

# One Europe for all

**The election to the European Parliament is important. The parliament makes decisions and passes laws that affect us all. The Swedish Municipal Workers' Union wishes to work for one Europe for all, with opportunities for work and support.**

The election to the European Parliament will be held on 25 May 2014. An important election. The parliament decides on issues that affect us all: about jobs, the economy and rights. The European Parliament passes laws that, for example, give employees the right to paid holiday, a safe working environment, equal treatment and protection when companies are sold. These are political decisions and they are decided by the political composition of the parliament. What the composition of the parliament will look like and what priorities it will have for the next five years will be decided in the election on 25 May.

**It is therefore important that as many people as possible vote. It's not about the others. It's about you. About us.**

Europe and the EU have had some difficult years. The financial and economic crises of the last five years have been a difficult test for both citizens and European collaboration. More than 26 million people in Europe are out of work. Almost 6 million young people do not have jobs. 125 million people are in the risk zone for living in poverty or social exclusion. Growth is conspicuous by its absence.

We do not wish the European Parliament to have the right to decide on issues that concern each individual country's welfare services. But it should still be an express ambition that the countries of Europe should offer their citizens good living conditions. The basis for a good society is a fair and effective tax system. Otherwise the gulfs become wider and vulnerable groups become ever more isolated. Basic services such as water, sewage and waste processing and electricity supplies must be available to all. If both men and women are to be able to work, there must be a social infrastructure with tax-financed care for the elderly and children.

The difficult times have opened the door to dark forces. We see xenophobic forces growing ever stronger throughout Europe. We see that the crisis policy focus on tightening and squeezing has undermined the influence of the parties in the labour market. Basic union freedoms and rights have been systematically restricted.

The EU and its member countries have used the financial crisis as excuse for ignoring previous international agreements and ratified working standards. Standards that have been fundamental in building the EU's European social model, a model that is now in the process of dissolving.

This is an unacceptable and frightening development. It results in people turning against each other, and is one of the reasons for the rapid increase we see in racist and populist political forces.

This is the greatest challenge facing the European Parliament and its representatives: presenting a new vision for European collaboration, supporting and delivering fair solutions to the problems and challenges that are facing us all. For the Swedish Municipal Workers' Union, the election of the European Parliament is about working against racism and xenophobia and working for more jobs and more hours worked, for welfare services that facilitate women's access to paid employment and for stronger rights for all employees in the EU. Equality of opportunity and diversity are important cornerstones of a Europe for all.

## Four points for a Europe for all

Here is the Swedish Municipal Workers' Union's summary of its most important political aims before the European Parliamentary election:

### 1. More jobs

Reducing unemployment will be decisive for how Europe gets out of the crisis. 26 million unemployed in Europe, six million of them young people, is a dismal and dangerous development. If there are no jobs, it is difficult for the unions to fight for good pay and working conditions. More jobs and welfare services that give women a greater opportunity to work must therefore be the most important goals of economic policy, at both national and European level.

To stabilise their economies and to create secure new jobs, the member companies should create better regulation of the financial markets and coordinate policy that stimulates demand, such as with free trade agreement with the USA. The EU's own budget should also be redistributed into more measures that promote sustainable growth and jobs. This must however be done with a view to work as human support, not as a commodity.

#### Requirements

- The EU's long-term budget for 2016 should include **more subsidy for job-promoting measures**
- **Make it easy for workers** to move between countries
- **Introduce a common EU 90 day guarantee** for young people with specific financial support for certain regions
- European companies should have **access to world markets on good and fair terms**. We believe that a free trade agreement with the USA could create more growth and more jobs.

### 2. Free and orderly mobility

People have always moved around to find the best possible place for themselves and their families. Walloons came to Sweden in the 18th century; impoverished Swedes moved to America at the end of the 19th century. This is much easier now than it

was then. So even more people are moving. We at the Swedish Municipal Workers' Union think this is positive. Those who come to Sweden include both people who are fleeing from war and poverty and people who have professional skills that the Swedish labour market needs. Human mobility is here to stay. The Swedish Municipal Workers' Union believes that mobility is a human right that should be promoted, not opposed. We wish the free mobility of people in the European labour market to have clear rules.

The rules and agreements that apply in each country should apply to everyone who works there, whatever country he or she is a citizen of. For example, young Swedish people who go to work in Norway should follow Norwegian labour market legislation and have a wage corresponding to that of Norwegian citizens. In the same way, Polish workers who come to work in Sweden should follow Swedish labour market legislation and have the same wage as Swedish citizens

For the market to work effectively and not lead to social dumping, abuse and unfair competition, the EU must set up binding guarantees to protect employees in terms of working environment, information and consultation and equal treatment.

The current situation in the EU's internal markets makes it impossible for union organisations to fulfil their main tasks of regulating the price of work and protecting workers' basic rights. But this also leads to serious companies being excluded or forced into unfair competition.

The Swedish Municipal Workers' Union does not accept a system that sorts people by origin or nationality. The EU's institutions and member countries must stop undermining union freedoms and rights. The fight for Swedish collective agreements on the Swedish labour market is about ensuring that all workers are treated equally, about everyone's right to equal pay and working conditions, regardless of nationality. The labour market should be clear and orderly.

### **Requirements**

- **A social protocol should be introduced into the EU treaty** stating that there must be a balance between basic union freedoms and rights and the rights and economic freedoms of the internal market. In the event of conflict, the union freedoms and rights should take precedence.
- **Protection of the right to organise and negotiate**, including the right to take strike action, should be reinforced within the EU.
- **Swedish collective agreements should apply to the Swedish labour market.** All employees who work in Sweden, whatever their nationality, should be treated equally.

### **3. Equality of opportunity**

Europe does not have equality of opportunity. Far too few women have a job and can provide for themselves. Women also often have worse working conditions. In the EU, the level of female employment is only 62 per cent - 13 percentage points lower than the male employment rate. Strengthening the position of women in the labour market would contribute to a stronger economy. This applies to Europe as a whole as much as it does to Sweden. This is always a key issue for the Swedish Municipal Workers' Union, and it is even more important in the European election, because the starting point in Europe generally is even worse.

### **Requirements**

- **More people should work more.** The female employment rate in the EU (62 per cent) should be the same as the male employment rate (75 per cent).
- **Strong welfare for more hours worked.** A social infrastructure with well-developed care for the elderly and children improves women's position in the labour market. Such tax-financed services should therefore be extended and should as far as possible be exempted from other saving requirements when reorganising public finances.

### **4. Diversity**

Societies with high unemployment are dangerous and a well-known breeding ground for xenophobia. This concerns the Swedish Municipal Workers' Union more than anything else in European politics. We wish to see politicians taking increasing xenophobia more seriously and taking powerful action.

- **Combat discrimination.** The EU's anti-discrimination legislation should be stronger, so that discrimination on the grounds of gender, origins, religion, age, disability and sexual orientation can be fought vigorously throughout Europe and in all areas.
- **A clearer EU.** The EU must act clearly when member countries abandon the principles of democracy, freedom of speech and the security of law or restrict citizens' rights.