



Bloco de Esquerda's Manifesto

# A FORÇA QUE FAZ A DIFERENÇA

(THE FORCE THAT MAKES THE  
DIFFERENCE)

Europe is living in a time of walls. Decades of uneven integration and of the broad liberal consensus, which has since been leading the European Union (EU), have transformed the political map. The collapse of social democracy is the result of its withdrawal from the struggle for labour rights, the struggle against poverty and inequalities, and for the welfare state. The adhesion of the Socialist Parties to the programme of economic liberalism, which became known as the Third Way, was, in fact, the way to the abyss.

From the rubble of ultraliberal Europe are now shadows of the past in variants somewhat modern. The rise of the far-right results from the combination of a prolonged social crisis, the absence of responses across the arc of the European consensus, and the authoritarianism of its elites, who did not hesitate to subjugate states and democracies in pursuit of the liberal extremist agenda. The rise of the extreme right is only explained by the way hate speech, xenophobia, racism, sexism and homophobia have gained strength in the political centre itself.

The leaders of the European right always stated that the permanent social crisis was the new normal, the only possible policy, and that the only thing remaining was for the people to conform and become used to it. Today they add to it the blackmail of a Europe of darkness governed by the far-right. In the absence of any mobilising project, the European elite simply stirs up the monsters it has created.

The Brexit referendum and, above all, the European reaction, are signs of the breakdown of an aimless project. In view of the growing discrediting of the European project and its institutions, the Union and its representatives have multiplied their threats. The respect for the will of the British people has been replaced by a punitive negotiation, in which dissuasion of third parties prevails over the construction of a new framework of international relations with the United Kingdom and the protection of rights in that transition.

It is in this gridlocked Europe that the pathways are being opened. Faced with the failure of European policies and the withdrawal of those who sacrifice everything to defend an unequal Union, alternatives to the Left are being pushed forward, reaching a new dimension in many countries. The paths are different because the contexts and social struggles are also different, but it is from these forces, from this plurality and from those alternatives that a political pole is being built up, which in turn can hegemonize the alternative to the European liberal consensus. "Now, the People" will be the name of that alternative, made of a commitment to work, to the welfare state, to democracy and solidarity, in close relation with political and social movements.

The European elections of 2019 take place at a moment of balance of the last political cycle in Portugal. The victories and limitations of the political solution that removed the right from power help to realise the difficulty of the paths that are put to democracy in the era of European authoritarianism.

The unprecedented agreement with a minority government of the Socialist Party reversed some measures of the troika. The cuts in wages and pensions ended, the national minimum wage grew 5% a year, social aid was restored, precarious workers were integrated into the state and privatisations were halted. Almost four years ago, the prognostics of the political right could not have been more dramatic. Unemployment was going to shoot, the economy would sink, exports would collapse, and everything would culminate in a new bailout, bankruptcy and failure of the political solution. Four years later, the economic and social climate does not allow any state of euphoria, but it is a thousand miles away from the tragedy where the Passos Coelho government dragged the country to. Today the only visible collapse is that of a fragmented right, without policy or a discourse.

But the limits of this policy within the framework of European obligations are also clear. Public service expenditure remains insufficient, labour legislation continues to promote precariousness and wage compression, public investment levels are historically low. We must go further. We must do better. The figures show that the main factor of balance of the public accounts was economic growth and that the main factor of economic growth was the recovery of income of the Portuguese families. As Bloco de Esquerda has always advocated, promoting work, rights and public services is the only way out of the crisis. These years proved that this is possible.

We must do more and better, precisely because we still have not left the crisis. With the fragile economic recovery under permanent threat, the idea that the country can afford to pay a debt that is unpayable for decades is absolutely unrealistic. That is why, after breaking with the governing of the right, doing more is doing differently. The left that Bloco de Esquerda represents rejects the debt trap and the blackmailing of European institutions and a future of permanent subordination and deferred development.

