

Building a social movement alternative to austerity

(8 May 2012) Representatives of a very broad range of social movements discussed the roots of the financial and economic crisis Europe is currently going through at a two day conference in Brussels. They also exchanged experiences about the resistance to the misery Europe policies of the conservative and corporate elites in many Member States. The [battles for a different Europe, a more social Europe unites many organizations and including trade unions](#)

EPSU's Deputy General Secretary **Jan Willem Goudriaan** addressed the opening session to explain the positions of Europe's trade unions and an alternative programme to the austerity measures pursued by many governments and the European Commission. Other speakers included **Trevor Evans** from the Euro-Memorandum Group, **Mariana Mortagua** of the Portuguese movement against the government policies and **Erik Wesselius** of Corporate Europe Observatory. He made clear how BusinessEurope and the European Round Table for Industrialists are imposing their view of economic policy on Europe in which there is no place for democracy. Democracy does not provide the stable climate business wants. **Jorge Fael** of EPSU affiliate STAL told delegates of the resistance to privatisation in Portugal and **Felipe van Keirsbilck** of Belgian EPSU affiliate CNE informed the conference on the results of the [Joint Social Conference](#). **Susan George** founder of ATTAC provided a stinging analysis of the crisis, the problems and how to come out of it.

There were several workshops that addressed specific issues such as financial markets, an alternative EU and labour rights. ETUC's **Patrick Itschert** discussed with delegates the importance of the struggle to [protect the right to strike against the Barroso attack](#) to weaken it by elevating the freedom of movement of goods and services and the freedom of establishment to a higher order than the fundamental right to strike. He also raised other important dossiers such as posted workers.

The EPSU Deputy General Secretary and STAL representative participated in the

seminar on privatisation including of water services. The group of participants including from the Italian Water Movement, Spanish, Hungarian, Bulgarian and other networks supported a joint letter to European Commissioner Oli Rehn urging him to refrain from pushing for privatisation as part of the conditions of the structural adjustment programmes imposed on several EU Member States. The group also supported the European Citizens Initiative on Human Right to Water (www.right2water.eu)

The conference was organized by [Corporate Europe Observatory](#) on the occasion of its 15th year

It took place on 5 and 6 May 2012, in Brussels.

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