

People's Tribunal indicts Troika for destruction of European livelihoods - The EU and crisis: from austerity to solidarity

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On the 15-16th of May, representatives from organisations across Europe gave testimony to an era of financial, economic and social crisis which began in 2008. Their verdict? The EU's policies have taken Europe on a course towards social and political regression [1].

Brussels (16 May 2014) - A Tribunal on EU economic governance and the Troika took place in Brussels on 15-16 May. Eleven witnesses from ten countries in Southern, Eastern and Western Europe gave testimony to the failure of the EU and Troika policies to address the crisis. In fact many testified that the strategy of the austerity policy measures is a deliberate attack on working people's standards of living.

Their stories showed how people's lives and livelihoods have been devastated by the austerity and other policy measures - whether via the Troika (European Commission, European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund) or by direct imposition on national governments of straitjacket fiscal policies, the restructuring of labour and social policies that favour the financial markets, the big banks, and corporations.

According to Christos Giovanopoulos (Solidarity4All, Greece), "with the financial and political dictatorship of the Troika, we are confronted with an (un)constitutional 'coup d'état' that has brought the loss of national and popular sovereignty and the demise of democracy".

Witness after witness testified to increasing inequality, unemployment (affecting women and men, across generations, but is especially high among the youth), homelessness, and impoverishment. According to Georg Rammer (Attac Germany), "the most recent statistics from the OECD indicate that around 20% of the population in Germany is affected by poverty or social exclusion. Children are particularly affected.

The IAB (German Labour Market Institute) has calculated that one in four children lives in a family affected by poverty". In Slovenia, according to Kira Cerjak (Iniciative for Democratic Socialism), "the labour force is increasingly forced into precarious work which does not suffice for decent livelihood".

Across the EU, according to Gabriele Michalitsch (Vienna University), "we have an enormous increase in female poverty and of unpaid work in the home. We also see the privatisation of child care and elderly care being transferred informally, particularly to women migrants who are deprived of their basic rights and expected to work for very low wages".

Europe-wide reports from rapporteurs on debt, democracy, poverty, public services, wages and feminist perspectives collaborated the narratives presented on the national situations indicating alarming developments, including intensifying racism and neo-fascism.

Since the beginning of the crisis, a restructuring has occurred that takes Europe on a track to social and political regression, violations of labour, social and migrant rights, attacks on women's reproductive rights and increased violence against women and an unprecedented roll-back of democratic achievements. All the testimonies pinpoint to similar trends across the EU - giving a strong message that this is not the crisis of one country, it is a Europe-wide crisis and a crisis of the economic model.

However the dominant message from the Tribunal is that resistance continues in large and small mobilizations and in many creative experiments of grassroots democracy. Ana Maria Jimenez of the PAH (Platform of People affected by Mortgages in Spain) reported that: "Today we are more than 200 nodes in the state. We have stopped over 1.000 evictions, we have relocated over 1.000 people through our Obra Social campaign".

Despite great difficulties, people are organising to demonstrate that water is a public commons and cannot be privatised as in the Thessaloniki and Italy initiatives involving citizens and local government; stopping evictions in Spain; trade unions defending their right to organise and defeat attempts of social dumping as in the Dockers strike in Portugal; confronting racism and neo-fascism in many countries; building several forms of people's self-organisation to counter the effects of austerity and constructing a different paradigm of socially managed public services and an economy of commons.

The outstanding challenges for social movements in the next years include: the roll-back of austerity laws imposed by the European institutions; the cancellation of illegitimate and unsustainable debt; redistributive measures to reverse inequality and enforcement of taxation on corporations and wealthy individuals; the full recognition at the European level of the right to housing, water, food, education and health services; the closure of the camps where migrants and refugees are imprisoned and the full recognition of the right to collective bargaining and an end to precarious work.

Social movements in Europe are already in a necessary process to re-invent ways of doing politics. But to be able to counter the policies of EU economic governance and the Troika, the greatest challenge is to converge and strengthen forces and set another agenda for another Europe.

P.S.

* <http://www.tni.org/pressrelease/peoples-tribunal-indicts-troika-destruction-european-livelihoods>

Footnotes

[1] See the final declaration on ESSF (article 32132), [The EU and the crisis: from austerity to solidarity - the verdict of the other voices and a call for another Europe](#).