

ATHEN'S STATEMENT

ANOTHER EUROPE WITH PUBLIC SERVICES FOR ALL

BECAUSE common public goods and services are important social elements, in that they constitute an essential tool in social and territorial solidarity, in the redistribution of social wealth, in sustainable society and in the exercise of citizen's rights

BECAUSE with the affirmation of the neo-liberalistic social model in the '80's of the "single market construction", public goods and services have been undergoing an offensive aiming at transforming them into economic assets and goods that must obey market rules

BECAUSE public services have long since been under attack at all levels:

a) on a global level, by international trade agreements such as the Gats (General Agreement on Trade in Services), endorsed by member States of the WTO (World Trade Organization). The agreement provides for the liberalization of services, opening up to private investment and "competition" of 160 sectors, among which water, energy, transportation, education and health. Other similar bi- and multilateral agreements between states like the EPAs (Economic partnership agreements) are strengthening this logic.

b) at European level, because of different policies, which are leading directly or indirectly to deregulation and that are promoted by the European treaties, the Lisbon strategy, most of the judgements made by the ECJ (The European Court of Justice) and various sectoral and crosssectoral directives, among which the Bolkestein directive project is the latest striking example.

c) at national level, through the political *welfare reforms* and "modernisation" carried out by various Governments together with economic choices that favor mostly profit driven enterprises even in the most competitive countries and branches, the promotion of public/private partnerships (PPPS), which threaten public ownership infrastructure and core public services, and further tax cuts that are generating erosion of the financial basement of public services.

d) at regional and local level by not providing the necessary means to allow citizens and local authorities to decide on their own how public services should be organized.

BECAUSE, it is the task of primary importance to develop a new "European Social Model", in which public services constitute an essential part, in order to fight the roots of global economic and social inequality that are threatening the very survival of the majority of the planet's inhabitants.

For that purpose, the current neoliberalistic policies of the EU must be rejected.

UPON THESE PREMISES

We, men and women members of associations, trade union organizations, social and political movements, institutional representatives, local authorities have committed ourselves to the struggle against the World Trade Organization policies and the GATS, to the withdrawal of the Bolkestein Directive project on services and to the directives that go further into liberalizing and privatizing public services.

Knowing that, thanks to the counter power we have been able to exercise, the Bolkestein project has been modified in some of its unacceptable essential aspects. Nevertheless, we consider that most of the "compromise" is still pro-liberalization in a field of services that is

crucial to the idea of 'common goods'. For this reason, we will continue to challenge the neoliberal agenda in Europe.

AWARE of the need to bring together our experiences, our knowledge and our struggles to oppose the attacks brought forward by the political and financial elite and business interest, *AWARE* of the need to amplify social mobilization and to develop proposals to counter neoliberalistic policies, *AWARE* of the need to relaunch a new public space from the bottom for social rights and labour which are founding on unrenouncable elements in a social Europe and for peace, *AWARE* of the need to make public services a privileged tool for democracy and social and economic policies,

WE HAVE DECIDED, at this IV European Social Forum of Athens, to confirm our commitment against the principle of neo-liberalism and therefore to open a new step of struggle with the aim of deciding - at both European and national level - the cultural, social and political-institutional conditions for the definition and the regulation of services designated to guarantee universal access to fundamental rights, entrusted by public authority and administration, and free of whatever obligation of total or partial liberalization and privatization.

To this aim, we therefore decide:

- a) to constitute ourselves into a **European network for public services**;
- b) to launch a campaign for public services in Europe, with objectives and practices commonly decided, set out from a number of unrenouncable characteristics, such as: universality, accessibility, equal access, continuity and quality of service, solidarity, democratic control, fiscal justice in financing public services, social participation, quality employment/labor rights.

Therefore, *WE COMMIT OURSELVES* :

- to support the creation and development in each country a *National Coordination for public services*, open to all organizations and social movements, to political and trade union organizations that share the goals of the present statement, for the defence and for the promotion of public services at local, national and European level.
- to create a *European Network for public services* based on European convergences of the national coordinations and the different existing networks, which will be a tool to promote and develop initiatives, mobilizations and campaigns, taking into account the various actions driven on European scale by trade unions (as for example the EPSU campaign presented at the ESF in Athens.);
- to develop alternative policies and strategies for public services
- to build links through direct support, twinning and seminars/workshops at any european and international scales.

WE PROPOSE right away:

- a) To pursue our European mobilisation against the Bolkestein directive project.
- b) To meet in GENEVA, the 27th of October, before the International Convention of Local Communities for the promotion of public services (the 28th and the 29th of October), to decide a day of European mobilisation, with national demonstrations and to work on the neo-liberal European agenda and on possible alternative policies.
- c) To call for the *first European Forum of Social Movements for public services* in 2007.

Signatures