

SPEECH – Demonstration Posted Workers (Luxembourg)

Dear friends, dear brothers and sisters, let me start by announcing our solidarity, the solidarity of UGT-Portugal, and I'm sure, of all the Portuguese workers, with this more than solid demonstration.

We had to be here, to say out loud, to all those who still think they can use and abuse workers, that they will have to fight us first, because we will be always on the frontline, when it comes to defend the rights to fair and decent working conditions all over Europe.

So let me express my best regards to the European Federation of Construction Workers and Carpenters but also to the ETUC, for organising this demonstration here in Luxembourg.

We have to fight! We have to take back what is ours! We have to restore the European dream!

A dream of a Europe build on solidarity, a dream of a Europe build on social rights, a dream of a Europe where people come first.

It's totally unacceptable that several governments around Europe want to treat their workers just like another part of the furniture of a company. We can't accept that workers are put on the same scale as another product that you just can export to enhance competitiveness.

This is not the Europe we want! What would great men like Robert Schumann or Jean Monnet say, if they would witness what the financial and economical powers are now transforming the European Union into? What would they say, if they witnessed European countries fighting each other for competitiveness through social dumping?

The European project used to be a project of prosperity and solidarity, where the living and working conditions across the member states should be risen, and not downgraded.

And to be fair, the Commission advanced with a directive that enhanced the situation of posted workers, but it is, as we could see by the reaction of several governments, clearly not enough!

We also have to take the chance, now that President Juncker wants to discuss the European Social Rights Pillar, to introduce the working conditions into that Social Rights Pillar.

What is more social than to fight for decent working conditions? What is more social, than to guarantee equal pay for equal work across Europe? What is more social than to guarantee access to equal social security schemes, independent of where you come from?

The workers have suffered enough since the beginning of the financial crisis in 2008, especially those in countries like Portugal, that where targeted for a financial intervention. Even despite the fact, that the new elected government in Portugal, by applying more worker friendly policies, proving that way, that it is possible to have both, enhance economical growth and working conditions, and at the same time, fulfil the international agreements, we still feel, that

the path of the international creditors, is the path of deregulation, flexibilization and the attack on free negotiation and collective bargaining,

We still feel that the path that Europe has chosen is the path of austerity, on behalf of the labour costs, low wages and the welfare state.

Even, after this long and hard 5 years, with the European Commission confirming that Portugal has fulfilled with success the financial adjustment program, we are always being surprised by several European political actors, suggesting the application of sanctions to Portugal for exceeding the budgetary deficit in only 0,2%, even knowing, that following this path, would increase even more poverty, inequality and social injustice.

We have to reject the neo-liberal model of governance. The political power is being held kidnapped by the financial and economical power, that treats people like numbers on an excel Chart.

We have to build a Europe that spreads hope to people. We have to build a Europe that welcomes and respects the human rights of refugees and migrants. We have to build a Europe that creates positive expectations to the new generation of workers.

Let me also on behalf of ETUC Youth, take the opportunity, to say out loud that it's more than time to effectively tackle youth unemployment and younger workers low working conditions.

Young people's employment in precarious work, with no job security, and low wages, is wide spread. 42% of young EU workers are on temporary contracts, in comparison to 10% among workers aged 25-64. There has also been a rise in forced, bogus self-employment amongst young people, whilst average wages for young workers have continued to decrease relative to adult ones, even despite the rising education levels amongst youth.

As a result young people today are the group at highest risk of poverty and social exclusion in Europe. 28,2% of Europe's youth is at risk of poverty and social exclusion. The financial and economic crisis has not only increased youth unemployment but has more broadly amplified the risks experienced by young people creating new forms of insecurity and exclusion.

This has an impact on a person's ability to build their future. A low income means young people are unlikely to be able to save, whilst precarious work contracts, typically do not allow for contributing to statutory pension schemes - putting public budgets under enormous strain for everybody, today and in the future.

We call for fair access and transition to the labor market!

The Youth Guarantee has to become a real guarantee and not just a slogan!

We call for fair working conditions!!

Where we reject all kind of discrimination on age basis, by introducing or reinforcing youth minimum sub-wages.

We call for equal social protection!!

With the right to access unemployment benefits and the ability to contribute to statutory pension schemes applicable to all contracts.

We call for fair and free-choiced basis mobility!!

By ensuring social protection to all workers, who have to work abroad.

We demand QUALITY JOBS!!!

Thank you.

Bruno Teixeira

UGT-Portugal