

BASTUN –message on November 14th on the ETUC European Day of Action and Solidarity

The global financial and economic crisis has during the past years evolved into a social crisis with soaring unemployment in many countries. Especially young people are especially hit as youth unemployment is all around Europe. It is above all wage-earners and tax-payers who have to bear the main burden of the crisis, whereas the financial sector that caused it in the first place is making profits again.

Workers' rights are fundamental human rights. We strongly condemn the current attacks on collective bargaining autonomy and the dismantling of workers' rights, be they in Lithuania, Spain, or Greece. What we need is not fewer rights and less protection for employees but more democracy, social security and justice.

The crisis does not stop at national frontiers. If workers' rights are weakened all over Europe, this will impact purchasing power and sooner or later the crisis will arrive at everybody's doorstep. Instead of wrecking Europe with austerity policies, we need solutions based on solidarity and a program for growth and employment. Only by counteracting growing austerity and by investing in decent jobs and education can the legitimacy of the European Union be restored. This crisis affects not only our colleagues in Spain, Greece, Ireland or Portugal – Northern Europe is affected as well: especially the Baltic countries have gone through drastic measures during the past years.

European integration is based on a common commitment to the creation of a democratic and social Europe – and that includes strong works councils and trade unions, protection of collective bargaining autonomy and recognition of basic workers' rights. But also strong European legislation strengthening workers' rights is essential. Only by co-operation and solidarity will we be able to halt the intolerable cuts in social benefits and the dismantling of workers' rights. Together we call for a fair, democratic and social Europe and declare our solidarity with colleagues in all the countries of Europe – in North and South- East and West.

BASTUN - Baltic Sea Trade Union Network