

RECOMMONS
EUROPE **RCE**

Manifesto for a new popular internationalism in Europe

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Foreword

This Manifesto of the ReCommonsEurope network has been drawn up by a group of researchers and activists from a dozen or so countries in Europe who wish to propose a plan to be carried out by the popular Left forces that want to create the conditions for social change in the interests of the majority of the population after coming to power in a European country with the active support of the population. It forms part of the ReCommonsEurope Project which was initiated by two international networks, the CADTM and ERensep, and the Basque trade union ELA, with the aim of contributing to the strategic debates taking place on the European radical left today. It was written collectively in the course of meetings which took place in 2018. It follows on from the appeal entitled “[Ten Proposals to Beat the European Union](#)”, a collective document published by more than 70 signatories in February 2017.

We have written a coherent proposal for the commitments, initiatives and measures to be taken by the forces of the popular Left. This practical manifesto puts forward a programme that a popular left government would need to follow in its first year of office in order to provide immediate responses to the social and ecological emergencies, and defeat the inevitable resistance by conservative forces and the institutions which represent them. The propositions cover the main problems which a people’s government will have to face immediately on coming to power. The Manifesto is also intended for the social movements (trade unions, associations, citizens) fighting at local, national and international levels for fundamental human rights and equality for all, for social emancipation and democracy, and against the destruction of ecosystems. The programme also includes medium and long-term objectives for which responsibility could be shared by political organisations and social movements of the popular left.

A programme that a popular left government would need to follow in order to provide immediate responses to the social and ecological emergencies

Our objective is to submit these analyses and proposals for discussion by the social and political left, and by all those activists and citizens of Europe who are convinced that it is necessary to make a radical change of course if we want to rise to the great challenges of the period. Europe is going through a major and prolonged crisis. The European Union continues to advance in an anti-democratic manner in the service of the richest sectors of the population. Ordinary people have repeatedly demonstrated in the streets and at the polls their rejection of the policies followed by governments over the last few decades – policies which for the most part have been coordinated and supported by the European institutions –, as well as their desire for radical change. In the last few years, several opportunities have been missed, especially in 2015 in Greece.

The climate crisis, violent austerity policies, and the danger represented by a racist and xenophobic far right, only make it more urgent to define a strategy associating organisation from below, as well as social movements and political organisations, in order to make politics serve the interests of the majority.

Introduction

In the last ten years, popular anger has expressed itself without interruption against discriminatory and anti-democratic policies in favour of the rich and big companies - policies implemented by national governments and often coordinated by the European Union (EU). It has taken the form of initiatives by trade unions, but also by new movements such as ‘15M’ in Spain (also called in other countries the movement of the ‘Indignados’), the occupation of the squares in Greece and the huge demonstrations in Portugal in 2011, the movements against the “Loi Travail” (Labour law) in France and against the Water Tax in Ireland in 2016, the great demonstrations for autonomy and against political repression in Catalonia in 2017. Feminist struggles gave rise to the historic demonstrations in Poland (« Czarny Protest » against the anti-abortion law in 2017), Italy (« Non Una di Meno » movement since 2016), Spain (feminist general strike of 5 million people on the 8th March 2018), as well as a victory over the political influence of the Catholic Church in Ireland with the legalisation of abortion by referendum in May 2018, and are at last succeeding in imposing their centrality in all social struggles. The year 2018 also saw the emergence of new social movements against the dominant economic and political order, with the movement against the « slavery law » (neoliberal reform of labour laws) in Hungary, the demonstration and development of the « Indivisible » antiracist movement in Germany, the Yellow Vests movement in France and French-speaking Belgium against unjust fiscal policies and the lack of democracy in political institutions. Nor should we forget the climate demonstrations, driven mainly by young people who have gone on strike in many countries, including Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, Belgium, France and Great Britain. All these social movements, and others, have challenged the austerity measures and authoritarianism of the policies being implemented in Europe, by posing directly or indirectly the question of a radical alternative social project to capitalism, productivism, ecological devastation, racism and patriarchy. This Manifesto sees itself as an integral part these movements and shares their objectives : the struggle against all forms of domination, for universal rights, for equality and for a democracy to be invented – a democracy which would not stop at the gates of companies and the threshold of working-class areas, and which would necessarily be radically opposed to the logic of a capitalist system (whether the latter claims to be ‘protectionist’, and so against ‘foreigners’, or ‘liberal’) which is destroying social rights and the environment.

These social movements are inseparable from the social, ecological, democratic and feminist emergencies, as well as a ‘crisis of solidarity’. A social emergency because the living and working conditions of the popular classes have continuously deteriorated in the last thirty years, most notably since

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the crisis which affected the continent in 2008-2009. An ecological emergency because the exponential consumption of fossil fuels, and more generally the destruction of ecosystems, both of which are necessary for capitalism, bring planetary climate change (whose effects are now clearly visible) ever closer to a point of no return and threaten the very existence of humanity. A democratic emergency because, faced with the challenges to the dominant classes over the last thirty years, the latter have not hesitated to adopt methods of domination which ignore democratic appearances to an ever-greater degree, and are increasingly repressive. A feminist emergency because patriarchal oppression in all its forms is increasingly being massively and loudly rejected by millions of women and men. A crisis of solidarity because the closing of frontiers and building of walls as a response to the millions of migrants fleeing war, poverty, environmental disasters and authoritarian regimes world-wide constitute nothing less than a denial of humanity. Each of these emergencies leads, in reaction, to mass civil disobedience, self-organisation and the building of alternatives, which represent possible sources of democratic alternatives in Europe.

In this Manifesto, our reflections and our determination to act are solidly rooted in these Europe-wide movements, without limiting themselves to existing frontiers and institutions: all the challenges and rights mentioned have become global. These take different forms in each country and continent, with their particularities and their own histories. The social attacks are articulated from the “local” to the “global” depending on the strategies of both multinational companies and their interest groups within national states and the institutions of globalised capitalism, based on the norms of so-called “free trade”. It is this logic which defines the “general interest” that the European Commission claims to defend within the EU, as well as the profoundly unequal “partnerships” that the EU has developed with the countries of the south and east of the territory of Europe.

The European institutions organise (with others) and coordinate neoliberal policies at a transnational level, incite and sometimes constrain national governments to accelerate the processes of lowering wages and pensions, dismantling laws regulating labour relations and

social rights, privatisation of public services, etc. Of course, neoliberal policies are not dictated by the European institutions alone – countries outside the EU also apply them – but the treaties and institutions are a powerful lever to encourage and impose them. Whatever diverse interpretations one might have of past phases of “the construction of Europe”, it is manifest that the EU has always been an ensemble of pro-capitalist institutions and, ever since the Treaty of Rome, has been constructed as a vast market for capital and “free and fair competition”, protected from popular and democratic intervention. Recent developments, however, have intensified the unequal and authoritarian nature of European policies.

The most recent period has been marked, on the one hand, by a considerable increase in economic and social inequalities within each country and also between the centre and the internal and external peripheries (to the south and east) of the EU; and on the other hand, by the increasingly dangerous character of the ecological crisis, with the disruption to the climate and so-called ‘natural’ disasters brought about by the destruction of ecosystems now visible as a significant and continuous process.

This rise in inequality is directly linked to European policies on employment which aim to destroy employee protection and generalise precariousness; on finance, aiming to shield the banks and large companies from taxation and any remotely serious form of regulation; but also

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currency matters, i.e. touching on the very architecture of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), as well as the specific initiatives taken by the ECB and the informal Eurogroup involved in the pseudo-negotiations with Greece. On the one hand, the impossibility of devaluing the currency, which is a direct consequence of the single currency, helps to widen the disparities between different parts of the continent, to encourage the precariousness of working conditions, to increase unemployment (especially amongst young people) and to push the population of the peripheral zones of the continent – young qualified people looking for employment in particular – to emigrate towards the centre. While masking the responsibility of the dominant classes in each nation, the rules of the Eurozone push governments, especially in the countries of the periphery, to continually reduce salaries, while the central economies compete with each other at the expense of their own increasingly precarious populations (such as the 7 million German workers paid 400 euros per month)

through threatening to relocate jobs and exploiting this peripheral labour force in order to increase market share abroad.

On the other hand, these inequalities have been reinforced by the systematic use of quantitative easing (the flooding of markets with billions of liquidity) in order to save the European banks, at the expense of the living conditions of the population, especially in the periphery. The EMU, which lies at the heart of the construction of Europe, has functioned since the 2007-2008 crisis as an instrument of economic exploitation of workers, of social polarisation between different populations and of the political domination of certain states by others. The EU countries which are not part of the Eurozone are themselves forced to reduce wage costs, to practise fiscal dumping and to make employment contracts more precarious if they wish to continue to compete with the Eurozone heavyweights such as Germany, France and the Benelux countries. Great Britain, which is currently negotiating its exit from the EU, provides an example of precarious employment as a result, especially, of the hundreds of thousands of 'zero hours' contracts.

At the same time, despite the fact that there is now a clear consensus concerning the importance of the current ecological crisis, the EU institutions and the governments of the member states (like the governments of the other main states which are responsible for global warming and the destruction of

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ecosystems as result of their policies in favour of large polluting companies) have not drawn any practical conclusions about the necessary transition towards decarbonised economies and the correlative transformation of the productive system. These institutions prefer to safeguard the existence of capitalism rather than of humanity, so putting in danger the lives of the young and of future generations.

The response of most governments to the growing protest movements consists in increasing the level of state repression: social and political opponents are threatened in Greece, in France and Belgium laws restricting freedoms follow one after the other and examples of police violence multiply, refugee rights activists are criminalised, etc. Far-right xenophobic and authoritarian forces have made considerable progress and even participate in European governments (as in Italy), or shape the political agenda of governments of the 'extreme centre' (as in France). The European institutions have never protected capitalist interests so actively and have never erected so many barriers against popular intervention or

democratic choice as in the last few years. In Greece, they responded to the electoral victory of Syriza in January 2015 by a policy of monetary asphyxiation (drying up of state liquidity) then, after the success of the “No” vote in the referendum of July 2015, held negotiations behind closed doors with the same government in order to neutralise the will of the people and, with the complicity of the Greek government, impose on them a third austerity memorandum. With the signature of agreements on migration policy between the EU and third-party countries such as the agreement with Turkey of April 2016, these institutions added to the injustice of the Dublin III Regulation and the violence of Frontex (the agency organising the repression of migrants at the frontiers of the EU) the systematic violation of international law, especially the law of asylum, and direct funding of a repressive policy delegated to third-party countries. Today, the leading projects for EU « reform » are militarist (increasing the budget of Euroforce), anti-democratic (automaticity of European control of national budgets) and even more neoliberal (projects for generalised privatisation of public services). More than ever, as stated in 2015 by the then president of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, from the point of view of the European institutions, « there cannot be a democratic choice against the European treaties ».

Faced with the pro-capitalist, anti-democratic and xenophobic construction which is the EU, what is to be done? Reform through elections at the European level is not a realistic option. A (very) hypothetical majority for a radical left coalition in the European Parliament would not make it possible to impose a modification of the most important treaties and democratic control of the European Commission and the ECB, which are the two main war machines of neoliberalism in Europe. The Parliament, in reality, does not possess the necessary prerogatives for such reforms, and the ECB and the European Commission, as well as the European Court of Justice and the various European agencies, are completely independent of popular sovereignty. And the simultaneous election in the quasi totality of member states of governments committed to reforming the EU seems equally illusory, if only because of the different temporality of electoral cycles. The European Union today constitutes not only a vanguard of neoliberalism in the world but also an ensemble of unreformable institutions, which is why a left committed to social transformation can no longer be credible and realistic without placing a complete break with the treaties and institutions of the European Union at the heart of its strategy.

But what forms should this rupture take? We already know that it cannot consist in negotiating a consensus without being in a position of strength faced with the European institutions, as the experience of the first Syriza government in 2015 clearly showed. We also know that political ruptures necessarily rely on social mobilisations on a grand

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scale. Such mobilisations were cruelly lacking in Greece at the beginning of 2015, and they could have created the conditions for the campaign for Brexit to take a different direction from the nationalist and xenophobic one which unfortunately prevailed in Great Britain in 2016. In other words, breaking with the treaties and the institutions of the European Union must be conflictual, democratic and internationalist. This Manifesto argues that it is necessary and possible to simultaneously oppose the forces and policies of inequality and reaction (which advance under cover both of liberalism and protectionism) at national, European and international levels, relying on both the initiative of citizens and organised social movements and on the action of a people's government committed to defending rights for all.

What is still needed, however, is for what is called in Europe the “radical Left” to raise its game in order to face up to today's challenges. Taken as a whole, its constituent parts so far cruelly lack clarity and courage in their relationship to the European institutions, radicality and ambition in the measures they advocate, and a popular base as a result of their isolation from the social movements which are defying the existing order from below. It is time, at local, national and international levels, to discuss the measures and realistic and radical initiatives which, if implemented, would really make it possible to satisfy social needs and guarantee the fundamental rights of the men and women living in Europe or desiring to do so, improve their living and working conditions, conquer democratic power and begin the process of going beyond capitalism while starting the ecological transition.

The chapters of this Manifesto are designed as propositions to be debated – propositions which arise from reflections oriented towards immediate and more long-term action. They are aimed at citizens and

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activists of the social, trade union and political left in the different member states or within the orbit of the EU, and submit for discussion diagnostics and proposals which the social

movements and left-wing forces which are candidates to join a people's government could defend together.

Chapter 1 submits for discussion principles, strategies and tools required to realise these objectives and implement these proposals. It aims to answer this question: What should a people's government do in the first days and months of its activity? This chapter presents measures that such a government in a member country of the EU should put into practice

Chapter 1 distinguishes and enumerates immediate, medium-term and more long-term measures to be taken at national or international levels

immediately (starting in the first hours after coming to power) and unilaterally – i.e. disregarding the European treaties and entering into conflict with the European institutions –, including an immediate increase in salaries and taxation of capital, a moratorium on the interest of the public debt, control of capital movements (in order to prevent the flight of capital organised by the capitalists), socialisation of the banks and restoring public control over the currency, etc – all measures without which no form of progressive policy is possible. Like the following chapters, it distinguishes and enumerates immediate, medium-term and more long-term measures to be taken at national or international levels.

The following chapters contain propositions for:

- the public debt, of which it is necessary to abolish the illegitimate, odious and unsustainable part (**chapter 2**)
- the banks, which it will be necessary to socialise within a public banking service providing funds to serve fundamental needs and not the accumulation of profit (**chapter 3**)
- employment and social rights, which must be developed and reinvented to improve living conditions and secure democratic power over the means and purpose of work (**chapter 4**)
- the energy and ecological transition, which must be put into practice urgently to prevent the destruction of ecosystems and invent new forms of sustainable life (**chapter 5**)
- feminist struggles, which must be at the heart of a radical democratic project and transversal to all social and political struggles (**chapter 6**)
- education and health, which must be defended as fundamental rights, developed and extended to all as public services, as opposed to their commodification and degradation (**chapter 7**)

- international policy and migration, aiming to ensure fundamental rights for all, peace and solidarity between peoples (**chapter 8**)

Like the first chapter, **Chapter 9** proposes principles, strategies and tools making it possible to achieve the stated objectives. It proposes to answer this question: What to do in the face of the hostility

Chapter 9 presents a strategy of disobedience, confrontation, rupture

and constraints imposed by the European institutions? It presents a strategy of disobedience (at all territorial levels), confrontation (including defensive and offensive measures), rupture (in different possible forms). This strategy does not propose ready-made answers, but indicates a general direction whose starting point must be the objectives to be defended and a recognition of the logic with which we are confronted. This chapter points to the need to rebuild alliances and constituent processes with a view to instituting democratic forms of international cooperation as an alternative to those of the EU.

Our side must refuse both the unrealistic projects of institutional reform of the European institutions, which in the final analysis only reinforce the status quo, and projects based on a retreat into the nation-state, which end up by merely reinforcing domestic capital. A popular left-wing force which

Popular sovereignty can only be built by creating new democratic institutions through organisation from below

aims at forming a people's government and starting the process of urgent social change must commit itself to disobeying the European institutions, breaking with its normal processes, defending itself against attacks and reprisals coming from the European institutions and big capital, as well as the attempts to block the process by national institutions wedded to the existing order, and working towards new international alliances with partners inside and outside the existing EU with a view to creating new forms of cooperation and solidarity. Popular sovereignty can only be built by confronting the present forms of political institutions at national, European and international levels, and by creating new democratic institutions through organisation from below. For that to happen, we must win the argument for the necessity of a clear political break with the national, European and international institutions, which are vehicles for the policies we are fighting, as well as to consolidate the links between networks and forms of resistance and between the political, social and trade union movements which share the objectives of progressive and radical change, in particular in order to have an influence on a European level. The immediate and urgent task is to reinforce and coordinate the existing initiatives of disobedience, rupture and self-organisation, and to initiate new ones,

systematically giving them an international dimension, making sure they are clearly opposed to the EU institutions and work in favour of new forms of solidarity between peoples.

By making these propositions for disobeying and breaking with the European institutions, there can be no question of looking towards a nationalist solution to the crisis and to social revolt. As much as in past periods, we need to adopt an internationalist strategy and advocate a European federation of peoples as opposed to pursuing the present course of integration which is completely dominated by the interests of big capital. It is also a question of constantly seeking to develop coordinated campaigns and actions at the continental level and beyond in the fields of debt, ecology, the right to housing, treatment of migrants and refugees, health, education and other public services, the right to work, the fight to close nuclear power stations, the drastic reduction of the use of fossil fuels, the fight against fiscal dumping and tax havens, the fight to socialise the banks, insurance companies and the energy sector, the reappropriation of the commons, action against the ever-increasing authoritarianism of governments and for democracy in every area of social life, the struggle to defend and extend the rights of women and LGBTI people, the promotion of public goods and services, the creation of constituent processes.

It will no doubt be objected that this revolutionary way is too radical or too difficult. We reply that others are an impasse, and that ours is the only one which makes it possible to start the process of breaking with the existing order, now and everywhere it may be possible, in order to rebuild

Rebuild local, regional, national and international spaces, and beyond that, a world which is liveable, fair and democratic

local, regional, national and international spaces, and beyond that, a world which is liveable, fair and democratic.

Chapter 1 - First steps of a popular government

I. DIAGNOSIS

In the main lines, the content and outcomes of EU neoliberal policies has been similar in all the member States. Big business and big banks, hiring an army of lobbyists, set the political agenda both at the national and the supranational levels. The correlative decline of democracy and loss of popular sovereignty in Europe reflect a historic shift in favour of capital and against labour. For labour this shift has amounted

Big business and big banks, hiring an army of lobbyists, set the political agenda both at the national and the supranational levels

to a tremendous escalation of insecurity with regard to employment, income, medical care, pensions, and so forth. For capital it has meant the rapacious appropriation of national wealth propelling inequality to levels unprecedented in the post-war years. The policies of the EU to confront the Eurozone crisis have further favoured capital while worsening the conditions of labour. They have reinforced massive unemployment, specially for the young and in the periphery, compression of the wages, a lack of investment and the decline of the public services. They have also dramatically increased the economic ascendance and the political domination of the core of Europe over the peripheries of Southern Europe and of Central Europe.¹

Faced with this unforgiving reality, the first requirement for the popular Left is to tackle the belief that the EU could be radically reformed from within, in other words, respecting treaties, following the channels and decision-making procedures of the European institutions.

The machinery of the EU and the authority of the ECJ ensure that the Treaties will continue to be interpreted in favour of advancing neoliberalism. Just as there is no normal politics within the EU, there is also no normal political contestation in determining the outlook of EU institutions. The EU is a transnational juggernaut geared to neoliberal and hierarchical motion. Rather, it is a hierarchical alliance of nation states that have created the institutional framework of a single market relentlessly promoting neoliberalism.

Therefore, the main dilemma consists of what to do whether a progressive and popular force reaches the government and sees that is not possible to apply a progressive policy without a negative and strong reaction of the economic apparatus of the EU. In our view, the popular sovereignty and an internationalist approach are not only compatible but also mutually necessary. Thus, it is necessary to defend a political

In our view, the popular sovereignty and an internationalist approach are not only compatible but also mutually necessary

roadmap which combines the national and popular political tasks with an internationalist point of view. This political roadmap consists in carrying out measures needed for breaking unilaterally the austerity measures, and thus to disobey the Treaties and neoliberal pacts,

¹ See Costas Lapavitsas, "A Socialist Strategy in Europe", *Catalyst*, n°3, 2017.

while building a cooperative framework with other countries (within or not the EU) compatible with the construction of a new solidarity and alternative economic area in Europe.

In this prospect, a radical democratic, social and labour agenda should be put in spotlight. The protection and extension of labour rights, the job creation and the extension of social rights and public services demands a political economy incompatible with the EU Treaties. The popular Left needs to propose fresh policies capable of tilting the balance of power toward labour, strengthening democracy, recouping sovereignty, and providing a feasible socialist perspective for the continent. For that to become a political reality, however, the popular Left must recapture its historic radicalism, reject the mechanisms of the EMU and the EU, and accept the consequences of this disobedient policy. On that basis it could in practice defend the rights of citizens and migrants, especially of the popular classes.

The extension of social rights and public services demands a political economy incompatible with the EU Treaties

II. PROPOSALS

What, then, is the European popular Left to do?² The lesson of Syriza is paramount in this regard. If the Left intends to implement radical anti-capitalist policies and effectively to confront the neoliberal juggernaut of the EU, it must be prepared for a rupture. There has to be a break, an upheaval, an overturning of prevailing conditions, for things to change in Europe. There must be a rupture with the domestic power structures that have a vested interest in the current arrangements. There must also be a rupture with the transnational institutions of the EU that sustain the current arrangements.

There must be a rupture with the domestic power structures that have a vested interest in the current arrangements

With regards to the economic and social policies of a popular government, the priority is to implement domestic programmes that directly challenge the power of capital. Each country would have to tailor its own programme according to its needs, but key elements would apply for all. In the short term these elements would consist in lifting austerity, re-extending labour and social rights, engaging in income and wealth redistribution and in public investment in order to satisfy immediate and fundamental needs and aspirations of the working class and the poor.

What should the popular Left do in the case of reaching a national government?

² See also : Eric Toussaint and alii, “The Challenges of the Left in the Eurozone”, CADTM, 18th february 2017, URL : <http://www.cadtm.org/The-Challenges-of-the-Left-in-the>.

Immediate steps:

The priority is to lift austerity. Fiscal and monetary policy ought to be deployed to boost domestic demand with the aim of reducing unemployment and raising incomes. In a huge economy, such as the EU, the sources of demand ought to be sought domestically in the first instance. This holds for countries of the core and for those in the peripheries, but also for the hegemonic power. Germany ought to wean itself from its destructive neo-mercantilism by focusing on its domestic economy.

**Boost domestic demand with
the aim of reducing
unemployment and raising
incomes**

Boosting domestic demand would necessarily include redistributing income and wealth away from capital and toward labour. Inequality has to be tackled as a matter of urgency across Europe, in both core and periphery. It makes economic sense in several EU countries to raise wages as a means of supporting aggregate demand. It also makes economic sense to raise the tax burden on the corporations and the rich, including on wealth. Restoring labour rights and protecting employment as well as re-strengthening the welfare state through provision for health, housing, and education would be integral parts of reducing inequality. There is nothing infeasible about such policies in contemporary Europe. It is entirely a matter of political and social choices that reflect the balance of power between labour and capital.

The required policies can be divided in a social and an economic part. Concerning the social rights, a popular government should immediately:

- Enhance the minimum wage and pension rights.
- Extend the universal and free public services in the field of health, education, care of children and older people, collective transportation, and a housing policy with a social rent.
- Create high quality public jobs for these purposes, as well as to launch an ecological transition process, including an insulation, renovation and requisition plan concerning housing.
- Implement a substantial time of work reduction by law.
- Draft a new progressive labour reform in order to limit the power of the entrepreneurs in the firm, and to move towards a democracy within all productive spaces.

It should also consequently implement a series of economic measures to protect this social agenda and its development:

- Halting the implementation of the Stability and Growth Pact.

- Establishing a temporary control of capitals movement to prevent capital flight and to pursue fiscal evasion.
- Establishing a control of prices on basic necessity goods.
- Suspend the payment of the debt, on the basis of a Moratorium and a Citizen Audit of the Public Debt, while opting for a selective default, protecting social security funds, pension funds and small savers.
- Regulate and limit the private banking system, and create a new public banking system under democratic and social control.
- Establish a Progressive Tax Reform (with more weight on profits and wealth) with the priority on the taxation of capital, big business and very high wages, in order to support a new public investment policy.
- Create employment under an energetic transitional model, and protect the working classes in case of a temporary decreasing of the national income, to make the ruling classes pay for the crisis.

