

ALTER SUMMIT

Towards a **people's manifesto**¹ **Our urgent common priorities for a democratic, social, ecological and feminist**² Europe

working doc – Dec 2012

Our democracy must roll back austerity ... before their austerity destroys democracy !

Our common goal is to reclaim genuine democracy in Europe. This includes equality, particularly between men and women; political, social and economic rights for all and democratic governments that take responsibility for protecting their citizens. We refuse the dictatorship of financial markets and demand that the peoples of European be freed from debt slavery and austerity.

I. EUROPE IS RICH ! NO TO DEBT SLAVERY !

We'll not pay their debt! The origins of public debt are:

- decades of tax policies that have outrageously enriched a small minority
- the banking debacle and the bank bailouts
- interest wrongly paid to private banks
- corruption and big, unnecessary public works

In some countries, the problem is mainly the private debt resulting mainly from heavy borrowing for real estate purchases and reckless lending by private banks, combined with lowering or stagnation of real wages. (Labour has lost 10 points of GDP to capital over the past 30 years). All over Europe, public and private debts are suffocating peoples. No one still believes that these debts can or will be reimbursed. Furthermore, they are partly illegitimate.

¹ The word "memorandum" is not unanimous. For some reference is clearly to Memorandums of Troika, not for others. An alternative is "Manifesto".

² There is no disagreement on the fundamental role of gender equality. There are questions about the word "feminist" in the sentence on what we expect from Europe. We are feminists ; what we expect from the EU is that it is egalitarian ...

Human rights come before debt service and human needs before profit

We demand a Europe-wide solution that stigmatizes no country and provides populations with lasting relief from the burden of illegitimate debt, the blackmail of financial markets and the antisocial programs imposed by the Troika and the EU. We call for debt audits undertaken in each country by citizens to assess the share of this illegitimate debt.

Our common and urgent demands:

1. Stop the blood-letting of the most indebted European countries, if necessary by suspending repayments for as long as populations are not protected against worsening poverty, public services are not strengthened and social rights not consolidated.
2. In order to reduce present debt stocks to realistic levels, undertake an immediate, one-off wealth levy. Future illegitimate and excessive re-indebtedness should be avoided by fair taxation and good wages (see below).
3. The European Central Banks³ must lend directly to States. Private banks and EU member-states must be prevented from lending to states at far higher rates than they are themselves paying.

II. FOR A GREEN AND SOCIAL EUROPE : ROLL BACK AUSTERITY!

Throughout Europe, any honest observer can see that austerity does not work: it brings lower wages, dismantling of public services, decline of social protection and leads to heightened debts, deficits and unemployment. A small minority continues to enrich itself whereas 10% of the European population already more than 60% of the wealth. Austerity is the neo-liberals' tool of choice to destroy social rights.

We demand a complete reversal of these policies, and a new course towards an economic model based on the social and natural commons.

Our common and urgent demands

1. **End austerity now** : it is driving Europe deeper into recession. Cancel or veto the treaties and regulations imposing austerity (the Fiscal Pact, the Six-Pack ...).
2. **Tax justice** with a permanent, progressive taxation system applying fair rates on wealth, corporate profits, financial transactions ; and strengthening tax administrations in the fight against fraud and tax havens;
3. **The socio-ecological transition⁴** is the answer to the climate & environmental crisis as well as to mass unemployment. Europe should invest massively in this transition to create millions of environmentally friendly and socially useful, good quality jobs

³ Discussion on « ECB » or « ECBs » : no doubt about the central importance of ECB, but nor all the EU countries are in the eurozone, and their own central bank has also a role to play.

⁴ Discussion on the question : should we join the « green » and the « social » transition in a same paragraph ? Rather yes, the splitting between what is « natural » and what is « social » being a bit artificial ; but public services also need a specific attention – that's why they are in a fourth demand.

4. Protect and strengthen **public services**, including health, education, transport and energy, public housing... These should be seen as common goods ensuring our social and economic human rights that cannot be privatized.

III. A decent income for all !

No to poverty, no to precarious work!

Neo-liberal policies lead to massive unemployment, wage cuts, deteriorating working conditions, and wage and professional inequality between men and women.

In the context of the crisis, these policies now go even further and are attacking labour rights, collective bargaining and the ability of workers' organizations to defend their members. They impose the principle of competitiveness in order to divide workers and increase profits while simultaneously weakening the level and quality of social protection for retirees, the poor, the sick and the unemployed.

We demand a society that provides every citizen with a decent job and an income that allows a dignified life.

Our common and urgent demands

1. Restore the freedom of collective bargaining and concerted action; restore collective agreements cancelled as part of austerity measures
2. Build a European social protection system, with upward harmonization of social and economic rights.
3. Establish a minimum income sufficient for a dignified life, and a minimum wage in each country (fixed by law or by agreement)
4. Institute genuine equality of both wages and career development between women and men
5. Share the jobs – meaning the right to a decent job for all

IV. FOR ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY: PUT BANKS UNDER PEOPLE'S CONTROL

The collapse of the private banking system is not an accident but the result of a system organised so that finance served shareholders and speculators almost exclusively to the detriment of the real economy. Governments have not merely authorised but encouraged this system:

- By consenting in recent decades to every demand of the finance industry including enthusiastic deregulation, the development of shadow banking and of subsidiaries in tax havens which contributed to the spread of toxic financial products.
- By privatizing many public or cooperatively-owned credit institutions formerly oriented towards financing useful regional activities..

Governments' response to the crisis was to inject billions of euros to rescue banks at the expense of taxpayers and to provide the financial industry with unconditional guarantees thereby strengthening it even further.

We demand that banks serve the real economy, society and the environment: governments and European institutions must stand up to the greed and impunity of bankers

Our common and urgent claims

1. Impose strong and enforceable regulations that prohibit banks from speculating with our money.
2. Separate commercial and investment banks; if investment banks then fail, allow them to fail in a controlled manner
3. Prohibit – for both banks and multinational companies--the use of tax havens . Prohibit shadow banking practices and any other form of concealment of off-balance sheet activities.
4. Give priority and incentives to collectively owned cooperative public credit systems
5. Review the guaranties wrongly granted to private finance.

Because we are citizens, not *stakeholders* or mere *consumers*

Because we demand democratic governments, not technocratic "*governance*"

Because we want a real democracy,
we demand citizen control over unelected officials and dictatorial european institutions

Because we do not want that Europe's prosperity relies on the exploitation of the rest of the world, we demand a fundamental rethinking of the trade policies of the European Union;

Because austerity leads to racism, fascism and sexism;

We build a unitary movement for a democratic, social, ecological and feminist Europe !

To support and strengthen the peoples' struggles against this Europe of inequalities, austerity and debt we gather forces around the above demands, by national and European actions culminating in the Alter Summit⁵ on 7, 8 and 9 June 2013.

calendar and information: www.altersummit.eu
Contact: info@altersummit.eu

⁵ Venue of the Alter Summit must be confirmed by end of Jan 2013 ; probably Athens.