

ETUC Manifesto on the European Parliament Elections

Adopted at the Executive Committee meeting of 22–23 October 2013

For quality jobs, equality and democracy in Europe!

From 22 to 25 May 2014, elections will be organised in each Member State of the European Union (EU) to elect the MEPs who will sit in the next European Parliament (EP). In particular, the European Parliament has the power to approve or reject European laws, decide on the European budget and choose the President of the European Commission.

In the last few years, some MEPs have also supported demands from the ETUC – banks are better regulated and bankers' bonuses have been limited. The European Parliament supported the Financial Transaction Tax, the establishment of the Youth Guarantee, the inclusion of social and environmental clauses in public procurement contracts or the ETUC social compact: all demands from the European Trade Union. In the face of increasing concerns about the rise in nationalism, racism, populist movements, the union movement must get mobilised. The May 2014 elections are therefore very important for all of us.

The ETUC stands for a change of course. The ETUC is fighting for another Europe.

The Europe that we refuse

The ETUC refuses the current austerity policy which chooses to cut public expenses and lets unemployment increase significantly – in particular youth unemployment (26.5 million unemployed, including 5.7 million young people under 25: a sad record). A policy of precarious work and inequality, which seeks competitiveness only through reduced wages, working conditions and contracts, social protection and unfair taxation.

The European Union has stood for progress for many decades. Its "social model", an alliance of economic growth and a sustainable improvement in living and working conditions, which is often held up as an example, is now under threat and has been weakened. This is a result of the measures imposed by the current Commission and Council, rather than the EU itself.

The Europe that we want, the policy that we want:

The ETUC calls for another *European policy*, for a social Europe. A Europe of full employment which cares for future generations.

We are calling for: jobs and good jobs...

- ***A revitalised employment strategy must be the top priority.*** An ambitious European investment plan focusing on the creation of quality jobs which could generate up to 11 million new workplaces. This plan will stimulate the European economy and will facilitate the EU's transition to a more environmentally and climate-friendly society over the next decade. A new European industrial policy will be based on innovation, research and development, education, training, health and a Just Transition towards sustainable development. A democratically decided and socially oriented European budget must support this recovery. The Youth Guarantee must be fully implemented.

- **The immediate end to austerity policies.** It is necessary to consolidate public finances but this does not have to lead to a dismantling of social benefits. The EU must put solidarity back at the heart of its policies. Public resources for investment programmes have to be excluded from the “Golden Rule” which limits the structural deficit of the Member States to a maximum of 0.5% of GDP.
- **The guarantee that economic freedoms cannot take precedence over fundamental social rights.** The European Union is not only an economic project, its main objective should be an improvement in the living and working conditions of its population; the fundamental notion of social progress must be confirmed by a ‘Social Progress Protocol’ appended to the Treaties.
- **Respect for, and promotion of, collective bargaining and the autonomy of the social partners.** Social dialogue must be concretely and genuinely promoted at all levels. The autonomy of social partners must be assured, particularly in relation to, but not only, wage bargaining. The EU must recognise the role of workers and their representatives. The increase in purchasing power and decent wages contribute to the revival of domestic consumption and therefore to growth.
- **An end to precarious work.** We need to put an end to precarious jobs. The statutory minimum wage must be increased in countries where this is deemed necessary by trade unions. A minimum social income will be introduced based on common European principles. An individual right to quality education and training will be guaranteed for all. The United Kingdom, Poland and the Czech Republic were able to opt out of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights: it is time to end these exceptions so that the living and working conditions of citizens are improved
- **A guarantee of health, safety, and hygiene at work.** An ambitious new European strategy must be rolled out very quickly (e.g. revision of the Directive on carcinogenic agents, adoption of directives on musculoskeletal disorders and psychosocial risks). Any further weakening of the Working Time Directive must be prevented.

Equality, solidarity

- **Re-establish cohesion and social justice.** We need to reduce the growing inequalities between rich and poor countries, regions and territories, between workers and between citizens. We need to reinforce solidarity between the countries in the EU. Effective and binding measures must be adopted with a view to fighting downwards social and unfair competition by guaranteeing that every worker receives equal pay and equal rights for work of equal value.
- **Combat persistent forms of discrimination at all levels.** Racism, xenophobia, homophobia, nationalism and extremism will be combated rigorously. Mobility must be fair, just and freely chosen. **Migrant workers** must receive the same treatment as other workers and must be informed about their rights. Migrant policy urgently needs to be changed. Specific actions must strive to close the gaps between men and women, notably in relation to wages. The work-life balance must be improved.
- **Quality public services and services of general interest accessible to all** as foreseen by the Charter of Fundamental Rights.. International trade agreements must respect these services. New childcare and health facilities should be developed for children and elderly people (e.g. for dependent people who need guaranteed long-term care with respect for their dignity).

- **Social security** is a fundamental human right, the financing of which must be shared and distributed equally and in that context, the role of public pension schemes (first pillar) remains crucial. Inter-generational solidarity must be bolstered.
- **A fairer fiscal policy.** New decisive and binding measures are needed to combat tax evasion, avoidance and fraud. Tax havens have to be eliminated, starting with the immediate implementation of the resolutions of the European Council and the G20. We need to fight against corruption, undeclared work and speculation. Taxation in Europe must be redistributive and progressive. Companies' tax bases and levels of tax must be harmonised possibly by the introduction of a minimum rate of 25%, which is the current average rate. Besides, the European economy is, more than ever, dependent on the financial sector which has to be solid and transparent. Checks on financial markets and financial institutions for the benefit of the real economy have to be reinforced.

Democracy

- **Transparency, legitimacy and responsibility for monitoring European economic governance.** Several anti-democratic and inappropriate measures have been imposed under the pretext of the crisis. The famous 'Troika' (the European Central Bank, the European Commission and the International Monetary Fund) has no mandate founded in European legislation. The adoption of the Fiscal Treaty excluded citizens and the European Parliament from any serious participation in this process. Such procedures must be fought. Social structural enforceable indicators must be integrated into this economic governance.
- **Strengthening and deepening of democracy and transparency within the different European institutions in general.** It is necessary to re-establish their credibility and legitimacy for the European citizen. The European Parliament's power to control and influence other European policies and legislation must be bolstered. The respective competences of the EP and the national parliaments have to be better articulated, in order to enhance democratic control over political decisions.
- The EU and its Member States must rigorously adhere to ***European and international instruments such as the ILO conventions.***
- **Information, consultation and participation rights** at work cannot be weakened but instead must be improved and democracy in the workplace has to be reinforced, in particular in the event of restructuring.

Conclusion: as already stated, the stakes of the next EP elections of May 2014 are clear: either putting an end to austerity and social dumping or allowing them to continue. To change course, we need to elect members of Parliament – while respecting the appropriate balance between men and women – who are ready to defend the interests of Europe's citizens, who will steer a change of course and build **another European project based on social progress** with a view to ending austerity, unemployment, poverty, inequality, wage and fiscal dumping in order to rediscover a Europe that makes people dream, a Europe closer to its citizens.

There is a social vision for the European Union. The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) (1), the voice of European workers, calls on workers to participate massively in these elections. Each vote will count.

(1) The ETUC has a membership of 85 national trade union organisations from all European countries making a total 60 million members (<http://www.etuc.org/>).