

ALTER SUMMIT

Call for an alternative summit

Today we are witnessing a major historical turning point in the European Union. European leaders, particularly those of the Commission, the ECOFIN Council and the European Central Bank, take advantage of the current crisis to impose a neoliberal order against the ideal of a democratic, social and ecological Europe.

The face of Europe is changing with dire consequences for citizens and for the future of the European project itself. This "silent revolution" - as Barroso himself calls it - is taking place through unprecedented activism at the legal-institutional level : proliferation of rules on fiscal matters and wages, higher thresholds of requirement of these rules, tougher penalties and an increasing automatization of their implementation, a mandatory entry of these rules at basic levels of European and national legislation (treaties, constitutions, ...). It also goes through strengthening the power of the Commission, the European Council and the ECOFIN Council. The European Parliament - as acknowledged by its own new president - being in the best case scenario reduced to merely rubber stamping heads of States' decisions.

The Treaty on "stability, coordination and governance" stemming from the European Council of January, 30, 2012, toughens the austerity measures, although the context of a crisis of a severity comparable to that of the 1930s, augmented by an unprecedented environmental crisis, vindicates instead the preservation of jobs and public investment. The European Commission will be entitled to compel the States in the exercise of such a central prerogative to democratic life as the budget, if it considers that policies do not conform to its or the ECOFIN Council's vision.

By adopting this Treaty, EU leaders are in denial of reality. The ever increasing EU summits have utterly failed to achieve their official goals, namely "restore market confidence" and resolve the crisis in the Eurozone. A second banking crisis begins in Europe; austerity policies jointly conducted in all the European countries are leading to a widespread recession and the social situation is heavily deteriorating in most European countries, starting of course by the countries at the periphery of the Eurozone. In Greece, public debt, unemployment, even the number of suicides, are rising at an alarming rate.

Citizens are entitled to ask whether these official objectives do not conceal a different strategy : to use the opportunity of the crisis, even making it worse, to switch to a totally different model, which would complete the neoliberal model at the cost of their social and democratic rights ("never waste a good crisis").

These developments are the most serious denial of democracy that Europe has experienced since the end of World War II. European citizens are subjected to punitive policies when everyone knows that this crisis comes mainly from the greed of the banks, from market finance, from the complicity or the laxity of political leaders who were supposed to control them, and from two decades of competitiveness weighing heavily on wages and taxation. This punitive neoliberalism jeopardizes twice democracy : by direct authoritarian leeway (when Jean-Claude Trichet, former ECB's President, sent a letter to the Italian Authorities to speed up the cuts and suggested to shift the collective bargaining from the branches to companies' level, or when, with the approval of the Troika, technocrat governments took power in Greece and Italy ...); and also, indirectly, by encouraging the rise of xenophobic nationalism, and anti-European and anti-democratic political movements (France, Hungary, Finland, etc.).

We say "Enough " ! We no longer accept these policies. They flout democracy ; they have already plunged Europe in a particularly severe economic crisis. They awaken xenophobic demons that the creation of Europe was in principle intended to eradicate. We want to improve the European social model and defend the people, not banks, corporations, and their main shareholders.

This requires other policies, which means also to review the institutions and treaties; not in the sense of a hardening of punitive neoliberalism, but rather for reclaiming democracy. Alternatives exist. What is lacking today is a balance of power to implement these alternatives and devise political processes in order to bring back the European project on the track of democracy, social and ecological progress. The alternative summit we call for will be a first step towards achieving these goals.

Contacts : info@altersummit.eu
www.altersummit.eu