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Congress political document

UNITE FOR A LEFT ALTERNATIVE IN EUROPE

INTRODUCTION: Europe in a profound crisis, the crucial role of the alternative forces and of the EL

Europe is going through the worst crisis in its history since the Thirties and the Second World War. According to the promises of the forces that dominate Europe, the European project was to be one of peace and social progress; it is now being transformed into a nightmare where the only horizon offered to the peoples of Europe is one of brutal and generalised social regression. Europe as a whole has been thrust into this turmoil by the crisis of the financialised capitalist system, the social and ecological consequences of which have hit humanity and the planet with unprecedented violence, as well as by the crisis of a model of the European Union that has cast in an ultraliberal mould, under the supervision of the financial markets.

The global crisis of capitalism, after decades of accumulation of profits and massive redistribution of wealth and power in favour of capital, affects in one way or another every country and every aspect of social life. Extreme austerity policies, shrinking and precarious employment, privatization of public goods and companies, destruction of a large part of the productive forces, dramatic reduction in the Welfare State, weakening of democratic institutions, strengthening of repression and emergency powers have all been employed to maintain the dominance of capital and global profitability.

The situation has become unsustainable for the peoples of Europe. Austerity and authoritarianism are applied as part of the European oligarchies' strategy to dominate the peoples. While the banks are bailed out, public spending is sacrificed and unemployment explodes. While company taxes and large fortunes are systematically reduced, unjust taxes rain down on the populations. Salaries are being cut, but company profits and the inequalities that come with them are increasing. Because of speculation, entire families have lost their homes. The non-sustainable use of resources continues to be driven, notably by productivist models of agriculture and speculation in agricultural markets, fishing and livestock farming, whilst small-scale farmers and fishermen have nothing to live on and climate change threatens humanity. While our ways of thinking progress towards equality, there has been an upsurge in exploitation, violence and trafficking of women. There has also been an upsurge of violence on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. While aspirations for more democracy grow, violations of our freedoms and repression are increasing. While peace seems more necessary than ever, European leaders choose to go down the path of Atlanticism, NATO and military interventions.

The path that the EU is headed down is that of a tragic deadlock. This path is dragging the entire continent into recession and causing the European Union to enter into an existential crisis.

Beyond the borders of the EU, all European countries are experiencing political and social turbulence that will reconfigure the continent for decades to come. European heads of state and all of the forces that have supported their projects in national parliaments as well as in the European Parliament, are heavily responsible. Very often, these projects have been supported by a consensus

involving right-wing conservative forces, liberals, social-democrats and greens,.

Today, crucial choices have to be made. There will be no maintaining of the status quo or going backwards. If the current choices are upheld, the EU will increasingly be reduced to an authoritarian management board and producer of social regression, threatening any idea of solidarity and European justice. We propose a break in order to found a new European project, one which is based on the interests of the peoples and respect for their sovereignty, in order to restore a sense of meaning to European integration.

For us, there is no question of waiting for the European Union to crumble, and for the monsters that could emerge from the rubble, nor of promoting nationalist solutions setting the peoples against one another. The European Left, which we represent, is internationalist and stands together in solidarity. We strive towards a socialist alternative, a civilisation freed from capitalism, exploitation, oppression and capitalist violence. Ours is a vision that guarantees not only a distribution of wealth that supports work and an advanced social and economic development model, but also democracy, equality, democratic and social rights for all European citizens.

It is to this end that we fight for a re-foundation of Europe, in other words, for a new definition of its objectives, policies and structures; an economic, productive, social and ecological model that is totally different, and that is based on solidarity, social justice and popular sovereignty.

In this context, the Party of the European Left has a historic responsibility, since the crisis in Europe is having profound effects on societies and is liberating opposing forces. On the one hand, social regression and the constant denials of democracy increase divisions both between peoples and within societies themselves. Within numerous European countries, these factors are fuelling a rise in forms of national and regional egoisms, anti-feminist, homophobic, transphobic or fascist and xenophobic approaches. On the other hand, struggles are intensifying and the forces of the left are making progress. Many critical forces are now ready to form a European front that can make it possible for a left alternative to show a positive way out of the crisis and build European regional cooperation, beneficial to the peoples of Europe and to the world as a whole; we want to join forces with them so as to truly bring about change in Europe.

This is the very *raison d'être* of the Party of the European left. The EL brings together anti-capitalist, communist, socialist, ecologist, feminist, ecosocialist, republican and other democratic forces, and works towards the development of proposals, actions and spaces where ideas converge. This is our “benchmark”, in the midst of a political landscape dominated by forces that promote neoliberalism and act to serve the interests of big capital. Our goal is to break this consensus through the convergence in action of the various political forces that exist in the European countries, struggling in the street and in the institutions, with an anti-capitalist perspective.

The 4th EL congress should mark the start of a new phase wherein to better meet these objectives, not just within the framework of the 2014 European elections, but also within the broader perspective of work on confluences between different popular struggles on the European level. We want to lead the way for workers and citizens, so that they can take the power over political decisions; we want to build a real political and economic democracy, to regain power against the financial coup d'Etat.

I/ A spectacular worsening of the crisis in Europe : the failure of an ultraliberal structure and “austerity” measures.