But these policies imply to disobey the European treaties and institutions, and the latter will necessarily try to prevent their implementation. In fact, the election of a popular government will immediately open a period of intense counter-propaganda and initiatives of the pro-capitalist economic and political forces to neutralise its progressive policies. This counter-attack of the European dominant classes can be achieved through the flight of capital and the increase of the loans' spread for example, but also through political blackmail by the national bourgeoisie and the European institutions in order to force the popular government to abandon its pro-popular policies and to abandon its democratic mandate.

The election of a popular government will immediately open a period of intense counter-propaganda and initiatives of the pro-capitalist economic and political forces to neutralise its progressive policies

During this period, the new elected popular government should thus mobilise both the population and social movements to support these radical policies and the workers of the strategic sectors (notably the banks) to prevent the “saboteurs” of the economy and of democracy to be successful. It should also reassure the population concerning their savings, the value of their money and their living and working conditions, and address the other peoples of Europe in order to obtain their active support.

Mobilise both the population and social movements to prevent the “saboteurs” of the economy and of democracy to be successful

The necessity of such a defence against the pro-capitalist counter-attack and such a strengthening of the popular support and mobilisation requires that the newly elected popular government should be prepared to promulgate decrees by the first day of its assumption of office concerning:

- the securing of deposits (until a certain amount)
- the control of banks, insurance companies, etc.

- the Central Bank, which should be put immediately under the authority of the government, and should be authorised to issue money.
- a moratorium on the servicing of public debt
- capital control
- at least one important measure to improve immediately and obviously the living conditions of the many, for example the increase of minimal wages

On this basis and at the same time, it should immediately initiate public discussions with other governments and address the other peoples of the EU in order to launch international campaigns to support these policies.

Middle-term steps at the national level:

As previously mentioned, hostility should first be expected from the domestic mechanisms of power whose interests would be directly threatened. Hostility should also be expected from the mechanisms of the EU, since an industrial policy based on public ownership and a range of economic controls would run directly against the logic of the single market. The neoliberal machine in Brussels would not tolerate a challenge to the institutional organisation of the EU and to the power of the *acquis communautaire*. Retaliations, be in form of sanctions, be in form of withdrawal of financing, or even the expulsion of the EU would inevitably arise.

Faced with EU hostility, therefore, the popular Left should reject the single market and its institutional and legal framework. It should argue in favour of controls on the movement of goods, services, and capital, in the absence of which it would be impossible to apply a radical programme in the direction of socialism. It should also reject the authority of the *acquis* and the ECJ, thus beginning to disentangle national from community legislation. Finally, it should rely on social struggles to impose achievements in the field of production relations, wealth distribution, cooperation among the peoples, and the caring of the environment as well as on constituent processes to create new democratic institutions at the national and international levels. Ultimately there is no other way to recoup popular sovereignty. This recoup has to be compatible with internationalism, as it is open to solidarity and share policies among different peoples under a democratic cooperation. If this implies being presented with an ultimatum to exit the EU, so be it.

The crucial issue related with how to respond to the very probable hostile reaction of the EU institutions

Faced with EU hostility, therefore, the popular Left should reject the single market and its institutional and legal framework

The crucial issue is the question of monetary sovereignty: A popular government should consider two possible options

is the question of monetary sovereignty. A popular government should consider two possible options.

Scenario 1. Exit from the EMU and creation of a new national currency.

A crucial step in the path of a popular government would be rejection of the EMU, under a neoliberal economic structure, as it is now. The monetary union is the backbone of the single market, and the most effective disciplining device for the imposition of neoliberal policy and ideology. The nations of Europe do not need a common currency to engage in free and fruitful interaction with each other, and they certainly do not need the euro. Conversely, the longer the EMU perseveres and the more rigid it becomes, the more difficult it would be to implement anti-capitalist policies in Europe.

For the peripheral nations, and especially for the Southern periphery, exiting the EMU, as it is set, is imperative. Getting out of the iron trap is the way to adopt policies that could expand the economy, absorb unemployment through the creation of well-paid jobs, reduce poverty, and place countries on the path of sustained and ecologically sustainable growth. Exit is certainly not an easy process but by now there is considerable knowledge on how it could be achieved with as little disruption as possible.³ If it were consensual, the costs would be further reduced.

For the core countries the issue of the EMU is considerably more complex, since it involves altogether dismantling the monetary union and putting alternative arrangements in its place. The EMU should certainly not be replaced by unfettered competition in the foreign exchange markets. Europe requires a system of stabilising exchange rates coupled with a means of making payments among countries. The technical knowledge to achieve these aims exists, and even some of the mechanisms of the old European Monetary System are still extant.

Dismantling the monetary union and putting alternative arrangements in its place

The EU is a huge economic entity in which most trade takes place among member states. In such an economy it is certainly feasible to stabilise exchange rates and produce far better economic results than the euro has done over the two decades of its existence. For that it would be necessary to have a proper anchor country as well as applying controls on the movement of capital across Europe. Flexibility could then return to rebalancing the external relations of EU economies. With capital controls in place it would even be plausible to devise a new joint means of payment based on principles of solidarity that would be used among European states only to facilitate international transactions and not as domestic currency.

³ See Heiner Flassbeck and Costas Lapavistas, *Against the Troika: Crisis and Austerity in the Eurozone*, Verso, London and New York, 2015; and Costas Lapavistas, Theodoros Mariolis, Constantin Gavrielidis, "Eurozone failure, German policies, and a new path for Greece: Policy analysis and proposals", 2017, Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, janvier 2017 : https://www.rosalux.de/fileadmin/rls_uploads/pdfs/Online-Publikation/3-17_Online-Publ_EurozoneFailure_Web.pdf.

Dismantling the EMU would create room for broader radical change in the EU. After all, it would mean drastically altering the character of the ECB, the Eurogroup and the European Stability Mechanism. It would remove the external constraints on the operations of other EU institutions, including the policing of the fiscal activities of member states. It would loosen the grip of the *acquis* by removing a host of directives and regulations. It would also remove the harshest disciplining device on labour across much of Europe. If provoked by popular forces, dismantling the EMU could be an important step against the neoliberal regime of the EU.

Drastically altering the character of the ECB, the Eurogroup and the European Stability Mechanism

Scenario 2. An alternative currency while remaining in the EMU.

The political advantage of an alternative currency, even if it is simply complementary, is that it allows, without needing to get rid of the international currency, to respond to several challenges. While it facilitates the emergence of certain secondary activities, which otherwise would not occur with much extension or would be done informally, there would also be greater room for manoeuvre for public authorities to deal with payments.

It could be an *ex-ante* measure, in relation to possible political conflicts caused by reprisals of the EU for discrepancies due to the economic policy adopted. For example, reprisals for the deployment of policies that do not fit in the European Treaties or the Stability and Growth Pact, and which could threaten or execute withdrawals of liquidity or expulsion or exit mechanisms. In such case, it would allow to equip itself with a means that guarantees the internal transactions, avoiding or alleviating any process of disordered transition. It would offer a mean of monetary sovereignty that might replace the Euro.

A complementary currency would initially be used for the payment of public employees and services related to the public sector. It would accept the payment of taxes in that currency. To avoid a rejection of the currency, it should have, in a first period at least, parity with the dominant currency. The complementary currency only could play a role of transition and cushioning, of widening the margin of manoeuvre, in an adverse context of rupture with a previous monetary zone.

The characteristics of an alternative currency, in the first instance, but that may be revisable depending on the macroeconomic and political context, could be the following:

- In a first phase, the currency would be complementary.
- It would invite local currencies to establish a relationship with that currency, in order to unify the complementary monetary system, and amplify its acceptability and repercussion.
- That alternative currency would have parity, in principle, with the main currency.
- It would be supported by future taxation.
- It would have several circulation channels and payment systems: electronic cards for minor transactions, supplemented by coins and paper, and virtual digital

currency that identifies transactions and agents for medium and high volumes (from 300 euros).

- Its course would be required, initially, in transactions with the public and voluntary sector in the intra-private sector.
- It would be an alternative currency with an expiration date from its issuance, for example, after five years, but a shorter period can be studied, in any case of a renewable nature.
- The alternative currency can be designed to end the monopoly of private banking intermediation, opening the opportunity for future public banking to take precedence over private banking, coexisting with the regional cooperative bank or ethical bank.
- To avoid an overweight of power of the entities dedicated to the monetary operation, it would be possible to create a central bank in charge of regulated issuance and monetary policy, under social and democratic control.

The alternative currency can be designed to end the monopoly of private banking intermediation

Middle-term steps at the international level:

Exiting or short-circuiting the EMU, and eventually leaving the EU, if done in order to implement policies supporting labour (irrespective of its nationality) against capital, is not a nationalist step, nor would it represent a return to competing and warring states in Europe. On the contrary, it could signal the emergence of a radical internationalism that would draw on domestic strength rejecting the dysfunctional and hegemonic structures of the EU. It could enable concrete economic policies creating a true basis for solidarity in Europe, and giving fresh content to popular sovereignty and democratic rights, within or beyond existing borders. It could also lead to new forms of inter-state alliances in Europe, or even an alternative model of supranational, democratic and solidarity-driven area based in peoples' cooperation and internationalism, disconnected of capitalist development, that would reflect the altered balance of class forces.

Exiting or short-circuiting the EMU could enable concrete economic policies creating a true basis for solidarity in Europe

A popular government requires a long term ecological, socialist and internationalist agenda at the international level. In this prospect, it should search new alliances within and outside Europe. It could be done by proposing a new solidary framework focused in the cooperation and integration of financial resources, fair trade agreements, exchange of raw materials (energy), and investment cooperation. The aim is to foster popular cooperation and solidarity while breaking with the constraints of the EU Treaties and institutions.

The actual form and content of renewed European interaction would depend on the internal social and political regime of member states. Workers' internationalism always starts at home. If capitalism was challenged domestically, several forms of socialist federal

integration would become possible in Europe. That is a feasible and worthwhile aim for the European popular Left. The sooner it began to engage in open debate and to act along these lines, the better for the people of the continent.

Chapter 2 - Banks

I. INTRODUCTION

The financial crisis that broke out in 2007-2008 continues to produce damaging social effects through the austerity policies imposed on victim populations. Bankers, financiers, politicians and regulatory bodies have failed fundamentally in the promises they made in the wake of the crisis – to moralise the banking system, separate commercial banks from investment banks, end exorbitant salaries and bonuses, and finally finance the real economy.

Economic heterodoxy and the programmes of deliquescent social democratic parties lack a structured project for the constitution of an alternative banking system. To remedy this, this proposal attempts to move towards a shared, coherent and operational proposal for an organisational plan for the banking sector and the concrete conditions for its implementation by a popular government that would come to power in Europe.

An operational proposal for an organisational plan for the banking sector and the concrete conditions for its implementation by a popular government that would come to power in Europe

II. DIAGNOSIS

In the wake of the crisis, hundreds of billions of euros have been used by the European governments to bail out dozens of private banks.⁴ Public authorities have decided to pay ransom to these banks by having the citizens bear the consequences of the low dealings of their directors and shareholders. A separation or “ring-fencing” between commercial banks and investment banks remains no more than wishful thinking.

Hundreds of billions of euros have been used by the European governments to bail out dozens of private banks

No measures designed to avoid further crises have been imposed on the private finance system. The concentration of banks has increased, as have their high-risk activities. There have been more scandals implicating the fifteen to twenty biggest private banks in Europe and the United States – involving toxic loans, fraudulent mortgage credits, manipulation of currency exchange markets, of interest rates (notably, the LIBOR) and of energy markets, massive tax evasion, money-laundering for organised crime, and so on.

The authorities have merely imposed fines, usually negligible when compared to the crimes committed, which have a negative impact not only on public finance but on the living

⁴ For a non-exhaustive list of banks that were bailed out, see: <http://www.cadtm.org/What-is-to-be-Done-with-the-Banks,13315>. For an assessment of the costs of the bailouts in the European Union, see: <https://www.tni.org/en/publication/the-bail-out-business>. Several case studies of the numerous bailouts can also be found online.

conditions of millions of people all over the world. Although obviously to blame, no bank director in the United States or Europe (with the exception of Iceland and the Spanish state where Rodrigo de Rato, ex-director of Bankia and ex general director of the IMF, is jailed since 2018) has been convicted, while traders, who are mere underlings, are prosecuted and sentenced to between five and fourteen years behind bars.

As is the case for the Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS), banks that were nationalised at great public expense to protect the interests of major private shareholders are planned to be — or have already been — sold back to the private sector for a fraction of their value. Salvaging the RBS cost £45bn of public money, while its reprivatisation will probably mean the loss of a further £14bn.

Lastly, as to whether banks are now financing the real economy, the efforts deployed by the central banks have failed to spark, as yet, even the beginnings of a real recovery of the economy.

III. PROPOSALS

The significance of popular mobilisation:

Because money, savings, credit and the payment system are useful to the general interest, they should imperatively respond to a public service logic (and therefore be used and managed as part of a public service). The financial system must not be a source of profit, detached from the financing of the real economy. Socialisation of the banking sector (i.e. the management of the banking sector by the workers together with customers, associations and elected representatives) is a necessary condition for a change of social model; popular support is a necessary condition for the socialisation of the banking sector.

Socialisation of the banking sector is a necessary condition for a change of social model

The socialisation of the banking sector cannot be seen as a catchword or a demand that would be sufficient in itself and that decision-makers would apply once they had grasped its common sense. It must be conceived of as a political objective to be achieved as part of a process that is driven by citizens. Not only must existing organised social movements (including trade unions) make this a priority on their agendas and the various sectors (local authorities, small and medium-sized enterprises, consumer associations, etc.) similarly support this view, but also - and above all - employees must become aware of the role of their profession and of the interest *they* would have in banks being socialised and users must be informed wherever they are (e.g. occupation of bank branches everywhere on the same day) in order to participate directly in defining what the bank should be.

Only very large-scale mobilisations can ensure that the socialisation of the banking sector is actually achieved for such a measure touches the very heart of the capitalist system. Field initiatives involving the population, such as citizen audits (similar to initiatives launched, among other countries, in France, Greece and Spain since 2011), can be put in place

and supported by a political force aiming at taking the government over. Generally speaking, monetary and financial issues must no longer be perceived as somehow hallowed and out of reach, so as to create the conditions for the broadest possible involvement on these struggles.

For a left-wing movement, it is fundamental to show the population the positive change resulting from the decision to no longer entrust the ownership and management of the banking system to big capital and the enormous advantages entailed by the existence of banking as a public service.

Measures to be immediately implemented:

To have room for manoeuvring once in power and to limit the risks of financial asphyxia, a popular government must establish control on capital flow. Controlling capital is not necessarily contrary to the European treaties. Article 65 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union introduces a number of restrictions on the freedom of capital movements, justified in particular by the fight against infringements of national laws on taxation or prudential matters or on grounds relating to public policy or public security. These reasons were called upon for Cyprus in 2013 and for Greece in 2015. Yet even if control of capital flow was contrary to the treaties, a popular government should assume disobedience. Moreover, the question arises of the place of a measure aimed at regulating capital in the hierarchy of norms, and therefore of the possibility for a government to implement it at once. In several European countries, national regulations provide for measures to control capital movements, such as the regulation of the duration of investments, at the regulatory level and not at the legislative level. They could therefore be applied immediately upon the coming to power of a popular government.

Controlling capital is not necessarily contrary to the European treaties

A popular government should immediately and significantly regulate the financial sector in order to ensure financial stability. The size of banks must be reduced so that no "systemic" bank can jeopardise the entire system. Investment banks must be separated from retail banks in order to protect the latter;

investment banks will not benefit from any state guarantee (such measures were implemented by US President F. D. Roosevelt in 1933 following the October 1929 Wall Street crash).

Investment banks must be separated from retail banks in order to protect the latter

In addition, the new banking regulation will impose:

- to significantly increase the banks' ratio of equity in their balance sheets, which ought to be above 20%;
- to implement all necessary measures to force banks to clean up their off-balance sheet commitments including all speculative transactions and all other unsafe transactions that are not in the interest of the community;

- to prohibit credit relations between deposit banks and investment banks;
- to prohibit securitisation – each of the banking activities will thus bear the risk it generates through appropriate regulatory requirements;
- to prohibit High Frequency Trading;
- to prohibit over-the-counter financial markets;
- to prohibit any connection between banking institutions and shadow banking as well as tax havens;
- to prohibit the socialisation of losses;
- to put an end to banking secrecy;
- to systematically prosecute managers responsible for financial offences and crimes and withdraw banking licenses from institutions that do not respect prohibitions and are guilty of embezzlement;
- to establish a real financial responsibility of the major shareholders, in particular in case of bankruptcies. The aim is to restore the unlimited liability of major shareholders so that the cost of their hazardous activities can be recovered from their own assets;
- to increase taxation on banks.

To ensure an efficient monitoring of the financial sector, an Office for Financial Security may also be set up. It would bring together monitoring bodies for banks, financial markets and insurance companies. Its mission would be to:

- measure the evolution of savings and credit and see to the smooth functioning of the payments system;
- check and monitor whether the banking institutions' policies are in keeping with the roadmap defined for them, in particular the financing of the ecological transition, the financing of the operating and investment needs of major public services, the financing of the de-privatisation of major public services previously transferred to the private sector (for example, health, water, energy, etc.);
- ensure that bubbles are prevented in certain sectors such as real estate.

The Office for Financial Security would implement control on capital and a financial transaction tax. An objective of the Office for Financial Security would be to subject financial innovations to a precautionary principle: the banks that develop them will have to prove their usefulness and assume full responsibility for them. Products and activities that are too complex would be prohibited. Finally, it would be possible for the supervisor to impose significant fines on banks in the event of non-compliance with the regulations and with their obligations (fines will be proportionate to the harm suffered by the community and to the amount of illegal profits). Similarly, managers would be likely to incur personal liability in the event of serious breach. The banking license will be withdrawn from any bank that contravenes the new legislation and its managers will be prosecuted and punished with imprisonment.

A popular government should also monitor its central bank, with a view to resuming control on its monetary policy and financing conditions. Recovering control of the central bank is essential to get the state out of the clutches of the financial markets to finance public services.

Recovering control of the central bank is essential to get the state out of the clutches of the financial markets to finance public services

Towards a socialisation of the private banking system:

While the development of financial capitalism and deregulated finance brought down the real economy in 2008 and threatens to do so again, the socialisation of all or part of the banking sector is urgently needed. Indeed, two programmatic paths are emerging here: **either socialise part of the banking sector with the creation of a public pole conceived of as a stepping stone towards the socialisation of the entire sector (scenario 1), or proceed from the outset to the socialisation of the entire banking system, including the financing and investment banks as well as the insurance sector (scenario 2).**

While the use of nationalisation can lead to confusion with the takeover of banks by the ruling elites within the framework of capitalism, socialisation refers more explicitly to collectivisation in which workers make decisions and exercise control, together with customers, associations and elected representatives – this decision-making instance being further monitored by representatives of national and regional public banking instances. We must favour a local, high-quality service that breaks with the outsourcing policies currently being pursued. Financial institution staff should be encouraged to provide genuine customer advisory services, while aggressive forced sales policies should be eradicated.

Socialisation refers explicitly to collectivisation in which workers make decisions and exercise control, together with customers

However, the transition towards a socialised banking system raises several questions that a popular government will have to address.

- The number of banks to be socialised:

If a government programme does not provide for the socialisation of the entire banking system, the question arises of the number of banks to be socialised and the criterion of choice. Beyond its theoretical aspect, it refers to the balance of power that a popular government can rely on, which depends on the mobilisation of the population. In almost all banking nationalisation experiments so far, investment banks have been excluded from the scope of nationalisation laws and kept in the private sector under pressure from the financial community. The establishment of a public banking service will be part of a balance of power for which it will be necessary to be well prepared.

- Compensation for shareholders:

When banks are socialised, the question of compensation for private shareholders also arises. Large shareholders and small shareholders should be treated differently. The major shareholders are actively or passively responsible for increasing speculative and banking activities bearing high risks for savers, the Treasury and society as a whole. Small shareholders do not take part in banks' decisions; it is normal for them to be compensated. Moreover, it goes without saying that the deposits will be protected. Unlike what was done in most of the bank nationalisations to date, where major shareholders have been compensated at taxpayers' expense, a popular government could decide to pay only a symbolic euro to major shareholders and recover the cost of reorganising the bank⁵ from these shareholders' global assets.

Large shareholders and small shareholders should be treated differently

Scenario 1: A public banking pole

If the choice of immediate socialisation of the entire banking sector is not shared by all the forces gathered in the setting up of a popular government, the public banking pole could represent a compromise solution and give this government the means of its policy. The socialisation of generalist banks must support the wider creation of a public banking pole (or public financial pole), whose missions would be to direct credit towards useful projects – supporting an economic, ecological and social recovery plan, strengthening the productive apparatus, directing savings towards meeting social and economic needs and ensuring financial inclusion and access to financial services for all.

With a view to the creation of this pole, a popular government will be able to rely on institutions already present in each country – public or semi-public financial institutions such as public investment banks have often been thoroughly misled into adopting a traditional banking behaviour whereas they should be among the key actors of the investment in the ecological transition. It would certainly be wise to include the major mutual banks in this public sector. This would have two advantages: it would take mutual networks out of the purely financial logic of other major banking groups, and give more strength to the public sector to weigh in the face of private banks, whose socialisation would have been deferred over time in the hypothesis of a process in successive stages.

As a rule, in terms of governance, each institution would retain its operating autonomy and its own management bodies in this public pole. However, these institutions would operate within a common framework defined by a national steering body that would ensure overall consistency. The national steering body would consist of national and local elected representatives, heads of institutions and representatives of workers' and citizens' associations (including trade unions). The public pole would vary according to the location, though organised along the same lines so as to ensure a sufficiently fine and balanced coverage.

⁵ A large proportion of banks hide toxic assets in their accounts (various structured products valued at their nominal value, whereas the market value is much lower) and are affected by non-performing loans (NPLs).

If a private banking system is to be maintained, what would emerge is a tripartite banking system: a public financial pole, including the socialised banks and other public institutions, would coexist along with the private banks and a cooperative sector. Whereas the largest institutions of the current cooperative sector behave like the private banks, this new cooperative sector would re-establish real cooperative banking and once again inscribe the values of democracy, solidarity and non-profitability in their statutes.

If a private banking system is to be maintained, a public financial pole, including the socialised banks and other public institutions, would coexist along with the private banks and a cooperative sector

Personnel representatives might be granted the right to information and veto rights over the projects that will be financed by the bank.

Socialisation requires a fundamental revision of boards of directors and the way in which their members are designated.

For all banks that do not belong to the public sector, a “banking law” would redefine the missions of all banks as well as the membership and the appointment process of their boards of directors, regardless of their legal structure. It would require them to take on a share of the clientele considered “unprofitable,” so that these clients are not provided services by the public banking pole alone.

A new code of professional ethics should be defined and a strict roadmap should be imposed on the entire banking sector in order to bring the banking groups and their entities back to their essential missions: holding savings and deposits without risk and financing the real economy. Especially vigilant monitoring will need to be exercised over banks left outside the field of the public pole to ensure that they adhere to the new code of ethics and properly follow the roadmap.

The question of whether a public banking pole can coexist with private banks and whether the latter, subjected to strong public regulation, can be made to serve the general interest is an essential one, and explains the aforementioned need for close monitoring. Should a private bank or banking group fail to adhere to its obligations, sanctions would be applied and the directors of the guilty groups would be held civilly and criminally liable before the courts.

The question of whether a public banking pole can coexist with private banks and whether the latter, subjected to strong public regulation, can be made to serve the general interest is an essential one

Scenario 2: Full socialisation of the banking system

Banks, and more generally the financial system, are weapons in the hands of the capitalist class. The maintaining of a private banking system next to a socialised banking sector would constitute a threat to the latter, since capital will use all available means to attack

the socialised sector whose politics in favour of the many contradicts the essence of a capitalist system working in the interest of a privileged few.

The full socialisation of the banking system means:

- expropriating without compensating (or compensating by one symbolic euro) of large shareholders (small shareholders will be fully compensated);
- granting a monopoly of banking activities to the public sector, with one single exception: the existence of a small cooperative banking sector (subject to the same fundamental rules as the public sector);
- defining, with citizen participation, a charter covering the goals to be attained and the missions to be carried out and which places the public savings, credit and investment entities at the service of the priorities defined by a democratic planning process.

Socialising the banking and insurance sectors into public services will make it possible:

- for citizens and public authorities to escape the influence of the financial markets;
- to finance citizens' and public authorities' projects;
- to dedicate the activity of banking to the common good, with among its missions that of facilitating the transition from a capitalist, production-intensive economy to a social, sustainable and environment-friendly economy.

