

## The European Competitiveness Pact is unacceptable

But there are alternatives!

We will fight for them.

1. On the 10 and 11<sup>th</sup> of March, representatives of trade unions, both national and European, NGOs and social networks from 15 EU countries (from both East and West) got together for the first Spring Social Conference. The conference aims to bring together each year before the Spring European Summit, a broad range of unions, social movements and activists looking for alternatives to globalisation in order to reaffirm the priorities necessary for a more social, more environmentally friendly and more democratic Europe. Europe must also respect its commitments as regards fundamental rights.

(The spirit and the aims of this process are repeated below - see also [jointsocialconference.eu](http://jointsocialconference.eu)).

A closing declaration (The Europe we want), plus a programme of action will be published both in our organisations and for the general public.

2. All of our organisations categorically reject the direction taken by the «Competitiveness pact», which was negotiated in an undemocratic fashion; this form of economic governance amounts to a veritable declaration of war on the people of Europe, on its workers, on pensioners, on public services and their end users; everything that makes the European social model so valuable.

This crisis, which did not happen by chance, highlights that we have come to the end of the road of a development model based on growth regardless of the social and ecological impact. It is based on hyper-consumption and on the limitless exploitation of nature and workers. The workers did not cause the crisis, but until now they have been the victims. Enough is enough! The critical budgetary situation of the European Union countries must be dealt with in a different way:

- a. by a fair tax system which, unlike the current trends, would weigh more heavily on the wealthy and on financial profits than it would upon workers (i.e. a return to progressive tax levels, a European tax on financial transactions, the abolishing of tax havens, the introduction of a minimum European corporate tax).
- b. by an audit of the public debts of the European Union countries: we cannot accept that the future of one or more generations should be mortgaged because of a debt, which is to a large degree actually the debt of speculators and the financial system.

3. The «pact» by Mr Barroso and Mr. Van Rompuy would exert huge downward pressure on salaries:

- a. by preventing them from following the development of the cost of living
- b. by dismantling the process of collective bargaining through «opt-out» clauses
- c. by increasing flexibility and precariousness and unemployment even further

And this in spite of the fact that:

- salaries (especially in the public service and in Central and Eastern Europe) have already been significantly reduced in several countries. In many countries the number of working poor has increased considerably
- business make ever higher profits and yet pay ever lower taxes
- we know that the 2008 crisis is to a large extent the end result of an unfair approach to sharing wealth. It is unfair to salaries and favourable to the excessive accumulation of profit

We have an alternative: an environmentally-friendly economy that commits to full employment through a more equitable distribution of wealth and jobs. We want an economy where all workers can count on a decent salary, collectively negotiated and which rises at the same speed as prices and productivity. Only such salaries are a secure foundation for a decent life, but equally are at the core of all social protection systems and all public services

- 4 The «pact» would reduce the real value of pensions (by tax reductions, by increasing the pension age, by cutting the public pension provision). In retirement workers will be either condemned to poverty or (for the better paid) abandoned to the mercy of private funded pensions .

Pay-as-you-go legal pensions at a sufficient level are financially feasible, without raising the pension age.

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Confronted by this declaration of war against people and basic rights, governments, parliamentarians and social movements have to take a clear position.

All the movements and organisations present at the social conference welcome the week of action announced today by ETUC and the Pan European demonstration called in Budapest for the 9 April.

Furthermore, today we must build a network of solidarity and broad and long term European activist movements. We need to build broad support in society to confront this unprecedented attack on people's and workers' rights.

In the coming weeks, and throughout 2011, these groups will rally at all levels (local, national, European and global - G8 and G20) to oppose this attack. They will also support the struggle against privatisation, the defence of our common goods for example the struggle in Italy to reconquer the public ownership of water (in particular the march in Rome on the 26 March).

The European Parliament has an important role to play in this. In each country, our organisations will start monitoring the Members of European Parliament from their own countries: citizens, workers and social beneficiaries must know who their enemies are and who their friends are.