We are faced with a crisis of the capitalist system that affects every region of the world, without exception. Nevertheless, the crisis in the EU is specific in nature, as it is linked to its construction

and to the neoliberal doctrines that have been intensively applied before and after the outbreak of the crisis. The “Strategy 2020” and the Fiscal Framework for 2014-2020 are evidently instruments that serve the same, destructive policy.

The EU was built on an economic and monetary model at the service of finance and the most powerful countries.

This construction was based on the destruction and privatisation principles, which were agreed among the European social democrats and the right wing political organisations in each and every Treaty, including the Stability Treaty. The spirit and the wording of the Washington Consensus was moved to Brussels by these majority European political organizations, which hurried the Troika intervention (IMF, European Central Bank and European Commission).

The goal of the European treaties is not to serve the people but to serve the markets. Their foundations make social and territorial cohesion impossible, and prevent the fulfilment of workers’ immediate aspirations, the creation of employment and training as well as human emancipation in general.

Neoliberal ideology, dominant at this stage of capitalist development, has presided over the construction of the EU.

The promotion of the deregulation of the market and of the financial system, the privatisation of strategic sectors of the economy, the pitting of workers against one another so as to drag down wages and social gains, *the inexistence of a sufficient budget, constructed on the strategy of cohesion through convergence, as well as the tasks assigned to the European central bank, which is at the service of the markets and protected from any sort of public intervention, lead to the crisis.*

This is the fundamental reason that the euro is in crisis. The EU economic-institutional architecture has been designed in order to safeguard exclusively the interests of big capital in its various branches, supporting the structural safety of their investments; this is what explains that since 2008 the ECB has devoted itself to saving the banks, not the people. Instead of putting the massive sums available under the aegis of the ECB at the service of social and ecological development and a convergence of progress for the peoples, the euro has protected the profitability of the most powerful financial investments. One after the other, countries were forced to implement structural adjustment programmes. What is more, when the 2008 crisis hit, the ECB bailed out the banks and strangled the weakest countries. Far from building solidarity, this management of the euro has heightened inequalities to the benefit of German domination of the eurozone. One of the effects of the situation is, in fact, a record growth in inequalities within Europe. The European economy is marked by a structural imbalance in favour of German exports. The EL considers that a profound transformation of the eurozone, putting it at the service of a solidarity-based European vision, is absolutely essential and urgent. This will require breaking the frame of the treaties that the ECB and the EU as a whole are based on, which are binding ECB and EU to follow neoliberal policies. This requires as well a fundamental change in the relation of forces between the classes on a European level.

Since 2008, not only has this crisis been managed according to immediate capitalist interests, but it has provided an opportunity to speed up a brutal process of economic and social restructuring in the region, by imposing a broad process of structural adjustments. The current catastrophe is not an «undesirable effect» of the crisis, but rather the result of a predatory process aimed at socialisation of losses and privatisation of anything capable of generating profits.

Contrary to the prevailing arguments, the origin of the crisis is not mismanagement on the part of the southern European countries. With the financialisation of the world economy and the implied interdependence that it creates, with the wage deflation which has affected American employers for decades, the subprime crisis in the USA created a shockwave within the world banking system that affected every economy on the planet. The interbank market entered into crisis and the banks registered record losses. The crisis is systemic. At the service of finance; European government

leaders made massive recapitalisations, thus transforming the private debts of the banks into public debts. Thus, the 'debt crisis' is a crisis of private debt! This then is the neoliberals' incredible feat: they have socialised losses and they are making the peoples pay for the financial crisis. Debt rapidly became the sword of Damocles hanging over European states. Invoking the unsustainable Maastricht criteria and through so-called "rescue" plans ("bail-outs"), which were in reality plans to rescue bank creditors, an implausible blackmailing of Greece, Portugal, Spain, Ireland, Italy and Cyprus got underway. The refusal to share out or restructure debts has predominated. The cost of this "aid" has been the imposition of memoranda of austerity and structural reforms aimed at privatisations and the destruction of public services, social protection systems and workers' rights. In other words, the crisis has been an opportunity for the neoliberals to push their reforms all the way with appalling violence and speed.

Result: Europe-wide recession and total devastation of countries' economic structures.

This is particularly visible in Greece, Portugal, Ireland, Spain, Italy and Cyprus, as well as in most of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, where the economic crisis is becoming a humanitarian one, marked by widespread poverty, hunger, child malnutrition, an increase in HIV/AIDS, other sexual transferable diseases and the re-emergence of epidemics that we thought had been eradicated. Non-EU member countries have also been affected. In many Eastern countries, the situation of workers, small farmers and the most fragile members of society has dramatically worsened and corruption corrodes all spheres of social life. The poorest countries are in the East of Europe: Moldova, Ukraine, Bulgaria and Romania.

Economic devastation fuels a huge democratic deficit. The first victims of the economy dominated by the markets are women, migrants and youth.

Youth unemployment is in excess of 50% in some countries and is growing rapidly everywhere in Europe. The emigration of young qualified people and young graduates is on the increase. Unemployment or exile, is this the choice we want to offer our young people?