## 1. AN AIMLESS UNION

**The EU is adrift. Tied to treaties that impose attacks on the welfare state and wages, the Union is unable to take off into an economy that creates decent jobs, fights the poverty of 25% of its population and responds to the challenge of climate change. The bankruptcy of European politics has its sharpest exponents in the collapse of social democracy and the emergence of extreme right-wing political varieties that attack democracy, given the total passivity of the same European directory that chases countries by tenths of their deficit. Paralysed in the face of the monsters to which they gave life, the European institutions cover themselves with shame by provoking a humanitarian crisis at their doors, making theirs the discourse and politics of xenophobia. However, more and more countries see a pluralist left either emerging or growing, that defies the European consensus and denounces the false alternative of the far-right.**

Over the last few years, there have been signs of disintegration in the EU. Growth is mediocre, but it persists in not affecting wages, aggravating inequalities and multiplying the risks of financial instability. Over the past three years, Portugal has grown slightly above the European average (7% accumulated), but real wages have practically stagnated (+ 0.5%). Since 2008 they have decreased by 0.4%. The forced march towards absurd levels of budget surpluses (2.7% of GDP in 2018, 3% forecast for 2019) ties the country to uneven growth and deferred development.

Portugal has distinguished itself by its zeal in meeting its budgetary targets, but its focus will prove to be ineffective in the context of an absolutely unpayable debt. The pre-announcements by the ECB that it will slow down and abandon its ultra-expansionist policy particularly threaten the most fragile and over-indebted economies, such as the case of the Portuguese economy. And because they threaten economies, they also threaten public accounts.

This performance is being achieved by sacrificing two of the most important public policies. Public investment remains at historical lows (1.5%, 1.8% and 2% between 2016 and 2018) and public services expenditure has not increased enough to reach even the nominal values prior to when the right was ruling (more 1300 million in Health, more 500 million in Education). The reduction in the weight of public services has not stopped. Between 2013 and 2019, public expenditure as a percentage of GDP declines by an average of one percentage point per year, though slower in 2018 and 2019. A fiscal stance that is based, albeit partially, on such assumptions, is very limited.

Moreover, the very plausible scenario of a new financial crisis, for which the European growth model is having a decisive contribution, can at any moment break down the tenuous economic recovery and the fragile rebalancing of accounts. It is in this context that the self-congratulatory declarations of European officials are as shocking as they are unreasonable. In the absence of a specific regulation of the financial system and without a relevant communitarian budget, the spectre of a new crisis threatens the survival of a Union that only offers endless austerity as a form of social and political engineering.

### **Ongoing interference is the new communitarian method**

The European Union is not a Union of equals. It is the European leaders themselves who recognise it when they say that these processes are based on an arbitrary case-by-case analysis. The threat of sanctions against Portugal and Spain was a striking example of the Union's democratic bankruptcy and of a double arbitrariness: the persecution of some Member States and the acquittal of others in worse circumstances, the punishment of peripheral deficits and the acquittal of surpluses from the centre. Germany is in continuous and increasing violation of the current surplus limit since 2011, the Netherlands and Denmark since 2010, and nothing happens. The only rule that counts is the law of the fittest.

In fundamental decisions, interference increases in direct proportion to the vulnerability of States. Over the last few years, "conditionality" has spread to virtually all European policies. The jargon conceals a very clear reality: the imposition of policies in areas where states have full sovereignty, including in the light of the treaties themselves. Privatisations, the precariousness of labour relations, divestment in public services and structural reforms have become a hidden agenda that all national governments are pressured to accept, even if in contradiction with electoral mandates. The most brutal version was that of bailouts, but the principle extends to more and more domains. Conditionality is the never-voted program that European institutions want to impose on countries whose governments cannot or do not want to oppose.

So it happened in the financial system. The same European institutions that proved incapable of imposing strong solutions in the regulation of the financial system in the decade following the crisis did not hesitate to impose ruinous solutions to the problems of the Portuguese financial system. In the case of BANIF, the European institutions not only prevented the most reasonable solution for integration into Caixa Geral de Depósitos (Caixa), but also imposed the sale of the bank and went so far as to inform the Portuguese government that they were already working with the bank they chose to sell to, before the government made any decision. For the European Commission, this abuse of power in favour of a private institution is “Competition Law”. In the case of Novo Banco, the outcome was no better. The European Commission blocked the mere hypothesis of nationalisation and imposed the sale to private institutions. The result was the bank’s offer with public guarantees. Taxpayers ended up with no bank but will continue to “clean it” and pay the bill, years after the government offered it.

Finally, in the recapitalisation process of Caixa, what would have been a normal recapitalisation of the public bank became a lengthy negotiation with enormous financial costs and credibility for Caixa, culminating in the imposition of a damaging solution, in which recapitalisation was only authorised through a ruinous loan and the reduction of its operations. To recapitalise the public bank, we must pay an income to financial companies. In all these cases, submission to European impositions was ruinous from a financial point of view, but also from the point of view of sovereignty, since the opportunity to impose the public control of these institutions was lost. The financial crisis and the years that followed have confirmed the urgency of Bloco de Esquerda’s proposal to ensure public control over the bank as a condition of development and democracy.