Imagine what socialisation of the banking sector means in concrete terms: private banks will have disappeared; that is, following their expropriation (with small shareholders being compensated), their personnel will be reassigned to the public banking and insurance service, with guarantees of their seniority and their wages (up to an authorised maximum in order to strongly limit very high salaries, and with increases in the lowest wages to reduce the wage gap) and with an improvement in working conditions (benchmarking⁶ and forced sales practices would be abandoned). A system of recruiting new employees will be implemented in keeping with the recruiting standards of a public service.

The existence of a concentration of competing bank branches in large urban areas while at the same time there is a shortage or absence of banks in small towns, villages and working-class neighbourhoods will be ended. A dense network of local branches will be developed in order to strongly increase accessibility to banking and insurance services, with competent staff to respond to the needs of users in keeping with the missions of public service. No one will be denied access to the public banking service, which must be provided free of charge.

No one will be denied access to the public banking service, which must be provided free of charge

The local agencies of the public service will manage current accounts and will receive users' savings, which will be fully guaranteed. Savings will be managed without taking risks. These savings will be used, under citizen control, for financing local projects and investments

⁶ Benchmarking is a tool for surveillance of employees, whose results are accessible to everyone at all times and are compared continuously via a ranking that stigmatises those who are considered to perform less well. It is a technique of management through stress that is widespread in major corporations in order to generate an unhealthy emulation.

of wider scope aimed at improving living conditions, struggling against climate change, abandoning nuclear power generation, developing short supply circuits, financing territorial development with rigorous adherence to social and environmental standards, etc. Savers will be able to choose the projects they would like to see financed by their savings.

Local branches will grant credits at no risk to individuals, households, SMEs and private local entities, associations, local governmental bodies and public entities. They will be able to set aside a part of their resources for larger-scale projects than those financed at the local level – naturally within the context of a concerted policy.

The fact that local branches will manage financial resources of reasonable size for local uses or for projects of wider scope that will be presented in a precise way (with a programming calendar and monitoring tools providing clear oversight of the use of the funds and the proper implementation of the projects) will facilitate supervision of the various participants.

The local projects to be financed will be defined democratically with maximum citizen participation.

The local branches will also be in charge of insurance contracts for physical and legal persons.

Whatever scenario is chosen, recovering control of the central bank would help support a transition towards a social sustainable and ecological economy. The ministries in charge of public health, education, energy, public transport, retirement, the environmental transition, etc. will have financing from the State’s budget.

Recovering control of the central bank would help support a transition towards a social sustainable and ecological economy

Specialised cross-cutting agencies will intervene in areas and activities that are beyond the competencies and spheres of action of a single ministry. Their purpose will be to conduct specific or transverse missions defined with citizen participation, such as the programme for total abandonment of nuclear power generation, including safe processing of nuclear waste over the long term.

A socialised banking sector will make it possible to reconstitute a virtuous circuit of financing the public authorities. They will be able to issue securities that will be acquired by the public service without being subject to the diktats of the financial markets.

CONCLUSION

Whereas money, credit, savings or the payment system are useful tools for the economy, the banking institutions are powerful instruments of accumulation for the capitalist class. Thus, taking measures against their private ownership would respond both to a necessity of developing public services for the many and to the need of removing power from the capitalist class, in order to achieve advances towards social equality. Such measures would threaten the core of the capitalist economy, and the private banking system will not go down without a fight — gathering strong popular support in favour of these measures will thus be vital.

The goal is to achieve a socialised banking sector, which will be run democratically by the bank workers together with customers, associations and elected representatives, and will fund local and national projects according to their common good rather than the profits which could be made out of it. At European and international levels, a popular government could try to organise cooperation between its public banking sector and similar institutions in other countries.

Chapter 3 - Debt

After the banking crisis hit Europe in 2008-2009, the massive bailouts of private banking institutions with public money and the economic slowdown shifted the concerns away from the harmful behaviour of private banking institutions to the sustainability of sovereign debt in the EU. The narrative adopted by the European governments and capitalist institutions absolved the banking institutions and their shareholders from their responsibilities and blamed supposedly reckless expenditures by the states and households.

The fiscal measures applied in the current crisis in most countries with developed economies have been policies aimed at limiting the ability of governments in fighting unemployment and providing social services through restricting public expenditure and investment under the justification that this is a requisite to maintain the confidence of

Challenge the legitimacy of sovereign debt that has been incurred to bail out private financial institutions

financial markets and thus solvency of state finances. In the EU this has been done through its strict fiscal rules and their tightening; the unavowed goals were to deepen the offensive of Capital against Labour and to repress any attempt at doing otherwise. In particular, the states of the European periphery have applied tremendous austerity by cutting spending and imposing indirect tax raises while reducing direct taxes. The adoption of austerity measures in the midst of a deep recession has been destructive in terms of production, employment, welfare and general capabilities of the state apparatus. Any government whose goal is to reverse such dynamics should reject these policies, challenge the legitimacy of sovereign debt that has been incurred to bail out private financial institutions and accumulate private capital, as well as reject the principle of balanced budgets.

Such process must start, in some cases, with the suspension of debt payments and the implementation of capital controls in order to put forward an exercise of transparency and sovereignty that allows the new government to clarify what debt is illegitimate and should be repudiated or unilaterally restructured. Given the potential for conflict with creditors that this implies, it is very important that such processes be carried out with popular support. This means that there must be direct participation of citizens, the opening of debt books to public scrutiny and the exercise of democratic control over the entire process.⁷ A useful step towards this objective would be the establishment of a Debt Audit Commission, as happened successfully in Ecuador, between 2007 and 2008, and in Greece in 2015, although with less success.

⁷ See Heiner Flassbeck and Costas Lapavistas. *Against the troika: Crisis and austerity in the Eurozone*. Verso Books, 2015.

I. CHALLENGING THE LEGITIMACY OF PUBLIC DEBT

The legitimacy of much of the public debt of EU member states must be challenged. Whereas public debt is presented as a simple necessity to finance public policies for the many, its increase in the last four decades has actually accompanied the process of financialisation of the economy since the 1980s, through which the role of private finance and the accumulation of capital in the hands of a few have

The increase of public debt in the last four decades has actually accompanied the process of financialisation of the economy since the 1980s

been strengthened. States shifted from borrowing from their own central banks and other domestic institutions with interest rates decided upon by the sovereign to borrowing from the financial markets (and thus from private financial institutions that accumulate capital through the payment of interest) with interest rates decided upon by the markets,⁸ while successive tax reforms enabled capital and the wealthiest to contribute less and less to the national budgets, thus forcing the poorest to contribute more. This transfer of wealth from the many to the few over the last four decades constitutes a reason to question the legitimacy of public debt.

Through the European Monetary Union, the European economic architecture reproduced and deepened this functioning. Further events that unfolded in particular in the course of the crisis from 2008-2009 onwards must be considered as sources of illegitimacy of the public debt.

The bail-out scam

From 2008 onwards, the States intervened to bail out private banking institutions that were on the brink of collapse. In some peripheral countries such as Greece, a similar scheme was implemented through the intervention of international bail-out funds on the initiative of what became known as the Troika (International Monetary Fund, European Commission, European Central Bank). The audit of the Truth

The bail-outs that Greece received were intended to protect foreign banks who were the major holders of Greek debt

Committee for the Public Debt of Greece showed that the debt owed by Greece to the rest of the Eurozone states through such rescue institutions is odious, illegitimate, illegal and unsustainable (see definitions below), since the bail-outs that Greece received were intended to protect foreign banks, especially French, German, Dutch and Belgian ones, who were the major holders of Greek debt in the wake of the crisis. The bail-out of 2010 protected creditors against a likely default and imposed cruel policies whose only purpose was to make sure that debt repayment would continue. The 2011-12 bail-out again protected international investors and local private banks which were compensated and recapitalised, respectively, as part of the debt restructuring deal. Adding insult to injury, Greece was put under a new programme in the summer of 2015, imposing a new round of austerity, privatisation and liberalisation. The Troika imposed similar bail-out schemes in Ireland (2010), Portugal (2011) and Cyprus

⁸ See Benjamin Lemoine. *L'ordre de la dette. Enquête sur les infortunes de l'État et la prospérité du marché*. La Découverte, 2016.

(2013). Before that, the IMF had already taken part in destructive macroeconomic adjustment programmes in EU member states and non-member states in Eastern Europe: Hungary, Ukraine, Latvia (2008), Romania and Serbia (2009).

Stopping neoliberal policies attached to debt repayment

The need to reduce the amount of debt is not only due to the large burden that interest payments impose on public budgets, but also because austerity policies imposed by the supranational institutions as a requirement to comply with its payment generally have disastrous consequences for the debtor countries. Obtaining resources in the short term to ensure the payment of the debt is the main concern of

**Austerity policies imposed
by the supranational
institutions have disastrous
consequences for the debtor
countries**

such policies. Greece is a paradigmatic case of this model. The country has implemented harsh austerity measures since 2010 and negotiated with its creditors a restructuring of the debt, carried out in 2011-2012, which basically imposed significant reductions on domestic debt holders, including banks. And yet, precisely because of the disastrous nature of the Troika's policies, by 2014 the debt had reached 177% of GDP again, 4% higher than in the previous peak, reached in 2012. Ending 2018, the Greek debt had not decreased and the International Monetary Fund itself makes it clear that Greece needs a severe haircut, because if debt continues to grow it will end up suffocating society and bringing its state to collapse. In fact, in its analysis of debt sustainability in mid-2016, the IMF predicted that if there is no major restructuring, debt would continue to rise to 250% to GDP in a few decades.

When analysing such programmes that have taken place throughout history, the myth that these are beneficial for the debtor disappears immediately. Even in cases in which there has been debt restructuring managed by creditors, and the Greek case is a prominent one, the programme has only been the salvation for creditors, who in the case of a default by a government in defence of popular sovereignty would be condemned to bankruptcy.

The objective of such adjustment programmes is actually to restructure the economies in order to deepen the offensive of Capital against Labour. These programmes usually include, for example, measures to maximise the payment of debt such as cuts in public spending; privatisations – which also generate new business opportunities for investors –; reforms in taxation, generally in the form of raises in indirect taxes such as VAT; supply-side measures for the reactivation of the economy, which may range from tax exemptions to new investors to trade liberalisation measures; or others to guarantee legal certainty, such as imposing constitutional reforms to guarantee the payment of the debt. Freezing pensions, lowering wages, reducing deficits, cutting social spending and increases in indirect taxes are the most common demands.

Not only do these conditionalities end up suffocating the majority of the population in poverty, stripping them of rights and increasing inequality, but they also present attractive business opportunities for the economic elites. Privatisations and liberalisation measures especially benefit investors and multinational companies that take over these businesses at a low price. Structural adjustment programmes of the IMF or the Troika memoranda with

countries of the European periphery are examples of such conditionalities. While the disastrous effects were felt the harshest in peripheral countries and in particular in Greece, austerity policies sharing similar objectives have been implemented in other European countries, including core countries, without the external intervention of the Troika. The implementation of these policies must be stopped immediately by a popular government that wants to put forward a progressive agenda.

Excessive public debt

No alternative program would be plausible without first resolving the issue of excessive public debt of the European states. The sustainability of public debt is mainly a matter of economic flows. The flow of income must be restored through increased taxation on capital and the wealthiest, and through a re-vitalisation of the economy. The sustainability of the debt in many of the developed countries, especially those of the European periphery, also has to do with its total amount, something that has become difficult to manage. In countries like Greece solving this situation will require severe unilateral haircuts, a policy that is inevitably confrontational, since it involves defaults, long negotiations and, in general, considerable legal proceedings.⁹

Capital controls: A first step to deal with debt

Most likely a progressive political party that wants to confront creditors and lift austerity will take office in the middle of great market turmoil. We witnessed this in Greece in 2015. The crisis in the euro area has created a doom-loop between banks and sovereign debt in the periphery of the Eurozone, which can cause southern member states that suffer such vicious dynamics to abandon the monetary union. In this context the need for capital controls has become urgent. The cases of Cyprus (2013) and Greece (2015) have shown how important it is to be prepared to avoid financial pressure through bank runs that can cause a banking collapse. The only way to do this is by activating capital controls. Capital controls would prevent massive capital flights out of the country (by capitalists fearing for their vested interests or outwardly sabotaging the efforts of the progressive government), and thus would help prevent banking instability and collapse. It would also ensure that capital is subjected to domestic taxation.

**Capital controls: a first step
to deal with debt**

Capital controls are a widely used policy across the world. The reason is that floating currency exchange rates do not entail autonomy in monetary policy, especially for small economies, and the main cause of this is speculation in the foreign exchange market, facilitated by free movement of capital. In the presence of free movement of capital flows, exchange rates tend to be above or below equilibrium, even for long periods of time.

⁹ See Heiner Flassbeck and Costas Lapavistas, *op. cit.*

It is necessary that the progressive political forces of European states willing to implement progressive government agendas, especially those of the European periphery, endorse the lessons of recent European history: policies of capital control are essential for a progressive exit from the current economic depression, but these only represent a partial measure that must be accompanied by other policy measures in other areas.

II. PUBLIC DEBT AUDIT AS A TOOL TO TAKE UNILATERAL MEASURES AGAINST PUBLIC ILLEGITIMATE DEBT

In order to argue and to gain popular support in favour of unilateral measures against the burden of public debt, from the suspension of its payment to its unilateral restructuring or to its repudiation, a citizen debt audit must be carried out. The books of public debt should be opened to public scrutiny and an investigation under democratic control should categorise the debts that must not be repaid. Thus, the debt audit must agree on the definitions of such debts. The following proposal is based on the Truth Committee on the Public Debt of Greece.¹⁰

An investigation under democratic control should categorise the debts that must not be repaid

Categories of debt to be challenged and their definitions

- **Illegitimate debt:** debt which was incurred not in the interest of the many, but to satisfy the vested interests of a privileged few (e.g. the conversion of private to public debt under pressure from bail-out creditors; borrowing money to build nuclear power plants in favour of the interest of private energy corporations); or whose conditions were grossly unfair, unconscionable or abusive.
- **Odious debt:** a debt of which the lender knew or ought to have known was incurred against the interest of the many and to satisfy the vested interests of a privileged few.
- **Illegal debt:** debt in which proper legal procedures were not followed, or which involved clear misconduct by the lender (including bribery, coercion and undue influence), as well as debt contracted in violation of domestic and international law or whose conditions attached thereto contravened the law.
- **Unsustainable debt:** debt that cannot be serviced without seriously impairing the ability or capacity of the government of the borrower State to fulfil its basic human rights obligations, such as those relating to healthcare, education, water and sanitation,

Unsustainable debt: debt that cannot be serviced without seriously impairing the ability or capacity of the government of the borrower State to fulfil its basic human rights obligations

¹⁰ See Truth Committee on the Public Debt of Greece, *Preliminary Report*, 2015. URL: <http://www.cadtm.org/Preliminary-Report-of-the-Truth>.

and housing, or to invest in public infrastructure and programmes necessary for economic and social development, or without harmful consequences for the population of the borrower state (including a deterioration in the living standards).

The citizen audit

The audit of the public debt and of the public finances of the state is a basic democratic right of citizens as well as a sovereign right of a nation. There can be no democracy without transparency regarding state finances, as it is immoral to ask citizens to pay for debt without knowing how and why public debt was created. Substantial sacrifices are demanded or imposed on the European societies in order to honour the payment of debt.

The debt audit is also an institutional duty of the European states under financial assistance according to European law. It responds to the obligation created by Regulation (EU) N°472/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council on 21 May 2013, which establishes that a Member State subject to a macroeconomic adjustment programme must “carry out a comprehensive audit of its public finances in order, inter alia, to assess the reasons that led to the buildup of excessive levels of debt as well as to track any possible irregularity” (Paragraph 9 of Article 7).

Finally, the debt audit is also an obligation stemming from international law. The United Nations Guiding Principles on Foreign Debt and Human Rights (A/HRC/20/23), adopted by the UN Human Rights Council in July 2012, calls upon States to undertake periodic audits of their public debt, in order to ensure transparency and accountability in the management of their resources, and also to inform future borrowing decisions.¹¹

The debt audit is an obligation stemming from international law

The preferable option to implement an audit for a popular government of the Left that wants to democratically confront the problem of debt would be to make a citizen audit of the debt. This would entail that citizens participate actively in the process by accessing to information, contributing to analyse the data, engaging into political advocacy in relation to the findings, publicising its outcome and participating in the popular education processes related to the subject. The process should make possible to understand how the debt was generated and accumulated, who were the main beneficiaries of such process, which were the different mechanisms and creditors, as well as which are the socioeconomic consequences of repayment. This must inform the assessment of the odiousness, legitimacy, legality and sustainability of the debt. Such a process could culminate in a consultation of the population such as a referendum so as to present the results of the audit and to decide democratically on the political measures to be taken.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

Principles and other elements for deciding on debt reduction/cancellation

An audit's assessment would be useful to the government in order to decide which parts of the debt shouldn't be repaid. As a matter of principle, debts that are considered odious, illegitimate, illegal or unsustainable shouldn't be repaid. However, the analysis of the structure of holders and debt instruments, legal aspects such as jurisdiction law and currency of the debt, and economic and distributional outcomes should also be considered when making such decision. In fact, it is possible that in some cases the main beneficiaries of the process of indebtedness are not the creditors but the private sector that has been bailed-out or large corporations that have benefited from billionaire public contracts. It might well be that in some cases debt holders are small investors or pension funds, which means that, as in the case of Greece, a haircut without compensation would harm the weaker. Thus, haircuts or even total cancellation should target large institutional investors and foreign public creditors that have imposed anti-social measures to the population such as the institutions and states of the EU and should aim at redistributing wealth in favour of working people.

Those who deny the possibility of a total or partial default do so arguing that, above all, legal certainty should prevail, a prevalence that is not defended with the same enthusiasm when it comes to respect human rights or economic, social and cultural rights. Faced with the possibility of default by the debtors, advocates of the prevalence of the rule of commercial law and of financial contracts deploy a series of threats and catastrophic scenarios: the closing of financial markets, economic and commercial isolation, a subsequent shortage of supplies, etc. The cessation of payment of the debt usually appears as an irresponsible and infantile option, unfeasible beyond the scope of propaganda. No matter how high the social cost derived from attending to financial commitments, it is argued that continuing to pay debt is always the "lesser evil".¹²

However, both theory and practice suggest that the threat of losing access to international credit has been exaggerated. Cases like Russia in 1998 and Argentina in the 2000s, are proof that a suspension of the repayment of the debt can be beneficial for the countries that execute it, because the funds that were previously dedicated to paying the debt become fuel for economic reactivation. Joseph Stiglitz wrote about Argentina: "*The fact that Argentina did so well after its default, even without an IMF program, (or perhaps because it did not have an IMF program) may lead to a change in these beliefs*"¹³ – about the chaos in case of default. Eduardo Levy Yeyati and Ugo Panizza, two economists who worked for the Inter-American Development Bank, set out the findings of their thorough enquiry into defaulting in some forty countries. One of their main conclusions is that '*Default episodes mark the beginning of the economic recovery.*'¹⁴ Similarly, in 2008 Iceland nationalised the bankrupt Landsbanki bank, but its foreign branch

Default episodes mark the beginning of the economic recovery

¹² See Sergi Cutillas Márquez. "Cara y cruz de la deuda pública: Retos de la economía". RBA Contenidos Editoriales y Audiovisuales, S.A.U., 2016.

¹³ Quoted in Éric Toussaint. "Joseph Stiglitz shows that a suspension of debt repayments can be beneficial for a country and its people". CADTM, 20 January 2015.

¹⁴ Idem.

Icesave was not bailed out; after the Netherlands and Britain compensated Dutch and British depositors of Icesave, their governments requested that Iceland covers the costs. Under strong pressure by popular opposition to Iceland covering private losses incurred by Icesave, the Icelandic government had to give in to a referendum through which the payment of the debt reclaimed by Britain and the Netherlands was overwhelmingly rejected (furthermore, the Icelandic government took measures to reduce the outstanding mortgage debts of the population, and Iceland was the only country where bankers faced trials and were imprisoned for their involvement in the banking crisis). Iceland enjoyed a rapid economic recovery. The control of movements of capital was successful too. The success was confirmed when Britain and the Netherlands failed to have Iceland condemned for the non-payment of its debt after these two states filed in a complaint before the European Free Trade Association Court.¹⁵

Throughout history, distant and recent, there are multiple precedents of defaults, haircuts, repudiations and cancellations.¹⁶ Of these examples much can be learned. But the main lesson of history for a popular government of the Left that intends to put forward a progressive programme in Europe

A suspension of payments
rebalances power in favour
of the government

should be that it is possible for the debtor nation to manage a debt default in a way that improves the living conditions of the majority and the most vulnerable (through the redirecting of resources previously allocated to debt payment towards an increase of domestic public demand, an increase of spending power and job creation), and that a suspension of payments rebalances power in favour of the government allowing it to increase its leverage against creditors in order to impose a unilateral haircut on their bonds, guarantees or securities.

III. DISCRIMINATING AMONG CREDITORS

Private bondholders

In order to discriminate among bondholders a government could establish different terms in the exchange offers related to different debt instruments, which is a voluntary process whereby bondholders accept a “new” bond in exchange for the “original” or “old” instrument. A way of doing this could be through ‘sweeteners’ included in the exchange of bonds (investors that fulfilled certain criteria could be offered bonds with special clauses or guarantees, such as mandatory prepayment or restatement in case of a future default).

Another option would be to protect and compensate certain groups of bondholders via public benefits under certain criteria established by the audit of the debt and the government. These benefits could be offered to small investors, not responsible for the unlawful indebtedness, whereas large investors or those that have participated and profited from

¹⁵ See CADTM. “EFTA court dismisses ‘Icesave’ claims against Iceland and its people”. Press Release, 28 January 2013.

¹⁶ See for example Éric Toussaint. *The Debt System. A History of Sovereign Debts and their Repudiation*. Haymarket Books, 2019.

unlawful indebtedness, would be sued and prosecuted, pursuing the possibility of total restitution of costs incurred and cancellation of current obligations.

A popular Left government must commit not to enter into new settlements in better conditions with the holdouts of the exchanges, neither must it do it with the creditors that were found responsible in the audit and were left out of the exchanges or offered worse conditions. This is intended to show that an exchange offer is definitive and, in the event that there is a holdout creditor, the sovereign is not willing to enter into any kind of settlement agreement in more beneficial terms.

In November 2018 in the Kuhn case, the European Court of Justice said that such unilateral haircuts can be taken by a state as a sovereign act (*jure imperii*) concerning his own national jurisdiction, thus preventing creditors from seeking before foreign judges a fulfilment of the previous contract (or a compensation to be paid) by the debtor state.¹⁷

Unilateral haircuts can be taken by a state as a sovereign act (*jure imperii*)

The results of the audit should also encourage a popular government of the Left to start legal proceedings against those who not necessarily being creditors had profited from the process of indebtedness against the well-being of the majority (e. g. private companies that benefitted of the privatisation of public infrastructure required as a condition to repay a loan). It should also enable the Parliament to take the measures needed to obtain compensation through legislative procedure, through taxation or in last instance expropriation without compensation.

Bonds held by banks

In many cases a large reduction of debt can be done through the socialisation of the national banking system, as would be the case in the southern European periphery, where local banks hold large amounts of domestic public debt. A total socialisation of the banking system would facilitate that a share of the debt could be easily restructured or written off. This, however, is more difficult to achieve without monetary sovereignty, since the new government would face more difficulties to repay banks liabilities if it could not do it in its own currency and had to recur to increasing taxation, which can be recessionary in times of crises, or borrowing from private creditors, which would be difficult given the radical steps being taken regarding banks. Another possibility would be to impose a bail-in on investors and depositors, although it is preferable to avoid imposing losses on deposits. If the government chose to include deposits in a bail-in schedule it should guarantee all deposits under a certain threshold, as for instance 150.000 - 200.000 euros.

A large reduction of debt can be done through the socialisation of the national banking system

¹⁷ See European Court of Justice, Judgment of the Court (First Chamber), *Hellenische Republik v. Leo Kuhn*, Case C-308/17, 15 November 2018.

Public debt held by the ECB

Another possibility, if this was in accordance to the audit results, would be to default on the debt that the state has with the ECB. This would be a powerful weapon of self-defence against the threats of reprisals by the ECB against a progressive government. The debt with the ECB is not a debt that needs to be repaid under economic arguments. The programme of Quantitative Easing (QE) has showed that a currency-issuing central bank can engage in monetary-financing without creating inflation in times of high unemployment and capacity under-utilisation.