Women are particularly affected by the crisis and specifically by the crisis in the EU, especially the spending cuts, given that many women work in the public sector and because they are the first to be affected by family work; and since women are still burdened with unpaid work in the family, they need good public and social services as well as effective gender equality policies. The gender pay gap is scandalous. The dramatic changes imposed by austerity policies are aimed at undermining and destroying the social state, leading to a rise in the number of women relegated - migrant women being especially vulnerable - to low salaries, badly paid and unpaid jobs and poverty and to the deepening of inequalities between men and women. For example, women with children or other family responsibilities are forced to go back to traditional housewife roles, working without pay, reducing or losing their rights and reinforcing their subjection to patriarchy: loss of economic and social rights (reduction of the pensions, etc.), sexual and reproductive rights (criminalization of abortion), sex and gender minority rights. In many countries physical, sexual and symbolic violence against women is increasing in particularly alarming proportions. There has also been an increase in trafficking of women and the business of prostitution.

Also, LGBT people are being targeted under the premise of conservative discourses about health, "normal" family, heteronormative and conservative models. In many countries in Europe, LGBT people are being physically persecuted, suffering from bullying in the workplace or school, denied medical treatments, with the complacency of the state authorities.

Very serious authoritarian abuses threaten democracy

In the face of the peoples' rejection of their political choices, those who bear the brunt of the responsibility for converting private debts into public ones seek at all costs to prevent any genuine debate on alternatives and to silence any objection.

This is the reason behind the European Commission's refusal to register the proposed European citizens' initiative proposition (to "Create a European public bank exclusively dedicated to financing of investments aimed at social development and ecological transition" bypassing the financial

markets thanks to very low-cost ECB loans) that was put forward by the EL. Given that this proposition would have been a first step in a process of intervention by public authorities in the financial sector, this refusal is a clear sign of hostility to ideas of social progress, democracy and solidarity.

Popular sovereignties have been flouted by the centralisation of powers in technocratic institutions executed by the «Troïka» (the IMF, the ECB and the European Commission). Faced with electoral sanctions, strikes and mass movements, governments survive artificially via large coalitions of so called “national unity” or non elected governments in order to continue applying the memoranda. They reject all of the political messages expressed by their people and bring about continuous political crises.

In all of the countries where there is mass protest, social movements are repressed, trade union freedoms are reduced, the pluralism of the media is called into question, and propaganda operations aim to discredit the forces of the left. The resurgence of anti-communism, particularly visible in the East, based on the unacceptable, historically ignorant and scandalous correlation of communism with fascism and Nazism, which aims to discredit any alternative vision, completes this strategy which endangers democracy.

European institutions are antidemocratic and too far from the requirements of the peoples. Real citizens’ intervention is quite simply intolerable for EU leaders, as it is incompatible with their class vision of the European project. Powers are confiscated from citizens and their elected representatives, in favour of technocratic institutions such as the European Commission that are fully aligned with neoliberal policies and “protected” from all public accountability. They need docile governments and parliaments, which is why national parliaments are excluded from processes of political decision making, even as regards budgets, which are, nonetheless, one of the main competences of national parliaments. This is also the reason behind the financial stranglehold that has been placed on local authorities. All of the votes of citizens who have clearly rejected the neoliberal European construction have been flouted, resulting in a growing rate of abstention with every election and a profound mistrust, which have been strongly manifest for decades.

The EU is being built against the biosphere

The human ecosystem is unique. Any productive decision, any industrial accident, affect the entire globe. But humanity as a whole cannot exist and survive in this ecosystem - endangered by the dynamics of capitalism. Capital and productivism go hand in hand: higher profits require increased pollution of all sorts, damage to human health, sterilization of soils, waste... Indeed, while the rich pollute more, it is the poor who have to pay the cost and suffer the most immediate damage. Thus, to preserve the environment, health, natural resources and our basic needs, a break with market principles and profit maximization is imperative - that is to say, ultimately, to break with the current functioning of the European Union, which promotes the destruction of public services and the reign of lobbies and private monopolies and their catastrophic waste. The pace of unsustainable impacts inflicted on the biosphere is growing constantly. The European market for carbon emissions, the largest in the world, which allows companies to exchange "rights to pollute", has not at all slowed down this process. On the contrary, it has opened a new territory for speculation, which benefits the worst polluters, for accumulating annuities.

The EU is setting itself against the people of the whole world. Whereas the EU could be a powerful tool for co-development, it is initiating free trade agreements which aim to dominate the other regions of the world. In its race to dumping and widespread deregulation, the European Union also negotiates free trade agreements with developed industrial areas, such as the Grand Transatlantic Market with the USA and Canada. This threatens jobs, small businesses, workers’ gains, but also the protection of consumers. It would establish international tribunals, used by private companies in order to compel states to change their laws or impose fines for trying to preserve health or environmental protection. More generally, free trade areas, which aim to increase

exports, produce carbon emissions in addition to the environmental costs, and accelerate the forced displacement of populations.