### **Authoritarianism before the nations, blocking the demands of citizenship**

When the statute of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union was clarified as an annex to the Treaty of Lisbon, it was clear that it was not a source of law and, as such, it was not binding either on the Member States or on the European institutions. Anyone who kept the illusion that the indicative value of the Charter could make any difference in concrete policies has been disillusioned. Even with backward formulations, the Charter has been largely ignored and attacks on political, social and individual rights have multiplied in the EU. No breach of fundamental rights has been prevented by the European institutions and, worse, the impositions of the European institutions are often aimed at destroying guarantees that existed in the Member States themselves, thereby aiming at the precariousness of labour relations and the privatisation of essential public services. The EU does not just refuse to protect citizens from poverty or precariousness. The EU has done everything to impose a program that attacks them.

Fiscal obsession contrasts with the neglect of regional and global commitments. This was the case with the promised push for the regulation of financial markets. A huge volume of European legislation that does not respond to the problems that led to the crisis and, even worse, which creates new instability factors. The Banking Union explicitly targets the creation of large pan-European financial conglomerates even after it has been widely acknowledged that the excessive size of financial institutions was one of the decisive factors for the financial crisis of 2008.

The blockage to the demands of citizenship is still expressed in the context of the new digital era. With the excuse of protecting copyright – which effectively must be protected – the European Commission has opened the doors through Article 13 to censorship on the internet. By passing on the power of defining what can be published on the online platforms for the platforms themselves, the European Union not only legitimises but severely limits digital freedoms.

### **Inequality and Fiscal Theft**

Another area of inaction of the European institutions is the struggle against fiscal dumping. European institutions continue to see the race to the fund in corporate taxation as a factor of “competitiveness”. The situation creates a genuine fiscal war between Member States, where some countries take over tax revenue that should belong to those in which the economic activity is carried out. In this context, the choice of the European Commission has been clear: to impose the reduction of the taxes on profits to promote the accumulation of capital, while continuing a crusade for the reduction of wages.

This creates a paradox. The European institutions have taken separate measures (such as in relation to Apple and Amazon) and have adopted legislation (such as the digital tax) that mainly affect US companies. While these measures are positive in themselves, there is a striking contrast between combating tax evasion by companies outside Europe and the protection of tax evasion of European multinationals, which continue to benefit from the most complete lack of tax regulation in Europe. Symbolically, the Commission has had as president a man whose previous career as prime minister of Luxembourg was marked by unfair tax competition against other European economies.

The EU actively promotes tax exemption schemes such as tax havens (assumed and not assumed), golden visas, exemptions or tax benefits to capital gains, extraordinary settlements and tax amnesties. Bloco de Esquerda advocates a European strategy to combat tax evasion and crime, based on the imposition of a minimum rate of taxation on capital income and the EU declaration as an offshore-free space.

### **The humanitarian catastrophe and the hypocrisy of the EU**

The so-called refugee crisis is the crudest face of European deconstruction at the hands of its dominant policies. After a time when the arrivals to Europe amounted to about 1 million people, it is now, when we see a drastic reduction of these arrivals, that the speech of the invasion and the threat is becoming further consolidated.

The saga of Aquarius II is exemplary of the dehumanisation of life and politics in Europe. A ship which has saved thousands of lives – about 30,000 in two and a half years – and which has registered and denounced crimes against the human rights of migrants and refugees has literally been adrift, with Member States giving in to the blackmail of the far-right Italian government.

Refugees from wars and conflicts are joined by climate refugees, but the European institutions prefer to continue to foment hatred by mimicking Trump: in Hungary, in Greece, in France, in Spanish territory, in Slovenia, in Macedonia and in Bulgaria, walls are as easily erected as eyes are closed with regards to the resulting atrocities.

Migrations result from the desperation and extreme misery that drive millions of people across deserts and oceans, defying death itself. The vast majority of these immigrants remain on European soil, making an invaluable contribution to social and cultural diversity, balancing the demographic balance and ensuring the sustainability of social security systems. The great hypocrisy of the EU is that it keeps these immigrants in an illegal situation for years, feeding the networks of human trafficking and the resurgence of forms of slave labour.

In this European context, Portugal is not an oasis, but in recent years it has taken important steps to humanise immigration laws that need to be deepened along with the elimination of obsolete and discriminatory administrative practices. Bloco de Esquerda has been engaged in this civilizational fight that is urgent to deepen in Portugal and continue at the European level.

