

EXTRAORDINARY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

ETUC\EC217\EN\4

Agenda item 4

Draft ETUC Platform on the Future of Europe (first draft for discussion)

The Extraordinary Executive Committee is invited to discuss the issues raised in this paper

Draft ETUC Platform on the Future of Europe

We, the European trade unions, want a European Union¹ based on cooperation, solidarity and social justice – a stronger European Union, capable of competing in the world with a sustainable economic and social model.

Together we are stronger – economically, socially and democratically. The EU cannot achieve higher standards of living for all without further integration.

We all deserve a new European Union for people.

The EU to react to its crisis

The refugee emergency, Brexit, terrorism, rising xenophobia and populism – the economic crisis, high unemployment, social exclusion and discontent: all this creates a crisis of trust in the EU among workers and citizens.

Europe is blamed for all the problems that are currently affecting people, although most of the responsibility lies with decisions taken by governments and national institutions.

Nevertheless, the EU decision-making process has been weakened (mainly because of the failure of the EU Constitution a decade ago, and to new intergovernmental mechanisms introduced after the economic crisis, which deprive citizens of democratic control over European decisions).

Distrust is also widespread among workers, and sometimes even involves trade unions: this gives the trade union movement a duty to explain to workers what is behind the crisis, and above all to provide concrete and credible solutions.

It is crystal clear that until the economy recovers, austerity has ended, and unemployment and social fragmentation are tackled, the fear, uncertainty and anger among workers will not be replaced with hope for a better future.

The European Union is at a crossroads: either it is reshaped and reformed into a different, fairer and more social Europe, or it is at risk of collapsing.

Nevertheless, polls show that Brexit has increased support for the EU (and opposition to referenda to leave) among citizens in a number of member states. There are challenges and opportunities in front of us, and we have to work together to build up a positive alternative.

The main achievements of the European integration process (such as peace and democracy – the single market and economic cooperation – high levels of education, innovation, technological development – protection of human rights and a well-functioning social model) have made Europe a very good place to live: this inheritance must not be undermined.

Change is urgently needed, and the European trade union movement wants to contribute to it, together with others who care about the future of Europe.

Summary for an analysis

Crisis of European values: rising populism, xenophobia, anti-EU and anti-politicians' sentiments and parties – no trust in the European project, with the EU constantly blamed by national politicians – democratic and solidarity values under attack – physical and cultural borders reintroduced – rising conflicts and divergence between Member States

¹ *Everywhere European Union is mentioned in this document, it is meant including also the European Economic Area (EEA) and more in general the whole Single Market.*

Crisis of the European economy: recession, deflation, unemployment – austerity, cuts, structural reforms – no sufficient signs of recovery – collapse in investment, demand, wages – rising macroeconomic and social imbalances within the EU, the EMU and between countries – rising economic divergence between West and East, North and South of Europe

Crisis of European social cohesion: long term unemployment – precariousness, fragmentation, no access to labour market – rising inequalities – social exclusion and discrimination (youth, women, migrants, disadvantaged categories) – dismantle of EU social model (social protection systems, social dialogue, collective bargaining and minimum wages systems, industrial relations, workers' participation)

Crisis of European democratic and institutional credibility: ineffectiveness of economic governance and limits of the intergovernmental approach (not only on the economy) – EU Council/Governments prevailing on EU Parliament/Commission – lack of democratic accountability (EU Parliament not properly involved in decision-making, ditto social partners and civil society) – renationalisation against integration and cooperation

Relaunching the EU: a trade union Platform for the Future of Europe

Reshaping Europe, relaunching the EU project, requires different policies, different rules and better involvement of citizens, working people and organisations representing them.

It requires more upward convergence in terms of living and working conditions between countries and within countries, less inequality and more economic and social cohesion. Better living standards for people have to be designed, and stronger policies put in place to achieve them.

The European trade union movement has already launched a series of proposals for a fairer and more social Europe (A New Path for Europe, the Social Progress Protocol, the ETUC Congress Programme, and the ETUC Action Plan), but now it is time to frame all this in a more ambitious and far-reaching platform for change.