Faced with economic migration, for which the EU is greatly responsible with its colonial policies and the imperialist wars that it supports, its present choice is “Fortress Europe”, Frontex and the Schengen agreements, which sentence migrant populations to absolute exclusion or even imprisonment in spaces where no law is applied, if and when migrants are not left to die in the sea. The EU, aligning itself with NATO, is not trying to achieve peace on the international stage but, in contrast, plays a role of protagonist among imperialist forces.

Austerity leads to all kind of abuses. The ongoing structural adjustment implies social regression, destruction of the conditions of life for tens of millions of people, and reduction of the still existing remains of democracy. It is at the heart of the problem. Structural adjustment is the anti-social solution to the crisis, which only can be stopped if there are decisive changes in the correlation of social forces in Europe.

II/International crisis: a global, systemic crisis, civilisation in crisis

The European crisis is part of the international crisis. The contradiction between capital and labour, capital and ecology, capital and democracy, capital and pacific development, capital and gender equality is becoming increasingly visible. Capitalism cannot be humanized.

Today, humanity as a whole is facing new challenges, which call for global responses so as to go beyond capitalism and patriarchy and allow a new human and sustainable development model to emerge:

- confronting the systemic crisis in international finance;
- proposing an alternative economic model to productivism and “competitiveness”;
- responding to development challenges: fighting hunger and poverty, responding to the energy and food crisis and guaranteeing access to water;
- responding to the crisis affecting the environment, to climate change, to unsustainable practices endangering biodiversity and ecosystems: adopting a sustainable and democratic ecological approach to economic activity;
- fighting imperialism, neo-colonialism and the power of the multinationals, strengthening anti-imperialist solidarity to defend peace, human rights and freedoms, and promoting a left-wing approach to issues of migration based on safeguarding decent survival and equal social rights for all people who seek refuge or move on European soil, regardless of ethnicity, gender, religious beliefs, national, minority or social background;
- promoting values of solidarity and equality of rights in the face of individualism, xenophobia, religious fundamentalism and every kind of racism and discrimination;
- sharing power, building genuine democracy to replace the power of capital and patriarchy, bringing fresh air to the public arena by fighting authoritarianism, anticommunism and anti-socialism.

The current struggle for the foundation of a new process of economic, social and political integration, at the European regional level, has to be united with an internationalist dimension, in which the process of popular affirmation in the continent is naturally linked with the advances of the progressive forces throughout the world.

Europe’s responsibilities extend beyond its borders. The existence of progressive regional alliances can be a tool in the global fight. The current battle for the refoundation of Europe must be seen in the context of the international dimension of our fight. The European Left intends to engage the political battles and alliances needed to enable a new mode of development to emerge.

The world has changed considerably in recent years. Globalization, the information revolution and

the emergence of new powers such as the BRIC countries have created new conditions for international struggles. The information revolution offers new opportunities for sharing, which are not simply tools for the struggle but assist in inventing the economy of the future.

Peoples do not resign themselves to witness the destruction of their conditions of life. We have entered a new international cycle of protests, in which the struggles of the various popular strata converge towards the questioning of structural adjustments and the neoliberal order; that is why workers' demands fuse with the clamour for profound change that comes from the "indignation" movement. The EL considers that the economic and political struggle, which continues to be central, unites naturally with the struggle for democracy, social justice, individual and collective freedoms, women's emancipation and culture at the service of everyone, establishing a common front with a common cause which is that of the social majority of Europe.

In this struggle, it is important to develop cooperation in the workers' movement and the left and progressive forces throughout Europe, including Russia and other Eastern European countries.

These popular mobilizations and the growing consciousness that development must respect human beings and the planet are in conflict with the capitalist reasoning endorsed by the "old world", and with their instruments of predation, wars, and domination.

The United States and their NATO allies found that "preventive" wars, "humanitarian" military interventions, the development of their military industries and reconnaissance systems, were a means of preserving their domination and their interests, particularly in the Middle East. Against the emerging countries, the present leaders of the European Union have begun negotiations with the United States and Canada with a view to creating a big transatlantic market. This agreement, which will affect every economic sector, including the most strategic ones, could devastate the economies of the European states and drag down workers' rights as well as social, environmental and food norms on both continents. Negotiations on this project are completely lacking in transparency, and the project must be resisted. The EL is committed to informing and alerting European citizens and conducting an extensive political battle in order to defeat it.

The defence of peace and security for the peoples is one of the European Left's principal objectives, in the framework of an anti-imperialist political position and together with the search for a new world economic order, in opposition to the neoliberal, neo-imperialist model. We want war to be abandoned as a tool in international relations. Awarding the Nobel Peace Prize to the EU was totally inappropriate.

Under NATO's tutelage, the EU has been present in recent major international conflicts and has supported its imperialist allies' choices, particularly Israel's belligerent colonial policy in Palestine. However, we consider that regional cooperation could be a tool in the search for peace, provided that it undergoes a change of direction, both on European territory – particularly by putting pressure on Turkey, which has illegally occupied and is continuously changing the demographic structure of the northern part of Cyprus since 1974 – as well as internationally, by ensuring compliance with international law. The EU could be a substantial ally for all the peoples struggling for self-determination.

Dialogue between progressive forces from all over the world, on the subject of an alternative vision and common struggles, is indispensable. In this spirit, the European Left is seeking significant relevant alliances.