The QE consists in massively purchasing private and public debt securities from banks and corporations in the euro area – it thus pours liquidities into banks and corporations, which then use the money to speculate, thus making further crises more likely. When sovereign securities come to maturity the ECB can buy more for an equivalent amount and

**A progressive government
should immediately suspend
repayment of the debt held
by the ECB**

thus pour further liquidities into private banks, who then buy more sovereign securities. If a government should decide to break away from austerity, the ECB could decide not to buy its debt securities when the old ones have matured. It could harm the said government if it decides to buy instead debt securities from a hard-liner neoliberal government. This would result in increasing the cost at which the country finances its debt. This constitutes one more reason for a progressive government to immediately suspend repayment of the debt held by the ECB.

It would be anti-economic, and illegitimate, if one extrapolates from the results of The Truth Committee on Public Debt of Greece,¹⁸ to repay such a debt, as it would only have the effect of withdrawing liquidity from the system by means of obtaining resources through further neoliberal reform, thus imposing deflation and austerity again at the expense of the majority and specially the weaker and poorer. If the ECB was to hold such quantities of public debt perpetually in its balances, euro area states could write them off from their national accounts.

Debt with the international bail-out funds

A similar case is that of the debt that peripheral countries owe to the European bail-out funds, the European Financial Stability Facility and its successor the European Stability Mechanism, which are owned by the member states of the Eurozone. These bail-out funds have been responsible for the bail-out scam of financial institutions in countries which were hit the hardest by the crisis, such as Greece. The bail-outs were conditioned to the implementation of macroeconomic adjustment programmes whose effects were catastrophic, as described above. It is time to end such abuse and stop repayments to these bail-out funds to dedicate those resources to reinstall social protection and economic conditions that allow all Europeans to live in dignity. Such a decision would put an end to the neo-mercantilist

¹⁸ *Op. cit.*

economic scheme led by Germany in the Eurozone, which is creating large amounts of pain in southern societies in Europe, destroying their economies and generating political nightmares such as the ascendancy of the extreme-right.

IV. REDUCTION OF PRIVATE DEBT

In order both to clean the balance sheets of banks and to redistribute resources favouring the poorer and in need (who are more and more numerous in our times of social crises), a popular government of the Left would need to implement a programme of private debt relief as a first step, reducing or cancelling debts of individuals and families. Mortgage

Implement a programme of private debt relief reducing or cancelling debts of individuals and families

and student debts in particular have generally been incurred first and foremost as part of the neoliberal offensive of Capital against Labour. Mortgage debts have accompanied the speculation bubbles in the housing market, thus favouring capital accumulation in the real estate sector (aside from the banking sector). Student debts have been increasing with the deterioration of living standards under neoliberalism in general, and with neoliberal attacks against public education in particular (e. g. through the introduction and/or increase of tuition fees in public universities), forcing more and more young workers to deal with a debt burden during most of their career.

One way in which such a programme could be financed would be as mentioned before, through a reduction of the obligations that private banks have with the ECB. This would be equivalent to enforce a “Quantitative Easing for the people”, in which the government would pass the write-offs of mortgage and student debt to the ECB, thus improving the living conditions of the majority as well as putting the conditions for the expansion of bank credit to revitalise the economy.

Another option would be to finance the write-offs by implementing a bail-in on capital at the cost of the big shareholders. This would reduce the price of bank shares and allow the government to invest in them at a lower market-price, which would give it the possibility to participate in the governance of the banks (partially or totally) if those have not yet been socialised.

In the case of re-denomination, the currency-issuing government could recapitalise the banks in accordance to the capital needs created by the debt-relief programme without need to recur to taxation, bail-in or foreign funding.

V. EMERGENCY FINANCING

A coalition of the popular left that reaches government and hasn’t got a currency-issuing central bank at its disposal should immediately look for ways of financing its deficits. Resources will probably be scarce for a government that needs to run large fiscal deficits to reactivate the economy and implement deep re-distributional and social policies.

In such case the government should consider issuing bonds in the internal market as an option to accumulate such reserves. These bond issuances could be part of the exchange of old bonds in the process of restructuring old debt or just the issuance of new bonds. In all cases these should be designed with long maturities and zero interest rates in the case of exchange with rich bond holders. The interest rate reduction would provide significant relief in fiscal terms. Also, the increase in the maturity of the bonds would eliminate funding pressures associated with the need to roll-over short-term debt.¹⁹ The pensioners and small bond holders will be fully compensated.

Issuing bonds in the internal market as an option to accumulate such reserves

Public debt could be used to finance ambitious programmes of ecological transition instead of enforcing anti-social, extractivist, productivist policies that foster competition between nations. Public indebtedness is not in itself a problem. For instance, public authorities can use bond issues to:

Public debt could be used to finance ambitious programmes of ecological transition

- finance the complete closure of thermal and nuclear power plants;
- replace fossil energies with renewable sources of energy that respect the environment;
- finance a conversion from current farming methods, which contribute to climate change and use a lot of chemical inputs which are responsible for the decrease in biodiversity, favouring local production of organic food to make farming compatible with the fight against climate change;
- radically reduce air and road transport and develop public transport and the use of railways;
- finance an ambitious programme of low-energy social housing.

Public borrowing is fully legitimate if it serves legitimate projects and if those who contribute to the financing do so legitimately.

A popular government will not hesitate to force corporations (whether national, foreign or multinational) as well as richer households to contribute to financing without drawing any profit from it, i.e. with zero interest and without compensation for inflation.

At the same time, a large portion of households in the popular classes will easily be persuaded to entrust their savings to the public authorities to fund the kinds of legitimate projects mentioned above. This voluntary funding by the popular classes would be remunerated at a positive actual rate, for instance 3%. This means that if annual inflation reached 2%, the public authorities would pay a nominal interest rate of 5%, to guarantee an actual rate of 3%.

Such a mechanism would be perfectly legitimate since it would finance projects that are really useful to society and because it would help reduce the wealth of the rich while increasing the income of the popular classes.

¹⁹ See Francisco Louça et alii. "Sustainable Program for Debt Restructuring in Portugal". Institute of Public Policy Thomas Jefferson - Correia da Serra.

Domestic banks could also provide financing to the government directly with loans.

A progressive tax reform that increases revenue at a minimum multiplier would also be necessary. This would include reducing VAT, and increasing the progressivity of income, profit and wealth taxation. Tax fraud and evasion would need to be prosecuted and reduced.

VI. DEBT RELIEF WITH DEBTOR NATIONS

European states (and capital based in these countries) continue to engage into neo-colonial and imperial relations with poorer countries all across the world. Currently, mounting public debt in middle income as well as in the poorest countries is achieving worrying levels. Economists are alerting on the gravity of the situation on macroeconomic developments and prospects, especially in low-income developing countries. The group currently includes 59 countries accounting for about one-fifth of the world's population and 4% of global output. The group's median public debt-to-GDP ratio now hovered around 47%. Some countries have begun to default because the debt situation is un-financeable. In fact, in just four years the share of low-income developing countries at high risk of debt distress or already unable to service their debt fully has almost doubled to 40%.

Governments of the popular Left would need to include debts that other nations have with their states in the audit of the debt mentioned above. Under the same principles debt that is considered illegitimate, illegal, odious and/or unsustainable must be cancelled. Such a move was carried out by Norway in 2006 when the country cancelled credits it held over Ecuador, Egypt, Jamaica, Peru and Sierra Leone as the loans had been abusively pushed for by the creditor. Similarly, in 1953 on the initiative of Germany's main creditors, the US, the UK and France, a major part of Germany's debt was cancelled, enabling its swift economic development.

Debt of debtor nations that is considered illegitimate, illegal, odious and/or unsustainable must be cancelled

VII. AN ALTERNATIVE SCENARIO: CONSIDERING MONETARY REDENOMINATION

Some of the measures mentioned in this chapter (socialisation and recapitalisation of banks, private debt relief, emergency financing, debt relief of debtor nations) would be more easily financed through monetary-financing, which would require that the government has control over a currency-issuing central bank. If the latter was not the case, as it is for countries within the Eurozone, a progressive government would have to decide whether to recover its monetary sovereignty and control of its central bank or continue under current constraints. Therefore, exiting the EMU is a strategic possibility that a popular government of the Left should seriously explore (see Chapter 1).

CONCLUSION

Public debt has been an important tool for capital accumulation and for the restructuring of European economies in favour of Capital to the detriment of Labour. Therefore, it needs to be challenged through unilateral measures such as suspension of payment, unilateral haircut or debt repudiation. Policy measures related to debt cannot be separated from others related to the mobility of financial capital and credit; capital controls and other decisive steps to achieve public banking are necessary conditions in order to successfully implement policies related to debt. Given the high potential of conflict that this implies with creditors, it is absolutely necessary to gather momentum through popular mobilisation in favour of such policies. In this regard, the citizen public debt audit can be an important tool.

The citizen public debt audit can be an important tool in order to gather momentum through popular mobilisation

Chapter 4 - Work, employment and social rights

This chapter will address the subjects of employment and social rights, and will analyse and propose public policies in those fields. Addressing these issues must be done from a broad perspective, based on the prior understanding that the capital vs. labour conflict is part of a capital vs. life conflict. This means that the struggle is not only a fight for a better distribution of wealth. This is a basic element, but not the only one, far from it. And our perspective points to a radical change of the economic and social model, one that needs to put at the centre the lives of the people, care and the life in the planet. For that reason, we defend an ecofeminist, democratic and social transformation of the economy.

We defend an ecofeminist,
democratic and social
transformation of the
economy

In order to achieve this objective, unions remain crucial, but their activity should be focused on contestation and struggle and not on institutional expertise and co-management. Admittedly, the existing forms of the labour movement are rather declining in Europe, troubled by anti-union policies but also by the neoliberal division of labour and work organisation. Yet a class struggle unionism – at local but also international levels – is more than ever necessary today. Its renewal and development can rely on alliances with other forms of social movements, which concern labour but are not exclusively rooted in the firm, such as the social struggles of the unemployed and precarious workers and as feminist, ecologist and antiracist struggles. Feminist struggles notably are a crucial issue for unionism since it relates the labour vs capital antagonism to the issue of equality and democracy in all the fields of social life. With respect to these alliances, class struggle unionism must work toward convergences beyond the traditional demands of the labour movement, concerning notably fiscal justice, public services, migrants' rights, short circuits and the relocation of the economy, and real equality between men and women.

Proposals and strategies presented here should be aimed both at improving the distribution of income, wealth and social power and at facilitating a radical change of the model. In this context we consider that it is essential to rethink employment and public authority.

Improving the distribution of
income, wealth and social
power and facilitating a
radical change of the model

I. DIAGNOSIS

The European Union²⁰ is a neoliberal project that has among its permanent lines of action:

²⁰ With regards to the last ten years, concerning labour laws, see for example: Commission of the European Communities, « Modernising labour laws to meet the challenges of the 21st century », Brussels, 22 January 2006; and concerning the economic policies, see for example: European Commission, « Recommendation for a Council Recommendation on broad guidelines for the economic policies of the Member States and of the Union. Part I of the Europe 2020 Integrated Guidelines », 27 April 2010.

- Reduction of labour rights. The argument that labour protection generates rigidities in the labour market that cause unemployment, has become a false theory upon which the relentless and widespread attacks on labour of the last decades through were based. The last four decades of constant neoliberal reforms have eroded working conditions and social rights to an unacceptable point.
- Attacks to right of collective bargaining. The same theory mentioned previously has been the alibi to curtail the right to collective bargaining, increasing the power of big business to the detriment of the working class. Collective defence instruments, most importantly the right to strike, are among the elements of collective bargaining under attack.
- Pension cuts have been promoted from EU institutions to be implemented in Member States. This has led to successive rounds of reforms of the pension systems, imposing multiple cuts through 3 ways: cutting new pensions, delaying the age of retirement and not guaranteeing the purchasing power of pensions. The introduction of the Sustainability Factor (for example in Germany, Spain, Greece, etc.)²¹ as well as the “European Fiscal Compact”²² tries to give a natural appearance to future cuts without the need to change the laws.
- Cuts on unemployment subsidies and other social rights. Under the premise of encouraging job search several cuts have been imposed on unemployment benefits (which have affected the amount, the access and the duration of the perception of the benefit).
- Reduction of the role of public employment services and introduction of the participation of private companies of all kinds. Privatisation and outsourcing has also affected employment services. Intermediation or training for employment are seen as spaces where private companies (such as temporary jobs agencies, etc.) are playing a leading role, making employment even more precarious and leaving the most disadvantaged groups increasingly out of the labour market and with fewer possibilities of access to quality employment.

The constant neoliberal reforms have eroded working conditions and social rights to an unacceptable point

The macroeconomic objectives of the European Union are the control of inflation, fiscal deficit and public debt, and the increase European big companies’ competitiveness on the global market, against other objectives such as the improvement of living, employment and work conditions, equality or full employment. Thus, it is not surprising that the result is a spectacular increase in the share of wealth of the richest, while income and wealth of working people are being drastically reduced. All this comes with high levels of unemployment and growing precariousness, poverty and social exclusion.²³

²¹ The “sustainability factor” is a principle of the “European Semester” which prescribes that the public spendings of a member State should not threaten its solvency in relation to its creditors. See for example: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/european-semester_thematic-factsheet_public-finance-sustainability_en_0.pdf.

²² The Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union (also referred to as TSCG, Fiscal Stability Treaty or European Fiscal Compact) entered into force in January 2013.

²³ Concerning the evolution of the distribution of wealth, as well as of the unemployment rate (notably for youth and women), of precariousness (temporary or unwanted employment, part-time, etc) and of inequalities

There are important divergences among European states in terms of employment, wages and social rights. Clear examples are the strong inequalities in terms of minimum wages or social protection, as can be seen from the official Eurostat data. For example, the minimum wages in Germany, France and Belgium are in average between ten and five times what they are in Bulgaria, Lithuania and Romania.²⁴ These divergences have not prevented EU bodies and Member States from the persistence on the same neoliberal orientation in the last two decades.

These European policies are clearly worsening the material conditions of the great majority of the population in Europe:

- They not only create poverty and unemployment, but also foster economic and political domination of big corporations and banks over democratic institutions. With active support of EU institutions, big businesses have taken advantage of the crisis to deepen their attack onto social and democratic conquests of workers in the 20th century, and to continue to expand their reach into public and private aspects of people's lives.
- Gender inequalities are much related to capitalist exploitation: women suffer a wage gap, a division of labour in which women and notably migrant and racialised women are concentrated in domestic work, care and unpaid work, inequality in the amount of pensions, etc.
- Economic growth or increased consumption are considered as the « only and best way », ignoring the unsustainable nature of this path and the disastrous consequences that this entails on the environment, the future of the planet and the self-sustainability of human life.
- Privileges of big capital have been constitutionalised against human, economic, social, cultural and environmental rights. Progress is made towards a new world order in which, through the so-called new generation trade agreements (TTIP, CETA, etc.), the interests of capital must prevail, with the status of a binding norm, whereas human, economic, social, cultural and environmental rights are destroyed.

Big businesses have taken advantage of the crisis to deepen their attack onto social and democratic conquests of workers in the 20th century

Likewise, the treaties of the European Union make Europe a fortress against migrants, disregarding the rights of people to migrate to find a decent life or to find asylum when fled from wars and from political or social persecution. The responsibility for policies of EU countries and institutions in relation to the impoverishment of hundreds of millions of people across the globe is often forgotten.

and poverty, one can look at the statistics of the European institutions themselves, for example. See for example for unemployment: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics.

²⁴ See Eurostat, « Minimum wages statistics », URL: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Minimum_wage_statistics

II. PROPOSALS

A radical change in employment policies and social policies is necessary to guarantee fair employment, a decent life and economic democracy for all. In this perspective, it is necessary to implement:

Citizens and social movements

Citizens and social movements' demands constitute a precondition to move beyond neoliberal logic. These initiatives should point to:

- Reversal of the cuts in labour rights, and of the dismantlement of the collective bargaining and social rights suffered in recent years.
- Establishment of a minimum reference salary level (such as the experience of US \$ 15 per hour in the US, € 1,200 per month in the Basque country, and so on).
- Reduction of the working-day, marking a horizon of a weekly working time of 32 hours. Guarantee of the right to housing.
- The right of people to migrate and to receive a welcoming process that guarantees full citizenship.
- Dismantle corporate power and power of transnational corporations (as the campaign for a binding treaty on transnational corporations and human rights wants to achieve) by their socialisation and public regulation. The social, ecological, democratic and feminist transformation of the capitalist economic model, with the demand of policies that promote the development of activities that meet these criteria and that reduce or prohibit those that are detrimental to it (such as the arms industry).

Immediate steps of a popular government

A popular government should first adopt immediate measures to reverse the cuts applied in recent years in labour rights, collective bargaining and social rights:

- Recover rights which were lost in the field of employment.
- Recover the value of collective bargaining and increase the power of the working class and the unions.
- Reverse the cuts imposed on pensions, unemployment benefits and other social benefits.
- Guarantee all rights to all people who are forced to migrate for economic, social or political reasons.
- Oppose and cancel “new generation” commercial treaties.

Popular governments should secondly approve measures in all these areas:

- Reduction of working week to 35 hours as a step towards a greater reduction, without reduction of salary. The reduction of the working time is decisive. It would be an important improvement of working conditions, it would contribute to generate employment and it would be a step forward in the distribution of wealth, time and care.
- Increase in the minimum wage up to at least 70% of the median wage.
- Eliminate existing restrictions on the improvement of collective agreements reached in different territorial areas (or, to put it another way, not allowing collective bargaining to be used to make conditions worse or to prevent them from improving). Prevent workers' dismissals in companies that make profits.
- Oppose gender inequality at work, and make effective the principle of the equalisation of wages between men and women with equal qualification.
- Establishment of a significant number of minimum hours that must be remunerated in part-time jobs.
- Democratise the work centres and enhance the participation of workers in decision-making.
- Increase social protection, with substantial increase in the share of income (measured in terms of GDP) that goes to health, education, social benefits, etc.
- Foster democratic work experimentations: cooperatives, self-organised production of goods and services, social and solidarity economy, etc.
- Recognition of new social rights that facilitate a life worth living: access to a social rental housing; right to work (better than basic income); attention to dependency situations through a public, universal and free social security system; guarantee the necessary and free places in a public system of nursery schools, creating an "allocation of autonomy" (or student wage) which would allow young people to fund their studies away from the pressure of the labour market. As indicated in the previous point, this implies an increase in high quality employment in socially necessary and sustainable sectors.

Medium-term steps of a popular government

Further economic and social policies of a popular government should:

- Break with the mechanisms imposed by the logic of adjustment policies (budgetary criteria, spending rule, and so on). These mechanisms suppose a violation of democracy, since they try to constitutionalise neoliberal policies in favour of big businesses above policies that foster prosperity and justice. Breaking or disobeying these mechanisms is essential to implement the employment and social policies that we defend.
- Democratise the economy: workers' right to decide over the conditions and organisation of their work, and on the means and ends of their activity, must be recognised as a democratic and social right and guaranteed by labour laws.

**An inalienable right to work
together with the right to
education and housing**

This implies an inalienable right to work together with the right to education and housing, and a full rethinking of the work centre in order to transform it into a democratic institution.

Medium-term initiatives in the international field

Moreover, in the international field, we should systematically promote:

- Initiatives for the social, democratic, ecological and feminist transformation of employment. This means that all political and social institutions must be put at service of changing the modes of production, distribution and consumption, making possible that employment is relocated to the socially and environmentally necessary sectors, and that working conditions are fair.
- Radical change in the rules of globalisation to give priority to human, economic, social and cultural rights. It supposes to break with the logic of the denominated Trade Agreements, that are systems of domination of the great capital and the transnational companies. This route also has clearly favourable repercussions on employment and the level of social protection.

Concerning the strategic issues at the European level, the priorities should be:

- Transnational strikes, in order to confront collectively corporate power from a clear class perspective.
- Common European or international campaigns of labour unions and social movements concerning the previous points.
- Pedagogy regarding the disastrous effects of the European Union on employment, inequalities and social rights.
- Opposition, disobedience and struggles against all the institutions of neoliberal capitalism that prevent the implementation of the social rights of the workers and citizens, including the European Union.

The employment and social rights issues are not just about economic redistribution but fundamentally about equality and democracy. This is also the reason why unionism and social struggles should clearly oppose the pro-capitalist European institutions. At all the economic and territorial levels, we need to foster democratic uprisings against the neoliberal order, by weaving new alliances between the anti-capitalist, ecologist, feminist, antiracist social movements and with all the struggles aiming at social justice.

Chapter 5 - Ecosocialism and energy transition

The sustainability of life and social reproduction of human beings are a basic element that must be defended at any level of social and political action, and also by an alternative European political project that would be supported by the popular classes. Sustainability requires meeting the current needs of the population and of the ecosystems to

Meeting the current needs of
the population and of the
ecosystems to which we
belong

which we belong, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs, combining economic organisation with social welfare and caring for the environment. These aims are contradictory with the current economy, and notably with the way of life in rich countries and of the bourgeoisie in poorer countries, the production means and the infrastructures and all the capitalist system of production, exchange and consumption.

The political change project must thus seek the transition from capitalism to another sustainable economic system, and this radical transition must be democratic. It should clearly incorporate the defence of rights of the ecosystems (in which human beings are included), which guarantees a healthy and sustainable environment through the fight against pollution, the preservation of biodiversity and the protection of natural resources. The access and preservation of commons such as air, water or land, the basis of the support of life and the production of food, should be considered basic human rights.

The defence of ecological sustainability implies assuming that nature and the environment are not an inexhaustible source of resources; therefore, the socio-economic organisation must be based on its protection and proper use.

The physical limits of the planet constitute a challenge to the requirements of growth and continuous accumulation under which global capitalism is organised and, specifically, the neoliberal project of the European Union. The planetary ecosystems can no longer supply materials in the quantities and conditions of profitability demanded by capital, nor is it capable of absorbing its waste in natural drains. In this regard, if we want to have 50% chance of staying under the ceiling of 1.5°C increase in average temperatures without a “temporary breaching of the ceiling” and without the use of negative emission technologies and/or geoengineering, the global net emissions of GHG need to decrease by 58% between 2020 and 2030, and be down to zero before 2050. After this date, global emissions would need to be negative.²⁵

A consistent environmental commitment cannot be limited to modifying the humanity-nature relationship in general, without getting involved in the simultaneous claim of sustainability and social equality, which guarantees the satisfaction of social needs and especially protects the popular classes: it is about guarantee sustainability with social justice, and guarantee social equity without productivism.

²⁵ See Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), “Special Report: Global Warming of 1,5°C”, October 2018.

To sum it up, we need an anti-capitalist, eco-socialist, anti-productivist and de-growth programme. In Europe, it implies a radical break with the pro-capitalist EU and its “climate policies”, and particularly with polluting licences, green bonds and cat bonds, and more generally with the perspective of a “green capitalism”²⁶ that the European Commission tries to promote. The treaties and the ecological policies of the European institutions, which are closely linked to the lobbies notably of energy and agribusiness (see for example the Monsanto papers), should be abandoned and replaced in order to allow the radical transformation of the economy that we urgently need.

The treaties and the ecological policies of the European institutions, which are closely linked to the lobbies notably of energy and agribusiness, should be abandoned

I. EVIDENCE

The evidences concern climate change, but also the depletion of fossil fuels and the loss of biodiversity as well as of raw materials, soil and water.

Climate change

Various scientific studies suggest that adequate conditions for the sustainable maintenance of human societies are guaranteed only if the increase in average temperature does not exceed pre-industrial levels by 1.5°C.²⁷ To do this, the concentration of atmospheric CO₂ must be stabilised at no more than 350 ppm (parts per million),²⁸ but at present 400 ppm is already exceeded.

Climate change has its responsible actors and its victims. In its origin is the productivist logic of continuous growth, driven by the intensive and expanded use of fossil fuels, highly polluting. The business interests, the decisions of the political elites, and the intensive use of resources by the richest populations (and above all in richest countries) are among the main responsible for the situation. Conversely, the most affected regions are those where the poor populations live: the United Nations estimates that there are already around 64 million people displaced by the effects of climate change, and UNHCR estimates that global warming could push the exile to a billion people in the coming decades.²⁹

²⁶ See Daniel Tanuro, *Green capitalism. Why it can't work*, Merlin Press, London, 2013.

²⁷ See James Hansen et alii (2016): “Ice melt, sea level rise and superstorms: evidence from paleoclimate data, climate modeling, and modern observations that 2°C global warming could be dangerous”. Atmospheric Chemistry and Physics. URL: <https://www.atmos-chem-phys.net/16/3761/2016/acp-16-3761-2016.pdf>.

²⁸ See Iñigo Capellán Pérez. (2014): “Agotamiento de los combustibles fósiles y escenarios socio económicos: un enfoque integrado”. URL: http://www.eis.uva.es/energiasostenible/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Capellanetall2014_esp.pdf.

