

Solidarity with Europe - LO, UNIO and YS support the European trade union movement on its Day of Action – November 14th 2012

Europe is currently in the middle of the worst economic crisis since the 1930s. The consequences are severe not only for the national economies, but for millions of workers and their families. More than 25 million people are now unemployed in Europe. In countries like Greece and Spain, the youth unemployment is above 50 percent. The financial crisis has contributed to the development of a social crisis in Europe.

The governments responses to the crisis has been austerity and massive cutbacks in the public budgets. Cuts in wages, increased retirement age, privatisation, decentralisation of wage negotiations and a weakening of the social dialogue is all too common. The cuts in public welfare have been deep and dramatic. The result is a vicious cycle where economic growth stagnates.

It is also alarming that the current situation leads to a polarisation of the political landscape. Right-wing extremists exploit the uncertainty created by the crisis. The same groups and politicians experience growing support in many countries. Hence we experience a danger extending beyond the economical and social sphere.

LO, UNIO and YS support the European trade union movement on its day of action on November 14th, when national and European trade unions rally in a number of European cities. The trade unions are demonstrating for political change, job creation, and for a more social Europe. The trade unions demand that the European and national governments put a stop to the destructive austerity.

The solution to the current crisis is not continued cuts in public wages and a further dismantling of the welfare state! Several countries have a significant potential in revenues through reform of the tax systems and combating the black economy. The black economy severely undermines the welfare state and it affects the most vulnerable in our societies. The Norwegian trade unions strongly propose that the EU and the national governments invest in the future and for job growth. Education and retraining is important to give unemployed new opportunities and social security. Investment in research and development is the key to increased global competitiveness and innovation.

LO, UNIO and YS underline the importance of respecting fundamental rights and support the trade union proposal for inclusion of a Social Charter in the EU-treaty. Creating improved living conditions in Europe must be first priority. A

Social Charter will serve as a new tripartite agreement at European level and help create a more social Europe.

Norway has so far been spared the tough political choices that other European countries have been enduring. The Norwegian trade unions stand in solidarity with the European and national trade unions and support their struggle for a more social Europe.