1. **With Latin America**: Although Europe's colonial and imperialist past gives it a special relationship with Latin America, there are similar problems on both sides of the Atlantic. In Latin America, peoples in several countries have been resisting the IMF's structural adjustment policies and have succeeded in preventing tragedies, thanks to political models

which provide alternatives with socialist ambitions and promote popular participation and advanced supranational cooperation. The regional integration process of ALBA, for example - based on cooperation and horizontal relations - which defends the ideas of solidarity and progress, is a window of hope and a concrete example of an alternative model against the global domination of neoliberalism.

Cuba plays a positive role and is a reference point for the region, and for many on the left in the rest of the world. We demand an end to the inhumane blockade of Cuba, which has been in place for the last 50 years and the release of the "Cuban 4".

We have much to learn from the experiences of others. We also have much to contribute in the spaces we have created together to invent progressive international cooperation for the 21st Century and jointly tackle the challenges facing humanity as a whole. The EL would like to continue and deepen its exchanges with the Sao Paulo Forum.

2. **In the Mediterranean :**

The "revolutions" in the Arab world were the catalyst for the wave of global indignation in 2011. They demonstrated the power of popular action and were a source of hope far beyond the boundaries of their countries. Some people think what has happened in the Arab world is destabilizing the oil economy, weakening the mechanisms of imperialist domination in the region and opening up new possibilities in the struggle of the Palestinian people. These revolutionary processes are not finished. They are always long, nonlinear, and fraught with political contradictions.

The work of dialogue between progressive forces in the region - traditional and new - started by the EL in Palermo in October 2012 and continued in Tunis at the WSF is important in strengthening those who are fighting against the plans of capitalist Europe and NATO in this key area for imperialist interests around the world.

We fully support the right of self determination of the people of Western Sahara and the resolutions of the UN must be respected.

The way in which Western countries have acted in the Middle East, in the case of Libya, vis-à-vis Syria and interfering in the Egyptian process, highlights the crucial need for better understanding and cooperation between the political forces of the Left on both sides of the Mediterranean.

The way in which the Erdogan regime repressed the popular movement, symbolized by Taksim Square, the maintaining of the illegal occupation of Cyprus and its role in the region in general, are unacceptable. The EL desires a peaceful solution to the conflict, respecting UN resolutions, democracy and workers' rights in Turkey, as well as recognizing the right to self-determination and democratic rights of the Kurdish people.

It will continue to act in favour of the recognition of the rights of the Palestinian people to a State and will strengthen its actions at a time when Israeli colonization is intensifying dangerously, in defiance of international law.

3. **With the African continent :** Given the colonial past and new forms of colonialism exercised by European countries and the EU via international agreements, the EL wishes to deepen its work with the forces of the African Left.

4. **With the BRICs:** The EL considers the growing role of the so-called "BRICs" countries in the global economy and international politics to be crucial. The EL want to facilitate the debate with the forces of the Left in these countries, those of Latin America (Sao Paulo Forum), Asia and Africa (Forum of the New African Left) to clarify the prospects for a global alternative to the hegemony of neoliberal capitalism.

III/ Changing the balance of power within Europe

We must consider a context where the confiscation of powers and destruction of social models promotes the development of abstention, disaffection and mistrust of citizens towards politics and their representatives.

The political landscape in Europe remains dominated by the forces of neoliberal consensus, but is nevertheless moving very quickly.

The forces of neoliberal consensus are in power, but their unconditional support for the Washington Consensus, the Treaties of Maastricht and Lisbon and the way in which they apply and implement austerity through authoritarianism mean that they are increasingly being challenged. They objectively defend the same dogmas and it can be seen. The cases of corruption and financial scandals also play a part in their loss of legitimacy.

In this Europe in crisis, the desire for change is growing, but so is the opposite impulse - taking a step backwards. The populist and xenophobic forces of the extreme Right, sometimes even openly fascist or neo-Nazi, are also on the rise, as well as a clearly backward sexist ideology.

The key question is how to open up a majority route towards the needs for emancipation and create political prospects for this.

In this context, the Party of the European Left, its member parties and the organisations with which they have forged links in this struggle have a crucial role to play. Citizens and voters can change their opinions, but only if an alternative left - connected with significant social mobilizations, workers' and unemployed people's struggles, antifascist and antiracist movements - exists and grows, thus breaking the neoliberal consensus and preventing the rise of fascism.

As progressive and anti-fascist forces, our goal is to help the European people to be victorious in the most intensive class confrontation we have seen since the financial crisis of 1929 and the Second World War. We see ourselves as a tool to serve those engaged in the struggle against injustice and exploitation. We maintain our ambition to create a European political and social front against austerity and in favour of left alternatives.

Struggles against austerity and in favour of democracy are progressing, but are still very dissimilarly developed. Although the pressures on the working classes are widespread across Europe, the power and reach of national struggles remains very uneven according to each country, its history, political and trade union culture and balance of power. This great diversity requires significant efforts towards dialogue and an understanding of the different situations.