### **The environmental emergency**

The Paris Agreement and the 1.5°C report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, of which Portugal and the EU are signatories, requires a 50% cut in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 to prevent a temperature rise above 1.5 ° C by 2100.

This requirement is imperative and may not even be sufficient to prevent a wave of climate refugees. However, the treatment of this emergency in the EU has been strained and often mixed with austerity policies that limit popular compliance, such as the so-called “green tax” in France, in addition to failing the target, putting the full burden of change on consumers and not on producers. The revolt of the yellow vests in France is a revolt against a vast array of measures that attack the incomes of families, while nothing is required of the most polluting companies.

Despite the fact that it is the integrity of the continent and of the planet itself that is at stakes, the coordination of European policies, which is indispensable for the implementation of the commitments to which the EU has committed itself, is practically non-existent. The lack of regulation that allows a concerted effort by all members becomes a benefit to the offenders, that is to the less committed states.

But the lack of commitment to the energy transition is not just about inaction. The European institutions continue to fund fossil fuel investment projects, including the 90 gas, port and transport infrastructure projects that were recently considered Projects of Community Interest.

### **The return of European authoritarianism**

In the social ruin of a Europe that cultivates and encourages selfishness, authoritarian responses grow. European institutions have ignored human rights abuses by far-right governments, some of them integrated into large European party families.

As always, the extreme right takes advantage of the social crisis to suppress freedoms, never undermining the policies that generated it. In places where the extreme right is in power alone or accompanied, policies to attack labour and social rights have become even more virulent, using policies against women, children, the elderly, immigrants, ethnic minorities or the LGBT community, language minorities and cultural, just to divert attention and create scapegoats.

Bloco de Esquerda faces the far-right, rejects the hate speech and denounces its complete absence of an alternative. The extreme right is a political fraud because it is only the most violent face of the discourse and the politics of the strong against democracy. Bloco de Esquerda integrates a left that is united in defeating the far-right in the only way it can be defeated: by offering an alternative of the rights that empties it. An alternative that responds to the social crisis has all the conditions to return the far-right to its place: the saddest pages of European history. They shall not pass.

### **Another Europe is possible**

At a time when European integration has become a threat to democracy itself, the place of the internationalist left is only one: to defend, without hesitation and with all the European left, democracy and the rights that constitute it. Bloco de Esquerda does not give up, on behalf of the Euro, of its political program. Nor does it avoid the fighting that is waged in the European institutions, however difficult or uneven it may be.

We defend the democratic sovereignty of national states, where labour rights and social rights reside. That is why we will fight all attempts to further weaken these achievements, including the promises that are always delayed by failed integration. The experience of this integration has shown us that where states have abdicated their democratic sovereignty, the promises of European democratisation have invariably remained unfulfilled.

A Europe of solidarities must be built on the basis of balanced economic relations between countries and on the primacy of a system of rights that recovers the best from the democratic traditions of its welfare states. This Europe can never be born in the current Treaties of the European Union. And it can never be surrounded by walls that leave out the victims of conflicts and catastrophes in which the European powers have responsibilities of the first order. It will have to be a fully responsible Europe, facing all the other continents. In the words of the German socialist Walter Benjamin, the world is our task.



## 2. RECOVERING LAND FOR DEMOCRACY

**In the chaos of the EU, authoritarianism and arbitrariness multiply. Control mechanisms by the European institutions allow a never-voted agenda to be imposed, particularly on peripheral Member States, often in direct contradiction to the democratic decisions of their peoples. Disregarding European rules results not only from their systematic failure to comply, but also from the growing awareness that EU states are not equal to them. The same EU that has pursued the peripheral economies for decades has been watching the rights and fundamental freedoms that the right-wing governments continue to carry out for years, unperturbed and serene. The same EU that increasingly fails to meet social, environmental and humanitarian requirements turns its budget and action needles into border control and militarisation. Faced with the collapse of European rules and policies, Bloco de Esquerda proposes a new path: Employment, Environment and Welfare State.**

### **Revoke the European Fiscal Compact and the Stability and Growth Pact**

The Stability and Growth Pact (SGP) and the European Fiscal Compact have in common the imposition of budgetary policies that promote or aggravate crises, fostering unemployment and exerting permanent pressure to reduce the burden of spending on public services and social policies. The budgetary rules in the Union have nothing to do with the sustainability of public accounts, which, moreover, have not ensured it, on the contrary. They have to do with the imposition of a single option in times of economic crisis: the compression of expense.