A cultural re-foundation for Europe:

The EU can be valued again by workers and citizens if:

- It is capable of providing concrete solutions to their problems.
- It can contribute to quality jobs – equal economic/social opportunities – social protection – personal security and well-being.
- EU institutions are democratic, transparent and accountable – workers and citizens feel their voice is heard by decision makers.
- The EU governance (but also the national decision-making processes) can be understood and influenced by them.
- EU workers and citizens feel they are treated equally and fairly.
- Channels are restored for information, consultation, education, dialogue for/with EU workers and citizens EU institutions, politicians and stakeholders (including social partners) together design a new European project for democracy, solidarity and social justice – to give hope to Europeans.

To achieve all this, we propose a new Pact for the Future of Europe, based on prosperity, social justice and democracy.

It is grouped here in 3 thematic areas. All proposals are listed in the form of titles, to be further developed: some have already been tackled in other ETUC documents or decisions, others are new and to be discussed.

An alternative economic governance:

- Democratic accountability of EU economic governance – an EU/EMU economic policy, social governance at the same level of importance as economic governance and in strict coordination with each other, a Labour Ministers' Euro Group, forms of enhanced coordination for the Euro Area, reshaping the ECB mandate.
- Revise the Stability and Growth Pact – by allowing flexibility and solidarity, boosting investment and quality job creation.
- A plan for public investment – for sustainable and fair growth (more effective than the Juncker Plan, which has shown itself to be inadequate in quantitative and qualitative terms).
- A plan for internal demand – increasing the wage share, boosting wage convergence at national, European and transnational level, supporting effective collective bargaining and industrial relations, and a pay rise for Europe.
- An EU/EMU Treasury – a common instrument for public investment, sustainable growth and quality job creation.
- EU/EMU coordination for fair taxation – fighting tax evasion, ensure a fair/progressive taxation for people and businesses, in order to support the EU social model and to build up an independent EU/EMU budget.

A renewed European Social Model:

- Relaunching and reinforcing the EU Social Model, including an European Pillar of Social Rights that improves living and working conditions of people.
- The EU/EMU social dimension of equal standing and importance as the economic dimension (social progress clause).
- Strengthening EU/EMU social protection systems/social rights through legislation/coordination for upward convergence (while preserving existing better conditions) – setting EU standards in these fields, through benchmarking, recommendation, legislation.
- Affirming and enshrining the principle of 'equal treatment' in all EU policy, decisions, legislation.
- Relaunching EU social dialogue, industrial relations, workers' participation.
- Reinforcing collective bargaining at national/transnational level – setting EU standards for minimum wages/living wages (where they exist and/or trade unions want them).
- Setting EU/EMU mechanisms for minimum income and additional unemployment schemes.
- Promoting the quality of work – setting frameworks for the protection and inclusion of most disadvantaged people (youth, women, precarious and atypical workers, self-employed workers, long term unemployed, low paid and undocumented workers, etc.)
- Strengthening the right of free movement and the fight against social dumping, through full equal treatment, voluntary mobility, integration and inclusion of native workers, mobile workers and migrants.
- Setting EU frameworks for protecting trade union rights.

A democratic reform of European institutions:

- An EU Convention for revising the EU Treaties²
- Rebalancing power in favour of democratically elected institutions (EU/national Parliaments) – reinforcing the role of the EU Parliament through the power of legislative initiative, and of challenging decisions taken by the EU Council intergovernmentally
- The President of the EU Commission to be elected/indicated by citizens on the basis of a political programme, in order to increase their participation and interest in EU policy – the European Commission to become a more restricted and political governing body of the EU, reporting to the EU Parliament, instead of being merely designated by Member States.
- More integration based on devolution of new powers/competences to reformed/elected EU institutions.
- Specific Treaty provisions/legislative processes for the EMU.
- A Social Progress Protocol to be included in the Treaties (see ETUC proposal).
- More democracy in the economy, on the labour market and at the workplace – especially in new fields such as digitalisation, online platforms, sharing and other new forms of economic activity – and in processes like climate change and transition.
- Setting up a European Court of Labour.
- Reforming the international/defence/humanitarian/intelligence role of the EU; setting a proper common EU foreign policy; reopening the discussion on the revision of the Dublin regulations, to set up a stronger and more humanitarian asylum policy.

² *While we are aware of the huge political obstacles to starting a process for Treaty revision, we think this discussion has to be opened, taking into account that several institutional voices are raised in this direction, particularly in the EU Parliament, and that the negotiations on Brexit, the inclusion of the Fiscal Compact in the Treaty and the ETUC proposal on a Social Progress Protocol, imply Treaty changes in any case.*