²⁹ See José Bautista. (24 June 2017). “Refugiados climáticos: hablan las víctimas del calentamiento global”. La Marea. URL: <https://www.lamarea.com/2017/06/24/refugiados-climaticos/>.

Deforestation and crises in food production especially affect poor rural populations. Even the World Bank states that 100 million people (notably peasants, farmers and fishermen) could fall over poverty by 2030 because of climate change.³⁰

100 million people (notably peasants, farmers and fishermen) could fall over poverty by 2030 because of climate change

Depletion of fossil fuels

Non-renewable fuels continue to be the main sustenance of global capitalism. But now we have reached, or have already exceeded, the peak of availability, from which the resources are obtained in decreasing amounts, with lower quality, with more technical, financial and energy requirements, and with more risks (due to offshore drilling, shale gas, oil slicks, etc) for the ecosystems.

Since 2005, the worldwide extractive capacity of “conventional oil” (the highest quality and the most accessible) is stagnant;³¹ the peak of the gas will occur between 2020 and 2039;³² that of coal is more difficult to calculate, some studies suggest that it will occur between 2025 and 2045.

The lower availability of oil will accelerate the fall of the extraction of the rest of energy raw materials, since oil plays a fundamental role in their extraction, commercialisation and transportation. All this implies a tendency to increase raw material prices, increase in speculation, and the need for large investments with unsecured economic returns. In this way, the geological and economic limits announce scenarios of increasing scarcity of fossil energy sources.

The functioning of the productive apparatus, but also the living conditions of the population, are organised around an abundant and cheap supply of energy. The lower availability of energy raw materials, of which all the countries of the EU are net importers, imply a risk for social sustainability. It requires a rapid process of energy transition based on the political commitment of a socially fair distribution of the burdens and benefits of the process.

For this it is fundamental to replace the fossil and nuclear energy sources with others of a renewable nature that promote a viable model based on a deep productive reconversion that drastically reduces energy consumption.

Replace the fossil and nuclear energy sources with others of a renewable nature that promote a viable model based on a deep productive reconversion that drastically reduces energy consumption.

³⁰ See World Bank. (2015). “The Impacts of Climate Change on Poverty in 2030 and the Potential from Rapid, Inclusive, and Climate-Informed Development”. Working Paper.

³¹ See International Energy Agency. (2015). World Energy Outlook 2015.; Political Economist. (2016). “World Energy 2016-2050: Annual Report”.; Minqi Li. (2017). “World Energy 2017-2050: Annual Report”.

³² See Dennis Coyne. (2015). “World Natural Gas Shock Model”.

Biodiversity loss

The sustenance of life depends basically on nature (food, drinking water, clean air, energy, raw materials). Every economic and social organisation depends on the existence of healthy and diverse natural systems for the regulation and purification of water and air, basic climatic conditions, pollination, the dispersion of seeds, the control of pests and diseases, among others.

The sixth mass extinction of species in the history of the Earth is currently taking place.³³ Throughout the planet “between 1970 and 2012 the population of vertebrates suffered a decrease of 58%, 38% in terrestrial species, 81% in freshwater species and 36% in the marine environment”. This dynamic assumes an average annual decline in the existence of animal species of 2%. In global terms, at present the species extinction rate is 100 to 1,000 times higher than in pre-industrial periods.³⁴

Loss of raw materials, soil and water

Today the global demand for minerals is much greater than its availability. Technological development depends on the availability of these increasingly less accessible materials and whose extraction requires fossil energy also in decline. Added to this are the high social and environmental costs of extractive systems that are increasingly energy-consuming, harmful and violent to the environment and the populations involved. The European Union is highly dependent on the external supply of this type of material; from a list of global reserves of 45 elements, only 2 of them are available in any country of the EU (40% of the strontium reserves are in Spain and just over 10% of the selenium reserves are in Belgium). Everything else comes from importing from third countries.

Soil and water are also essential resources in danger, not only in quantity but also in quality. 20% of the world's aquifers are overexploited and erosion and climate change are significantly reducing the availability of fertile soils. Given that 70% of the water is used for food and we are depleting the aquifers, the production of food will be irretrievably compromised. Between 1960 and 2010 renewable water resources per capita in Europe decreased by 24%, especially in the south of the continent.

**Between 1960 and 2010
renewable water resources
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³³ See WWF. (2016). “Living Planet Report 2016”. URL: https://wwf.panda.org/wwf_news/?282370/Living-Planet-Report-2016.

³⁴ See Millenium Ecosystem Assessment Board. (2005). “Living beyond our means. Natural assets and human well-being.” Statement of the Board.

II. PROPOSALS

Structural policies that face the crisis we have described need to be addressed. The urgency advises to frame them within an emergency plan to face sustainability in a framework of social justice. Given its global nature, programmatic proposals cannot be reduced exclusively to “environmental” issues, but must include other measures in the productive, financial, urban, educational and cultural fields. In any

case, a popular government should consider as a priority axis a strategy with these objectives, setting environmental rights at the highest level (including a possible state constitutional reform and taking this issue into account in constituent processes in Europe) and developing a powerful public pole to plan and promote these measurements.

A popular government should consider as a priority axis a strategy setting environmental rights at the highest level

Immediate citizen initiatives

The necessary changes to address the crisis described will only be possible with a great social support, based on a well-informed citizenship and willing to promote and be co-responsible for the transformations.

Therefore, it is necessary to:

- 1) Encourage, protect and develop citizen initiatives that are already and really oriented towards the socio-ecological transition (cooperatives of public services, agroecological consumption, recycling, ecological restoration, industries in the process of reconversion, etc.).
- 2) Promote awareness-raising and the organisation of self-organised initiatives functioning as laboratories of experiences that can be increased in scale in the future.
- 3) Deepen the establishment of public-community alliances, involving the organised society in the transition process.

Immediate steps of popular governments

We are aware that an ecological and energy program for the working classes of Europe will be conditioned by the current macroeconomic context, geopolitics, the price of energy and the energy crisis, the evolution of climate change as well as the European Commission's own plans and policies. We know also that a program like the one described below will necessarily require to establish a new way in which ordinary people and their institutions relate to the management of ecology and energy in many of its aspects.

We urgently need a public ownership of the energy sector, which implies to expropriate the private energy companies and to transfer them to a socialised public owned sector of energy

In order to guarantee a democratic program in favour of the social majorities, we urgently need a public ownership of the energy sector, which implies to expropriate the private energy companies and to transfer them to a socialised public owned sector of energy. We also need a citizen control of the means and aims of production in all sectors, which should be the closest possible to the fields and to the needs concerned, as well as a democratic control at State level of the key elements: infrastructures, economic players, financing mechanisms, strategic planning, and associated industry.

An energy and ecological transition program must be based on the following principles:

- 1) Public-community should control the main elements of socioeconomic structures, which is the only way to make democratic decisions that benefit the interests of the working and popular classes.
- 2) We need to reshape entirely the economy, in full and clear rupture with the capitalist system, into a democratic mode of production being organised closer to the population in order to drastically reduce the socio-environmental impacts of the current cycle of production and consumption.
- 3) Mechanisms must be created to finance the transition and they should be consistent with the chapters of the Manifesto dedicated to debt, the banking sector and the monetary system as well as employment and social rights.
- 4) We need a strategic prioritisation of the actions of transition in terms of its positive impact, which will depend fundamentally on its proximity to the systemic structures and the risk associated with them.

In line with the previous principles, the energy and ecological transition program would include the following structural actions:

- A program for the popular classes of Europe should contemplate a combination of objectives with temporal horizons legally linked to effective tools – indicators systems, data collection methods, measurement systems, best practices, budget, evaluation system, etc. – that allow reaching the objectives. These effective tools permit to establish democratically binding objectives, which are necessary.
- Reducing the risks and delaying the failure phase should be the two basic objectives of the culture of resilience, and to achieve them it will be necessary to plan:
 - a) Structures for generating new knowledge and monitoring good practices and success stories
 - b) Systems of indicators and continuous evaluation
 - c) Emergency protocols
 - d) New institutions and community dynamics that favor resilience
 - e) Adapted infrastructures

The only effective, rapid and democratic option to guide a radical transition (i.e. a revolution of the economy) in favour of the popular classes is to socialise the key sectors of the economy and to increase public investment to boost the economy in the right direction.

In order for the public sector to fulfil its dynamic function of the transition and to be financed without the pressure of capitalist market, it needs monetary autonomy. For this purpose, the rules of the European Monetary Union should be abandoned and replaced by other forms of financial cooperation in Europe. Both the macroeconomic approach to public investment and monetary autonomy are intimately linked to the other parts of the program in which it is dealt with in greater depth (for an in-depth explanation, see said sections).

In order for the public sector to fulfil its dynamic function of the transition and to be financed without the pressure of capitalist market, it needs monetary autonomy

Likewise, we should create the financing mechanisms and tools that allow us to mobilise large sums of money that are necessary to guarantee our transition. Only for the energy transition it is estimated that investments of 280 billion euros per year will be needed in the EU until 2050 to carry out the transition successfully, which is equivalent to 2% of the current GDP of the EU.

Funding mechanisms are required that allow the energy transition to be stable, predictable and with democratic control. To achieve adequate financing dynamics and avoid corruption and the creation of clientelist networks, money must reach the right hands in sufficient quantity and without compromising the development of other legitimate aspirations of the popular classes. For this purpose, public banking close to the local level and to popular classes must be developed to obtain the greatest efficiency with democratic criteria.

We must push for a development model that favours local production, reduces the overall socio-environmental impact and generates local prosperity, even without GDP growth. For this, it will be necessary to develop an industry associated with the transition that allows for the establishment of favourable monetary conditions, as well as reducing external dependencies and the balance of payments.

The development of an own industry will allow to create quality jobs, to integrate training structures in production and financing circuits, and to develop research, development and investment dynamics that generate more economic efficiency favourable to workers and new production processes as well as infrastructures adapted to the needs of each territory. Once the decision-making capacity on the strategic elements of the ecological and energy policy is in public hands, the model should be redesigned according to the metabolic needs of the territories.

For this purpose, it will be necessary to define the basic criteria that allow the reconfiguration of institutional units for the management of energy, water and food that help to improve resilience and environmental and social sustainability from a more local sphere than the current one.

The magnitude of the environmental problems will require, in a short period of time, radical and huge socio-economic transformations. Therefore, in addition to developing specific actions, the government should implement emergency and exceptional mechanisms to promote those actions that, due to their severity and urgency, need to be addressed immediately. The previous actions must be accompanied by the following sectoral measures:

Conservation of nature and biodiversity

In order to contribute to the preservation of key natural systems and cycles, it is necessary to focus efforts on the:

- 1) control of the urbanisation and land occupation process;
- 2) mitigation and adaptation to climate change;
- 3) correction of overexploitation of ecosystems;
- 4) reinforcement of legislation and regulations to reduce pollution and alterations in biogeochemical cycles;
- 5) initiatives to face the expansion of invasive species;
- 6) multiply the measures to reduce wildfires.
- 7) Reforestation and development of agroforestry

Energy / climate

The following initiatives are necessary concerning

- Public-community control:
 - a nationalisation / socialisation plan for the means of production that takes into account the most important elements, such as energy companies, infrastructure, operators and pricing and tax systems
 - the redefinition of the state model based on the relocation needs of the economy (energy), fundamentally based on the governance or management of the common
 - a contingency plan, embedded in the culture of resilience, based on studies of sensitivity of the economy to changes in energy prices and other variables.
- Financing:
 - the connection and harmony with the socialisation of banking sector and monetary autonomy
 - an energy financing plan, which not only includes the guarantee of sufficient national financing and efficient mechanisms, but also criteria and priority of redistribution of wealth
- Industry:
 - to reduce the industrial consumption of energy

- to develop a relocated (broad-spectrum), public owned and socialised energy industry and to transform every sector of the industrial production on the basis of renewable and non-polluting energy
 - to generate a democratic legislative body that pushes demand in the right direction
 - to generate the necessary training structures for the radical transformation of industries according to the aims of the ecological and energy transition
- Material resources:

We need to:

- prohibit fracking techniques and close all nuclear and thermal power plants based on fossil fuels;
 - incorporate in the Human Rights the Water Supply and Sanitation and the Provision of basic energy supplies for households;
 - implement waste management policies aimed at the closure of material cycles;
 - favour territorial decentralisation and the organisational democratisation of the economic system;
 - establish strategies for adapting urban metabolism to local biocapacity and climate change;
 - increase resilience and reduction of the ecological, energy and climate footprint to achieve “almost zero” carbon balances before the middle of the century;
 - guarantee the public management of the soils, and thus prevent the speculative dynamics from determining the urban spatial configuration;
 - transform mobility both in urban and rural areas, as well as between those two (by the limitation of the use of private vehicles and the increase of public transport and electrification of motorised services) and preserve air quality in cities;
 - impose to the producers the reduction of packing; and recycle systematically urban solid waste, to reach a reduction of its volume to that of 1990, and to reduce the generation of greenhouse gas by more than 50% by mid-century.
- Food and health:

The following objectives are to be implemented:

- provide not only the rural population but also urban and peri-urban population with access to land and other infrastructure necessary for production

(transformation centres, shared machinery, etc.) and social reproduction (housing, schools, health centres, etc.);

- promote agricultural uses without pesticides or synthetic fertilisers;
- reduce the irrigated area quickly, replacing irrigated crops with rainfed crops, notably by promoting more varied cultures, and more resistance species that are less water consuming;
- increase investment in research and development in agroecological production systems and recover the traditional knowledges;
- encourage the decrease in the consumption of foods of animal origin, especially meat;
- encourage extensive livestock farming compared to the industrial one, adapting livestock production to the biocapacity of the territories and recovering the most fertile land for vegetable production destined for human consumption;

Medium-term steps of governments.

In the medium term, a popular government committed to ecological sustainability and support for the popular classes should promote the redefinition and resizing of the main economic sectors. The overall objective of this restructuring is to obtain energy savings, to reduce GHG emissions, to eliminate unnecessary production, to decrease the obsolescence of production and to reduce working time, while optimising opportunities for creation and distribution of decent work. Depending on the characteristics of each specific sector, it will be essential to promote the spatial decentralisation of economic activities, the regional integration of the city and the closure of resource-waste cycles in the industry.

Promote the spatial decentralisation of economic activities, the regional integration of the city and the closure of resource-waste cycles in the industry

A fundamental part of the provision of quality goods and services must be guaranteed by a sector of socialised economy, which should include energy, transport, communications, housing, health and education.

A sector of socialised economy should include energy, transport, communications, housing, health and education.

The productive restructuring must be accompanied by a reduction of the global physical scale of the economy or economic relocation, to adapt it to the limits of sustainability. In addition, the material decrease in the sphere of production and reproduction must be accompanied by a fair distribution of employment, the guarantee of basic universal social benefits and free access for all to public services.

We will also have to face a reform of the consumption devices, promoting the collective, democratically managed, ones (with some guarantee and institutional regulation) over the individual ones and all those mediated by the market.

Here are some of the concrete measures to be developed:

- establish long-term objectives and strategies, either constitutionally or through legislative development;
- create democratic mechanisms of investment and financing (with the socialisation of banks, but also the cancellation of the illegitimate, illegal, odious and unsustainable part of public debt, etc.) of the ecosocialist transition;
- redefine energy, water and land management units with a methodological, metabolic approach;
- implement systems of indicators that, beyond GDP, allow for an integral evaluation of their evolution;
- preserve the key terrestrial (and hydrological), coastal and marine ecological systems, strengthening their public ownership and/or common management;
- eliminate the legal barriers to agroecological production by small farmers, develop public services with free and easy access for all, encourage living in rural areas and freeing up urban spaces and increase the self-sufficiency of cities;
- develop a new model of energy companies and guaranteeing the control of income and rates, improvements in the internal management of (public) companies, the regulation of data privacy, new business models, etc.;
- implement a strategy that allows the anticipation of possible local ecological conflicts (and the democratic arbitration of these conflicts) associated with economic relocation.

Medium-term initiatives in the international field

Trying to solve socio-ecological and energy challenges from each country is essential (which can also allow very interesting social and political repositioning), but it is totally unfeasible if the internal initiatives of transition are not accompanied by international action. This implies mainly:

1) The modification of European regulations:

For there to be public leadership, we need to overcome the European competition and to modify the public procurement regulations. A radical change of the European criterion of stability and limitation of the public deficit is also absolutely required if we want to guarantee sufficient investments in the ecological transition. The current European monetary restrictions

A radical change of the European criterion of stability and limitation of the public deficit is also absolutely required if we want to guarantee sufficient investments in the ecological transition.

and management must also be entirely abandoned and replaced, in order to be done with mercantile regulations and to take the first steps of creating the democratic and distributed industry.

2) In the EU Biodiversity Strategies, implement mandatory measures for companies and investors, notably concerning the issue of public health (reduction of air pollution, prohibition of polluting and pathogen pesticides, etc.).

3) Replace multilateral treaties (such as Energy Charter, “international dispute settlements” mechanisms in “free trade” agreements, etc.) and every treaty that opposes the stated objectives.

CONCLUSION

Guaranteeing the living conditions of the current working classes and of future generations requires a transition from the capitalist model in which they are trapped under the EU to a model that is socially and ecologically sustainable, and that seeks decent employment for all.

In order to carry out this transition, the following principles will be essential:

- 1) Public-community control of the main elements of socioeconomic structures, which is the only way to make democratic decisions that benefit the interests of the working and popular classes.
- 2) Reshape entirely the economy, in full and clear rupture with the capitalist system, into a democratic mode of production being organised closer to the population in order to drastically reduce the socio-environmental impacts of the current cycle of production and consumption.

At the European level, the essential measures – already detailed above and summarised below – are to:

- 1) modify competition regulations, public, commercial, monetary and financial contracts in order to guarantee the development of a sustainable and democratic economic model;
- 2) create the necessary new structures and institutions to execute the ecological and energetic transition plans;
- 3) preserve the key terrestrial (and hydrological), coastal and marine ecological systems, strengthening their ownership and public or common management.

And at the level of member States, popular governments must:

- 1) carry out an Emergency Plan to address sustainability in a framework of social justice;
- 2) develop plans for democratisation and public-community control of the main elements of the economy in order to make the transition quickly and effectively, with low environmental impact and with reduced social and labor risk, and with enough money to achieve the objective of the transition;

- 3) guarantee the access of the popular classes to basic goods avoiding abuses and waste;
- 4) adapt their institutions and structures to the new economy based on satisfying the needs of the popular classes.

A radical ecosocialist transition plan is needed in Europe, as well as in the rest of the world. For this purpose, beginning to concretely overtake capitalism is not only a matter of equality and democracy, but also of the survival and reproduction of the ecosystems to which human beings belong. In this perspective, a radical break with the current European treaties and institutions, and their replacement by alternative forms of international cooperation, are an absolutely necessary condition.

Chapter 6 - Feminism

I. DIAGNOSIS

We are living in a time of profound crisis that has a particularly negative impact on the lives of women as well as negative impact on minorities (migrant communities), people with disabilities and the LGBTIQ community.

Since the start of the latest capitalist economic crisis of 2008 the gap between male and female employment rates has mostly decreased in the EU member states, but the data varies and there are differences between core-periphery and non-EU member states, as well as differences between each state.³⁵

The causes of this decrease are explained by the fact that during the crisis predominantly male sectors have been hit by layoffs and cuts while on the other hand, women continue to prevail in what are mostly feminised professions, worse paid, but more stable in times of crisis, such as teachers, health, care (nurses) or public sector workers in general. However, this in no way implies that women are no longer subject to gender inequalities and discrimination in employment, wages and working conditions. They are and have historically been. This trend still continues.³⁶ For example, the gender wage gap, one of the structural features of the capitalist system persists everywhere without exception. Within the EU countries the average gender wage gap is about 16.2%, with significant national differences. The gender wage gap also differs across industrial sectors and it is generally higher in the private than in the public sector.³⁷

Relevant research also shows that women, despite the decrease in unemployment rates, are more vulnerable and exposed to risks of poverty. This trend continues as well. The research also confirms that although the unemployment gap between male and female rates of participation is reduced, in some cases

Women are more vulnerable
to unemployment and
exposed to risks of poverty

women even surpassing men in tertiary education attainment, it nonetheless does not reduce the fact that women are more likely to be exposed to violence, health and poverty risks.

It has long been debated that in times of crises, women enter the labour market as they in general represent a more precarious and less stable workforce, with lower overall

³⁵ See Eurostat's unemployment statistics: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics#Male_and_female_unemployment

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ See for example the website *Gender Pay Gap*, which monitors wage differences between men and women: <http://genderpaygap.eu/>; see also Eurostat? "Women in the EU earned on average 16% less than men in 2016", Eurostat news release, 7 March 2018. URL: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/8718272/3-07032018-BP-EN.pdf/fb402341-e7fd-42b8-a7cc-4e33587d79aa>; Veronika Hedija, "Sector-specific gender pay gap: evidence from the European Union Countries", *Economic Research-Ekonomska Istraživanja*, 30:1, 2017. URL: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/1331677X.2017.1392886>.

participation rates and thus provide the slack for temporary substitutes to the overall male bread-winner model.³⁸

The official EU statistics confirms for example that women, compared to men, are the ones more likely to take part-time jobs.³⁹ Since the economic crisis broke out and the welfare-state started to disintegrate, fiscal discipline, cuts in social spending and public funds in general have significantly reduced the subsidies for education, health and care (and again, we can observe the differences between the core and periphery among EU member states as well as well as non-EU states).

This in turn means that the burden of social reproduction fell upon families and women in particular: women are thus forced to take temporary jobs in order to be able to cover some of the expenses and contribute to the family budget and to be able to dedicate themselves to children and the elderly. This is to say that services that are formerly purchased are now replaced by intensive female labour, particularly in household tasks. Single mothers in particular are more vulnerable and likely to be exposed to various forms of poverty and other social disadvantages: “some groups of women are characterised by a higher propensity to work part time, namely, those in the youngest and oldest age groups and the mothers of young children.”⁴⁰

The burden of social reproduction fell upon families and women in particular

Additionally, “part-time jobs are often of lower quality with lower hourly wages, provide poorer training and career opportunities, and, in the long run, reduce pension entitlements. Far more women than men work on a part-time basis. In 2015, on average in the EU, 8.9 per cent of men worked part-time in contrast to 32.1 per cent of women”.⁴¹ Temporary employment is also a means of promoting “market flexibility”, and in some countries, in particular Italy, Greece and Spain women are more likely to have long-term part time employments. More generally, under the impulse of the Council of the European Union, labour laws are being torn up and company agreements are being imposed over branch agreements, enabling employers to force flexible working conditions upon women and loosen hygiene, safety and work protections.

³⁸ See Marion Cochard, Gérard Cornilleau and Hélène Périvier, “A gender analysis of the economic crisis on labour market in six European countries”. URL: http://www.euroframe.org/files/user_upload/euroframe/docs/2011/EUROF11_Cochard_Cornilleau_Perivier.pdf; Hélène Périvier, “Men and women during the economic crisis”, *Revue de l’OFCE*, 2014/2 (No. 133). URL: <https://www.cairn.info/revue-de-l-ofce-2014-2-page-41.htm#>; Vicki Smith, “The Circular Trap: Women and Part-Time Work”, *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 28, 1983. URL: <http://berkeleyjournal.org/2016/03/from-the-archives-the-circular-trap-women-and-part-time-work/>.

³⁹ See European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), *Gender equality and economic independence: part-time work and self-employment*. Report, October 2014. URL: <https://eige.europa.eu/rdc/eige-publications/gender-equality-and-economic-independence-part-time-work-and-self-employment-report>.

⁴⁰ Ilona Kiaušienė, “Comparative assessment of women unemployment and poverty in European Union”, *Intellectual Economics*, Volume 9, Issue 2, August 2015. URL: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1822801115300059>; see also Frédéric Salladarré and Stéphane Hlaimi, “Women and part time work in Europe”, *International Labour Review*, Vol. 153 (2014), No. 2.

⁴¹ European Commission – Directorate-general Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, “Part-time work: A divided Europe”, News, 4 May 2016. URL: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1196&newsId=2535&furtherNews=yes>.

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights in its report “Migrants, minorities and employment Exclusion and discrimination in the 27 Member States of the European Union Update 2003 – 2008” published in 2010 stated that:

„available data indicates that migrant and minority women occupy the least-paid and least-skilled jobs in the most marginalised segments of the labour market. Often, their employment opportunities are restricted to work in the domestic sphere, with a high risk of insecurity and, often, irregular working conditions. In addition, discrimination experiences of migrant and minority women are different according to the various social and legal positions they occupy and to the attitudes of the majority population they are confronted with”.⁴²

The Balkans states, which are not all yet in the EU also exhibit similar traits. In the period of the so-called transition, nearly all of these countries have faced severe economic and social problems that are only exacerbated by the current crisis. The overall deindustrialisation, subsequent high unemployment rates and debt-based growth, followed imposed structural adjustment programmes by the IMF, ECB and the EU have had devastating effects on entire societies and on women in particular. In nearly all of these countries the differences between male and female work participation rates persist and they are related to several factors – from having children and taking care of other family members (often enlarged family) combined with a lack of state support and institutions for child and elderly care, to traditionally present discrimination by the employers who are less likely to employ women.