However, in the centre of the EU, these rules are meaningless. Germany was the first country to violate the SGP, France violated it in nine of the last ten years. However, it is unthinkable that any economy in the centre of the Union faces sanctions for this reason. Or even threats, as happened with Portugal and Spain. The fiscal rules serve exclusively to impose an ideological agenda, either through pressure to comply with these norms, of direct imposition or redemptions.

In addition, the main cause of economic instability in the European Union, the existence of macroeconomic imbalances between Member States, which generate systematic surpluses of the economies of the centre, still do not deserve any relevant attention. On the contrary, the rules of the SGP and the European Fiscal Compact have accentuated those imbalances. Failures were allowed in certain countries, causing the imposition of policies on others. Bloco de Esquerda advocates the end of the SGP and the European Fiscal Compact in favour of international economic relations based on a balance of solidarity between countries.

The incorporation of the European Fiscal Compact into Community law was rejected on the proposal of Marisa Matias and other MEPs from various political groups. This was an important victory against economic insanity and should pave the way for Portugal's untying of this treaty. In this sense, Bloco de Esquerda advocates the fruition of a referendum on the European Fiscal Compact. We challenge the parties that have contributed to their rejection in the European Parliament to allow the citizen's choice and to campaign for the liberation of the country from this treaty, which constitutionalises austerity.

### **Freeing democracy from conditionality**

The principle of conditionality (the imposition of programmatic measures as a condition for access to European policies) has been the instrument through which the ultraliberal agenda is imposed on countries that do not have the strength or governments to reject it. Although this instrument has been used in a particularly violent way in the context of bailouts, the same idea has emerged with regard to virtually all European policies, from the European semester to the ECB's support, through access to Community funds.

Conditionality is a consolidated ideological programme that reproduces an ideological agenda that was at the origin of the European Union and the Euro and goes back to the Thatcher governments, the formulation of the third way and the consensus that united European and national political centres. This programme, defined by the privatisation or concession of public services and enterprises, precarious labour relations and regressive taxation, has for decades been resisted by national democracies. Conditionality has been used to overcome these resistances, determining the performance of the European institutions in function of the execution of structural reforms that materialise that program. Therefore, conditionality represents a tool of subversion of democracy.

Bloco de Esquerda rejects the principle of conditionality in European policies. Programmes involving Member States cannot depend on the submission of democratically elected bodies in each country to an ideological agenda that has never been met and often runs counter to the choices of peoples. All European policies must respect the principle of self-determination of the Member States, i.e. their right to define the most appropriate policies for their economic and social development, according to the wishes of their citizens.

### **Reorient the budget**

The Community budget is the only instrument that could allow a cohesion policy. To do this, it would need to have a relevant economic weight, redistribute income from surplus economies to deficit countries, and invest in development policies and public services. In reality, the Community budget has always fallen short of any of these objectives, but the scenario has worsened over the years with the reduction of the budget as a percentage of European GDP and its progressive reorientation towards the priorities defined by the European right, with the systematic support of the socialist parties.

Community budget policy has dramatically worsened this trend by opting for a cut in cohesion policy in favour of border control and the militarisation of Europe. Europe, unable to undertake a policy of solidarity, within and beyond its borders, turns to the priorities of the extreme right, contributing to give even more fuel to the social crisis of which it feeds.

An EU marked by systematic macroeconomic imbalances must have compensation mechanisms, be they direct transfers, solidarity financing of public services or investment for economic convergence. This emergency is now politically more difficult, largely because of the responsibility of the European institutions which, in order to hide the inequalities of the architecture of the EU and the Euro, attacked the peoples affected by the single currency, using a moralistic narrative on the threshold of racism. In the long term, the absence of such compensation mechanisms will mean that the EU is unfeasible, since no economic space can survive the accumulation of growing inequalities within it without rebalancing it.

Bloco de Esquerda therefore advocates a reinforced budget oriented towards European solidarity and green and inclusive investment for development and cohesion policies, financed in a highly redistributive way. To persist in the security and militarist turn, combined with austerity, is no longer just to insist on a Europe of winners and losers. It's just promoting the destruction of the EU.

### **Put the European Central Bank in its place**

The European Central Bank (ECB) has, on theory, a more limited mandate than that of most central banks. It has the sole responsibility of ensuring price stability, understood as the responsibility of keeping inflation below, but not distant from 2%. However, under the cover of its alleged independence and an abusive interpretation of its mandate, the ECB has been allowed to intervene on any matter relating to the economy, financial system and other public policies.