Conflicts exist in all countries. It is, however, in the south of Europe that resistance is most widespread, with new convergences between precarious and permanent workers, youth and the elderly and the public and private sectors around alternative political platforms. In Greece, Spain and Portugal a climate of struggle and convergence has punctuated the last four years: massive strikes supported by the population, sectoral social movements coming together along with that of the Indignados and those of young people facing precarity. In many other countries, such as France, Belgium, Italy and the United Kingdom, the potential for resistance is high. In the Nordic countries, the Left are fighting attempts to undermine the achievements of the Welfare State. In Eastern Europe and the Balkans, there are, against all odds, strong popular movements in favour of purchasing power, social rights and right to energy with respect to the environment and in favour of democracy against oligarchies and corruption.

Steps have been taken towards a coordination of these struggles on a European level

Considering the European level as critical when it comes to class struggle, the coordination of actions on a local, national and European level is crucial. Some changes within the social movements have occurred during the crisis. Coordination initiatives and research on common positions and joint actions of critical forces are growing within and between the countries of the EU

and Europe.

In spite of the great contradictions it faces, the European Trade Union Confederation has, for the first time, entered into a dispute with EU guidelines: a unanimous rejection of the budgetary treaty and the policies on austerity, support and calls for political mobilisation.

A step forward was taken on 14 November, 2012: coordinated general strikes in the south, inter-professional mobilisation days and solidarity actions in 23 countries and thousands of European towns.

Towards new confluences of social and political forces at European level

The Left, with all its components, is overcoming its historical oppositions and its own limits to resist the offensive of capital and develop a common vision for the future of Europe. We are building a new kind of alliance, which promotes common work and common actions, while, at the same time, respecting each other's cultures, spaces and roles.

The Alter Summit process, which brings together social and trade union movements, making the choice to open up the debate with political forces, is a remarkable step forward. The EL, which seeks to establish a European front, is committed to continuing the approach and assisting - in its role - with the development of this type of process.

The thrust of the Left towards an alternative, a hope for the class struggle in Europe

The rise of alternative political forces is also uneven across countries. It is often linked to popular rejection of austerity measures. The forces identifying with the policies of the Troika have experienced electoral defeats. The Social Democrat discourse of "compromise" is being exhausted as class confrontations become palpable. The social-democrats, participating in 17 governments/or parliamentary majorities in Europe, have experienced a steady decline in their election results because they do not represent any hope and they have no alternative project for societies, but implement the neoliberal agenda in our continent. They support the power of big capital and share with the Right this neoliberal conception of the world.

In this political landscape, there is a growing alternative Left that has a historical responsibility, facing the right and far-right dangers but also the renuncements of the social-democracy. Its primary characteristic is its clear opposition to the memoranda. Using all the means at their disposal, in their countries and at European level, the member parties of the EL seek to defeat austerity policies. When the question of power becomes a practical reality, this includes consideration of the non-application of austerity policies, refusal to adhere to the European treaties and intergovernmental agreements such as the Fiscal Compact and renunciation of them, based on democracy and popular sovereignty.

Through its theories and practices, this alternative Left allows for the convergence of various political forces. Where the process of political re-composition matures, where these forces are active in struggles and solidarity and where they offer an alternative to austerity and defend popular sovereignty, the forces of the Left are growing. In the case of Greece, the progression is spectacular.

IV/ The EL in action to rebuild Europe

Alternative proposals to overcome the crisis

Against the backdrop of the crisis, various strategic ambitions are developed by both dominant and emerging capitalist interests. The alternative plan of the European Left is not trapped in the agenda of the dominant political forces and capitalist class interests. In contrast, it promotes the abolition of neoliberal dogmas, as a precondition for the emergence of Europe as a geopolitical space that will contribute to a wider shift towards policies based on solidarity with the poorest regions of the world. A sustainable strategy also involves a new, global regulation of financial markets, taking into account the current changes and the role of emerging players like China, Russia and the rest of the BRICs.

1 - Focus on employment, social, ecological and solidarity development:

- Produce in Europe, and produce in a different way. Launch a dynamic for the public re-appropriation of strategic sectors, new cooperation and industrial innovation to guarantee employment, a high level of rights for workers and equality between men and women at work. Apply the ecological transition to meet both social needs and ecological limits in the use of natural resources.

- Defend and develop public services. We oppose the privatisation of health and education systems and any public services; such privatization leads to increases in all kinds of discriminations and inequalities. We are fighting for good, public, and free education, accessible to all - from the day-nursery through training and higher education to continuing education. For us education is all-round development of the personality and of culture. It must not be limited to the acquisition of economically usable knowledge and focused on competition and individualism. Schools must permit the empowerment and coeducation of citizens who stand up for their rights rather than being submissive. We wish to develop and rebuild public health systems, to ensure access for all. Housing, access to water and energy should be considered fundamental human rights. For that reason we stand for public ownership and management of water and energy.

- Minimum wages in Europe should provide a decent remuneration. We need decent minimum pensions for all, eliminating gender inequality in access to benefits. Reduce working hours without reducing wages or raising the retirement age. Harmonise upwards wages and the level of social protection. An increase in wages and the level of social protection must be able to be determined by a single country. We must develop political measures to ensure the equal redistribution of all kinds of paid and unpaid work, of all domestic and care work, between men and women. It must be acknowledged that human beings have needs beyond material ones. New concepts for care work and alternative economic models must be debated in order to end the traditional sexual division of labour and enable the autonomy of women.

