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# The crisis of the EU and our orientation

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**This text was submitted by the International Committee working group as an addendum to the text “[Capitalist globalization, imperialisms, geopolitical chaos and their implications](#)”.**

1. The EU is facing a profound economic, social and political/institutional crisis. The Maastricht and Lisbon Treaties, which were to make the EU ‘the world’s most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economic space’ – based on the introduction of a common currency and a harsh budget discipline (the ‘Maastricht criteria’) – could not resist the blows of the 2007/2008 financial and economic crisis.

The crisis unveiled the EU’s main contradictions:

– It is a project that has as its foremost priority the rescue of the financial institutions rather than the welfare and social cohesion of its populations. Rights and liberties are in force above all for capital and the Union has long since abandoned its promise to adjust the living conditions upwards and it has carried the competition between the workers of all member states to extremes.

– It is a project in which the interests of the elites of individual member states – above all of those in the economically strongest – have got the upper hand over the interests of the entire Union.

– And it is a project that on the one hand in various aspects and to some extent is accelerating European integration while on the other hand its institutions lack democratic legitimacy.

2. Those contradictions and the EU’s capitalist class character have unequivocally been shown by the EU’s treatment of the Greek crisis. The course of this crisis has taught us two things:

\* It is impossible to get rid of austerity policies in one member country without being in radical conflict with the EU’s leading institutions and treaties, because this would threaten the very project of the EU. Its institutions and Treaties cannot be “reformed” democratically. It is necessary to break with the EU in order to get rid of the austerity policy.

\* It is not possible to get rid of the austerity policy without a simultaneous break with the capitalist regime in one’s own country. The Brexit of the UK is an example that shows us that the question of leaving the EU has a right-wing answer if it is separated from the necessity to break with the logic of profit. It will obtain a progressive character only if it is indissolubly linked to a project of eco-socialist transformation. For a lot of progressive and anticapitalist forces this twofold condition is difficult to understand. Thus the debate on how to overcome the dictatorship of markets often puts wrong alternatives on the agenda: Leaving the EU or fighting against it from within? But the EU is not a foreign power although it sometimes acts – as in the Greek case – as a colonial power. It is an appendix to the national bourgeois state apparatuses. Any popular government, especially in the European periphery, must when launching its own policy take into account an adverse reaction from the EU. In such a case, it should be ready to rely, at least for a period, on its own means. This implies preparing new international alliances and introducing political mechanisms like an alternative monetary policy or new banking regulations capable to intervene in the private sector. It implies as well building a public banking sector and setting up controls of capital movements. These transitional steps need not contradict a policy which combines an endogenous and sovereign development with a future supranational alliance on a popular and cooperative basis. Thereby it takes into account the unevenness of political developments in the EU member states. Whatever the concrete paths might look like, a lasting resistance to a new financial and banking crisis or to the logic of global competition as well as the emergence of an alternative social and

ecological transition, not to speak of a socialist upheaval in Europe, are only conceivable on a European scale. Although specific struggles on national and local levels are inevitable, an internationalist approach should push for common objectives and actions among different peoples based on the common interests of the working class. It should focus locally and nationally on those demands and political proposals which are compatible with popular struggles in other European countries. The trade unions and the social movements should initiate common struggles on all levels where capital is acting and organized.

We do not merely aspire to co-exist but we should cooperate, respecting the autonomy of others. By acting in such a way we offer an alternative to the far right's reactionary concepts of Europe.

3. Those who – after the financial crisis, and even more after the Brexit – see the EU as already finished will probably be disappointed. The EU is – at least in continental Europe, the UK has always played a special role – a necessary framework for the capitalist class to be competitive on the world market and in world politics. The EU can also be reshaped within the capitalist framework if this should be necessary. This has happened more than once since the Second World War. Today we are facing a new paradigm shift – the possible consolidation and institutional creation of a core Europe – based on the euro and on a European military project.

The difficulties and contradictions this project is facing are great and it is not at all certain that it would work. But also the constraints are great – after the Brexit and the US policy change the ruling classes of the EU feel that the time has come to capture more shares of the world market at the expense of the US. The alleged weakening of the US as “the protecting power of the west” gives the EU the legitimization to launch a genuine arms race and a militarization of the EU. The militarization of the EU's external borders is already taking place at the moment.

But the rearmament is also an instrument for creating a new reactionary interior cohesive force since the social cohesion is diminishing because of the rising levels of precarity. Furthermore, the causes of the financial crisis are still present and new waves of the concentration of capital destroy thousands of jobs. This goes hand in hand with an increasing racist rhetoric and practice hitting migrant workers and asylum seekers. They are the new bogeyman of a capitalism that has got into its system crisis.

The creation of a core Europe around its euro zone would mean that some member states will be shaken off whereas the centre is getting increasingly under the domination of German capital (possibly through the creation of a European Monetary Fund). The resulting upheavals are not foreseeable.

4. We say NO to this policy of our governments and to the caricature of European unity they have created and are still creating.

We organize the resistance with the aim to create a European opposition to dominant policies – this could result in a constituent process outside the EU framework.

Our Europe should be bound to a common eco-socialist, democratic and anti-imperialist perspective guaranteeing equal rights for all as well as the peoples' right to self-determination. Therefore we make a new attempt to coordinate our activities – e.g. against all kinds of free-trade agreements (within the EU and between the EU and its "partners"), against the debt regime, against racism and islamophobia, for equal rights for all, against the logic of competition among people and workers – for the adjustment of social standards like wages and working-hours, against nuclear energy and the use of fossil fuels – for democratic plans and funds to organize the transition, for the socialization of the banking system and for the public control of financial flows.

All these are problems that cannot be solved on a national level. We take part in the elaboration and popularization of an European and international Manifesto defending such demands. We participate in European discussion forums about a left alternative to the EU (like Plan B, Alter Summit, etc.) putting emphasis:

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– on the building of European networks like those between ‘rebel towns’ or those defending public services, labour rights, women's rights, the rights of migrants...

– on workers/citizen/social control and its possible dynamics, as e.g. contained in the citizens' audit on the debt;

– on the accountability and control of companies and transnationals (e.g. in case of lay-offs, of capital flight, conversion of production and so on).

We create a place for our mutual internal information and discussion, with specific working groups and lists. (Angela Klein ISO Germany, Catherine Samary NPA France, Daniel Albarracin, Anticapitalistas EE, 14 June 2017)

*PS:*

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