

May Day Address

Dear Colleagues,

Recent developments in Europe are a real cause for concern for the European Metalworkers' Federation (EMF). Neo-liberalism, deregulation and rigid austerity measures are threatening to change the European project to promote peace and secure prosperity beyond all recognition. This is not the Social Europe that trade unions have always fought for - a Europe of sustainable growth, with more and safer jobs, a Europe whose core task is harmonisation of the differing living conditions and a fair distribution of income and wealth, a Europe with more involvement and more rights for its citizens and workers.

Unsocial austerity and repressive policies have driven Europe into a fundamental existential crisis. In many countries GDP is sinking whilst unemployment rates keep reaching new record highs. This paints a shameful picture for the whole European Union.

The wrong course was already set before the outbreak of the crisis via debt and deficit criteria, poor economic coordination and reckless neglect of the social union. The fiscal compact initiated by the German government now also threatens to irreversibly damage the political and social democracy of both the EU Member States and candidate countries.

This policy is irresponsible and must be stopped at once. The economies of many European countries are being driven into massive recession, putting jobs at risk. Large parts of society are becoming impoverished and more and more people are bitterly turning their backs on Europe as democracy is throttled by austerity policies. All this is completely unacceptable and must be stopped.

The EMF stands for a change of policy and a democratic Europe, a sustainable Europe, based on solidarity.

Urgent economic measures have to be taken: financial transactions need to be very heavily taxed. It is high time that financial market actors are made to pay for the crisis caused by their own reckless acts. This means that financial markets must be re-regulated and the bank sector reorganized. Government bonds must be guaranteed by the Euro zone, acting as a single entity, and state finances must be decoupled from capital markets.

Trade unions and politicians are also called upon to act. Wage development must match price and productivity developments throughout Europe in order to put an end to the constant, unfair redistribution of income in favour of capital at the expense of labour. What is also essential is the social regulation of the labour market. This means putting an end to low-wage sectors and, above all, to unfair precarious employment conditions, i.e. "cheap mini-jobs" and temporary work.

Finally, in order to enable genuine cooperation between the EU economies with their differing levels of productivity, there is a real need for sharing. The notion of cohesion – of harmonising living conditions – must be revived. This can only be achieved through organising transfers in accordance

with the principal of solidarity. Adjustment payments help to break down the social and economic imbalances in the euro region. In this respect, obligations and rights must be jointly agreed on by donor and beneficiary states. It is especially those countries with acute economic problems that should be given fresh development prospects via aid from, and in the interests of the whole European Union. Here, I am not only thinking of Greece or Spain, but also particularly of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe.

The only real solution from my point of view is the re-founding of Europe! Traditionally, May Day is synonymous with solidarity. If Europe is to have a future, then proactive and combined efforts must be made to solicit and win over people's support and sympathy. We trade unions advocate a citizens' European social movement to campaign against the disastrous crisis policies and in favour of a radical change of course and policy. To achieve this, we have to start today!

I wish all our members a good 1st May

In solidarity,



Ulrich Eckelmann
EMF General Secretary.