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PROTECT THE PEOPLE NOT THE SYSTEM

The Corona crisis and the consequences for European politics

Party of the European Left (EL)

Square de Meeûs, 25

1000 Bruxelles

info@european-left.org

T. +32 (0)2 50 22 606/616

F. +32 (0)2 50 20 173

<http://www.european-left.org/>

Credits:

Riccardo Parreggiani 4, 6, 11

Andrea Barcaccia 10, 12

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PREAMBLE

The health crisis that the world is facing reveals a structural crisis that already existed and that the EL has consistently exposed. The EL took on the task of proposing an alternative model for this Europe following the explosion of Covid-19. For this, a Platform has been created and we are working very actively to develop it focusing not only on solutions for the actual crisis, but also, more in the long term, for a public, social and ecological transformation of the economy. It is important to rethink the role of European and global institutions, to ensure investments that go in the direction of a Social Green New Deal, and to protect workers: for a tomorrow focused on human needs and not just on profit.

The situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is a shock for all humanity. Drastic measures have been taken in almost all countries to prevent people from contracting the disease and to contain the pandemic. While, indeed, every effort must be made to protect the population, these measures must be coordinated, but an effective European coordination by its institutions is still absent as well as a global response. In this way, the countries most affected are left on their own. The risk is therefore that the politics in general, with the Stability Pact in particular, will limit solidarity among countries in coping with economic crisis by leading to the dichotomy privileged countries-countries already hit by austerity in the past.

The spread of the COVID-19 virus also has significant consequences for the economy: it is accelerating the crisis of neoliberal globalisation as a hegemonic model of society, accelerating the restructuring process of capitalism.

The coronavirus pandemic clearly shows the failure of the prevailing neoliberal economic and social model. As a consequence of the neoliberal austerity policy of privatising public services, healthcare systems are not able to cope with the public needs in a pandemic.

The Party of the European Left (EL) demands immediate measures to combat the consequences of the crisis and a radical change of policy, opening a new path for the development of the society, placing the people at its core.

Some measures at national level to protect the most vulnerable people, like in Spain, are going in a good direction, but comprehensive activities concerning five poles are necessary. First and foremost, everything must be done to protect the people. A public, social, and ecological transformation of the economy is urgently needed. Democratic institutions and rights must not be questioned by the measures undertaken in order to combat the crisis: on the contrary, in difficult times like these, democracy and civil rights have to be defended and expanded. There is no other answer than international solidarity to the global dimension of the crisis: now it's the time for a new initiative for disarmament and a policy of détente.

Protection of the Population

Every effort must be made to improve the operational capacity of healthcare systems.

We need extra resources for public health systems, as well as convergence of standards in all countries in terms of personnel, facilities and equipment in the public hospitals and prevention systems, and an increase in the capacity for production of health protection tools. And it is also imperative to acquire, on a continent-wide scale, European public services, efficient and coordinated with the rest of the world. **We call for the immediate creation of a European Health Fund funded by the ECB with 100-year securities that are not negotiable on the markets and the possibilities to obtain more public services by abolishing Growth and the Fiscal Compact.**

The population must be protected, both socially and economically. Thousands of workers and employees are at risk of losing their jobs and their incomes, or already did. **The virus hits the weakest hardest: those most affected are people working in poorly paid and precarious jobs, particularly cleaning staff and carers.**

Although governments across Europe are asking employees to work from home, this does not apply to everyone and in too many cases it is a privilege. Workers in essential services or essential production lines, who have to be present in the workplace, need guaranteed protection against the spread of the virus.

We demand an economic rescue plan for workers and their families, including all precarious workers, the unemployed and non-documented migrants and refugees or similar. In case of income losses, financial compensation is needed. Rents and mortgages need to be suspended for those who cannot pay them because of their income loss. We oppose any attempt to worsen working conditions, such as the suspension of collective agreements and the reduction of workers' rights. **The systems of social protection, salaries and pensions should be adapted to the highest level we have in Europe.**

Women are the ones who sustained the most efforts to keep us all safe and the society running: their essential role must be recognised and honoured. No solidarity or mutual aid could exist without the crucial role of women. Despite that, they are mostly affected by precarious working conditions, in particular nurses, cashiers or cleaners. The situation of women migrants in the camps or also in the host countries is especially hard.

Women should not pay the highest price for this crisis: we need a concrete plan focusing on the protection of all women (workers, unemployed, migrants), especially when victims of any form of violence (particularly domestic violence).

We strongly oppose the pressure by the economic and industrial world onto decision-makers to end the lockdown measures and reopen even non-essential productions without guaranteeing the basic conditions for workers' safety to avoid the increase of infections.

We need urgent actions not only for big companies, but in particular for small and medium-sized businesses and self-employed workers. Financial support for businesses must be aimed at maintaining employment levels, respecting wages, working hours and duties. **In order to deal with the problems of production remodelling, the reduction of working hours for equal pay shall be encouraged.**

The importance of cultural work has also been unrecognized for decades. But there will be no Europe without culture. Like air and water, like public services, culture is a common good which cannot be considered as a market value subject to the rules of profitability and profit. The importance of culture is that it brings together, it emancipates, it flourishes. It must imperatively be supported. For this, we consider these two demands as necessary:

- An artist status recognized throughout Europe;
- A European Fund to support the cultural policies of States and Regions.

NO-ONE IS LEFT BEHIND

The Covid-19 pandemic shows that our society needs a new social and ecological transformation. The idea that the market can solve this crisis is an illusion, and the rhetoric of the state of emergency is used as a pretext for dismantling democratic and social rights.

We need a Social Green New Deal that goes beyond capitalist limits.

Through a Platform, the Party of the European Left took the task of proposing an alternative model for this Europe: we not only have to rethink the role of European and global institutions, but we are called now to working very actively to protect people.

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