



# elektron

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## European Trade Union Meeting

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WORLD FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS

On March 23-24, 2010 the European Trade Union Meeting on the subject: “*Social Security in Europe and the role of the class-oriented trade union movement*”, was held in Athens with great success.

There was a big participation and eighteen (18) trade union organizations from 14 European countries took part and discussed the contemporary issue of Social Security.

They also discussed about the issue of the economic crisis in Greece and the problems of Greek workers.

On March 23 evening, the FSM hosted a night of solidarity with refugees from Somalia. Food was given to the refugees as well as toys for the children.

Below you can read the keynote speech and the final resolution adopted.

## **European Trade Union Meeting**

23-24 March 2010 - Athens

*Social Security in Europe, the role of the trade union movement.* Intervention of WFTU General Secretary George Mavrikos

### Dear friends

Dear Colleagues

We welcome you to Athens and we hope that the two days you will be here will be also used to do bilateral contacts with the other delegations that will strengthen the solidarity and internationalism.

Initially we had decided to make this meeting on Social Security with the participation of trade unions from around the world. But due to the limited time we decided to turn it into a European Trade Union Meeting on Social Security.

The issue is timely and crucial. In many European countries considerable debates take place on Social Security. Almost all governments both the neo-conservative and the social-democratic ones adopt some tough, anti-labor decisions. So the class oriented trade union movement in Europe and around the world has to be coordinated and act for the interests of the working class. The European class oriented trade union movement and its proposals may provide an alternative way out, the other solution, the other course.

In Greece you all know that the situation is very bad. The public debt of the country is 310 billion euros, approximately every 2 months it borrows about 5 billion euros, the government claims that there is money to pay the public sector wages and pensions in both the public and private sector.

The first basic question is:

Where did the money and the wealth produced by the working class for years go? Where did the significant income from the social security contributions paid and still been paid by the workers go? The responsibility of the governments of PASOK

and New Democracy who run the country over the past 35 years is very serious. It is their responsibility. They gave the money to the big capital. It is them who through their policies sent the sweat of our people to the pockets of monopolies. The responsible are so far all governments together with the European Union.

The second key question is:

What's the truth behind the "interest" of France, Germany, U.S., behind the IMF and the role of the European Union? Are they fond of the Greek people? Do they really want to give true solutions to the economic problems of the Greek capitalism? What is the truth?

The truth is that the crisis in Greece was the reason and the opportunity to reveal the internal contradictions within the European Union itself. Between Germany, France, England, between the groups of different countries. Also the crisis in Greece gave the opportunity to the great rivalries that exist between the euro and the dollar to be uncovered.

Within the EU there is an unbalanced growth. There are also countries that are closer to the strategy of the U.S. and others seeking strategy from the European Commission. Within these intra-capitalist competitiveness Greece has been involved and half are pushing to borrow from the IMF and others support the establishment of a European Monetary Fund and to get involved actively in the game.

For the Greek people, if Greece borrows from the IMF or from European mechanisms, makes not much difference. The consequences are serious and will be even tougher. Today's generation and the future ones will have to pay for the crisis. The IMF and the European Union are against workers.

Against people. With their policies support the capital and the capitalists. Already the Greek Government with the European Union has put in place tough anti-labor measures such as:

1. Reduction of the wages of all civil servants by 30% per month.
2. Cut of a monthly salary of all civil servants in three parts (30% in Easter, 30% in summer and 30% in Christmas)
3. Increase of the VAT by 2-3%
4. Increase of taxes on workers while giving new privileges in the capital.
5. Release the layoffs and taxation of the dismissal allowances.
6. Preparation of a new anti-labor plan started to be discussed tomorrow morning at 10:30 in the Parliament.

The propaganda of the Government claims that these measures will lead the country out of the crisis, that these measures are temporary that only civil servants are concerned and that are fair and necessary.

This propaganda is false. The measures will be permanent. They are unfair because are paid by those who are not responsible for the crisis. The measures are not necessary for the people but are necessary for capitalism. Even if the country marks some development, this will be weak, temporary and will benefit the monopolies and the multinationals.

Dear comrades,

In all EU countries, the attacks on Social Security are coordinated. In Spain, Portugal, Germany, Ireland, Denmark everywhere. So the argument that some governments implement anti-social security policies because their countries have economic problems is not true. Economic problems exist. These economic problems are created by the governments through their policies and are now using it to hit the rights of workers.

