



**Press release**

**“EU and ILO enhancing the fight against youth unemployment in Eastern Europe”**

Friday 17 June 2011

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**GENEVA – An Informal Meeting of Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs took place at the margin of the International Labour Conference (ILC). During this meeting – jointly organised by Hungary, holding the Presidency of the EU Council, and the ILO – the European Commission, Ministers of Belgium, Spain (as the members of the current Trio Presidency), Poland (as the forthcoming Presidency), Azerbaijan, Croatia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Ukraine and representatives of employer and worker organizations debated on the question how to secure decent work for young people in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus.**

Creating decent jobs for young people entering the labour market is an essential element of the progression towards wealthier economies, fairer societies and stronger democracies. The Hungarian Presidency of the EU Council selected youth employment in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus as a central theme for the Informal Meeting of Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs during the 100<sup>th</sup> session of the International Labour Conference.

For the purpose of the meeting, the ILO prepared a background paper entitled “Youth Employment in Eastern Europe: Crisis within the crisis” which is available at following address: <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/eurpro/geneva/what/events/index.htm>

The impact of the global economic crisis on youth employment has been severe in most countries. In countries of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, the global economic crisis has exacerbated the youth employment crisis that was already an enormous challenge. The youth unemployment rates, at well above 35 per cent in some of the countries, are among the highest in the world.

But there is not only unemployment. Young people in Eastern Europe as well have to cope with precarious jobs and informal employment. Some of them are totally giving up hope of finding a decent job. Another important problem is those young people who are neither in employment nor in education (NEET). Transition of young people from inactivity to labour market has to be improved.

Mr. Sándor Czomba, the Hungarian Minister of State for Employment, says that capable and effective education and training system is a starting point for the successful labour market participation of young people. He has highlighted that youth employment is a specific flagship initiative of the EU’s 10 year strategy for growth and jobs (Europe 2020) and the Hungarian

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Presidency identified this issue as an overarching aim in the last semester. “The vulnerable situation of young people heightens the risk of a ‘lost generation’ who become discouraged and are forced to live at the margins of the labour market”, says Susanne Hoffmann, Regional Director of the ILO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia.

The EU, through the European Commission and the current and the future Presidency of the Council, and ILO affirmed their commitment and agreed on strengthening their collaboration in fighting youth unemployment.

The discussions at this Informal Ministerial Meeting are also very relevant in the light of the preparations for the 2012 June International Labour Conference as a general discussion on Youth Employment will be on the agenda.

*For more information or to request interviews, please contact the Hungarian Ministry for National Economy: +36-1-374-2700 or the ILO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia: [europe@ilo.org](mailto:europe@ilo.org) or + 41 22 799 66 66.*

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