

RESULTS OF THE SUMMIT OF FEBRUARY 7 AND 8 2013: A poor man's Europe!

A declaration of the Common Front

You will all have received a message from the Vice-President on the outcome of the summit: for the first time in the history of the construction of Europe, the future budget is to be cut by 3% compared with the figure for the preceding period. For Heading V (administrative expenditure), this means an overall reduction of 2.5 billion euros. In the words of Mr Sefcovic, this balance sheet should be seen as “the best result possible” and we should “learn to live with it”.

The reality is that this figure is completely unacceptable.

It is unacceptable for European integration: the Heads of State and Government of the EU have agreed to a budget which for the first time in the history of the European Union has been genuinely reduced, and this is based on a structural deficit caused by the significant difference between payments and commitments!

The overall agreement speaks of 960 billion EUR (commitments expressed in current euros), which means a cut of 3.5% compared with the previous figure!

It is unacceptable for European integration: all this budget will do is exacerbate European austerity, at precisely the time when the economists are at last agreeing to accept that austerity merely causes recession and aggravates the economic crisis. It means abandoning the policies which are shaping the future of the EU on the world scene just as it means abandoning the struggle for economic and social consistency within the EU.

This plan which is inimical to the EU comes along with a plan to emasculate our Public Service: as far as the personnel are concerned, the Commission proposal would have grave consequences: staff cut by 5%, working hours increased by 7% with no salary increase, retirement age raised by 2 years, future secretaries salaries slashed by 22%, special levy raised considerably in reality, and so on.

The additional reduction of 1.5 billion demanded by the Council would lead among other things to a two-year pay freeze. A measure such as this would have a powerful impact on the salaries of working colleagues, particularly those who are new to the institution, for the entirety of the remainder of their careers and then on their pensions. It would be the equivalent on average of forcing staff to work for between two and three years over their careers for nothing!

This new reform of the Staff Regulations associated with the EU multi-year financial framework means that austerity will be carved in stone for staff for good, while the economic

situation within the Union is set to improve in the next 2 or 3 years, as has been predicted by a number of economists. This means that the only thing we can do is support the EP's call for a clause amendment in two to three years.

Does the Commission expect our gratitude for these conditions?

The appeal of a career in the European Public Service has already been seriously undermined: with the economic crisis in Europe still rampant, we are seeing the successful AST and AD examination candidates rejecting recruitment offers or speedily resigning because there are better positions to be had elsewhere, both public and private. This phenomenon is particularly marked in the case of certain nationalities. All the additional cuts will do is worsen recruitment issues, particularly as far as the geographical imbalance within the institutions is concerned. All the more disturbing is the fact that colleagues who have already spent a considerable proportion of their careers in the institutions are leaving in ever larger numbers because they have lost all motivation to stay with the EU and all their faith in their European political leaders. Their institution shows no interest in retaining them and securing their expertise for European integration. It seems as though in the eyes of their employers the staff have become nothing more than a device for adjusting budget variables.

The European Parliament has stated that it rejects the agreement as it stands and announced that it will not issue an opinion on the financial prospects until June. We welcome this reaction on the part of the EP and we call on the President and other leaders in the matter to maintain a resolute position in the defence of the European Union and its Public Service.

Mr Sefcovic has given the TPOs to understand that he was planning an immediate re-opening of the talks in the Council on the implementation of this so-called agreement.

Please, Mr Vice-President! You can hardly expect us to discuss ways in which our destruction can be undertaken more efficiently while the EP is still standing up for us! Nor can you imagine we will stand by and watch the hasty implementation of certain of the Commission's general management decisions becoming reality at this time.

To the contrary, we call on the College to rally to the European cause by supporting the resistance launched by the Parliament.

The Council staff repeated their strike action on the eve of the summit, and they were alone in this, since the other institutions had organised supporting actions of a more symbolic nature. In the months to come, we must ready ourselves to act on a united basis with all personnel groups in all the institutions to defend our common interests. Let us not be drawn into the game which the Member States would like to play, where they set us up one against another, so that they can claim that the bulk of these anti-European measures are only being implemented by the "others". We must act together and we must fight together, both for ourselves and for the Europe we want to try to continue to believe in.