

**Speech given by Bernadette Ségol, ETUC General Secretary
CMKOS Congress
25 April 2014, Prague**

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Friends,

Thank you for inviting me to speak to CMKOS congress, on behalf of the European Trade Union Confederation.

It is 10 years since the Czech Republic joined the European Union.

The Czech people wanted the democracy, fundamental rights and freedom of movement that the EU guarantees.

The Czech people wanted the prosperity and social progress which the EU has done so much to improve since it was set up.

The Czech people wanted the EU's unique social model –dialogue and negotiations between employers and workers, work with decent working conditions and pay, good public services, environmental protection, public health.

Social laws such as equal pay for men and women, parental leave, health and safety regulations have benefitted people in every EU country.

There is much to be proud of what we, together, have achieved.

But the crisis has blown Europe off course. It has diverted the European Union onto the wrong path.

The crisis has hit Czech citizens hard. Wages have fallen in the last 5 years. Unemployment is at its highest. And it is much worse in Greece and Portugal and other countries.

Policies implemented are not doing enough is not doing enough to lift the Czech Republic and other countries out of unemployment.

EU leaders are focussed too heavily on austerity, on putting all the emphasis on cutting Government debt and public deficit.

EU leaders claim that the crisis is over. It shows they have forgotten the unemployed, the working poor, the struggling citizens, the rising bills and falling wages.

These people should not pay the price of the crisis.

The financial sector must stop speculating and serve the real economy.

We need a financial transaction tax.

The EU must stop tax fraud, tax evasion and tax competition.

We have a chance to change the direction the EU is going.

On May 23-24 the Czech Republic votes in the European elections. I urge every one of you to vote.

The European Parliament is a vital democratic institution. It has an ever greater say in the spending, the laws and policies of the European Union. These matter in our everyday lives.

We need a new path for Europe. This is the ETUC message. It is possible.
– And the European Parliament can help us on that new path.

The EU needs to invest in growth – infrastructure, research & development, training and education, green and hi-tech industries - to create good jobs and to create new hope in the European Union

Do not believe the claims of the Euro sceptics who say we are better off without Europe, or with less Europe. This is dangerous.

Do not believe the far-right who put all the blame on migrant workers, and foreigners. They want to divide us. They want to take away our freedoms. They stand for hate.

My friends of CMKOS: I want to thank you and your leaders for your active participation in the life of the ETUC and for your constructive and friendly support.

Přeji hodně zdaru vašemu sjezdu.

Společně to dokážeme