



Public Works in Europe 2014

**UNISON Scotland's manifesto
for the European Election**

**PUBLIC
WORKS:**

Introduction

On Thursday 22nd May we will elect Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) to represent Scotland for the next five years. These elections matter because the European Union has a huge effect on our daily lives and the European Parliament is the only directly-elected body within its structures.

The Scottish Parliament puts European-derived legislation in devolved areas into Scots Law as well as scrutinising European Union (EU) business. The Scottish Government engages directly with the EU at many levels.

Many of the issues affecting working men and women in Scotland are decided either wholly or partly at the European level. Introducing minimum levels of workplace rights. Issues such as equal pay, protection from discrimination, maternity, paternity and adoption rights, equal rights for part-time and fixed-term workers, four weeks paid holiday, health safety legislation, etc, are all measures campaigned for and won in the EU which directly affect workers in Scotland. The EU also forms the background to many issues affecting public services such as procurement.

Changes to European treaties mean that the European Parliament now has more powers than ever before including over many consumer issues, energy and agriculture.

With widening inequality and mass unemployment across Europe the decisions taken by the European Parliament have never been more important. UNISON Scotland is taking the opportunity to set out our key priorities for the European Parliament.

Excellent public services

Public services are highly valued in Scotland and are central to the quality of the lives of our citizens. At a time when we are only slowly coming out of economic recession their importance increases. Public services are the foundation of a fair society combining economic strength with social cohesion.

We need to establish a European framework for public services, guaranteeing universal and equal access for citizens, quality, local autonomy and transparency in public services, maintaining their integrity as defined at national level, so that European competition and business rules do not counter citizens' rights. The recent Procurement Directive should be used to strengthen social and environmental criteria for awarding public contracts.

UNISON Scotland is calling for MEP candidates to support:

- Legal provisions that define public services across all EU legislation;
- Safeguards in EU trade agreements that protect public services against privatisation and competition;
- The right of public sector workers to be given due respect for their role and for the full extent of EU law to ensure that they will not be excluded from progressive legislation on working conditions. This includes amendments to directives that may undermine Scottish agreements on public service pay and conditions.
- The reiteration by the European Parliament that water is a human right, the continued exclusion of water services from the Concessions Directive and continued opposition to the commercialisation and liberalisation of water services

Democracy and transparency

The EU is negotiating a trade deal with the US, known as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). This must not be allowed to include provisions which will lower commitments on employment rights or environmental standards.

Among the proposals for this treaty is investor-state dispute settlement – this is a technical term for a process where companies have the right to sue foreign governments if they don't like the local legislation. They have been part of other agreements which both the EU and US have signed. The cases are heard in private and governments often lose. If ISDS goes through big companies will be able to sue whenever they find that changes in law in the area of public health, consumer, environmental or social protection interfere with their profits.

In recent years the Troika (European Central Bank, European Commission and IMF) have imposed severe austerity measures on a number of EU countries. This has been done with little accountability or concern for the social impact of policies. Economic governance needs to be both opened up and have greater social indicators built in.

We are calling for:

- Investor state dispute settlement not to be part of TTIP and efforts made to be remove ISDS from other trade agreements.
- More transparency about the areas being negotiated in current trade talks
- Transparency, legitimacy and responsibility for monitoring European economic governance.

Improving workers' rights

Economic freedoms, such as the freedom to provide services, cannot be superior to fundamental rights, such as the right of trade unions to take collective action. In particular the right of the social partners to ensure non-discrimination, equal treatment, and the improvement of living and working conditions of workers must be restated.

Across the EU as well as unacceptable levels of unemployment, felt most acutely by young people there has also been a huge increase in under employment.