- Act in favour of ecological transition: promote action against climate change, developing renewable energy and implementing energy savings. Every step towards social progress must respect our ecosystem. We share with the ecosocialist approach the idea that the ecological bifurcation is a long-term process, which cannot be entrusted to big corporations and other organizations seeking to maximize profits in a shorter time. It must be an affair of popular sovereignty and democracy. Only peoples can define the public interest and guarantee environmental planning, providing for the social needs of the people, the rescue of the ecosystems and a real ecological transition. This popular involvement in the ecological transition of our society is one of the essential parts of our citizens' revolution.

- Facing the challenge of food sovereignty, the future European food and agricultural policy must be supported by public policies that respond to human needs and to the challenges of public health. Our ambition is to have quality food, healthy and diverse, accessible to all. We need a European agricultural policy that offers protection from the volatility of speculative markets and land grabbing. We advocate a new model of agriculture, equitable and sustainable, ensuring farmers a decent income and allowing them to live with dignity in all our territories; a model which creates employment in agriculture by installing new independent producers, providing consumers with food at a fair price.

2- Emancipation from the financial markets: putting the economy at the service of human beings

- The Eurozone crisis has led to serious problems and unsustainable situations for the majority of the population. There is an acute need for radical changes in the foundations of the Economic and Monetary Union. The eurozone crisis has led to debates on the single currency, with proposals made for some countries to leave the euro or for it to be dismantled. These debates are perfectly legitimate, since the current policy, priorities, criteria and results of EMU are unfair, antisocial and undemocratic. However, withdrawal from the euro would not automatically lead to more

progressive policies. Withdrawal does not solve the main problem, which is the role of financial markets and the power of big capital. It might even increase competition between peoples and lead to an explosion in state debts through the practice of competitive devaluation. What we need is a common strategy, with alternative fiscal policies based on sufficient budgets, but also on public and democratic control of the banking sector of each country and the ECB. There is also a need for a radical reorientation towards funding projects according to a new model of production and consumption, which will serve the needs of the European peoples. We need to transform the existing tools into tools for collaboration at the service of the people. A transformation of the eurozone through a radical change of the architecture of the euro and European cooperation, oriented to an economy based on social needs, must set the potential of monetary creation in Europe to work in reducing inequalities and securing public funding and a new mode of social and ecological development. This involves changing the role of monetary creation in Europe, including the role, status and tasks of the European Central Bank and, more generally, changing the criteria for the use of money by banks and major groups throughout Europe.

- In the meantime, the European Left advocates the immediate organization of a European convention on public debt, which will decide on the abolition of the biggest part of the – unsustainable – public debts of over-indebted states, along with revised repayment terms, such as a “growth clause”.
- In the meantime too, we propose to create a European institution democratically administrated and controlled, in order to finance at a very low interest rate, even at a zero rate, public spendings of national States and enterprise investment if they develop employment, according to precise social and ecological criteria, with the monetary contribution of the European Central Bank (art. 123.2 of the Lisbon Treaty) and with the receipt of Tobin Tax. This could lead to the creation of a European public bank. Hence, we can concretely begin to radically question the independence and mission of the European Central Bank, as well as the current architecture of the euro and its governance. Place the ECB under democratic control, giving it the power to be lender of last resort, that is to say, lending directly to states without present anti-social “conditionnalités”. Money should not be used for speculation but to create jobs, public services, useful products and ecological transition.
- Change the tax system, generalising taxes on capital in the various countries. We fight to abolish toxic financial products and tax havens, and for the termination of all plans for the creation of “Special Economic Zones” on European soil. The rich should pay for the crisis!

3 - Respect for popular sovereignty and democratic development

The task of rebuilding Europe requires a process capable of putting forward the alternative model proposed as a way of dealing with the current situation, where the mechanisms for adopting European decisions must be changed through democratic procedures, mobilisation and social pressure. This should not conflict with national decisions but allow for the adoption of decisions at European level by a European Parliament with full powers and jurisdiction.

Such a model will offer citizens the ability to access decision-making bodies, while also safeguarding a multicultural Europe, with respect to personal choices and equal rights for citizens with disabilities. A Europe which will reconcile humans with the environment and will constitute a new “Charter of Fundamental Rights”.

Through our action in the institutions and in all the European, local, national and international movements and forums, we cooperate with all willing left and democratic, anti-austeritarian forces, with which we share common ideas and practices.

- Rebalance power in the institutions: powers to national and European elected assemblies. The European Commission must transfer its powers to the European and national parliaments and its role must be limited to its executive duties.

- Develop popular action and participatory democracy in institutions and enterprises, including referendums, participatory budgeting and gender democracy by means of different actions and

measures, such as quota policies, leading to the achievement of real and equal representation of women.

- One particular issue is that of the new tendencies for regional separatism. Following the recognition of peoples' historical rights, we have known how complex these issues are and, according to the territories in question, how heterogeneous they can be. Hence the need for case-by-case analysis and the guarantee of an informed debate and peaceful democratic consultation of the peoples concerned.

