

Summit Statement: A Plan B for the EU and the Euro Zone

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FINAL STATEMENT

The European leaders commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome while the European Union (EU) is falling apart. They decided to address the EU crisis by preparing for a new Treaty. And meanwhile, boost enhanced cooperation initiatives in a Europe of “multiple layers” as evidenced by the Commission’s recently published White Book on the future of the EU. All of those, however, go in the direction of deepening neoliberal policies killing Europe and pushing forward a militarily aggressive integration and expansion alongside NATO. We have a Plan B to confront that gloomy horizon for European citizens.

We stand ready to offer European peoples an alternative. It requires rupturing with the current treaties. Cooperation in Europe must be launched on a new basis: protecting our people, democracy and nature against free trade areas and a European internal market serving the profits of banks and international corporations and the wealth of oligarchies. We must get rid of an EU that is a machine of war against labour and at the service of the sole financial capital. We must confront it with a democratic Europe founded on the cooperation of fully democratic States for the benefit of our peoples. International cooperation should be pursued where it serves the interests of the majority of European citizens (i.e. climate change, asylum policies, corporate taxation), while protecting democracy and social rights against deregulation, privatisation and liberalisation via EU law.

The first Plan B Summit in Paris, in January 2016, was convened following the Coup against Greece in the wake of summer 2015. To further demonstrate our reaction against anti-democratic EU actions, two other Plan B Summits took place in Madrid and Copenhagen. Meanwhile oppression against Greece continued, leaving no room for wishful thinking: the EU is violating democracy and popular sovereignty. State debt is being used as a mechanism of subordination, while the European Central Bank operates as an instrument of imposition, using liquidity and the denial thereof as a weapon against any popular and political resistance.

Now, it’s the time to foster and consolidate the Plan B network as an open, plural forum of debate and policy preparation for credible alternatives for the European peoples. Our strategy is composed of a Plan A and a Plan B. Plan A encompasses various proposals of deep re-orientation of the EU project. The Plan B is a progressive disengagement from the EU in case Brussels continues in the neoliberal anti-democratic path, and offers a new type of cooperation between States, including monetary cooperation. We shall work in each of our countries and all together throughout Europe, towards a complete renegotiation of the European Treaties. We commit to engage with the struggle of Europeans everywhere in a campaign of civil European disobedience toward arbitrary European practices and irrational “rules” until that renegotiation is achieved. We recognize that in cases such as Greece, there is no room for a negotiation with the oppressors. And we support the peoples’ right to resist and disobey.

The Plan A: We believe the current Treaties are an obstacle to any progressive agenda. Any attempt to modify the treaties should have, at its core, the principles of mass- participation, debate and

collective decision-making. Popular sovereignty, the people's choice, must prevail. In order to foster that debate and associated mobilisations, we propose amongst other things the following solutions for a European project to be continued along a democratic pro-labour route.

We, participants of the Plan B Summit, call for:

1. A deep reform of the European Central Bank to ensure full employment and to allow for funding public investments and ecologically sustainable economic activity as mandatory goals;
2. The abolishment of the TSCG/Fiscal Compact and a full stop to the institutions' interference with national budgets while ensuring that Member States pursue policies according to the democratic choices of the people. The issue of public debt will be addressed at a European level, with the full recognition of the right of people and States to conduct debt audits prior to any payment and to refuse to pay debts which are illegitimate, illegal, odious and unsustainable. We will work on a European conference on debts with the aim to liberate the European peoples from unpayable debts, which now only serve as a tool to impose upon them neoliberal undemocratic and austerity policies.
3. The re-orientation of the mercantilist policy agenda dominating the EU and, in particular, the Eurozone toward domestic aggregate demand to balance the current accounts. Consequently, we need a credible macroeconomic mechanism to address current account surpluses by raising salaries and domestic consumption and increasing imports from deficit countries;
4. The rejection of CETA, TTIP and TISA and other free trade agreements that increase the power of multinationals at the expense of democracy, social and environmental rights. The introduction of a principle of social non regression and social and ecological standards for the internal single market and for trade with non-EU partners, i.e. European social and ecological protectionism: to protect our environment, producers and workers, implementation of common tariffs on imported goods, including quotas or other rules for goods and services that do not respect fundamental ecological and social standards.
5. The fight against tax competition, tax havens and tax arbitrage, penalty taxes on financial flows to tax havens inside and outside the EU, and the introduction of minimum effective corporate taxation. We must allow member states to defend their tax base via penalty taxation on flows to tax havens in case of non-cooperation;
6. Strengthening the work against climate change through an economic policy that delivers ecological sustainability and halts climate change. The EU must also put in place stronger adaptation strategies, from the local to the international level, to prevent climate change damages;
7. The adoption of a social protocol to protect social rights and collective bargaining against internal market freedoms and ensures that all mobile workers from EU member states, as a minimum, always work under the same working conditions and salary as the workers from the host country;
8. Strengthening of women's rights and gender equality, fundamental asset of democratic societies and social and economic development. Resisting patriarchy is also a fundamental human rights issue. All forms of gender-based violence and sexual exploitation must be eradicated;
9. The resistance to Fortress Europe. Europe needs a new migration, refugee and asylum policies based on international human rights conventions and humanitarian law and increased, shared responsibility to provide protection. No more closed borders, no more deaths in the Mediterranean. No arms exports and wars and military interventions as well as destructive free trade deals that are among the main reasons why people have to flee; no more funding of the war industry though armament deals, largely linked to corruption and to odious debt.

10. The preparation and the inclusion in the Treaties of the conditions to grant Member States wishing to do so an orderly exit from the Euro zone while stabilising exchange rates.

Plan A is a question of balance of power. We must disobey the Treaties in order to make a reconstruction of Europe possible. However, we fully recognise that any attempt to change the EU's neoliberal Treaties in favour of democracy and labour can be blocked by just one Member State and will be met with fierce opposition by the European institutions. Therefore a credible Plan A needs a Plan B which will partly serve as leverage in negotiations with the EU, but it will also allow member States to decouple and disengage from the EU's neoliberal straightjacket in order to pursue new types of cooperation based on our progressive agendas.

While we, the undersigned give different priority to Plan A, we agree on the utmost importance for a Plan B, which will allow pursuing our goals in a different context.

The PLAN B: Facing impossibility of deep reorientation of EU, we commit to engage our countries to regaining control of their basic tools for intervening in the economy. With close cooperation among States, we want to implement our progressive agenda of fiscal, social, economic and environmental justice.

Let us be clear on a key element. Between our people and saving the euro, our choice is clear : we chose the people. We propose, as an alternative to the Plan A, a Plan B for an “amicable divorce” of the euro or a euro-exit plan for a single country. In general, a framework for monetary cooperation based on national currencies and a common European accounting unit.

We aim at creating a fair trading system (“solidarity protectionism”) based on the promotion of workers' rights, environmental protection, capital control, health and consumer protection, public control of essential services and resources and special treatment and aid for impoverished countries, fully respecting core international and ILO conventions, minimum corporate tax rates and the Paris COP21 climate agreement. We must allow member states to defend their tax base via penalty taxation on flows to tax havens in the case of non-cooperation and through credible accountability mechanisms.

All these solutions can be upheld by one or many Member States and third States willing to cooperate on a progressive base. The larger this new cooperative and progressive zone is, the better for our peoples.

The Rome Summit is a milestone in the development of our Plan B strategy. Especially considering the upcoming elections in several key Member States (Netherlands, France, Germany). In a context of Brexit and continuous crises in Spain, Italy, Greece and Portugal, the Plan B and its internationalist solidarity is more vital than ever.

We commit not only to largely communicate these solutions for Europe ahead of the debate on a European reform at the anniversary of the Treaty of Rome but also to support all proposals, initiatives and mobilisations moving towards this perspective. We are also ready to present them to the European Council and Commission as soon as one of us govern. We stand ready to disobey the European rules should the neo-liberal, mercantilist and un-democratic EU continues. If the European Council and the Commission object to our reasonable and concrete solutions, we commit to make them prevail outside the current EU framework.

We will continue to deepen and broaden our political platform. The next and 5th Plan B Summit will take place in Lisbon, October 2017 - 10 years after the signing of the Treaty of Lisbon.

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P.S.

* <http://www.euro-planb.it/index.php/il-documento/>