We are calling for:

- A guarantee that economic freedoms cannot take precedence over fundamental social rights. The fundamental notion of social progress must be confirmed by a 'Social Progress Protocol' appended to EU Treaties.
- Protection for, and promotion of, collective bargaining. Social dialogue must be concretely and genuinely promoted at all levels. The autonomy of social partners must be assured, particularly in relation to, but not only, wage bargaining.
- Work should mean security – urgent action is needed to raise minimum wage rates across the EU as well as tackle underemployment, zero hour contracts and other precarious forms of working.
- Any further weakening of the Working Time Directive must be prevented.
- The Posted Workers Directive to be strengthened to stop employers undermining local and national agreements and preventing legislative measures being enacted by Government
- Migrant workers must receive the same treatment as other workers and must be informed about their rights. Mobility must be fair, just and freely chosen.
- Action to ensure that the REFIT programme reviewing regulation is not used to undermine health and safety or employment rights,
- Enhanced participation in economic decision-making at European level.
- Consolidation of workers' rights to information, consultation being anchored in company law directives and the extension of the rights of European Works Councils.

Europe-wide action against austerity

Across the EU and sometimes driven by it. The reaction to the financial crisis and recession has been to clamp down on public spending. In several countries this has been accompanied by demands from the European Central Bank and European Commission for privatisation, cuts to public services, reductions in both rates of pay and minimum wages. We back The ETUC's call for 'A Europe of full employment which cares for future generations'.

We are calling for:

- The immediate end to austerity policies. Any consolidation of public finances must not come at the price of social benefits or social protection.
- The UK to maintain its opt out from the Fiscal Compact and for public resources for investment programmes have to be excluded from the "Golden Rule" which limits the structural deficit of other EU Member States to a maximum of 0.5% of GDP.
- Reform of European economic policy with changes to the Stability and Growth Pact and the role of the European Central Bank. European public service unions should be given a voice in the in the European economic debate.
- Further action to implement a financial transaction tax, both to dampen down speculation and to raise money for investment putting Europe back to work.
- Tax havens have to be eliminated, starting with the immediate implementation of the resolutions of the European Council and the G20.
- Co-ordinated action by the EU and Government at every level to implement the European Youth Guarantee.

Increasing gender equality and ending discrimination in Europe

Austerity has impacted disproportionately on women and others who suffer discrimination. We must seek not just to put Europe back to work but to do so equally.

We are calling for:

- More action to implement the principles of the European Women's Rights Charter, to improve women's rights and opportunities and promoting mechanisms to achieve gender equality in all aspects of social, economic and political life.
- The introduction of improved parental leave rights for men and women up to the highest standards in Europe.
- Support for parents to balance their caring and work responsibilities.
- Action to close the gender pay gap - vital to improve living standards, fight poverty and increase economic growth.
- Action to ensure and promote women's sexual and reproductive health rights throughout the EU and to step up European efforts to eradicate human trafficking and sexual exploitation through closer judicial and police co-operation.
- The European Parliament to encourage and support the EU and its member states in efforts to stop domestic and gender-specific violence, including that perpetrated against women of ethnic minorities, through all appropriate EU programmes and funds.
- Further campaigning to help stop the rise in racism throughout the EU.

Climate change

The EU has a target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40% by 2030 but has no clear energy-efficiency targets. The EU is energy dependent, importing 55% of the energy it consumes. The commission's proposal is to increase the share of renewables to 27% of energy consumed in Europe by 2030, this is welcome but more needs to be done.

The energy debate cannot be reduced to the pursuit of low-cost competitiveness and Europe's energy choices cannot be left to the market. The challenges of supply, energy dependency, environmental protection and access to energy require a policy based on better market regulation, support for innovation and funding for the upgrading of energy generation and distribution infrastructure.

We are calling for:

- A comprehensive EU climate directive, ensuring that industries not covered by existing law, eg energy, agriculture, food, building and transport, are included in the emissions reduction target.
- A Common Energy Policy, based on sustainability, energy security and independence to take the lead in building a new electricity transmission network to ensure cross-Europe energy supplies.
- Proper EU-wide measures and targets on energy efficiency.
- Democratic control of energy regulators.

Conclusion

UNISON Scotland will be calling on its 160,000 members in Scotland to judge the policies of the political parties standing in these elections against the principles in this manifesto.

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