The problems in Social Security are neither an Italian phenomenon nor a Greek phenomenon. The problems in Social Security are first of all political and

2010 elektron 10 (94) 3, FTE in Mexico ideological. Reactive changes are promoted in all countries of the European Union under the Maastricht Treaty and the Treaty of Lisbon. The attacks are part of an overall plan of reactionary changes that serve the needs of the modern capitalist system.

The aim of all these changes is the implementation across Europe of measures such as:

1. Removing conquests and rights by raising the retirement age, reduction of pensions, restriction of medicines and increase in their prices.
2. Privatization of Social Security and Health - Welfare and implementation of private economic criteria throughout the system.
3. Hit of the rights of disabled people. Hit of the rights in dangerous and heavy jobs.
4. Reduction of social security contributions paid by employers and increase of the contributions paid by the employees.
5. Free legal framework for the dominance of multinational companies in the function of public hospitals.

At the same time with the high unemployment, the heavy exploitation against young workers and economic migrants, the black labor, the undeclared work, the uninsured work is being generalized.

The ultimate goal:

- Capitalist concentration
- Profitability of capital
- Intensity of workers exploitation

Dear comrades,

This situation is applied to all the continents: In Latin America, Asia, and Middle East. Certainly in the Third World and the U.S. the big problem is the large number of uninsured workers. Today in the U.S, 47 million employees are totally uninsured, completely

2010 elektron 10 (94) 4, FTE in Mexico deprived from any social security, medical and pharmaceutical coverage.

The big question is what do the trade unions do? How do they act? How do they coordinate their action? What do they claim?

The World Federation of Trade Unions believes that we need some general, common objectives to be jointly claimed by all of us with a good coordination. Of course, in every country there are specific and separate issues. But we can agree on common objectives, while each union in its own country to apply the combination is closer to its positions and strategy.

As common targets we suggest:

1. To compete for a public social security system covering all the modern needs of workers and the unemployed.
2. To fight for social security coverage for all workers. No one to be uninsured.
3. Everyone to have a free public health coverage. To stop the irresponsible actions of the capitalists in Health Care.
4. Reduction of the retirement age so that the working people to be able to enjoy a part of the sweat of his life. Increase of pensions.
5. To resist to the strategy of Maastricht and the Lisbon that hit conquests of many years and leads them back to the Middle Ages.

Dear comrades,

- The WFTU has decided to organize in September this year an International Day of Action. Last year, in 2009 the same initiative has taken place on April 1st when in 48 countries have been organized demonstrations and activities. We propose for Europe to decide the issue of the International Day of Action 2010 to be Social Security. To issue communications, materials, posters and to inform the working people.

- As part of this activity to be addressed to the European Commission and to protest against the policy of the European Union.
- To send a memorandum to all European governments. To ask to stop the expenses of each country for the military equipment and to be given for the strengthening of Social Security.

Dear comrades,

Let's discuss openly, democratically, say freely all our proposals. We can end up agreeing on common objectives and concrete activities.

Thank you.

Social Security in Europe, the role of the trade union movement

### **RESOLUTION**

The World Federation of Trade Unions believes that we need some general, common objectives to be jointly claimed by all of us with a good coordination. Of course, in every country there are specific and separate issues. But we can agree on common objectives, while each union in its own country to apply

the combination is closer to its positions and strategy.

Common Aims:

1. To fight for a public social security system covering all the modern needs

## 2010 elektron 10 (94) 5, FTE in Mexico

- of workers and the unemployed and young workers.
2. To fight for social security coverage for all workers. No one to be uninsured.
  3. Everyone to have free public health coverage. To stop the irresponsible actions of the capitalists in Health Care, in Social Security.
  4. To resist to the increase of the retirement age so that the working people to be able to enjoy a part of the sweat of his life. Increase of pensions so that pensioners can have a decent life.
  5. To resist to the strategy of Maastricht and the Lisbon that hit conquests of many years and leads them back to the Middle Ages.

### Activities:

- The WFTU has decided to organize in September this year an

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Athens March 23-24, 2010.

Source: [www.wftucentral.org](http://www.wftucentral.org)



European Trade Union Meeting in Athens, Greece



PAME from Greece during the strike on February 10 2010



Greek workers on strike



PAME's demonstration on strike, February 10 2010



Valentin Pacheco on PAME's meeting in Greece, March 4 2010



Workers women's demonstration in Greece, March 8 2010

Energy Workers's Front, in Mexico

Frente de Trabajadores de la Energía,  
de México