantles core labour rights, uproots labour institutions and demolishes the social state depriving workers of vital institutional capabilities to defend themselves. In particular, free collective bargaining is impeded, collective agreements abolished and trade unions intimidated, while social dialogue is systematically destroyed to be replaced by authoritarian unilateralism that renders national social partners redundant. The senseless and unjustifiable demand by the Troika for the closing of the Workers' Housing Organisation (OEK) and of the Workers' Social Fund (OEE) is a further attack on the existence of trade unions in Greece.

Greece is being pushed to one of the deepest economic slumps in modern times, forecast to cumulatively reach wartime recession levels of 25%–30%. Sacrifices imposed on workers, pensioners and their families are without precedent in the post war period. The most drastic reduction in a primary budget deficit that Europe has seen for over 30 years was achieved in Greece thanks to the impoverishment of Greeks. With more than one million unemployed, nearly 30% of the population has shifted to below the poverty line. Nearly a quarter of a million people rely on relief work for a daily meal.

Nonetheless fresh austerity is ceaselessly heaped on top of existing measures. The national minimum wage—the last protective threshold for low-paid workers—was recently slashed by 22% (32% for young workers) a move that will universally pull down wages by 40% and abolish a series of benefits. Further measures are expected in June.

The ETUC monitors with the utmost concern the situation in Greece that by far exceeds any sense of fiscal discipline and violently imposes a level of devastation no people can accept, leading the country into an economic, political and social abyss.

We express our indignation at the proposed prioritising of loan repayments over pensions, salaries or any social need via an escrow account where all public Greek revenues will be collected, pushing the country soon into an internal default.

This is not an acceptable course. Greece needs options for recovery in a spirit of real solidarity and cohesion which for once will really put people before the markets.

The ETUC reiterates its proposal for an EU-type “Marshall Plan” approach aimed at growth, employment and innovative investment: an EU solidarity pact for economically sustainable and

socially acceptable solutions with the effective involvement of trade unions. We call on Greece's creditors and the Greek authorities to refrain from further squeezing of wages, pensions and imposing new taxes. It is prime time to insist on alternative debt and deficit-reducing options. Equitable tax collection, action against tax fraud, effective use of structural funds available for investment, revisiting Greece's excessive defense spending and easing its defense needs by a European guarantee for Greek frontiers, and cutting superfluous spending and not social expenditure are just some of the available alternatives.

The ETUC and its affiliates will remain vigilant and active, at the forefront of Pan-European efforts to save Greece.