In some countries, like Bosnia and Herzegovina, the rate of illiteracy is almost 3%, and the majority of the illiterate population is comprised of women. The rate of functional illiteracy is higher, and computer illiteracy is around 40%.⁴³ All of these countries were forced to adopt the neoliberal economic agenda, change labour laws, give incentives to big capital by introducing very low flat tax rates and various forms of regressive indirect taxation and liberalise markets.

Even though the official EU statistics claim that the rate of poverty has been reduced following either enlargement or the signing of stabilisation and association agreements, the truth is that all of these countries have actually been struck by a massive wave of emigration which is not accounted for. In economic terms, this is similar to the wave of emigration from the peripheral EU countries: labour is exported to cover trade imbalances and repay private and public debt.

Labour is exported to cover trade imbalances and repay private and public debt

In sum, according to official European statistics, around 24% percent of the population in Europe are at risk of poverty and exclusion. Approximately one in four Europeans experiences some form of poverty, not counting the non-EU member states, where the rates

⁴² European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). URL: <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2011/migrants-minorities-and-employment-exclusion-and-discrimination-27-member-states>.

⁴³ See the official statistics of 2013 for Bosnia and Herzegovina: <http://fzs.ba/index.php/popis-stanovnistva/popis-stanovnistva-2013/konacni-rezultati-popisa-2013/>. For statistics concerning functional illiteracy in developed EU states, see for example (in French): Justyna Bednarz, “L’analphabétisme fonctionnel des adultes dans les pays riches de l’ouest”, *Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE)*. URL: <https://ec.europa.eu/epale/fr/blog/analfabetyzm-funkcjonalny-doroslych-w-krajach-bogatego-zachodu>.

are even higher.⁴⁴ As previously mentioned, women are more likely to experience forms of exclusion, poverty and violence, both in the home and at work.

II. BACK TO THE HOME? IMPOSING THE DUAL BURDEN

With the rise of right-wing extremist and racist movements, the Left is facing challenges on all fronts. The rise in the so-called alt-right ideology has brought another peculiarity: an attack on feminism and feminist movements that from the 1960s onwards have gained significant public influence and did much to liberate and emancipate women all over the world. Increasingly, feminism is demonised by the right-wing political movements, parties and right-wing, racist, homophobic civil society associations. Violence against women is on the rise in its various forms: from femicides to an onslaught on women’s reproductive rights and life conditions in general.

Violence against women is on the rise from femicides to an onslaught on women’s reproductive rights and life conditions in general

The media generally support the conservatives and thus present the whole issue as a conflict of values. We are thus presented with an ideologically biased story where feminism and feminist values are presented as being against the family and opposed to the heteronormative and patriarchal values that want to save the world from the feminists. The truth however is different.

What in fact we are faced with is the crisis resulting from the collapse of the welfare-state. With it, the entire burden of social reproduction is transferred onto families in general and women in particular. Women, who suffer a structural gender pay gap are, on the one hand, forced to undertake further paid work; and on the other are obliged to undertake more reproductive labour, housework and care of children and the elderly (and they take care of the expanded family as well, in particular in the periphery countries and non-EU member states). What is sometimes seen as a right wing aberration, the idea that any 'return to the family' is in stark opposition of the current status quo, is actually an attempt to naturalise capitalism in its neo-liberal form.

The idea behind this naturalisation is to say that the collapse of the welfare-state in the sectors of public education, health and care is necessary, and that women are to be presented yet again as mothers, educators and carers and that this is their natural and only possible role. It is not feminism for all (unlike middle class or lean-in feminism for wealthier and well paid women) or the left that “undermines the family”, but, as Marx and Engels pointed out, it is capitalism and its crises that cause discord in the home, violence against women, force children onto the streets and isolate human beings from each other.

⁴⁴ See Luz Solano-Flórez, “12 Facts About Poverty in Europe”, *The Borgen Project*. URL: <https://borgenproject.org/facts-about-poverty-in-europe/>; Daniel Linotte, “Poverty in the Balkans”, *European Western Balkans*. URL: <https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2017/01/24/poverty-in-the-balkans/>.

And yet, precisely because of the crises, for many people family appears as the only space of safety, representing a mechanism of mutual aid against the tyranny of the ‘free market’. This is the material basis for popular support for the ideas of the right, in the absence of a left-wing alternative. This is why certain political and ideological circles are attacking feminism and trying to annul everything women for which women had fought for centuries inside the feminist and workers’ movement.

It is for this reason that we find feminist mobilisations across the world particularly relevant. From South America, through Africa, India, North America and Europe, feminist mobilisations have had tremendous impact in this period when nothing seemed to be on the horizon.

Moreover, since 2015 the movement *Ni Una Menos*⁴⁵, which originated in Argentina’s 2015 feminist mobilisations has spread to almost all continents. Since 2015 feminist groups and movements have organised numerous protests demanding equality, not just in terms of rights. It is precisely women organised around various feminist groups who have campaigned, for example in Poland

Feminist movements are the only ones currently at the fore of the struggle against capitalism and an overall attack on life

against the abortion ban or in Ireland for a referendum which successfully legalised the right to abortion. In other European countries, feminist movements are the only ones currently at the fore of the struggle against capitalism and an overall attack on life (conditions we live in, destruction of the environment, education, health and care systems...). In 2018 we have seen one of the biggest waves of global women’s protest with the organisation of the international women’s strike. This unprecedented form of struggle, which mobilised millions of organised women workers in both Spain and Italy on general strike, brought together perhaps for the first time, large masses of women in work and women working in the home, thereby overcoming the classic bourgeois separation between public and private, which also takes the form of the gendered separation between male and female spheres.

Feminist mobilisations were successful precisely because they managed to show that it’s not about a “conflict of values”, but an attempt to transfer the entire burden of social reproduction on the family and women. It is on this basis and on the basis of uniting with the unions that mobilisations were successful.

Recently, we have also seen a wave of protests in Google, where workers across continents organised a campaign, “Walk out”, leaving their offices in order to protest against widespread sexual harassment within the company and pervasive gender wage gaps, demanding the company deal with cases of sexual harassment accusations against its senior executives and implement equal pay for equal work.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ See (in Spanish): <http://niunamenos.org.ar/category/manifiestos/>; see also (in Spanish) Natalia Figueroa, “‘Ni una menos’: el movimiento que promueve la protección y organización entre mujeres”, *diarioUchile*, 22 October 2016. URL: <https://radio.uchile.cl/2016/10/22/ni-una-menos-el-movimiento-que-promueve-la-proteccion-y-organizacion-entre-mujeres/>.

⁴⁶ See “Google walkout: global protests after sexual misconduct allegations”. *The Guardian*, 1 November 2018. URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2018/nov/01/google-walkout-global-protests-employees-sexual-harassment-scandals>

Many experiences from around the world show that when investors attack the resources of local communities, women are first on the fronts to defend the public goods. And it is because women are the first ones to feel the long-term negative effects of the scarcity of resources, the damage to the environment, as well as the consequences of austerity policies.

For these reasons we believe that it is not enough to simply oppose blatant misogyny, but also nationalism, racism and xenophobia. These struggles have to be united with struggles for equality that go beyond the frameworks of pure legal equality. The onslaught of neoliberal measures, indebtedness, commodification of housing and the welfare crisis are taking a massive toll all over the planet. We need a broader feminist movement united with the struggles over work, wages, housing, care, education, health, and against the attack on life and our means of subsistence.

It is not enough to simply oppose blatant misogyny, but also nationalism, racism and xenophobia

All relevant research point to the fact that we have reached a critical threshold and that we are actually on the point of no return. The only way out is a struggle against big capital in order to emancipate ourselves and the conditions we live in. *Ni Una Menos* can serve as one of the best examples and inspirations for, as summarised by a collective of feminists, taking inspiration from *Ni Una Menos* means opposing violence with its many sides:

“Violence against women, as they define it, has many facets: it is domestic violence, but also the violence of the market, of debt, of capitalist property relations, and of the state; the violence of discriminatory policies against lesbian, trans and queer women, the violence of state criminalisation of migratory movements, the violence of mass incarceration, and the institutional violence against women’s bodies through abortion bans and lack of access to free healthcare and free abortion. Their perspective informs our determination to oppose the institutional, political, cultural, and economic attacks on Muslim and migrant women, on women of colour and working and unemployed women, on lesbian, gender nonconforming, and trans-women.”⁴⁷

III. PROPOSALS

Popular left-wing governments need to synthesise the struggles of the movements and go beyond mere demands for formal equality to challenge the gender division of labour and the privatised, gendered character of social reproduction. The roots of the contemporary form of patriarchy lie in the privatised character of the reproduction of labour power, and the responsibility of women for its upbringing and maintenance. There is a unity between the character of labour power as a commodity and the gender division of labour, the idea of

⁴⁷ Angela Davis, Barbara Ransby, Cinzia Arruzza, Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, Linda Martín Alcoff, Nancy Fraser, Rasmea Yousef Odeh and Tithi Bhattacharya, “Beyond Lean-In: For a Feminism of the 99% and a Militant International Strike on March 8”, *Viewpoint Magazine*, 3 February 2017. URL : <https://www.viewpointmag.com/2017/02/03/beyond-lean-in-for-a-feminism-of-the-99-and-a-militant-international-strike-on-march-8/>.

women's work and role in society, which presents itself in the division between private and public, family and society, emotion and reason, the different forms of feminised care work and the production of value.

It is these separations and alienations which turn the family into a central ballast of a system in crisis, a ready support for reactionary ideas that seek to make women pay for the crisis of capital – that we must attack. We must present credible proposals for the public funding of the socialisation of social reproduction. We must massively invest in communal creches, restaurants, and laundries with the longer term aim of delivering these as free public goods at the point of demand. In this way we create the preconditions for the integration of men and women in all economic sectors on equal terms and equal pay. We begin to create the conditions for the end of subaltern women's work at home and in the economy, and in this way transform the gender division of labour in a genuinely egalitarian and libertarian manner. In the period of transition, we will have to use quotas to make sure women, migrant and immigrant women are properly represented in the economic fields of their choosing, but in particular in the public sector. In the public sector our aim is to create forms of flexibility that serve not the interest of capital in having a low cost private reproduction of labour power in the family at the expense of women, but enable women to have or not have children, to take or not take time out of work to bring up children, to pursue or not pursue careers, to have the right of reproductive self-determination and to the flourishing of their potential in work and society. In this way the public, socialised sector will be the level for wider changes in society and our aim is to work with the liberation movements to transform social reproduction from below through the initiatives of self-organised movements.

**The public, socialised sector
will be the level for wider
changes in society**

Thus, concrete measures are to be adopted by social movements

- Campaign and demand full equality of all, against all forms of violence and discrimination based on gender, class, race and age.
- Demand decriminalisation of protests and solidarity actions with migrants and other vulnerable groups.
- Demand and campaign over equal pay for equal work.
- Campaign over socialising the burden of social reproduction: for investment in communal creches, communal restaurants, communal laundries.
- Campaign over and demand higher citizen's participation in political decisions on local levels.
- Campaign over protecting sources of drinking water and all other means of subsistence.
- Mobilise against the sovereignty of big finance, indebtedness and austerity policies.
- Campaign over the issues of reproductive health and rights.
- Campaign over the issues of migration and opening the borders.
- Campaign against imperialist wars – led in particular by the NATO coalition – which destroy entire societies.

Concrete measures to be adopted by popular governments

- Impose higher taxes on big capital to fund a massive expansion of the public sector, including employment in areas associated with the ecological transition and green economy.
- Expand full time employment of women in the public sector.
- Enforce existing legislation on equal pay for equal work in the public sector and introduce punitive measures for private sector employers that fail to respect the legislation.
- Relieve women of the entire burden of social reproduction by:
 - Investing in the socialisation of social reproduction by expanding the provision of communal creches, communal restaurants and communal laundries; initially these would be heavily subsidised services with a view to their provision as free public goods;
 - Ensuring that work in the education, health and communal care sectors is not feminised, that is there is an equal balance of male and female workers.
- Legislate to ensure that women returning to work after childbirth or child care are not discriminated in terms of their careers.
- Legislate and enforce existing legislation defending the civic and employment rights of LGBTIQ populations.
- Introduce quota legislation to enable immigrant and migrant populations to find work, that is equally paid, in the public sector.
- Supplement equality legislation with public campaigns over and material support for communities and movements fighting racism, gender oppression and discrimination.
- Reform of existing legislation to support victims of sexual and domestic violence, including children; support legislation with public campaigns and material support for women fighting back and for youth movements articulating their own demands.
- Increase the citizen's participation on matters that concern their daily lives and on everyday level through the introduction of self-management mechanisms in all public sector work units and community self-management mechanisms to assist the processes of socialisation of social reproduction.

CONCLUSION

A consistent feminist political position demands that we oppose all forms of exploitation, sexism, patriarchy and all forms of violence that turn the exploited and vulnerable into mutual enemies, while the capital safely continues in dividing our common struggles. Our strength is solidarity. Solidarity with each other, against capital and the EU imposing austerity. Solidarity of the oppressed for the oppressed, of women, LGBTQI communities, minorities, people of colour and workers against the tyranny of the market and capital. Against the dominant politics of inequality, we will fight for equality that puts our lives and the future of this planet on the top of the list of any political debate – parliamentary and extra-parliamentary. When we are demanding equality, we are demanding not just legal

equality, but equality which would refuse to settle with crumbs, while the system continues its ruthless destruction of our lives and environment.

We know that equality can arise only out of the struggle and it is only through mutual struggle and solidarity that we can emancipate ourselves and the conditions we live in. This we believe, will not be resolved by the EU policies of gender mainstreaming, of various tactics of lean-in feminism and assuming women as bank directors when these same banks take our homes and lives. We refuse to settle with the politics of “lesser evil”. We do not want female politicians simply because they are women. Female politicians who vote for austerity are not our friends. Those who vote for austerity are directly responsible for the increase in violence against women, for the lack of funds for safe houses, for the devaluing female labour in relation to male.

Equality can arise only out of the struggle and it is only through mutual struggle and solidarity that we can emancipate ourselves and the conditions we live in

Feminism we will fight for is not feminism of a tiny minority of corporate and bank women directors at the expense of working women, migrants, vulnerable and our children. Feminism we want to fight for is aimed against the EU and its devastating austerity policies. Instead of continuing with policies that brought deaths of thousands of women and the exploitation of hundreds of thousands more, our fight will be based on our main principle: the enemy is capital, and the enemy is always at home.

Chapter 7 - Health and Education

Since the outbreak of the financial crisis of 2008, austerity measures across the world and in Europe have plundered social funds, imposed strict fiscal discipline and introduced cuts to what were already declining investments in education, health and care systems, waging a war primarily against those who either earn very little or nothing. Moreover, the evidence clearly proves that the crisis hits hardest the most vulnerable groups, the elderly, the unemployed, lower-income members of societies and girls in particular. This means that access to both health and education is increasingly (if not entirely) becoming dependent upon our bank accounts. Those who can pay are provided with a decent education, health and care. Those who cannot must either go into debt or must wait in line for access to shrinking health provision.

Cuts in social spending and fiscal “discipline” have deprived those who work most for society of basic rights and entitlements. The last decade in particular was marked by a major increase in commercialisation and corporatisation related to health, care and education issues. Instead of being seen as basic human rights and social entitlements, they are increasingly identified with the logic of capital which turns them into private goods to be sold and bought.

This is what we want to change. The struggle over education, health and care is part of the struggle to emancipate ourselves and the conditions we live in.

The struggle over education,
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ourselves and the conditions
we live in

I. DEFEND AND EXTEND PUBLIC HEALTH AND EDUCATION

While European governments are announcing an increase in spending on defence, anti-immigration solutions and investing into weapons industry,⁴⁸ while huge proportions of our societies are turned into waiting lists due to lack of available education, health and care services and institutions, we are told that these are now services we need to buy.⁴⁹

Waiting lists to enter publicly financed and subsidised kindergardens or to get a medical treatment are longer and longer, and in some countries (in particular the periphery and non EU member states) subsidies are almost non-existent. In this sense, we are witnessing striking differences between core-periphery and non EU member countries; most strikingly in Greece where the reduction of the health budget by half has led to a significant increase in the

⁴⁸ See European Union External Action Service, “EU budget 2021-2027 invests more and better in external action, security and defence”, 2 May 2018. URL: https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/43885/eu-budget-2021-2027-invests-more-and-better-external-action-security-and-defence_en.

⁴⁹ See Callum Williams and Mahiben Maruthappu, “‘Healthconomic Crises’: Public Health and Neoliberal Economic Crises”, *American Journal of Public Health*, January 2013. URL: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3518343/>.

death rate.⁵⁰ Studies have also pointed to the difference between rural and urban areas when it comes to good, publicly funded and available education, health and care provision. The differences in all cases are drastically amplified by the class dimension.

Education is not a product we buy, nor a service we get offered, but a life-long process into which we need to invest. Investing in education means investing in a future that is ever more uncertain. Preparing children for the vast and fast changes of the contemporary world is of an extreme importance, as they will face a world of climate change, robotisation and other changes that will affect the labour market and the environment they will inhabit. Thus, education should in no case be understood as a series of metric tests measuring success or failure within the educational processes it is increasingly perceived. Children, students and adult students are not mere numbers, but human beings with their specific needs, talents and capacities. These should be brought to front and everyone should be allowed to develop their creative potentials to the best of their abilities.

Although the turn to liberalisation, marketisation, commodification and deregulation in education is not new and has been a subject of debate for almost three decades, even EU reports claim that the last financial crisis has worsened the overall results of the EU concerning school dropout rates, completion rates in secondary or tertiary education and enabling permanent adult education and learning. Moreover, we see huge disparities between member states, periphery and non EU member states, as well as regional differences within the EU member states.⁵¹ Accordingly, from the 1990s onwards, the European states have, alongside publicly funded schools, developed programmes through which they either participate (co-fund) or only supervise private kindergardens or schools. This has created conditions and incentives for an increase in various forms of privatisation when it comes to education in general.

Kindergardens, primary and elementary schools have all been part of “education reforms characterised by spending cuts, forms of deregulation, liberalisation and commercialisation, outsourcing and the introduction of new providers of school services (some for profit and others not)”.⁵² The often praised Nordic model of education – presented as egalitarian, socially conscious and welfare-oriented – has also been subjected to severe criticism precisely due to the drastic differences that the introduction and imposition of privatisation, marketisation and deregulation has had on the educational system in general and on elementary schools in particular in the past decade or

Inequalities in access to a high quality public education are (as also in the case of public health) distributed along class lines, and are amplified by the conservative turn in politics

⁵⁰ See Global Burden of Disease 2016 Greece Collaborators, “New study shows effects of austerity on health in Greece”, 22 August 2018. URL: <http://www.cadtm.org/New-study-shows-effects-of-austerity-on-health-in-Greece>.

⁵¹ See Eurostat’s statistics on education and training: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Education_and_training_statistics_at_regional_level#Europe_2020:_early_leavers_from_education_and_training.

⁵² See Nafsika Alexiadou, “Privatising public education across Europe – Shifting boundaries and the politics of (re)claiming schools”, *Education Inquiry*, September 2013. URL: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.3402/edui.v4i3.22610>.

so.⁵³ Under the pretext of formally giving choice to parents, an institutional segregation based on race and income has taken place; the middle classes are now increasingly free to move their children from schools in areas with a working class and immigrant majority to areas where housing speculation is leading to an ethnic and class cleansing of communities. In each country inequalities in access to a high quality public education are (as also in the case of public health) distributed along class lines, and are amplified by the conservative turn in politics both of EU and non EU member states.

Though the official EU reports claim that many of the countries are progressing towards having less than 10% fall out rates (early school leaving) and towards increasing tertiary level attainment, the research actually presents a somewhat different picture. For example, the results of PISA research from 2012 show that on average “17% of European 15-year-olds have poor reading skills” and it is estimated that “55 million adults 16-65 years of age have literacy difficulties”. All countries, albeit in different ways have been affected by the economic crisis which has slowed down the progress set by the EU for 2020. The differences between countries are staggering in terms of investment into infrastructure and education in general. Countries like Greece, Spain or Italy have all been devastated by the impacts of the crisis in terms of the overall educational system, and the regional differences at the EU level are also striking.⁵⁴ Instead of investing in education, neoliberal governments have mostly invested in privatising, outsourcing and deregulating the educational system as a whole.

Greece, Spain or Italy have all been devastated by the impacts of the crisis in terms of the overall educational system

Education starts at an early age, and all recent research underlines the importance of “Early Childhood Education”⁵⁵ for the full development of children and their potential. Prolonged maternity leave is equally important for the full mental and physical development of the baby and its later development into a fully mature person. Therefore, maternity leave needs to be legally ensured and protected and not used as an excuse to push women out of the workforce and labour market. At the same time, we need to understand that welfare states, to different degrees and at different times, using differential forms of taxation and tax rates have

⁵³ See Marianne Dovemark, Sonja Kosunen, Jaakko Kauko, Berglind Magnúsdóttir, Petteri Hansen & Palle Rasmussen, “Deregulation, privatisation and marketisation of Nordic comprehensive education: social changes reflected in schooling”, *Education Inquiry*, 2018. URL: https://tuhat.helsinki.fi/portal/files/98828687/Deregulation_privatisation_and_marketisation_of_Nordic_comprehensive_education_social_changes_reflected_in_schooling.pdf.

⁵⁴ See for example the results of PISA and PIAAC research from 2012 and 2013: http://www.eli-net.eu/fileadmin/ELINET/Redaktion/Factsheet-Literacy_in_Europe-A4.pdf; see also the Education and training monitor report (EU analysis): http://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/monitor2017_en.pdf. Regarding the impact of the crisis on education in Greece, see: <http://www.qs.com/impact-of-the-financial-crisis-on-greek-higher-education/>; see also Domna Kakana et alii, “Mapping the Impact of Economic Crisis on Greek Education: Teachers' Views and Perspectives”, *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, Vol. 7, No. 3, March 2013. URL: https://www.ijhssnet.com/journals/Vol_7_No_3_March_2017/16.pdf. Regarding early school leaving in Italy, see (in Italian) Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca, “La dispersione scolastica nell'a.s. 2015/2016 e nel passaggio all'a.s. 2016/2017”, November 2017. URL: <http://www.miur.gov.it/documents/20182/0/Focus+La+dispersione+scolastica/9bc1c11b-1c40-4029-87ba-40b8ba2bc2bf>.

⁵⁵ See Tony Bertram, Chris Pascal et alii, “Early Childhood Policies and Systems in Eight Countries”, IEA, 2016. URL: https://www.iea.nl/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/Electronic_versions/ECES-policies_and_systems-report.pdf.

sought to maintain the nuclear family by providing incentives for women not to enter the labour market. Such is (increasingly) the case for example in Germany and historically Italy has been one of the most prominent examples of this kind of policies.⁵⁶

Creches, kindergardens and day centres are where our first education starts. We as a society have to value each and every level of education equally and not base it on profit. The feminisation of the teaching profession in general (creches, kindergardens, primary, elementary and secondary schools with some sectors of the higher education) has meant degrading the social status of the profession and its poor remuneration. As such, women working in the profession, although highly educated, are often seen as mere housemaids and as performing “traditionally” female tasks. Thus, undermining or not valorising the work done mostly by women in creches, kindergardens, primary, elementary schools and day-care centres means that we as a society, are accepting and in fact confirming that not only work with children is insignificant, but that as feminised it should be considered “naturally” female and thus not paid as other professions seen as typically male. This attitude is not only wrong and sexist, but socially unacceptable. All work in education should be treated with equal respect and remunerated as such.

These tendencies have only been fortified since the 1960s onwards and what we are witnessing today, worsened by the economic crisis, is its peak.⁵⁷ The resolution adopted by the European Trade Union Committee for Education warned against:

“the profound effect this crisis has had on teachers, education employees, and students, and asserts that sovereign debt and deficit reduction through austerity measures is not a viable path towards sustainable economic growth in the present situation across Europe. It also urges European-level policymakers and national governments to recognise that it is their imperative to seek an exit from the crisis for the sake of future generations.”⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Regarding the German case, see “Working mothers, unite!”, *The Economist*, 10 July 2008. URL: <https://www.economist.com/europe/2008/07/10/working-mothers-unite>; “Falling Behind: Working Women in Germany Grapple with Limited Child-Care Options”, Knowledge@Wharton, 28 March 2007. URL: <http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/falling-behind-working-women-in-germany-grapple-with-limited-child-care-options/>.