Thus, the ECB has been pressing governments to implement structural reforms, imposing bailouts and drawing up their programs, blackmailing Member States to apply specific decisions regarding the financial system. These pressures and decisions are made on a case-by-case basis, often in direct and non-public communication with national governments, which poses obvious problems of transparency, fairness and legality.

Bloco de Esquerda has always argued that the ECB's mandate should provide for full employment as a priority objective. If the ECB controls an economic policy instrument as decisive as monetary policy, it should be held accountable for the economic consequences of its decisions, which would mean withdrawing its independence status.

Bloco de Esquerda defends a negative definition of the ECB's functions by preventing it from intervening in economic policies outside its mandate and by prohibiting the use of its powers as a monetary and financial regulator to threaten or blackmail sovereign states, as has already happened. If treaties do not oblige the ECB to promote employment, at least they should not allow it to sabotage anyone who tries to do it.



## Respond to human rights, prevent future crises

Measures adopted unanimously by the Member States and endorsed by the Community institutions, such as the establishment of refugee “relocation” centres or the infamous agreement with Turkey to block flows from Syria and East Africa, show what is the so-called refugee crisis: anyone looking for Europe is denied everything, including a refugee status itself. Even family reunification and the Dublin criteria are not allowed to continue, undermining any possibility of a supportive and joint response.

As if this were not enough, it also normalises the criminalisation of NGOs trying to save migrants from death in the Mediterranean, where 17 thousand people have already lost their lives in just over five years. The practice of the European Union in the face of the immense humanitarian crisis it feeds on is an inhumanity that is on the back of its discourse full of “humanistic values” and “human rights”.

The humanist discourse is the disguise for the continued sale of arms to countries that fuel conflict and the purchase of oil in territories occupied by terrorist groups. The EU contributes actively to the financing and armaments of these organisations, while pursuing its first victims. Bloco de Esquerda has proposed and will continue to propose an embargo on the sale of arms and the purchase of oil in these territories. It also advocates the end of offshore operations in Europe, since they are the privileged instruments for financing terrorist activity.

## Green and Red: solidarity economy

The starting point for a response to climate change is the rejection of the supposed contradiction between environmental emergency and economic needs. In fact, the environmental challenge must be seen as the centre of a strategy for creating quality jobs, innovative industries and improving the quality of life.

For this, any green austerity, which adds to the containment of labour incomes the costs of the necessary energy transition, must be refused. On the contrary, this transition requires a strategy of public initiative, which includes regulation of the productive sectors, but also a complete redirection of public resources.

Bloco de Esquerda advocates the integration of a climate impact assessment (measuring contribution to greenhouse gas emissions and alternatives) in all European public policies, as well as industrial and commercial projects, whose opinion is binding. We also propose a carbon tax on sectors participating in the European emissions trading scheme and a mandatory 10-year guarantee system for all electronic products, among other measures to combat planned obsolescence.

Bloco de Esquerda also calls for the cancellation of all funding for fossil fuels – oil, gas and coal – from the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and for the creation of a European Bank for Climate Change, the main objectives of which are to create a European programme of public climate jobs, aimed at:

- 1) maintaining the current level of energy availability stable by replacing fossil fuels with renewable sources, thereby creating a European solar and wind energy industry;
- 2) promoting the transition of the transportation system to total electrification, with a project of expansion of railways and of integrated and free public transports in all the countries;
- 3) developing a process of adaptation of agriculture, livestock and forestry in the European territory, reducing the high energy and chemical inputs and consequent greenhouse gas emissions (according to the climate change scenarios for each bioregion);
- 4) ensuring territorial adaptation in cities and coastal areas regarding the increase of the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, such as heat waves, droughts, floods, sea and land storms;
- 5) supporting a European energy efficiency plan for buildings, industries and public works.

This is a global struggle. Developed countries, starting with the European, have based their economic development on a model that has had lasting consequences that are now borne by all the inhabitants of the planet. Europe only has the legitimacy to appeal to countries that have not had this responsibility to adopt more sustainable forms of development if it is available to support this development.

Bloco de Esquerda argues that Europe and the United States should share financial resources and technology to support the energy and social transition of developing countries. In addition, it is necessary to create an international reception plan for environmental and climatic refugees, victims of tragedies that we have not been able to prevent. The environmental issue must be seen as an absolute emergency. The time is now.

