



“Karlsruher Signal” - A Change of Direction for Europe

Europe - once initiated by several generations as a major project for peace and wealth - is now kept hostage by banks and other financial market players.

The political reaction of the European Commission and of the governments of the member states to these market forces is often helpless, hesitant and frightened. And it is this reaction which makes the financial markets so powerful. The real problem is not the often quoted "invisible hand" of the markets but a policy which subjects itself to these players.

The causes for the European crisis are manifold. On the one hand, Europe is suffering the consequences of the global financial and economic crisis in 2008/2009. On the other hand, other causes can be found within inadequate policy initiatives in many EU member states. But it can be taken for granted that:

The deregulation of the financial markets continuing for decades, and the wrong focus on shareholder value;

the redistribution of income from the those who make an important contribution to society to the coffers of the rich;

the establishment of a single Euro area without a common financial and economic government, anchored in democracy;

actually led to the government debt issues and the destabilisation in Europe.

In addition, the social safeguarding of work has been undermined in all European countries during the last two decades. The rapid growth of insecure and badly paid jobs and the continuing mass unemployment in many countries furthermore erode the financing foundations of the social states.

Certainly a strict policy of thrift will not solve but further exacerbate the problems. The currently advocated policy of thrift dumps all burdens of the crisis on the workforce and on the unemployed, in particular on the young people and the senior citizens. The originators and the beneficiaries of the crisis are spared.

The matter is further worsened by the zigzag course of the political decision-makers. The idea of Europe is thus discredited in the eyes of many people and the ground for nationalism is prepared.

During the last weeks and months many people, mostly young people, protested in many European countries against the undermining of their opportunities for education and thus of their chances for a successful future. Many of them are unemployed or work under precarious conditions or have to take on several jobs to earn their living. The blatant contradiction of our times is that the extremely well educated young generation in Europe is unable to find employment or is forced to accept badly paid and insecure jobs.

Also in Germany the hiring-out of workers, work contracts, unpaid internships, temporary work contracts and so-called mini jobs are on the rise. Also in Germany mainly the young generation is affected.

The European work-force does not expect the strongest individual union to merely issue declarations of solidarity. The most effective solidarity of IG Metall and their members is to fight against precarious and badly paid jobs in Germany within our spheres of action: in enterprises and administrations, in the industries and in society.

Therefore IG Metall will include the opportunities for a successful future of young people into their tariff policy, demanding a permanent employment after their apprenticeship. Another goal we want to achieve is the limitation and social regulation of the hiring-out of workers and of work contracts.

IG Metall requests to stop that hesitant manoeuvring and to immediately change the finance, economic and labour market policy of the EU Commission and the German government and to move in the direction of a democratic, ecological and social Europe. This includes:

- the establishment of a democratically legitimated European economic and financial government, which is able to agree and to implement the ranges for the revenue and spending policy and to stipulate requirements for the debt levels of the Euro states;
- the strengthening of a social Europe by uniform minimum standards for safe and fair labour; this includes the containment of the low-wage sector and the boundless flexibilisation of the labour market;
- better prospects for the future for the youth of Europe based on a better education and a better transition into the labour market. This includes an increased co-responsibility of the employers for the professional formation of the youth;
- the extension of the operational and corporate co-determination of the employees in Europe to create a strong counterbalance to the interests of the shareholders;
- the determination of fair taxation ranges for all EU member states, in particular in regard to corporate and income tax and also to the taxation of large fortunes and inheritances;
- a European solidarity pact in education, research, development and infrastructure to drive the economic momentum and convergence;
- the European supervisory authority for all players and all businesses in the financial markets and the full liability of the financial market players for their transactions (speculation protection fund) and the introduction of a turnover tax for financial deals (tax on financial transactions) to finance the European solidarity pact.

Europe will only become a democratic and social region, if the citizens of Europe are enabled to shape it and if their ideas and interests become the point of origin and of reference for the European policy. Therefore Europe requires a fundamental reform of its institutions and a comprehensive democratization. We want Europe to be shaped by its citizens, not by banks and multinationals.

IG Metall expresses their full solidarity with the people and the unions in Europe, who fight against this anti-social and ecologically wrong policy with peaceful and nonviolent means.

IG Metall calls upon EMF and ETUC to develop a platform and an action plan of the European trade unions to introduce the interests of the workforce into the political decision-making processes in Europe with one voice, as uniform and as powerful as possible.