4- Peace and cooperation among peoples

- Dissolution of NATO, promotion of disarmament and anti-war activities, elimination of foreign military bases within EU territory. The EL strongly opposes to war and militarism. One hundred years after the imperialistic World War I we consider it as an obligation to commit ourselves and the struggle for global justice and disarmament.

- New economic and trade relations with the rest of the world - security is built through development.

- Defence of the values of solidarity, justice and equality, with special attention to gender violence against women during wars and military occupations.

- Abolition of the Schengen and Frontex agreements

- Refusal of the great transatlantic market

The European elections : a united front to escape from austerity and rebuild Europe

The EL places a lot of importance on the 2014 European elections. In the face of abstention and lack of confidence by European citizens, it sees these elections as a possibility for politicisation around European issues. The current composition of the European Parliament is dominated by forces of the liberal consensus.

There is an urgent need for political change. We should do everything we can to defeat those responsible for the crisis and the worsening of the situation. It is therefore necessary to strengthen the Left within the European Parliament so as to increase support for the alternative project and the forces behind it, as well as to promote it both within the parliament and externally.

The GUE-NGL is the only parliamentary group which has fought against the fiscal treaty and the only one capable of taking an alternative from the left into the European Parliament, whilst at the same time proposing other political choices, as is the case with their practices, whereby they are present in struggles and convey the demands that come out of these struggles.

Through this campaign, our ambition is to make possible the creation of a coalition of the forces who are opposed to austerity and who are looking for progressive solutions to the crisis. We know that these forces are numerous, but they are disparate and are not easily aligned on the political level. The EL calls for the widespread advocacy of the drawing up of the broadest possible lists both to unite against austerity and for a left alternative.

The EL expresses its willingness to establish a constructive dialogue with the various European political forces that are opposed to the present neoliberal order, starting from the proposals made in its Programme, and advancing along the lines of a common anti-capitalist framework. We should highlight the Party's objectives for refoundation and its concrete proposals in all European countries and at EU level.

The future of the EL: a new role to be strengthened

Since the congress in Paris, the EL has come a long way.

1- Towards a new cultural hegemony:

There is a lot of work still to be done in order to make a turnaround in European politics credible. This is a priority objective for the EL, which for us means constructing a left way out of the crisis, by progressively bringing together all of the available forces necessary. Our ambition should be more than ever before to make the EL a credible force on a European level.

Our strategy is based on four pillars:

a) In order to function as an instrument enabling the confluence of the activities of the European left, one of the assets of our European party is the political solidarity that exists between its members and observers. When its parties grow, the EL grows with them and when they fail it should act in solidarity. In the coming years, we want to strengthen this solidarity and make it concrete and systematic. We want to reinforce working together. From a practical point of view, that means strengthening our schedule of joint activities, conducting European campaigns and promoting alternative information and communication.

b) We would like to work with European, national and regional parliamentarians, within the Parlacon framework, but also with parties that will not necessarily join the EL or that are located in non-EU member countries. We also continue our work concerning the enlargement of the party and we have set ourselves these goals: the strengthening of links with GUE-NGL parties who are not members of the EL and with important political parties in other countries, as well as the presence of the EL in all European countries. We want to carry out significant “monitoring” work on emerging parties given that there are a whole series of countries where left forces are either emerging, evolving or being reformed.

c) Bring together a European front, an expression of the coming together of social, trade-union, feminist, cultural, environmental and political forces against antisocial measures, to combat the crisis and to draw up alternatives to serve the peoples. With the Alternative Summit organised in Brussels, its participation in struggles and in the European meetings of the social movements (for example in Florence in November 2012), and its involvement in the Altersummit process, the EL has gained visibility amongst social movements and the trade union movement. We want to deepen this relationship of trust and joint work, which although still fragile, has now been established.

d) Conduct common activities with Transfrom! Network, the political foundation affiliated with the EL and with citizens, from the neighbourhood level right through to the European level. Even though the European citizens’ initiative was rejected by the European Commission, we maintain our ambition to conduct popular campaigns and initiatives, led and co-created with European citizens, and to new forms of popular involvement in political life.

The EL expresses its commitment to promote and strengthen local, national and regional solidarity networks, such as practical survival skills for impoverished citizens, but also tools such as a new collective conscience against the neoliberal orthodoxy of individualism, profit and consumerism.

2 - Which initiatives do we need to succeed in our project to bring these forces together?

During its 4th Congress the EL took the following decisions :

- **To organise a yearly “European Alternatives Forum”**, bringing together the most important left political forces, local elected officials, social movements, trade-union forces, intellectuals and activists. This annual meeting would allow the EL to establish a dialogue between these forces. The idea is to create as large a political space as possible to deepen and enrich proposals, to give the EL more political clout on a European level. We envisage having held the first of these forums by autumn 2014, within the new political landscape that comes out of the European elections.
- **To programme a yearly popular campaign** around alternative proposals, involving citizens, with direct forms of participation (citizens’ vote, local referendum...) so as to be able to work on our visibility and on a European awareness about the issues that we wish to bring to the forefront.
- **To organise political events in neighbouring regions** with the participation of EL political parties and other countries.