

Putting People First - Our agenda for a strong economy and a fair society

These are desperately worrying times. We are in the grip of an economic crisis caused by deregulated markets, increasing inequality, greedy bankers and speculators. All of us know someone who has lost their job, or their home, or is struggling to pay their bills. Yet the response of governments across Europe is to hand over billions to the failed banks and big business whilst planning cuts in vital public services. Unions throughout Europe are demanding that governments put people first, and take urgent action to build a fairer society and to help hard working people to beat the crisis. We want a new deal for a Social Europe. Campaigning together' we can achieve our' goals.

A System in Crisis

The economic crisis is the result of greedy bankers and speculators gambling with other peoples' money and all our futures. It is the result of a financial and economic system that was allowed to spiral out of control, allowing a privileged few to get rich, leaving the rest of us to pay the price. Now we are calling for urgent government action to protect our families and our communities and to lay the foundations for a strong economy and a fairer society.

Put People First

Now is the time to put people first. Hard working people must not be left to pay the price for a crisis they did not create, The low paid and average wage earners, unemployed, women, young people, pensioners, minorities and people with disabilities are especially vulnerable. We demand decisive action by governments to:

- *Protect peoples' jobs. People are rightly angry that billions have been pumped into the banks yet the banks are still not lending. If the leading banks are to be bailed out and taken into public ownership they must be run for the benefit of all. Our stakes in the banks- as taxpayers and savers - must be used to help people get back into work and help those in our communities suffering through no fault of their' own.*
- *Stop the bailout of multinational companies who have made vast profits out of taking over public services, ripping off the taxpayer' and public service workers. Governments must now invest in publicly owned schools and hospitals, not hand them over' to private profit.*
- *Stop people from losing their homes. Give urgent help to people struggling to pay their mortgages and better security for tenants. Give public authorities the cash to build and renovate homes, and to buy empty ones and with more affordable housing to tackle the housing shortage.*
- *Provide extra help with high fuel bills, paid for by windfall taxes on energy companies.*
- *Give more help for people thrown out of work - better redundancy pay, decent benefits and retraining opportunities to help people back into work, with quality apprenticeships and training for the young unemployed.*
- *Ensure effective regulation - in the public interest - of the financial institutions and businesses.*

Public Services — A Lifeline

Public services are a lifeline for communities and a vital safety net for our people facing hard times. They keep people in work and support local economies. We call on governments to:

- *Stop public service job cuts that add to unemployment and weaken essential services.*
- *Expand services that help people who are struggling to cope — like welfare and housing advice, health and social care.*
- *Increase funding to community and third sector organizations that are a lifeline for people in need.*
- *Stop selling off our public services. The markets, competitions, commissioning which have taken over our health and local government services are not understood by anyone and do not work.*
- *Agree a Green New Deal so we can invest now in environmental technology, green jobs and energy-saving projects.*

Working together

We all need to play our part in meeting these challenges! Communities and trade unions, across Europe, working together and campaigning for change.

We can't go back to "business as usual" where bankers and bonuses matter more than people and public services. We need to build a fair society based on good jobs, quality public services and a stronger, more tolerant society. We call on governments to:

- *Make tax fair and crack down on tax avoidance - to stop any cut back of public services, so essential to our communities in a recession.*
- *Make decent pay, equal pay, a real minimum wage and improved social provision for all a priority so no-one needs to get into dangerous debt.*
- *Bring in decent state pensions to ensure dignity in retirement.*
- *Re-regulate finance and make sure our savings and pensions are invested responsibly.*
- *Maintain levels of overseas development aid so that the poorest of the poor are not forced to bear the brunt of the crisis.*

This crisis has demonstrated what can happen when inequality, private greed and unregulated market forces get out of control. It is up to us to show there is a better way. Unions across Europe will challenge those calling for cuts to pay, pensions and services, and rebut the racist myths and false solutions peddled by the far right. It is time to reassert what matters most - putting people first and the values of fairness, solidarity and democracy – values that public service workers put into practice every day.

Unions across Europe are at the forefront of the campaign for better public services and for a better life for public service workers - workers like yourself who deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.

UNIONS - PUTTING YOU FIRST