⁵⁷ See for example Madeleine Grumet, “Pedagogy for patriarchy: The feminization of teaching”, *Interchange*, Volume 12, Issue 2–3, 1981, pp 165–184; Carolyn Basten, “A Feminised Profession: women in the teaching profession”, *Educational Studies*, Vol 23. Issue 1, 1997, p. 55-62; Miriam Stanonik, “Education and feminization of the teaching profession”, in Marcin Godawa, Stanko Gerjolj (ed.), *Faces of Women*, Krakow, 2015. URL: http://bc.upjp2.edu.pl/Content/3350/stanonik_art_faces_of_women.pdf; *Women and the Teaching Profession*, Commonwealth Secretariat, UNESCO, 2011. URL: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000212200>.

⁵⁸ “Impact of the Crisis on Teachers”, European Trade Union Committee for Education. URL: <https://www.csee-etuice.org/en/actions/campaigns/education-in-crisis/271-impact-of-the-crisis-on-teachers>.

Current trends in education intensify already existing social and class inequalities. Namely all education systems in the EU have for a long time involved more or less formalised systems of selection which reproduce the social division of labour, that is, docile manual and increasingly routine white collar labour on the one hand, and managerial, technical and scientific cadres on the other. But today private academies are expanding the historic role played for example by the British public schools or the European gymnasiums, that is they symbolise a social regression, in the sense of reproducing class hierarchies through selection. Unless we stand up for education available to all and defend it as a basic human right, these tendencies will only sharpen the social gaps existing between privileged and unprivileged classes and undermine the possibility of education for all under equal terms and conditions.

No human being should be deprived of the chance to fully developing her abilities and skills simply because she or he comes from a less privileged background

In conclusion, we think that no human being should be deprived of the chance to fully developing her abilities and skills simply because she or he comes from a less privileged background. We want to put an end to these forms of discrimination and segregation.

II. FOR THE RIGHT TO PUBLIC, FREE AND SUBSIDISED EDUCATION, HEALTH AND CARE

Equally important and related to investing in education is investing in our health systems. No one should be deprived of basic access to health and care services simply because they are not rich. Health and care are not a privilege, but a right for all. It is not something we afford, but something we all have a right to, under equal conditions and irrespective of wealth. All across Europe we are seeing how our pensioners and poor people are increasingly left on their own, deprived of basic medical treatments, medicines and care. This should not be the case.

All across Europe we are seeing how our pensioners and poor people are increasingly deprived of basic medical treatments, medicines and care

The EU is facing serious challenges and problems when it comes to health and care issues. On the one hand, an aging population and a greater number of elderly people in need, on the other hand a shortage of qualified both highly and less skilled, labour-power needed to deliver both treatment and assistance to everyone. For these reasons, the EU is highly dependent on migrant labour-power which it mainly imports from the former Eastern Bloc and from former colonies, while the populist and conservative politicians tend to present it in terms of the dominant ideology where migrants are presented as those who are taking the jobs away from the impoverished EU citizens.

Particularly interesting is the sector of care work, mostly performed by women and under conditions that often escape regulation and inspection: “increasingly in Europe domestic work is an immigrant’s job. Indeed, native women are no longer willing to occupy

this labour market niche but increasing immigration during the last decades have swelled the ranks of immigrant women who move to European Union (EU) countries to take up jobs as cleaners and carers in private homes.”⁵⁹ We observe the same pattern in recruiting highly qualified medical staff as doctors and less qualified medical staff such as nurses.

Inequalities exist and persist all around the European continent. Eastern Europe and the Balkans are particularly vulnerable to economic inequalities, to the detriment of their own education and health systems. The trends of exporting both cheap and highly skilled labour power as a commodity (already educated with public money by mostly poor, indebted states) to more developed and rich EU countries has already provoked and continues to provoke huge problems in terms of current and generational replacement of doctors, nurses, teachers and professors. Soon, there will be no one to teach the teachers, to train doctors or to take care of children and the elderly. We need to put an end to this form of exploitation and fight for equally and just system where all human beings will be equally respected, educated and taken care of.

From the beginning of the 2000s and in particular after 2008, the EU in both its core and periphery has witnessed an increase in various forms of full or semi privatisation of its health system. Generally, we distinguish two types of privatisations in relation to health and care services. The first one is indirect and is to be understood as a step before full privatisation. It can be defined as:

After 2008, the EU in both its core and periphery has witnessed an increase in various forms of privatisation of its health system

“Decentralization

(deconcentration/delegation/devolution) Autonomization / Corporatization Regulated competition (or internal market policies or liberalization) / Managed competition.”⁶⁰

The second group is understood as “direct form of healthcare privatisation” and is defined by:

“Liquidation (or termination); Contracting out (or outsourcing); Public-private partnerships (privatization of investment and management); Privatization of healthcare financing.”⁶¹

Another crucial aspect of marketisation is therefore the emergence of public-private partnerships. It involves commercial contracts between public authorities and private businesses in the design, construction, financing and operation of public health infrastructure and services traditionally delivered by the public sector. The pioneer in this field has been the UK, followed by Spain and Hungary, with the rest of the EU following suit in the last decade. PPP projects, with their multiple fees and concessions, over a contractual period of up to 25 years, have proved extremely lucrative to multinational firms. For the public, they have meant staggering waste and massive debts, resulting in cutbacks in public services and even further

⁵⁹ Anna Triandafyllidou, “Irregular Migration and Domestic Work in Europe: Who Cares?”, in *Irregular Migrant Domestic Workers in Europe: Who Cares?*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2013. URL: <https://www.eui.eu/Documents/RSCAS/Research/MWG/201314/13Nov-Triandafyllidou-Chapter1.pdf>.

⁶⁰ Elias Kondilis, “Privatization of healthcare in Europe”, Lecture given at Queen Mary, University of London, Adapted from Hans Maarse, “The Privatization of Health Care in Europe: An Eight-Country Analysis”, *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law*, Vol. 31, No. 5, October 2006.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

debt to meet new claims – due to the transfer of all risk to the public, and all profit to the private sector.

In the UK, between 1997 and 2010, 147 health sector PPP contracts (or PFI – private finance initiative) were signed to construct new hospitals and renovate existing ones, and provide various services such as catering, maintenance and laundry. By 2010 for projects with a capital cost of €14 billion, the National Health Service owes an incredible €80.7 billion over the lifetime of the contracts, including also service contracts. Rising annual payments – €1.5 billion in 2010 and set to peak in 2030 at €2.85 billion – have proved too much of a burden for a chronically underfunded service. Following the neo-liberal logic, health provision has been sacrificed to honouring debts, with hospitals forced to make ‘efficiency’ improvements. As a result, English NHS hospital capacity fell by almost a third by 2009-10, occupancy rates rose to unsafe levels and health workers were made redundant. However public money, normally vetoed in the case of investment in public services, is always available to meet debts to the private sector, as in the case of hospitals more or less bankrupted by the cost of servicing PPP debts.⁶²

Public money, normally vetoed in the case of investment in public services, is always available to meet debts to the private sector

Under the pretext of offering more choice and access, the EU actually introduced a push towards greater liberalisation i.e. privatisation of health-services⁶³ with devastating consequences.⁶⁴ Many studies have been warning about the EU’s incessant attempts to privatise healthcare services at the expense of those who are already socially and politically deprived of basic access to these services.⁶⁵

Thomas Gerlinger and Hans-Jürgen Urban claim in their excellent study “From heterogeneity to harmonisation: recent trends in European health policy”⁶⁶ that the whole EU rhetoric on improving health care systems, enabling access and offering choice is actually a false and non-existing choice as:

“The goal of ensuring a high level of social protection and open access to health care services implies a high level of public spending, which would clash with the cost-cutting needed to achieve the Maastricht stability criteria and would thus weaken the EU. Conversely, the intended utilization of health policy to promote competition policy and cost containment

⁶² See Bankwatch Network, “The Hidden Costs of Public-Private Partnerships – Case Study: UK Hospitals PPP”. URL: <https://bankwatch.org/public-private-partnerships/case-studies/uk-hospital-ppps>.

⁶³ See European Commission – Expert Panel on effective ways of investing in Health, “Best practices and potential pitfalls in public health sector commissioning from private providers”. URL: https://ec.europa.eu/health/expert_panel/sites/expertpanel/files/docsdir/014_publichealthsector_privateproviders_en.pdf; Christoph Hermann, “The marketisation of health care in Europe”, *Socialist Register* 2010.

⁶⁴ See Jan Willem Goudriaan, “The rising wave of privatisation damages healthcare in Europe”, *Euractiv*, 7 April 2016. URL: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/health-consumers/opinion/the-rising-wave-of-privatisation-damages-healthcare-in-europe/>.

⁶⁵ See for example Rachel Tansey, “The creeping privatisation of healthcare. Problematic EU policies and the corporate lobby push”, *Corporate Europe Observatory*, 2 June 2017. URL: <https://corporateeurope.org/power-lobbies/2017/06/creeping-privatisation-healthcare>.

⁶⁶ Thomas Gerlinger and Hans-Jürgen Urban, “From heterogeneity to harmonization? : recent trends in European health policy”, *Cadernos de saúde pública*, Rio de Janeiro, 23 Sup 2:S133-S142, 2007. URL: <http://publikationen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/opus4/frontdoor/index/index/year/2009/docId/7142>.

can encourage privatization of medical treatment, endangering the goal of ensuring a high level of social protection and unhindered access to health care services.”

Thus, although the official EU rhetoric is related to a technical vocabulary where people's lives are treated according to cost-effective, “rational” criteria, and claims “that improved population health drives economic growth, greater labour force participation and higher productivity”, we must firmly oppose this approach. Health and education should be considered as common goods in themselves and as such, they are to be understood outside the capitalist logic of profits and losses.

Health and education should be considered as common goods in themselves and as such, they are to be understood outside the capitalist logic of profits and losses

Additionally and importantly, we would like to emphasise that the relevant research proves the existence of a causal relationship between having/lacking education and good/poorer health. In other words, people with literacy difficulties are more likely to have health issues as well.⁶⁷

III. PROPOSALS

Our proposals are therefore aimed at both movements and popular governments. We believe that the struggle for free and publicly available health and education is the only viable alternative to the increasing privatisation and racial and class segregation present within both spheres as a result of state policies and the interest of people being subordinate to the interests of capital.

Immediate proposals to be adopted by movements

- Campaign for having and/or strengthening publicly available and free health, education and care services.
- Campaign for the nationalisation of pharmaceutical industries and access to pharmaceutical products via the public health system.
- Campaign over salaries, for dignity of job and life.
- Demand immediate stop to any further liberalisation, privatisation or marketisation in any of the sectors that should be equally available to everyone, regardless of their class.
- Demand and promote citizen's audit on Public-Private Partnerships contracts and debts contracted via the PPPs.

⁶⁷ See Barry Weiss, Gregory Hart and Ronald Pust, “The Relationship Between Literacy and Health”, *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*, Volume 1, No. 4, Spring 1991. URL: <http://muse.jhu.edu/article/267725>; Jane Corrarino, “Health literacy and women's health: challenges and opportunities”. URL: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/jmwh.12018>.

- Oppose illegitimate debts contracted via PPPs.
- Demand the immediate moratorium on any further PPPs.
- Demand that any further public money investment into private schools and hospitals be stopped.
- Demand socialisation of education, health and care systems.
- Campaign to prolong maternity leave to 12 months for everyone.
- Equal access to free, publicly financed and subsidised early childhood education, elementary schools and universities.
- Campaign over meals for every child attending publicly financed institutions (creches, kindergardens, schools).
- Demand quality and not quantity. Human beings are not mere numbers.

Immediate proposals to be adopted by popular governments

- Instead of increasing investment in military and defence, invest money in education, health and care services so that all citizens benefit from it.
- Restore the dignity and increase salaries to all workers included in the processes of education, health and care.
- Immediate stop to any further PPPs projects related to public services.
- Revise the debts contracted through various forms of PPPs.
- Invest in public education, health and care systems instead of promoting private interest and income based on the ideology of choice.
- Stop any further public investment into private schools, hospitals and other similar private institutions.
- Ensure that all children excluded from the educational system as a result of disabilities, poverty and other forms of discrimination are included in the education system and resources are properly provided to facilitate their flourishing.
- For children with special needs, ensure that specialised educational assistance is provided.
- Put an end to income and race based segregation in health, care and education.
- Instead of quantifying and introducing further measurement tests, invest in quality
- Reduce the number of children per classroom.
- Reduce the pressure put on public institutions by investing in public jobs and thus ensuring numbers of teachers, doctors, nurses and care workers needed to maintain the quality and standard.

Medium term programme of popular governments

- Socialisation of the entire health, care and education systems.
- Return of what are now private services in health, care and education to the public domain:

- Self-management of health, care and education institutions by professionals working in these sectors, combined with the participation of the users of social services and citizens in general, as well as local councillors;
- Direct involvement of citizens in decisions concerning health and education through their right to participate in the relevant self-management assemblies;
- Fully free and universal medication, care and education;
- Fully free higher education and maintenance grants for all students.
- International cooperation in public research, especially in the health system to overcome the fragmentation, monopolisation, waste, massive costs imposed by Big Pharma.
- A system of redistribution of wealth from the richest to the poorest countries, targeted specifically at health, care and education sectors.
- Equal citizenship and employment rights for all workers, irrespective of nationality, employed in the now socialised, public sector.

CONCLUSION

Having, preserving and strengthening free, publicly financed and subsidised education, health and care systems does not seem possible or viable within the framework of the EU and the euro. Without attacking and grappling with austerity and debt led economy the chances do not exist. The current EU fiscal pact is in fact preventing fiscal deficits and counter-cyclical spending while the ECB monetary policy targets inflation rather than inequality growth. Further public spending is therefore constricted, and depends on the rate of growth (and thus taxation) or borrowing on money markets. Under current circumstances, the choice is either-or: either public investment and spending or further worsening and in some cases collapse of public education, health and care systems. This brief chapter dealt with health and education issues, but equally important questions to be dealt with are those of: public transport and increasing attempts at its privatisation at the cost of the poorest members of our communities, the right to publicly available right to housing under attack for the past half century, with gentrification and other forms of expelling the poorest members in the interest of finance and capital, and generally questions concerning local communities and their demands and needs.

Chapter 8 - International relations

I. GLOBAL CAPITALISM, GLOBAL INEQUALITIES

The development of a core and a periphery through “European integration” is nothing unprecedented: the history of capital accumulation has been one of dispossession on a global scale, and hence of unequal development and rising inequalities worldwide.

Today, while the Global North and China have overproduction capacities in most of the economic sectors, the Global South still faces a striking weakness of industrial development, recurring crises in the food production and a lack of public services.⁶⁸ Nearly 2 billion people suffer of malnutrition, most of them living in the Global South. Half the world lacks access to essential health services.

The populations of the Global South are also the most affected by forced displacement. At the end of 2017, 68.5 million people had been forced to flee their home because of war and persecution. Out of this total, 40 million people were displaced inside their own country, 3.1 million were awaiting the outcome of their application for refugee status and 25.4 million were refugees outside of their own country.⁶⁹ These figures do not include the people fleeing away from misery and the consequences of climate change, whose numbers will most likely rise in the near future.

II. MASS EXILE AND MURDER – THE POLICIES OF FORTRESS EUROPE

In the EU, most of the ruling classes as well as the rising far right forces assert that massive flows of refugees have been reaching the continent since 2015. The widespread use of the term “refugee crisis” suggests the same. While the flows of migrants *seeking* refuge in the EU have indeed become more important since 2015 in particular as a result of the war in Syria, the arrival of around one million people in an area of more than 510 million inhabitants can in no way be characterised as a crisis for Europe. The EU hosts a small minority of the total number of refugees worldwide, as “developing countries” host 85% of them⁷⁰ – in the case of Syria for instance, most of the refugees are hosted in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. Furthermore, such assertions hide the

The actual response of the EU to this situation has been one consisting of strengthening its policies of “Fortress Europe”

⁶⁸ Of course, both categories of “Global North” and “Global South” cover various social realities. There is a “South” in the Global North (for instance, this manifesto develops an analysis based on the existence of peripheries within the EU) just like there is a “North” in the Global South (in particular with the existence of so-called “emerging” countries). Besides, countries both in the Global North and in the Global South are divided along class lines – and the ruling classes often maintain close relationships with each other, whether they find themselves in the Global North or in the Global South.

⁶⁹ See : UNHCR, *Global Trends. Forced Displacement in 2017*.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

actual response of the EU to this situation, which has been one consisting of strengthening its policies of “Fortress Europe.”

The opening of internal borders of the EU through the Schengen Agreement (which applies to 22 of the 28 member states of the EU as well as to Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Andorra, Monaco, San Marino and the Vatican) was accompanied by a strengthening of the EU’s external borders. Freedom of movement was granted to Schengen area nationals only, while reaching the EU (that is, the Schengen area) was made more complicated for poor non-Schengen nationals, in particular for populations from the Global South.

Through the Dublin convention, the EU reproduced in the field of border control the absence of solidarity between member states that prevails in its economic policies. Indeed, the Dublin convention “stipulates that refugees seeking asylum within the EU must submit their papers in the country through which they entered, and must remain there until their request has been examined. Failing this, the applicant is liable to be returned to that country, or ‘Dublinized’, so becoming an outcast shunted from one country to another,”⁷¹ thus requesting from the “frontline” countries of the Schengen area (in particular Greece and Italy, but also the Spanish State) to do the dirty work of keeping migrants out of the EU. This was accompanied by the establishment of a border control agency for the EU, Frontex, whose annual budget evolved from around €6 million in 2005 to around €143 million in 2015 and around €320 million in 2018.⁷² In the recent years, the means for repression of migrations have also constantly increased within the member states themselves, with the generalisation of detention centres for migrants, the use of new technologies to patrol borders, or the construction of walls and fences to prevent migrants from crossing borders (e. g. Ceuta, Calais).

What’s more, the EU establishes “compacts with other states or agencies, outsourcing functions of coercion, detention, surveillance and control. By these means, a good number of the non-member states along the Mediterranean littoral and beyond have been transformed into buffer zones and thus annexed as an outer ring of the EU’s border defences. The most important of these external gatekeepers, however, are Turkey and Libya, which stand at the head of the two main routes of informal migration to the EU: that from Africa, which is mainly funnelled through Libya and across the central Mediterranean to Italy; and that from Asia and the Middle East via Turkey to the Balkans or the easternmost islands of Greece.”⁷³ In 2015, the EU’s Valletta Summit on Migration agreed on funding the detention centres of Libya which for a few days became particularly infamous in November 2017 when CNN released a video footage showing a “slave auction” happening in one of those centres. The same summit agreed to spend \$2 billion in “development funds” to strengthen border control in Sudan, Ethiopia, Niger, Nigeria, Mali and Senegal. In March 2016, another infamous agreement was signed between the EU and Turkey, through which “Turkey agreed it would prevent ‘irregular’ crossings from its coast, in return for an EU promise to lift visa restrictions

⁷¹ See Stathis Kouvelakis, “Borderland. Greece and the EU’s Southern Question”, *New Left Review*, No. 110, March-April 2018.

⁷² Frontex, Key Documents. URL: <https://frontex.europa.eu/about-frontex/key-documents/> (Accessed 17 September 2018)

⁷³ See Stathis Kouvelakis, “Borderland. Greece and the EU’s Southern Question”, *op. cit.*

on Turkish nationals and open a new round of accession negotiations, along with €3bn to assist the settlement of refugees on Turkish soil.”⁷⁴

Such policies are not just morally wrong: they transformed the Mediterranean Sea into a mass grave, as at least 17,825 people died trying to cross it to join Europe between January 2014 and August 2018.⁷⁵

Such policies transformed the Mediterranean Sea into a mass grave

Stathis Kouvelakis convincingly argues that the fortifications which were set up over the recent years to prevent migrants from coming to the EU are responsible for this tragedy; he also shows that, since the 2016 EU-Turkey agreement, “while the monthly death rate fell, that per arrival keeps rising, doubling since 2016.”⁷⁶

This is even more unacceptable since Europe bears an overwhelming material and moral responsibility in the situations leading hundreds of thousands of people to leave their countries. The colonial past of the main European powers, which was a structural element of capital accumulation in Europe, disintegrated the social fabrics in colonised territories and replaced them with a violent relationship of dependency towards the colonial rulers. Since dominated nations formally achieved independence after having had to fight for it for decades, colonialism turned into neo-colonialism – the direct subjugation of formerly colonised nations being turned into an indirect subjugation, in which the violence was made less visible but the dependency towards the most industrialised capitalist centres remained. The obstacles to self-determination, therefore, remained as well.⁷⁷

Europe bears an overwhelming material and moral responsibility in the situations leading hundreds of thousands of people to leave their countries

This neo-colonialism can be characterised by a broad set of policies, among which we could highlight:

- The implementation, with the help of the local dominant classes, of a permanent system of indebtedness of subjugated nations towards external bilateral (dominant States) or multilateral (International Monetary Fund – IMF,– World Bank and other financial agencies) creditors. This debt system allowed for the continuation of the plundering of national assets of those debtor states in favour of the most industrialised countries. Once these subjugated nations defaulted on the payment of their debts, it helped impose neoliberal policies of the Washington consensus: the creditors offered the debtor states new loans and/or momentary debt relief for them to continue their reimbursements, on the conditions that these debtor states would privatise key sectors of the economy, remove the tariffs for trade, adopt floating exchange rates and variable interest rates, decrease their public spending in the social sectors, and more generally decrease their public investment. These policies made these dependent states

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ See International Organization for Migration, Missing Migrants Project. URL: <http://missingmigrants.iom.int> (Accessed 17 September 2018)

⁷⁶ See Stathis Kouvelakis, “Borderland. Greece and the EU’s Southern Question”, *op. cit.*

⁷⁷ See for instance Ernest Mandel, “Mise en perspective des relations Nord/Sud”, *ernestmandel.org*. URL: <http://www.ernestmandel.org/new/ecrits/article/mise-en-perspective-des-relations>

even more vulnerable to international competition with the most industrialised countries, prevented them from investing in the productive sectors of the economy and in public services, destroyed the remaining local and self-organised economies and thus condemned the populations to a permanent state of precariousness and poverty.⁷⁸

- The implementation of free-trade rules and agreements pushed for by the EU and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) which favour the most industrially developed nations and encourage the development of export-led economic models (e. g. the Economic Partnership Agreements between the EU and the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States). Subjugated nations therefore privilege the development of one or a few economic sectors for exportation, which impinges on their food sovereignty and self-sustainability. Export-led economic models also encourage the race for competitiveness through the lowering of wages and/or the worsening of working conditions.
- The political, financial and material support to corrupt and authoritarian leaders as a way to maintain the economic interests of the most industrialised states and their multinational companies. A striking example of political support: Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, Hosni Mubarak and Bashar al-Assad all received the French Legion of Honour, the highest French decoration (Bashar al-Assad *returned* his in 2018 after France announced it would strip him of it). When the uprising broke out in Tunisia in December 2010, France offered Ben Ali its *savoir-faire* in terms of repression of demonstrations. Similarly, Egypt and Saudi Arabia – two states whose regimes are heavily involved in the current Middle-Eastern geopolitical chaos – have been reliable buyers of French and British heavy weapons over the recent years.
- The direct interference in the politics of dominated nations through economic and financial blackmail, support to coups or direct military intervention, whenever the economic interests of European nations are threatened.⁷⁹

III.OUR INTERNATIONALISM

Immediate citizen initiatives to be launched at the national and international levels, notably by the social movements:

- The Left needs to participate to and develop the existing social movements challenging the migration policies of Fortress Europe, such as providing shelter to migrants, helping them cross the borders, denouncing the detention centres for migrants, organising mass demonstrations in favour of opening the borders and welcoming

The crisis of the European migration policies revealed the need for the Left to engage in humanitarian action, and conversely it confirmed the need to politicise existing humanitarian initiatives

⁷⁸ See for instance Eric Toussaint, *Your Money or Your Life. The Tyranny of Global Finance*, Chicago, Haymarket, 2005.

⁷⁹ Regarding the policies of direct interference and of support to corrupt, authoritarian leaders pursued by France in several African countries, see (in French) the important work of the association Survie: <https://survie.org>.

migrants with dignity. We need to concretely oppose deportation whenever possible. Furthermore, the Left should acknowledge the existence of forced displacement induced by environmental destruction and engage in solidarity with climate refugees. The crisis of the European migration policies since 2015 revealed the need for the Left to engage in humanitarian action, and conversely it confirmed the need to politicise existing humanitarian initiatives for them not to end up like a plaster being applied to a gaping wound.