### **Labour rights against the jungle economy**

Labour is the poorest relative in the EU. European integration with deep gaps, which makes wages the main variable of adjustment, has excluded the right to employment from the Charter of Fundamental Rights (which in any case binds neither the Union nor the Member States) and exerts permanent pressure on national states to further undercut their labour markets. The result is clear: instead of the framework of collective bargaining and job security, which has given the post-war period the period of greatest prosperity in the history of Europe, there has been a proliferation of forms of unbridled exploitation, from informality to temporary contracts, temporary work, false independent work and outsourcing.

With a single market facilitating relocations, the EU has become a labour dumping regime. The economic and social effects are so disastrous that even the ECB (which has so often advocated deregulation) has already called for measures to increase wages, otherwise monetary policy itself will lose its effectiveness.

Europe needs a minimum labour agreement. And if there are proposals that are difficult to agree on a European scale, there are others that may be advanced, notably in the strong limitation of atypical recruitment procedures for collective bargaining as a European standard. Regarding wages, several countries are already discussing rules for limiting salaries in companies. Bloco de Esquerda will argue for the European Union to introduce this limitation.

### **Facing poverty now**

The EU today has 120 million citizens at risk of poverty (25% of its population, a very misleading number because, in fact, taking into account the calculation formula, there are many millions closer to the poverty line). In addition to the human tragedies these numbers hide, the despair generated in the population generates fertile ground for populism. Poverty is the worst enemy of democracies.

The EU, after over 30 years, has dismantled all the efforts and small achievements to combat this phenomenon, in particular the European Programs to Combat Poverty, has only outlined a poverty reduction objective in 2010 (within the framework of the Strategy Europe 2020) that no one paid attention to. The European discourse on the need for social investment, a better balance between the economy and social inclusion, has recently been summed up in the proclamation of a European Pillar for Social Rights, which is not binding on the Member States and, at the same time, is systematically sabotaged by the obligations of the European Semester and the European Fiscal Compact and the SGP.

Bloco de Esquerda will fight for the creation of an Integrated European Strategy to Combat Poverty and Inequalities, with objectives common to all Member States. At the same time, Bloco de Esquerda will defend the adoption of a Community Directive on minimum income schemes in the European Union, one of the central actions of that strategy.

## Democracy before multinationals

In recent years, EU trade policy has been marked by the negotiation and conclusion in several cases of Free Trade Agreements, of which TTIP, TiSA, CETA and JEFTA are perhaps the best-known acronyms. These are agreements that more than simply normalise customs tariffs aim at normalising several other regulatory barriers.

However, by examining these agreements or their preparatory work, it is easy to see that this regulatory normalisation takes place at the lowest common denominator, jeopardising important achievements of consumer rights. These agreements place commercial interests above values such as the right to a healthy life or the protection of the environment.

As Joseph Stiglitz put it, we are dealing with a truly managed trade that serves only the particular interests that dominate Western policies. The ultimate example of this overlapping of commercial interests to national interests is the inclusion of ISDS ("State-Investor Dispute Settlement") clauses, which allow investors to appeal to an arbitral court to sue a state for sovereign decisions. In practice, large corporations and multinationals can condition democratically elected parliaments or overlap with judicial tribunals.

This whole device was prepared on the backs of citizens in secret negotiations with documents that even democratically elected deputies could not access, thus penalising twice the interest of citizens who, unlike corporate interests and economic lobbies, did not follow this process.

We were on the streets beside the great wave of citizen protest. We have claimed access to documents. We fought for transparency. We have voted against the agreements in the name of defending the public interest. It is on the side of the citizens and not the multinational interests, in defence of the planet and in the fight against climate change that we will continue to be before this European commercial policy.

## Equals for real

The EU claims the values of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, respect for the rule of law and human rights and calls for societies characterised by pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men. This is the content of Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union. Article 3 states that the European Union is combating social exclusion and discrimination and promoting social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of children and the elderly.

However, reality shows us a European Union that is increasingly distant from these values and the fulfilment of these goals. Equality between women and men is far from being achieved and there are also setbacks in some Member States resulting from the passiveness of the EU and from the economic policies it lays down.

The EU cannot even legislate on an instrument as fundamental to equality as maternity, paternity and parenthood leaves. Year after year, mandate after mandate, equality falls behind, because in 2019 solutions are still under discussion which, when presented in 2008, were already retrograde. And many other central themes for the promotion of gender equality are not even addressed. The European institutions themselves do not meet equality criteria, especially regarding equal representation, and this discrepancy is all the greater the closer we get to executive or leadership positions.

