



The Athens **Manifesto**



EUROPEAN TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ETUC)

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The central issue for European trade unions at present is that the financial crises affecting Greece, Ireland and Portugal and the more general policy of austerity governance in other member states are exerting downward pressure on pay, public services, social security, pensions, and labour and living standards.

The ETUC is alarmed at the negative consequences so far of the bailouts of economies in distress organised by the EU and the International Monetary Fund. The austerity measures imposed, for example in Greece, Portugal and Ireland, have made the situation worse, and the countries concerned face a long period of continued recession, rising debt burdens, pressure on labour standards and labour rights and unemployment. There is a real risk of countries and their populations becoming even more strongly indebted, with huge dangers for Europe and its Member States.

The ETUC therefore urgently demands an important policy change in the EU's approach and for it to provide effective help to countries in difficulty.

The new Euro Plus pact applicable to the Eurozone and six other economies has far reaching implications particularly on pay since it includes recommendations to member states on:

- > comparisons of unit labour costs,
- > hostility to wage indexation and more generally to centralised bargaining,
- > linking pay to productivity, not including inflation,
- > downward pressure on public sector pay and, in some cases, on minimum wages, also with consequences for the private sector,

- > downward pressure on pension entitlements and early retirement schemes,
- > promotion of strict budgetary and constitutional controls on public debt and expenditure.

The ETUC asserts that this approach is totally unacceptable to the trade unions of Europe and will campaign at all levels to uphold the following principles:

- > wages are not the enemy of the economy but its motor, prompting growth and jobs;
- > the autonomy of social partners in collective bargaining and wage negotiations must be respected while trade union organisations should better coordinate collective bargaining;
- > the purchasing power of workers' wages and salaries must be improved, with increases being in line with inflation and productivity, while preserving existing wage indexation systems with the overall goal of a fair distribution of wealth;
- > the process towards income inequality should be reversed;
- > the fight against wage and fiscal dumping must be intensified, and the principle of equal pay for equal work applied;
- > pension entitlements and systems should be protected and ensure decent living conditions; and
- > rules on public debt should be adapted to economic realities and exceptional circumstances and not provoke recession and its social consequences through austerity measures.



In this context we are determined to

- > combat the rising power of the far right and their narrow nationalist allies and to stand for a social Europe, and will be active, to that purpose, in the next European Parliamentary elections;
- > fight unemployment, rising inequality, precarious work and austerity governance;
- > mobilise for growth and sustainability;
- > work for greater trade union strength and membership, and
- > develop a joint response to an increasingly integrated European labour market.

All this will be at the core of the ETUC's work in 2011-2014. The ETUC will:

1 fight for a European New Deal for workers, **against** austerity governance, cuts in pay, social security and public services; and **for a European economic governance that serves the interests of the European people and not the markets** including qualitative growth, full employment, strengthening the European social model. Important examples are: a financial transaction tax, harmonisation of the corporate tax base, minimum taxation rates for companies, moves towards Eurobonds, and measures to protect investment for the future from blind austerity policies.

2 demand and campaign that fundamental social rights take precedence over economic freedoms and consequently enshrine this principle in a **Social Progress Protocol** in European treaties, in a revised **Posted Workers Directive** and in **internal market regulation** known as "Monti II".

3 place **more and better** jobs at the top of the European agenda and at the heart of EU economic governance, and reflect it in the European social dialogue as well as in the evaluation of the 2020 strategy and Single Market Act.

4 demand a coordinated attack on **youth unemployment** with guaranteed access to education, training and jobs, investing in a good education system from early childhood to higher education.

5 prioritise the **improvement of working conditions** of all European workers, the fight against undeclared work, corruption and the black economy and **social and wage dumping, through legislation and within the social dialogue.**

6 develop **joint initiatives** with European employers for green jobs, growth and investment, sustainable industry policy, education and training.

7 act so that **all workers**, whatever their form of work is, can lead a decent life and are protected through collective agreements and/or legislation, ensuring equal treatment, and that they can enjoy workers rights.

8 demand **effective and stringent regulation of financial markets and ratings agencies**, an end to tax havens, a financial transaction tax, and a stop to excessive pay, golden handshakes and bonuses for executives.

9 demand new systems of **corporate governance** to promote sustainability, long-termism, and fair pay levels for all – a system in which European Works Councils, trade unions and worker information, consultation and participation rights must play a fundamental role.

10 actively contribute to managing a **fair transition towards a low carbon economy**, including through social dialogue; support research and innovation in new technologies and energy efficiency.

11 support **public services** and fight against their dismantling due to austerity cuts and wholesale privatisation, ensuring their essential contribution to democratic development, sustainable growth, employment and social welfare.

12 work actively for gender equality and fight against **all forms of discrimination** on the grounds of sex, race, religion, age, disability and sexual orientation. The EU as a whole must take a lead in finding solutions in relation to external migration flows based on our commitment to equality, freedom, democracy and the rule of law enshrined in the Treaties.

13 protect **migrant workers** by promoting mutual trade union membership recognition, and demand equal pay for equal work and work of equal value, based on the host country principle, and fighting against racism and xenophobia. Furthermore all migrant workers must have the right to be advised on their rights in the host country.

14 improve **health and safety** standards, including by campaigning for working time regulation that protects health and ends opt outs, monitoring the agreements on stress, transposing ILO recommendations on AIDS, violence and harassment in the workplace, prioritising musculo-skeletal disorders, strengthening labour

inspection, protecting personal data, implementing fully the REACH regulations on chemicals, increasing training, and devoting a day a year to celebrate and promote the work of health and safety representatives.

15 assist in the **EU enlargement** by working with affiliates in Turkey and the Western Balkans.

16 support **fair and sustainable globalisation**, including EU co-operation agreements (but not necessarily all bilateral trade agreements notably the one with Colombia), and work closely with the ITUC and TUAC.

17 promote the **European Social Model as a positive and sustainable model for world development**, and campaign with the ITUC for trade union rights globally.

18 support the **Pan European Regional Council (PERC)**, and sub-regional activities in Europe, and also trade unions and social dialogue in the **Euromed** region; promote relations with trade unions organisations in Africa, North and Latin America and Asia

19 demand the **right to strike on transnational issues** and press the demand for a **specific labour chamber** in the European Court of Justice.

20 maximise the use of the range of **means** available to the ETUC to improve the impact of the trade union agenda at European level, i.e. using campaigns and mobilisations, the EU institutions, employers and the social dialogue, allies in civil society, the Tripartite Social Summit, and EU external relations.

