



**PLENARY SESSION PRIORITIES**

**24-25 February 2016**



**European Council & Brexit Gabi Zimmer - GUE/NGL President - Germany**

Ceding to Cameron's special requests, member states are burying the concept of a social EU. By discriminating against workers from other member states, the free movement of people will be limited through the back door. The EU is being remodelled in the shape of an Anglo-Saxon style radical market economy, where the gap between rich and poor will increase, while capital and corporations can move freely to the countries where the biggest profits are expected. While almost all of Cameron's conservative wishes are fulfilled, zero-tolerance is applied to Greece which suffers from harsh austerity measures and the strain of the highest number of refugees arriving.

**European Semester Package: social and employment aspects**

Regarding the European Semester, the Commission insists on further budget cuts and labour market deregulation. This contradicts the need for public investment for growth and social standards to prevent poverty. We call for the establishment of EU targets for poverty-proof minimum wages and minimum incomes. We need a social EU now!



**European Semester Package, Annual Growth Survey 2016 Miguel Viegas - Portugal**

The basic objective of the Annual Growth Survey is to ensure that the member states institutionalise austerity-based budgetary and economic policies regardless of their constitutional texts and the will of the people. In line with the debt and deficit targets laid down in the Stability and Growth Pact, the economic reform plans set out in their country-specific recommendations are profoundly neoliberal and antidemocratic in nature. The report that we are going to vote on during the next plenary session, in which Keynesian make-up was applied, does not break away from neoliberal principles and expresses fake concerns regarding the lack of democratic legitimacy.



**European Semester Package, Commission decision including country reports  
João Pimenta Lopes - Spain**

The National Competitiveness Boards are one of the recent changes introduced in the European Semester. The Commission says that these boards should be in charge of tracking performance and policies in the field of competitiveness in order to avoid distortions in the single market. But, we are not naive. The final objective is to impose measures regarding wage-price evolution, taxation and non-price competitiveness. The weak economic recovery will be an excuse to ask for greater efforts from, and loss of rights of, the working class and the people. The end is easy to forecast: more economic domination, divergence, exclusion and uneven development.



**European network of Employment Services Paloma López Bermejo - Spain**

The EURES platform should become part of a European structure supporting fair mobility, but further action is still required at EU level. Workers' fundamental right to free movement must be defended against current trends, and it must also be strengthened with full recognition of social rights for mobile – and migrant – workers. This must be achieved by reversing the neoliberal policies that are forcing many impoverished EU citizens to migrate against their will.



**Activities of the European Ombudsman 2014 Ángela Vallina - Spain**

We congratulate the Ombudsman on her ongoing work focused on subjects like the 'revolving doors' cases involving former civil servants of the European Commission. However, the proposed amendments to this report which deal with the most critical issues such as FRONTEX policy, lack of transparency in the TTIP negotiations and the countries most investigated by the Ombudsman, are at risk of being ignored by the larger political groups in the Parliament. I have the feeling that the Ombudsman's office is one of the very few remaining workplaces in the EU institutions in which there can still be trust. This can be seen as a symptom of the sickness of the EU.



**Tobacco agreement Dennis De Jong - Netherlands**

Soon, the Commission must decide on the renewal of its cooperation agreements with the tobacco industry aimed at fighting the smuggling and counterfeiting of cigarettes. Commissioner Georgieva still has not provided the Parliament with her assessment of the current agreements. Since I have strong indications that these agreements are mainly benefitting the tobacco industry, the Commission should not only fully inform us immediately about its findings so far, but I also want the assurance that no further negotiations with the tobacco industry will take place, unless the Parliament gives its explicit consent.