

a **Europe that Puts People First**

UNISON's manifesto
for the European election in
Scotland



**PUBLIC
WORKS:**





Introduction

On 4 June 2009, we will be asked to elect Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) to represent Scotland for the next five years. Europe has a huge influence on our daily lives. Since devolution, Scotland makes a direct contribution to Europe. It enacts European-derived legislation on devolved matters that used to go via Westminster. The Scottish Parliament scrutinizes European Union (EU) business and the Scottish Government engages directly with the EU at all levels.

The European Social Chapter has changed the lives of working men and women in Scotland, by 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.

Climate change and many other environmental improvements have been led by Europe including;

- recycling of waste, including cars and electrical goods,
- improved air quality by reducing greenhouse gas emissions,
- energy efficiency - introducing efficiency standards for products, like washing machines.

European affairs now impact directly and indirectly on UNISON members. As we approach the 2009 European Elections UNISON Scotland is taking the opportunity to set out our key priorities for the next European Parliament.

Excellent Public Services

Public services are highly valued in Scotland and are central to the quality of the lives of its citizens. At a time of economic recession their importance increases. Public services are the foundation of a fair society combining economic strength with social cohesion. Far from crowding out the private sector they support business and enterprise. The public sector provides public services, purchases private goods and spends on essential public works which create and secure jobs as well as providing universal protection against social risks, such as unemployment and poverty.

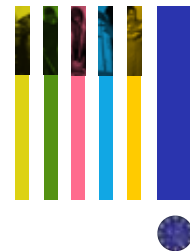
We need to establish a European framework for public services, guaranteeing universal and equal access for citizens, quality, local autonomy and transparency in public services, maintaining their integrity as defined at national level, so that European competition and business rules do not counter citizens'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

UNISON is calling for MEP candidates to support:

- An EU action programme on quality public services, based on the public service protocol agreed by EU governments in 2008 and the European Federation of Public Service Unions' Public Services Pledge;
- Legal provisions that define public services across all EU legislation;
- That any European proposal on health services ensures that the Scottish health system - based on the principles of providing a service which is comprehensive, free and equal at the point of need and paid for by direct taxation - is maintained. Current proposals could fundamentally compromise these principles by introducing a system requiring patients to pay for healthcare up front and reclaim the costs according to the nationally set tariff or cost;
- The evaluation procedure for public procurement being improved to include social, as well as environmental provisions.
- 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 opposition to the commercialisation and liberalisation of water services and the privatisation of water utilities. Promoting public-public water partnerships across the world.

Economic Crisis

People all across Europe and here in Scotland have been hit hard by the global financial crisis and economic recession. We must act to help those who have been hardest hit - losing their jobs and homes - get back on their feet. We must also ensure a wholesale reform of the financial market



and better regulation of all financial sectors to ensure future financial crises are prevented.

A European strategy should be created for smart green growth and jobs, which will create ten million new jobs by 2020 – two million in the renewable energies sector alone – and help make Europe a world leader in innovation, new green technologies and products. In the EU, all levels of government can work together to stimulate smart green growth, notably through structural reform and fiscal policies. EU-funded investment projects should be swiftly implemented to help achieve these goals.

We are calling for:

- Creation of an efficient, affordable and ‘clean’ transport system across Europe including a high-speed rail network, more direct air routes and a transformation of city transport systems.
- Expansion and modernisation of energy and broadband structures;
- Development of energy efficiency strategies in all cross-EU institutions to cut peoples’ bills by reducing energy consumption.
- Examination of all EU programmes to find ways of increasing employment opportunities and implementing EU-funded investment projects.
- Education and training to be expanded, including the provision of apprentices and lifelong learning opportunities, so that when we recover from the recession, necessary skills are available to grow economies across Europe.

Improving Workers’ Rights

Decisions by the European Court of Justice (ECJ), in December 2007 and April 2008, have been largely negative for trade unions and have altered the balance between markets and 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.

The core issue raised by these cases affects the future balance between the economic and the social aims of the European Union. The rulings have far-reaching implications for trade unions and workers in Europe, and for fundamental workers’ rights, collective bargaining and industrial action. They are closely linked to issues such as the Services Directive.

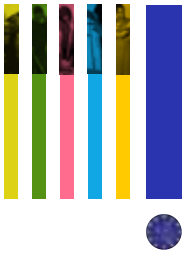
There is a need for the European Commission to prepare the necessary legislative proposals, to assist in preventing conflicting interpretation in the future. A review of the Posted Workers Directive should also be held, after thorough analysis of its current impact in member states, in order to avoid “social dumping”. In the middle of the current economic downturn adverse effects on workers and their families need to be prevented.

We are calling for:

- Action to prevent the exploitation of workers and strengthen rights to collective bargaining.
- An examination of the Viking, Laval and other judgments - ensuring workers’ rights are not undermined.
- A review of the EU Posted Workers Directive.
- The development of a European framework for cross-border collective bargaining and agreements.
- Progress on work to promote decent working time, meeting health and safety standards and a fair work-life balance.
- A strengthening of workers’ rights to information and consultation.
- 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.

Increasing Gender Equality and Ending Discrimination in Europe

Despite significant progress towards achieving equality between women and men in recent years, many inequalities remain. Women still earn, on average, 15% less than men for doing the same work; they are much more likely to be unemployed, discouraged from entering the labour market by the lack of decent jobs, or in lower-paid, low-quality jobs. Millions of women around the world still face exploitation and rights violations, in the form of human trafficking, domestic violence and other abuses. There are still too few women in politics half a century after they gained the right to vote and stand for election across Europe.



In some parts of Europe, men have hardly any rights to parental leave when their children are born. Women often have to choose between having children and pursuing the career they want. Working families find it hard to balance their professional and personal responsibilities. This must be changed. Those European countries which have done most to increase women's rights and opportunities now have the highest proportion of women in the workforce and the highest birth rates.

We must continue to fight gender stereotyping. Strengthening women's rights and opportunities will bring significant economic, social and democratic benefits for all Europe's citizens.

The EU should take a lead in tackling racism across Europe including the negative stereotyping of the migrant workers that play a key role in Scotland's economy. The far-right, with their message of hate have been rightly marginalised in Scotland. However, we must remain vigilant to ensure that they do not succeed in exploiting the recession for their perverted aims. UNISON Scotland will as usual campaign strongly wherever and whenever the far-right seek to peddle their lies.

We are calling for:

- The creation of a European Women's Rights Charter, to improve women's rights and opportunities and to promote 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.
- A campaign to close the gender pay gap - vital to improve living standards, fight poverty and increase economic growth.
- 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.
- 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.
- A campaign against racism across Europe together with a strong legal framework against all forms of discrimination.

Climate Change

Climate change is the greatest long-term threat facing Europe and the world. It requires global action to find a global solution. The recently agreed climate change package which commits member states to increasing the share of renewable sources to 20% and cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 20%, both by 2020 is a start, but much more needs to be done.

In Europe we already import 50% of our energy, and this could rise to 70% by 2030. We must work together to increase our energy independence by developing environmentally-friendly energy sources in Europe.

We are calling for:

- The EU to take a lead in achieving a new global climate agreement for the period to follow on from the Kyoto treaty.
- A global target of 30% emissions reductions by 2020 at the UN summit at the end of 2009.
- 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.
- 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.

UNISON's manifesto for Scotland's European election is published by UNISONScotland, 14 West Campbell Street, Glasgow G2 6RX. Tel 0845 355 0845. Email d.watson@unison.co.uk

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