## The joint Social Conference process (unions and social movements)

Unions and workers' movements wanted to give themselves a way to define and make people aware of a social agenda for the UE: shared priorities; coordinated national and European activist movements. We believe that the changes in society and the breadth of difficulties justifies calling together so many different workers' movements and trade unions. We are engaged in many different ways in wide-ranging workers' movement on both a European and international level: the JSC was born at the European Social Forum, is supported by the European Trade Unions Confederation, and works as part of a network with many other issue based networks.

We want a fairer Europe, one that is more environmentally friendly and more internally democratic; based on cooperation and solidarity amongst individuals and nations, and active outside of Europe for a fairer world, based on cooperation between countries and regions, and not on competition. For this to happen, in light of the seriousness of the situation, we want to take the time to deepen the coherence of our analysis and to strengthen the coherence of how we act. We are in favour of a united Europe based on democracy, justice, equality, environmental sustainability and solidarity. We believe that it is possible to create better economic and social integration on a European level. It is necessary to do this in order to:

- to build a democratic political space able to oppose financial globalisation
- to consolidate an area of democracy and civil liberty against nationalism, authoritarianism and xenophobia.

If we want to rebuild a belief in the idea of a People's Europe - which is suffering from the consequences of a free-wheeling liberal agenda, we will not do it via propaganda. It is via a European Union that strengthens democracy, well-being, equality and a secure existence for all citizens.

We note that when confronted by well organised political powers, our political actions have too often suffered from working in silos between the European and National levels of power: there are scarcely any issues which can be solved solely at the national or the European level. A central part of our approach is therefore that for each issue we want to start off with a «bi-level» approach, both for analysis and mobilisation.

Consequently, in alliance with the ETUC and the ESF as well as in the closest possible cooperation with other unions & networks we want to contribute to the development of a strong **European social movement**:

- To initiate new alliances between the trade unions and the social movements, in full recognition of their diversity, and to enhance the cooperation and to join efforts in the searching for alternatives.
- We want to see the social movements and trade unions together, strongly rooted in the national societies and on the basis of joint European-wide coordinated goals.
- To provide the time and the means to transform joint analysis into the capacity of acting jointly in order to influence the economic policies. That is why part I("The Europe we want") is completed by part II ("Our agenda for 2011")

On the eve of the "Spring Summit" of the EU we will annually host a "**Social Spring Conference**", aiming at

- The sharing of analysis between the different parts of Europe and the various social movements and the converging of the interpretations of the situation,
- The developing and deepening of a common vision of social progress, and speaking out on it,
- The defining of the best strategies and the coordinating of actions in order to achieve the paramount goals we will define. Keeping in mind our vision for Europe, but also the political agenda, and the priorities of the EU's "Spring Summit"

**For this first « spring Sociale conference » were present :**

**Unions:** CGIL- It ; Cartel Alfa - Ro ; CGT - Fr ; CSDR - Ro ; FO - Fr ; FGTB - Be ; FSU - Fr ; CSC - Be ; CISL - It ; CIG Galicia - Sp ; CGTP-In - Po ; Fagforbundet - No ; ELA - pays Basque ; ESK - pays basque ; BNS - Ro ; MSZOSZ - Hu ; MOSZ - Hu ; Solidaires - Fr

**international unions :** ETUC; ITUC, EPSU

**Movements :** Attac (Fr Be All) ; Transnational Institute ; European Anti Poverty Network ; Réseau Justice Fiscale ; Transform (Ostereich ; Tchèque Rep ; Poland) ; CADTM ; Seattle to Brussels network ; Caritas Europe ; Association européenne des Droits de l'Homme ; LDH France; Forum Italiano dei Movimenti per l'Acqua ; Nordic Welfare Campaign ; MAIS - It ; Les économistes atterrés ; Conf of kurdish associations Europe ; CEO - Corporate Europe Observatory ; Romanian Social Forum; Global Social Justice ; euomarches ; Degrowth ; Global Alliance for Immediate Alteration - NL