

A FAIRER EUROPE FOR WORKERS

ETUC
PROGRAMME
FOR THE 2019
EUROPEAN
ELECTIONS

- 1.** The **European elections – 23-26 May 2019** – will be decisive for working people. The new European Parliament can either make the EU a better place, or undermine the European cooperation built up over many years.
- 2.** The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) – with some 45 million working people in 90 trade unions in 38 countries – believes that a fairer Europe for workers is possible, based on **democracy** and **social justice, quality jobs and higher wages, a socially fair and just transitions** to a low-carbon and digital economy. This should be the basis of a new social contract for Europe.
- 3.** Stronger and more widespread collective bargaining – negotiations between trade unions and employers – social dialogue and workers' participation in every EU country is essential to achieve a **fairer Europe** and more **democracy**.
- 4.** The ETUC calls on all trade union members and all people to **vote** in the European elections, and to vote for parties and candidates that will support our trade union demands and create a better future for women and men, young people and elderly people in Europe.

CRISIS LEFT DEEP SCARS

- 5.** The crisis has left deep scars on workers. Many people's wages are worth less today than a decade ago. Public services have been slashed and people's rights reduced. Slow economic recovery and falling unemployment have yet to benefit many workers.
- 6.** Working people are understandably disillusioned. Growing inequality, a lack of secure and well-paid jobs, unregulated globalisation, the lack of a just and coordinated EU approach to migration, and climate change have all created uncertainty and fear. The European Union is facing a backlash against austerity and deregulation which made the crisis worse for workers, pensioners and young people. This has fuelled the growth of nationalist, anti-European and far-right forces.

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- 7.** Change is possible. Europe can be a force for social progress. Nationalism offers no solution to the problems facing us today – not to the monopoly power and tax avoidance of multi-national companies, low wages and poverty, climate change, pollution or fighting terrorism. Together the EU and Member States have the power to ensure we all get a fair share of the wealth we help to create.

- 8.** The ETUC has been pushing EU leaders hard to change policies and already we see some improvements. After strong trade union pressure the EU created a new investment plan, adopted a 'European Pillar of Social Rights', put forward new legislative initiatives for better working conditions, and made some progress on more sustainable economic policies. These are important changes, although not sufficient, and the EU must go much further – to a new 'social contract' that offers all citizens a fairer and more equal society with real opportunities for all.

DEMOCRACY

- 9.** **Democracy is at risk from extremists** – within the EU, on our borders and beyond. The ETUC calls for EU action to defend democracy and democratic principles, trade union rights and women's rights, uphold the rule of law, apply zero-tolerance for hate speech, improve democratic participation, and preserve the right of people, trade unions and civil society to campaign for the public interest.
- 10.** Democracy must go beyond voting and include real involvement in political decisions as well as **democratic participation** in society and at the workplace. National Governments must stop blaming the EU for bad decisions Governments have imposed outside the proper EU democratic decision-making process.
- 11.** Sound **social dialogue** and effective **collective bargaining**, especially at branch level, are essential tools of economic and social democracy. The right of workers to be informed, consulted and to participate in changes at work must be strengthened, including through European Works Councils.
- 12.** The EU must put a Social Progress Protocol in the EU Treaty, to give social rights precedence over economic freedoms.

QUALITY JOBS & HIGHER WAGES

- 13.** Europe needs **new economic policies** to boost growth that benefits everyone, not just a few. Progressive and sustainable economic reforms must be implemented, making the EU economic policy 'Semester' fair and more social, relaunching public and private investment, creating tools to protect working people from economic crisis and shocks. Reforms of the EU budget, monetary union and economic policy-making must ensure that social justice goes hand-in-hand with economic competitiveness.

14. Fairer and progressive tax systems are needed to redistribute wealth, fund public services and social protection, and tackle social problems caused by globalisation, decarbonisation and digitalisation. Efficient tax systems must prevent tax evasion and avoidance and tax companies adequately and equally.

15. **All working people in Europe deserve a pay rise**, to address wage gaps and to boost sustainable growth and competitiveness. We need better wealth distribution and upward wage convergence for social justice and to tackle growing inequality. It is unacceptable that profits and productivity are not redistributed to workers who have generated them, especially in low wage countries affected by massive brain-drain which creates disillusionment about the European Union. Work of the same value should be paid the same across Europe, across sectors and for women and men.

16. The solution - to raise wages and achieve better standards of living and work for all - is **collective bargaining**: negotiations between employers and trade unions for fair wages and working conditions, particularly at branch level in each and every sector and country. This requires EU and national law to reinforce the capacity and strength of social partners, to enable collective agreements to be negotiated and put into practice, and to enlarge their coverage among workers.

JUST TRANSITIONS

17. The parallel transitions towards a **low-carbon** and **digital economy** have to be managed so that no one is left behind. We need a new EU Industrial Policy to create new jobs and opportunities, and to ensure that EU competition and company law do not override workers', social and trade union rights. More democracy at work would also help to achieve change that is socially fair.

18. This means anticipating change and helping workers affected by **job disruption and transformation** from decarbonisation, digitalisation, automation and globalisation. Workers must have a say on the way jobs are changing and get strong support when jobs are threatened, through public and private investment, social dialogue and collective bargaining and adequate training policies.

19. This means ensuring that **all non-standard and precarious workers**, in platforms and gig economy as well as in more traditional sectors, including self-employed workers, can have decent pay, equal access to adequate social protection, and the same rights as the other workers, including to join a trade union and bargain collectively.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

- 20.** The EU must rebuild its **social model**, by fully implementing the **‘European Pillar of Social Rights’** at European and national level. This must include the right to quality education and life-long learning, health and safety at work, fair working conditions, fair wages, secure employment, gender equality, work-life balance and to public services of good quality. Access to adequate social protection systems, fair pensions, housing and social services must be ensured for all, on equal basis in terms of contributions and benefits. All this must happen through the involvement of workers and their trade unions at all levels.
- 21.** **Migration** must be managed so that human rights are protected, all people have equal treatment at work and in society, and exploitation ends. We need to work together across Europe for the integration and inclusion of migrants, for the benefit of all. Fair mobility must be ensured to all EU and third-country workers, and fight against social dumping must be a priority.
- 22.** **EU trade and globalisation policies** need to be fairer and give more prominence to social rights, not just serve the interests of multi-national companies. The EU must help implement the UN Sustainable Development Goals – including no poverty, decent work, reduced inequalities and gender equality – in Europe as well as in the rest of the world, and these must shape all EU policies – ‘domestic’ and international.
- 23.** The EU should work to strengthen global commitment to international cooperation, including to uphold democracy in the UN and ILO, and to make other international bodies more democratic and promote social justice.

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