

Croatia joins an EU at war

When Croatia joins the European Union on 1 July, the country will join an EU at war. It is a class war in which capitalist forces, the Troika (the EU Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund), national governments and the new European oligarchy have gone on the offensive to dismantle the welfare state and defeat the trade union movement. Croatia's accession to the EU will, in other words, serve some Croats' economic, social and political interests while it will undermine and weaken others' – mainly those of workers and trade unions. **Asbjørn Wahl** writes.

The background is a Europe in crisis, an economic crisis which in reality is a deep systemic crisis of capitalism. The current phase of this crisis was triggered by the financial crisis of 2007-8, which particularly in Europe was turned into a sovereign debt crisis. This crisis is now being used as an excuse to destroy social Europe and to shift the balance of power further in favour of capital. This is the aim, or at least the effect, of the harsh unemployment and austerity policies which are now being pursued across Europe. The crisis has also clearly revealed that the EU institutionally consists of a core of powerful states and a periphery of more powerless ones. Croatia will obviously find its place among the latter.

Over the last few years we have experienced enormous attacks on workers and trade union rights in the EU. Firstly, we had the so-called Laval quartet (the Viking, Laval, Rütter and Luxemburg cases in the EU Court of Justice in 2007-

8) which all restricted the right to strike. Secondly, a number of the latest pacts, legislation and policy recommendations in the EU have strongly contributed to weakening the right of workers and trade unions. Thirdly, encouraged by the EU Commission, collective agreements in the public sector have been set aside by governments in at least ten EU member countries, while wages have been cut, without negotiations with trade unions. Legislation has also been introduced at national level in a number of EU member states in order to further limit the right to strike and to be able to use more extreme measures to curb strikes by military and police forces.

The institutional development of the EU has been remarkable over the last few years and has contributed to carving in stone neo-liberalism as the one and only economic model of the EU. New pacts and institutions have thus been adopted at a speed which is

unprecedented in the history of the EU, and with little democratic legitimacy. The Euro-Plus Pact, the six pieces of legislation on economic governance (the so-called six-pack), the Fiscal Pact and the Competitiveness Pact under negotiation are all parts of this development of an ever more authoritarian, neo-liberal EU.

Structural reforms of the labour market have been central elements of this legislation. In the neo-liberal EU language this means lower minimum wages, reduced coverage of collective agreements, decentralisation of wage formation, more flexible working hours, reduced overtime pay, more temporary work, etc. In effect, lower social protection and reduced trade union power. Furthermore, unemployment benefits are cut, retirement age increased and pensions reduced. As if this is not enough, the member states have been instructed to implement austerity policy in national legislation,

preferably in their constitution. To them, in other words, it is austerity forever or the end of social Europe.

So far, the European trade union movement has not been able to curb this reactionary policy of liberalisation, privatisation and austerity. It still clings strongly to the social partnership ideology of the post-Second World War period, despite the fact that the class compromise on which this policy was based, has broken down. Right up to the last few years, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) therefore has (like their closely related Social Democratic Parties) actually supported most of

the neo-liberal legislative and institutional development of the EU. Only recently have we seen the beginning of a change of this policy – under pressure from some national trade union confederations, particularly from the south of Europe.

The all-European trade union actions which took place on 14 November 2012 were in this regard promising. At least, nothing like it has ever happened in the history of the European trade union movement. General strikes were organised in six EU member states (Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece, Cyprus and Malta). In addition, more limited strikes were carried out in France and Belgium

– and huge demonstrations and solidarity actions were organised in a number of other countries, including in Central and Eastern Europe. This is the tendency in which Croatian trade unions will have to find their place in order to defend the interests of their members – and thus start the construction of another Europe, a peoples' Europe. ¹⁸

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Fewer women in leadership:

Case of Zimbabwe teacher colleges

Although Zimbabwe has made strides in gender equity there were still some gaps such as those found in leadership positions in teacher training colleges. In these institutions fewer women occupied leadership positions write **Nunurayi Mutyanda** and **Tecla Chido Bvumisani**.

Zimbabwe's literacy rate stands at 90.9% and its education system is one of the best in Africa. In terms of gender, the country has at least 17 pieces of legislation in place that enhances the status of women. Regardless of all these measures, the 2013 Human Development Report produced by the United Nations Development

Programme (UNDP) shows that Zimbabwe is not doing very well in various development indicators including gender equality. According to the report, the Gender Inequality Index (GII) for Zimbabwe for 2012 was 0.544 ranking the country at number 116 out of 148 countries covered in the report. A look at the number of women in leadership

positions at the institutions of higher learning, particularly teacher training colleges, reveals severe underrepresentation of women in leadership positions.

Zimbabwe has 13 teachers' training colleges. Out of these only two of the principals or vice principals are female. Why is the situation like this? Could it be that