- The European popular Left needs to build up links with groups and individuals involved in emancipatory politics outside of Europe in order to best articulate our internationalist demands – in particular in the neighbouring region of Middle East and North Africa, which has witnessed the most recent revolutionary process whose future is seriously threatened by the ongoing counter-revolutions. This also implies building up links with activists now exiled in Europe.
- We need to engage in and develop audits of European credits over third parties in order to argue for the cancellation of illegitimate and odious debts owed by developing countries to the EU (through multilateral agencies like the European Investment Bank or the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development) and its member states. The European Left and social movements should challenge the free-trade agreements signed with developing countries and other economic policies deepening the dependency of subjugated nations.
- We need to actively engage in the “Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions” (BDS) campaign against the settler colonialism of the Israeli state. Left-wing groups and social movements in Europe need to oppose imperialist and counter-revolutionary wars (e. g. European military involvement in Mali, counter-revolution in Syria led by the Syrian regime and its Russian and Iranian allies) and actively denounce the co-operation between their own governments and regimes involved in human rights violations (e. g. Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Libya).

Left-wing groups and social movements in Europe need to oppose imperialist and counter-revolutionary wars

First steps of a popular government at the national level:

- A popular government should open its borders, organise a secured access to its territory for migrants (in particular by sea) and ensure the freedom of movement and installation for all. Detention centres for migrants will be abolished. Working hours will be legally reduced (without any wage loss) in order to offer employment for all. All legal discriminations (concerning political, economic and social rights) based on nationality will be abolished. Equal rights including free access to health care and to public education as well as access to a decent housing should be ensured; anyone settling in the popular government’s jurisdiction should be given full civic rights, including the right to vote at all levels of the jurisdiction. Any financial participation

to European common budgets for border control (e. g. Frontex) will be cancelled. If the state owns a Navy military force, it will be disarmed, put under democratic control and used for humanitarian action (e. g. in the Mediterranean Sea).

- A popular government will implement a moratorium on the reimbursement of its credits over third parties until the results of an audit with citizen participation are known. All credits over subjugated nations outside and inside (e. g. Greece) the EU will be cancelled.

**Illegitimate and odious
credits on other states will be
cancelled**

Illegitimate and odious credits on other states will be cancelled. A popular government will disobey the rules of the WTO, step out of any free trade agreement it is part of which is unfavourable to less developed countries, and instead propose fair trade to the said countries. It will fully co-operate with third parties to help them recover assets stolen by their former rulers (e. g. co-operation with the current Tunisian authorities to recover the stolen assets of the Ben Ali clan and transfer them to a development fund under democratic control of the Tunisian people).

- A popular government will take sanctions against corporations which are active in its own jurisdiction and which violate the national and international laws abroad (in order to be effective rather than represent a negligible fraction of the corporation's annual turnover, sanctions will target the major shareholders). It will allow any foreign third party to sue a transnational corporation which is active in the

**A popular government will
allow any foreign third party
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jurisdiction**

popular government's jurisdiction and will support the initiative for a legally binding treaty for transnational corporations to respect the international law. It will leave the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes, which is part of the World Bank group and works in favour of the world's biggest corporations. It will forbid transactions with tax havens and take sanctions against them.

- A popular government will stop its financial participation to the international financial institutions which participate to the subjugation of dependent countries, such as the IMF and the World Bank. If it can, it will use its representatives in these institutions to denounce their activities and call for the creation of new development institutions based on solidarity rather than subjugation and profits.
- A popular government will recognise the destructive role played by colonisation, including slavery, colonial wars, wars of extermination and any other involvement in colonial mass murders; it will initiate a process to determine financial compensations to be paid to its former colonies if it had any and it will give back to its former colonies the cultural goods which were stolen from them (e. g. the items of colonial art exhibited and stored in the British Museum – in London,– the Louvre Museum – in Paris,– the Royal Museum for Central Africa – in Tervuren, near Brussels). It will

determine financial compensations to be paid for profits made over dependent debtor states. It will make sure the compensations are used under democratic control by the populations concerned. If it has the financial capacities to do it, it will offer loans with zero interest rate to dependent countries. It will also transfer useful technologies free of charge to third parties.

- A popular government in a member state of the NATO will leave the latter and cease all co-operation with it. The military command which is the most closely linked with the capitalist state and class will be dismissed and the army will be re-organised under democratic control. If the state is involved in wars abroad (e. g. Mali), it will initiate a process of disengagement to be achieved as soon as possible and to be replaced with humanitarian support under democratic control of the people concerned.
 - A popular government will socialise the weapons industry and implement a moratorium on arms production and sales abroad. It will engage towards global disarmament and dismantle its nuclear weapons if it has any. It will initiate retroactive legal actions against those responsible for the sales of arms to criminal regimes (e. g. Syria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Turkey, Myanmar).
- A popular government will socialise the weapons industry and implement a moratorium on arms production and sales abroad**
- A popular government will take sanctions against regimes that violate international law and fundamental human rights, paying attention not to further endanger the populations of the said regimes when a dependent country is concerned (e. g. actions against individuals responsible for the actions of the regime). It will freeze all economic ties with the state of Israel as long as the latter does not respect international law and UN resolutions, that is until the state of Israel recognises the sovereignty of the Palestinian state within the 1967 borders and the international regime of Jerusalem (this means the abandonment of the illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem), ends its illegal blockade on the Gaza strip and its Apartheid regime within its own borders, and allows Palestinian refugees to return to their homes.
 - A popular government will actively support oppressed nations and ethnicities (e. g. Palestinian, Kurdish, Sahrawi, Rohingya) through humanitarian and diplomatic help. It will assist populations whose lives are directly threatened, including through measures to prevent criminal regimes from committing mass crimes.

Medium term steps of a popular government and of social movements:

- A popular government will need to break the isolation through mass mobilisations against counter-revolutionary threats from within and from abroad. It will call for international mobilisations for peace, solidarity and social justice. It will make public

the constant blackmail and threats used by pro-capitalist governments inside multilateral institutions and negotiations.

- In order to break the isolation, a popular government will need to establish new bilateral and multilateral co-operations with pro-capitalist governments abroad. It will do so by making clear the distinction between tactical diplomatic moves (which would be the motivation behind such co-operations) and strategic political alliances (which could not be achieved with the said pro-capitalist governments), and under strict democratic control by the population.

Medium term steps at the international level:

- Once they have the financial capacities to do it, several popular governments establish a common financial institution based on solidarity, offering zero interest loans to dependent countries both outside and inside the EU.
- Several popular governments establish new co-operations in economic, social and ecological fields, adopting equal legislations (e. g. in the fields of labour rights, social security, housing policies) based on the highest existing standards among the group of countries concerned.
- Several popular governments adopt a legally binding treaty to force transnational corporations to respect international law and act together at the international level to promote social change and ecological transition.
- Several popular governments establish a strong enough relationship of powers to enter into meaningful negotiations with oppressive powers for the settlement of national issues (e. g. Palestine, Western Sahara, Kurdistan) and protracted civil wars (e. g. Syria).

CONCLUSION

The European Union and a significant part of its member states have borne and still continue to bear an important responsibility in the global imperialist system of domination which must be overthrown. Because the social and ecological emergencies are global emergencies, the politics of a popular government aiming at favouring the emancipation of the many cannot stop at the national borders, nor at the European ones. Rather, popular governments will have to seek and develop forms of cooperation and long-lasting alliances based on international solidarity. These new kinds of co-operation shall not have any pre-given geographic delimitation: they will be created with any popular government that wishes to do so, whether it finds itself inside or outside of the current European Union, North or South of the Mediterranean Sea, West or East from the Bosphorus strait.

Popular governments will have to seek and develop forms of cooperation and long-lasting alliances based on international solidarity

Such politics must be built from today, through the expression by popular left movements of concrete international solidarity with all the oppressed and exploited, inside and outside of the current European Union.

Chapter 9 - Social struggles, political confrontations and constituent processes

The European institutions (of the European Union/EU and the European Monetary Union/EMU) are structurally neoliberal, thus undemocratic and unequal. They constitute an obstacle to the satisfaction of the popular classes' needs, demands and rights in each country, as well as to solidarity and equality between the people of the member States. Thus any real social and political attempt to a radically progressive social transformation in the EU and its surroundings must confront them. The priority is to prepare such confrontation through egalitarian, anti-xenophobic and feminist rebellions coordinated in European networks and to seek to delegitimise and make irrelevant the existing institutions and Treaties. We must contest them with criteria and practical examples of social justice, dignity, solidarity and democracy. This implies the subordination of money, financial markets, banks and fiscal policies to such aims and popular choices and control. Against the logics of competition as well as in the perspective of an ecological transition, the European level of struggles and building alternatives is of particular importance. That is why we want to communise Europe, but this is impossible in the framework of the existing European institutions.

We want to communise Europe, but this is impossible in the framework of the existing European institutions

The following scenario proposes to rely on existing social struggles at the local, national and transnational levels in order to disobey, confront and break with the undemocratic and capitalist European institutions, and *to substitute them new forms of popular cooperation and democratic institutions in Europe.*

I. PRINCIPLES

Our strategic orientation is based on three principles.

First, our “profile” is and must always be clearly situated politically in *defence of rights for all and environmental justice both against the European ruling classes and their national components and against any xenophobic and racist currents*, be they pro or against the EU, within or outside the EMU. Therefore, dividing lines must be clearly put forward (on social, environmental and democratic issues) in order to break both with national dominant forces and institutions and with the European institutions and Treaties which work in the favour of the ruling classes. This scenario of disobedience, confrontation and break is legitimised by transnational democratic and egalitarian goals, clearly associated to the need to reunite European peoples (in another way and within other international relations).

In defence of rights for all and environmental justice both against the European ruling classes and their national components and against any xenophobic and racist currents

Second, we need to build new international cooperation towards our progressive agenda as part of a long term permanent strategy. Our goals can only be achieved through the

building of permanent fronts and preparation campaigns on a transnational level on the basis of the struggles that already exist on local, national and regional (and international) levels. Through such self-organised campaigns and fronts we intend to *legitimise and implement new rights for all*. The stake is to escape the paralyzing double bind between accepting the undemocratic rules of the EU institutions on the one hand and the dead-end of exclusive nationalism on the other. Our aim is also to try and overcome the main weaknesses of the Left currents made obvious in the confrontations of states with the EU as in the Greek crisis and the Brexit: the lack of cooperation between the popular Left forces in Europe and the lack of a concrete alternative European project.

Third, the scenario, including short-term steps and long-term campaigns, should *articulate social struggles (and self-organisation), political initiatives and elements of “constituent processes”*. We mean by that the defence and legitimation of fundamental rights which could be formulated as part of the “constituent basis” for an alternative political Europe; all of them must of course be anchored in similar struggles at the local and national levels. The whole process must stimulate popular expression of demands and control on existing institutions and be associated with the creation of counter powers and new democratic institutions at the local, regional, national, European and global levels.

Articulate social struggles (and self-organisation), political initiatives and elements of “constituent processes

The realisation of these principles implies as necessary conditions the understanding of the importance of each level and of their articulation for concrete goals – with critical approaches of all existing institutions. The local and national anchorage is essential to take into account concrete contexts, and because it is at these levels that the indispensable confrontations and breaks with the existing institutions, the ruling classes as well as the EU are most likely going to take place. But social and democratic rights as well as actual control on key (social and environmental) issues are confronted to an articulated system of Treaties, institutions and socio-economic mechanisms which cannot be defeated at these two levels only. Local and national initiatives should in no case be restricted “on behalf of” European stakes or waiting for an ideal context of simultaneous European and international struggles. Far from being excluding, local and national social struggles should be thought in the prospect of constituting networks and linking counter powers for international cooperation, which can help consolidate national resistances and breaks. Each national advance should be an opportunity to propose to launch wherever possible constituent processes toward other European or international alliances, in order to build or strengthen a “European public space” which needs to allow the expression of class struggles and social conflict in order to be democratic. Public calls to other European forces to join and support the same demands or organise joint initiatives are always needed. Likely failures and weaknesses at the European level should not lead us to renounce to national advances.

Local and national social struggles should be thought in the prospect of constituting networks and linking counter powers for international cooperation

The capitalist system and its dominant conflicting forces and destructive politics are launched at the local, regional, national and (European) international levels. Therefore, it is at such articulated levels that a new “hegemonic” bloc (with its “narratives” on past and present order and struggles, and its proposals for an alternative anti-capitalist system) can be built, rooted in pluralist debates and struggles. This is why the three socio-political dimensions proposed in the scenario (our general “profile”, the need to build permanent fronts, and to associate them to dynamics of new “rights”, “constituent” processes and institutions) should be thought jointly at these levels.

II. PROPOSALS: THE MAIN STEPS OF THE “REBELLION AND COMMUNISATION” SCENARIO

What steps do we need to elaborate?

1. We need to implement in practice and immediately our alternative social, environmental and political goals through coordinated permanent platforms and cooperation-oriented disobedience: at local, regional, national and European levels, and concerning all **matters or** specific issues (for example debt, migration policies, ecological transition, neo-colonial agreements with the Global South including “Eastern Europe”, etc.), several political actors should disobey the Treaties, diktats and decisions of the EU. They should declare they do it together in order to implement alternative policies and to set up new instituted and long-term cooperation (concerning all or specific matters).

These disobedience processes can be based on existing struggles – with the need to consolidate or build European networks to draw lessons from advances, difficulties and weaknesses – such as the different forms of strikes, in particular transnational and against precarious work; the currently strong feminist movements with all its “intersections”; the ecologist territory-based struggles (“ZAD”) and inventions of new forms of management of “commons”; the different spectacular forms of struggles against tax evasion like requisitioning of furniture from banking agencies of financial institutions involved in such tax evasion; the movements of occupation of public spaces and discussions about their goals and functioning and broad protest movements which challenge social inequalities and the lack of democratic institutions such as the current movement of the “Yellow Vests” in France, the 2014 “Citizen Plenums” movement in Bosnia, the 15M movement which started in 2011 in Spain and so on; the audit of public institutions at municipal, national or European levels and their debts; the opening of private companies’ account books to delegitimise capitalist criteria of “efficiency” and exploitation; the movements welcoming the migrants and helping them cross the borders; the building of networks of “Rebel cities” implementing “Rights for all”; etc. Some of these movements already try to connect on a transnational level, and we need physical and digital spaces (for example assemblies and websites) to unite forces; this objective must be sought more systematically.

Some of these movements already try to connect on a transnational level, and we need physical and digital spaces (for example assemblies and websites) to unite forces

Common declarations of disobedience must also be based on *concrete campaigns* (in all fields such as labour rights, monetary policies, anti-racism, etc.) that should as often as possible demonstrate the possible efficiency of the implementation of democratic, environmental and social aims at a European level, in contradiction with the existing Treaties and neoliberal policies. It is on the basis of such campaigns and concrete experiences that we can prepare the populations to the need to disobey the dominant « rules » or diktats of the existing political institutions.

This first step must be done in order to *satisfy the concrete needs* of the people, against the logics of competition, if possible already through international progressive cooperation and self-organised services and producers. Although we should not reduce the struggle to existing institutions, specific popular demands and struggles should try to use all institutional means, including parliamentary battles in the EU, to strengthen strikes and trade union activity at the European level.

If a political actor is isolated at the moment, it can still delegitimise existing politics and institutions, disobey them by implementing alternative solutions and propose openly new kind of popular cooperation and self-organisation at all possible levels.

2. Existing struggles at the national level must demonstrate the two-ways links between the national ruling classes' politics and the dominant European ideology, political economy and institutions in order to systematically engage in targeted confrontations with both. In order to bring in a break with their

Refuse any social “sacrifice”
for a currency, be it the euro
or a national one

hegemony, popular consultations and mobilisations should be focused on the concrete aims and program which must be put forward against the EU's ruling classes and institutions: when the monetary system and the Treaties appear in contradiction with legitimate aims and democratic and social rights (as it obviously was, for instance, in the Greek case), then they need to be questioned, not implemented; and proposals should be put forward to replace them by other treaties. Our logic must be to refuse any social “sacrifice” for a currency, be it the euro or a national one, and establish the subordination of markets and all financial means to democratically determined aims. The confrontation consists also in implementing defensive tools against the counter-threats and attacks of the EU, as well as political offensive initiatives to destabilise the neoliberal block and to bring about a crisis in the legitimacy and the functioning of the European institutions.

Implementing such tools must be done as soon as possible by a political actor through unilateral measures, like the suspension of the debt payment during an audit; a public policy program creating jobs on the basis of a specific taxation; the control of capital flow; or some socialisations and/or nationalisations linked to concrete struggles and demands.

If a political actor is isolated at the moment, it implements such tools by itself and, through the call to popular mobilisations across Europe (rather than only inside its own geographical area), it proposes

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other actors to contribute to the de-legitimisation and therefore political crisis of the European institutions. “Defensive tools” should never be a protection for national capital, but a democratic and popular protection of rights for all and improvement in social welfare against speculation, sabotage and other hostile acts from dominant forces, at all levels; it should foster cooperation instead of competition between working people who want to associate in a common entity to defend common rights and aims.

3. Such defensive tools and offensive political initiatives necessarily imply *a break with the European Treaties and institutions by popular governments at a national level*. The form of the “break” (be it the consequence of the implementation of alternative policies or a democratic decision to exit) cannot be preconceived and foreseen, but our goal in any case is to de-legitimise, if possible to “block” the capacity of intervention of the European existing institutions, and to force them to state that our progressive goals are in contradiction with their treaties and politics – and produce a crisis and difficulty of “normal” functioning for the EU. All the steps taken by a popular government as described previously in the Manifesto require a break, at least at the national level, with the existing European dominant politics and rules. We must demonstrate clearly that what we defend is not for reasons linked with “national interest” but for political, social, environmental and democratic reasons – which concern all people inside and outside of the current Union.

For example, the refusal to pay the illegitimate, unsustainable, odious and illegal parts of the public debt must be of course first based on concrete national analysis about fiscal policy (who pays) and public needs and expenses (and how else they could be better satisfied). But those arguments lead to denouncing fiscal and social dumping at the European and global level. On the European and international levels, we urgently need a debate to challenge the legitimacy of the existing international monetary system, the role of the IMF, and the European Monetary Union – on the basis of a concrete analysis of their negative effects – and to propose alternative rules and forms of cooperation for the financial system. We defend the absolute need of a democratically controlled monetary system and currency, therefore the need of socialisation of banks and of control on capital flow. Those measures are in conflict with the European Monetary Union and the Treaties of the European Union.

Therefore, a popular government at the national level would be in confrontation with the European institutions in various contexts leading to diverse forms of “breaks”, according to the concrete relationships of power and popular feelings linked to the precise situation of the given country in the given economic context. It could decide an exit of the EMU and/or of the EU (for example on the basis of the Article 50), or accept the challenge of being expelled (even if that is not clearly foreseen by the Treaties); the dynamics could also lead to a dismantlement of the European institutions or to long-lasting confrontations with them.

Alternative choices should be discussed democratically through a popular mobilisation. It should be clear that none of the possible choices imply a will of nationalist orientation against other people, but are thought as means to implement democratic, environmental and social aims at the local, national and international levels, with the argument that all proposed orientations could be stronger if implemented within a new form of international

The real issue is to attain the most favourable conditions to fight against neoliberal and capitalist politics

cooperation. It should always be stated clearly that the real issue is to attain the most favourable conditions to fight against neoliberal and capitalist politics.

For instance, the option to leave the EMU should always be associated with opposition to political forces which want to have a “more competitive” export policy or/and a “national preference” for the satisfaction of needs (political forces promoting the idea of social services for nationals only, excluding immigrants or “second zone citizens”). Whichever currency is chosen, means should be taken to defend the rights of circulation and installation of any individual. The option to stay within the EMU should never be associated with any apologetic presentation of the EU or with arguments claiming that a “European” level of politics and institution would be more “progressive” as such than a national one (the opposite narrative and apologetic approach of “nation-state” as “progressive” as such is not more acceptable).

4. *Constituent processes at all the possible levels in order to build alternatives:* as stated before, the previous steps should be associated to new political cooperation in Europe based on a common Platform against the European ruling classes and institutions as well as xenophobic currents, and in favour of social rights for the workers and all

An alliance of associations, Rebel Cities, Regions or States could launch a “rebel constituent process”

subaltern classes as well as of the defence of the environment. The scenario cannot be totally predicted but for instance, an alliance of associations, Rebel Cities, Regions or States could launch a “rebel constituent process” (concerning global or specific functional prerogatives), open even to political spaces not involved from the beginning in the disobedience process. These processes (or others based in popular processes and districts) could be based notably on the drafting of lists of grievances through democratic popular assemblies (among the recent examples, it can draw on the experience of the mass Rif Movement launched in October 2016 in Morocco, or on some of the local examples of the “Yellow Vests” movement in France, such as Commercy, Saint-Nazaire, Toulouse). They should always integrate content for all parts of subaltern classes, with concerns in favour of the working people, concrete antiracist and anti-patriarchal concerns, rural and urban dimensions, concrete openings to refugees, etc. These constituent processes, with various forms according to the situations and levels concerned (from municipal forums and networks to Constituent Assemblies at the national or European level associated to internationalist platforms) are to be launched in the view to create new cooperation, to favour the process of rupture of neighbouring political actors who have not yet taken it upon themselves, to dismantle Fortress Europe and ultimately to create alternative institutions at the European and international levels.

If a political actor is isolated at the moment, it should launch this “rebel constituent process” on the territory and/or the function concerned, and propose other actors to join the process. The notion of “rebellion” (as for Rebel cities) indicates that we do not limit ourselves to institutional procedures in the existing EU, that we organise networks of different forms of organised rebellions, that such a “constituent process” is in conflict with dominant Treaties, and that it can be non-linear. For example, partial “constituent assemblies” would help to delegitimise and to block the existing Union, and (physical and digital) “networks of networks” would help overcome the difficulties linked to the multiplicity of specific

languages, situations and temporalities. They could be organised on specific issues (“Commons”, labour codes, migrant rights, etc.) and without geographical criteria, even before being able to establish a new form of international cooperation at any credible European level.

III. PROPOSALS: IMMEDIATE INITIATIVES

Each of the previous steps requires some immediate initiatives, in order to make them possible and to be ready when the socio-political conditions and occasions occur. The main requirements concern the designing and the popular appropriation of the concrete tools necessary to disobey, confront and launch constituent processes as well as the gathering of the social and political forces that could operate them.

To specify the scenario and adapt it concretely to different possible situations, we need:

- a) *to draw the lessons of the previous attempts to break with the European treaties and to disobey the European institutions, mainly: the political sequence of 2010-2015 in Greece, the Brexit referendum in Britain, and the regional rebellion in Catalonia demonstrated mainly in 2017; and also other examples of similar breaks from exploitative and oppressive entities, which can be older and from outside the EU.*
- b) *to analyse, precise and popularise the juridical and economic tools already used or debated in the popular Left: for example, the audit committees of the public debt, the complementary systems of payment and/or the creation of a new national currency under democratic control, the article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty, etc.*
- c) *to rely on the existent networks that already have anticipated or could agree with the scenario and launch campaigns linked to it or join its implementation: notably the “Rebel Cities”, the Oviedo Manifesto / Municipal network against illegitimate debt and fiscal cuts in the Spanish State, Via Campesina networks, Women networks and campaigns, networks of precarious workers, transnational strike, trade unions’ networks. The Altersummit network and website could be “communised” and used as a “network of networks” and facilitate informations and debates, just like we should mutualise informations about the Plan B network, the European Left Forums or other European initiatives of the Left to draw strategies and political orientations together.*

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Concretely, for 2019, *we propose to all progressive forces (trade unions, political organisations, associations, activist collectives) sharing similar goals:*

1. *To strengthen jointly their criticism of the capitalist and undemocratic European institutions and specify together their proposals in order to break with their hegemony and reconstruct new popular cooperation.*

2. *To update, “communise” and popularise convergent elaborations, such as the Altersummit's Manifesto⁸⁰ and ReCommonsEurope's contributions and Manifesto. Together, they could be used for collective consultations about aims and means of an alternative socio-political process in Europe and for the establishment of an alternative European Rebel Front and public “space” of those who stand within, against and outside the EU, in order to launch a long lasting democratic European rebellion.*
3. *To encourage the development of all significant initiatives on the local, national and European levels in favour of “rebel constituent processes” such as those that are being developed by some “Yellow Vests” protesters in France.*
4. *To take advantage of the European elections in order to raise campaigns and launch popular debates about this scenario and its implications; to inform about the existing initiatives and alternative spaces that could take part into this scenario; and to gather social and political forces around it.*

⁸⁰ See Altersummit, “A people’s manifesto. Our urgent common priorities for a democratic, social, ecological and feminist Europe”, 2013. URL: <http://www.altersummit.eu/manifeste/article/the-manifesto>.