The wage gap between men and women is still higher than 16% on the European average. This difference stands out starkly when it comes to retirement. Housekeeping, childcare, the elderly, or dependents with special needs continue to be primarily the responsibility of women. According to Eurostat's 2017 data, on average in Europe, 79% of women perform household chores daily while only 39% of men do it. Portugal is one of the Member States with the greatest gender inequality in the division of household tasks.

Policies for the effective promotion of gender equality at sectoral level are urgently needed, as demonstrated by the recently adopted report by Marisa Matias and Ernest Urtasun on the fight against tax inequality in the EU. It was the first report to be presented, discussed and approved in the European Parliament, with a gender approach to a sectoral policy.

Violence against women and domestic violence continue to manifest as one of the greatest scourges of societies and one of the most brutal manifestations of gender inequality and the oppression of women. At least one in three women over the age of 15 in Europe has been the victim of one or more acts of physical violence. One in 20 women will have been raped as of the age of 15. Almost half (47%) of women between the ages of 18 and 74 who were victims of physical or sexual violence in Europe never filed a report. Femicide manifests itself as the most extreme form of violence against women; every year thousands of women die in Europe at the hands of husbands, partners, boyfriends or former partners. Thousands of orphaned children and lives destroyed.

Eradicating violence against women and domestic violence must be a priority that gets off the ground and reaches the concrete lives of people. It is not acceptable for EU Member States, including Portugal, to continue to fail to comply with the Istanbul Convention in their domestic legislation. The public policies to combat this scourge must be harmonised and endowed with the financing that allows its effective realisation.

There is much more to be done in terms of gender equality. But equality imposes itself beyond the gender dichotomy. Respect for sexual orientation and gender identity is not a reality in all Member States and progress in deepening the rights of LGBTI people has been slow and insufficient. Equal opportunities, of constituting a family, of having access to marriage must be effective in all Member States, as well as the establishment of gender self-determination for Transgender people. The protection of intersex people and non-binary people should also be a priority in a Europe that asserts itself as inclusive, free and equal.

People with disabilities also continue to be discriminated against in the exercise of their most basic rights, while having no unequivocal recognition of their right to independent living. The EU makes programmatic statements for Independent Living and reinforces community-based services but continues to allow the use of structural funds in institutionalisation, disregarding the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

People with disabilities continue to be disrespected at the European and national level with unequal access to education, vocational training and employment; difficulty in locomotion due to architectural barriers; inappropriate and inadequate public transport; we continue to see the perpetuation of medical rehabilitation and institutionalisation policies that must be stopped and it is necessary to ensure that the power of decision of Independent Living is in the hands of people with disabilities.

An essential aspect to be pointed out refers to the constraints on access to information and communication that affect in a particularly dramatic way the lives of deaf people for whom it is necessary to generalise the use of the Portuguese Sign Language as well as its unequivocal recognition. In this regard, it is also important to ensure greater visibility and availability of the sign languages of the various countries in the European Parliament.

Our programme for disability is very clear and consists of creating the conditions for the realisation of the rights registered in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

### **Quality of life for the elderly**

Retired and elder citizens constitute a significant part of the poor in Portugal. There is an urgent need to reactivate programs aimed at combating poverty, but it is equally important to accept that quality of life cannot disappear simply because people enter a different phase of life, both being retired and older. One and the other cannot be seen as a burden and, as such, marginalised. Those who are retired and the elderly are at the centre of our communities. Their defence is both a symptom and a factor of social cohesion.

The greatest difficulty in addressing this problem is that it is not a uniform reality because social and professional diversity is very large. In housing, in the SNS (National Health Service), in mobility, in independent living arrangements, the welfare state must be rebuilt so that social support can meet the plurality of current and future needs. States must invest in adequate training to perform functions in this sector.

It is in this context that the network of informal caretakers is inserted as the network of continuing care units. Home-based care for the elderly and the bedridden is a valid and worthy alternative to institutionalisation, ensuring care in an advanced and complex phase of life. Aging cannot be a massacre and cannot be lived in suffering. Against this fatalism, Bloco de Esquerda supports the enrichment of citizenship: a new generation of public services for a population that will continue to grow.

## Common Agricultural Policy

The EU's agricultural policy has promoted the destruction of small-scale agriculture and contributed in large measure to a model of overexploitation, extractive, of exportations and mass production at any price. From the beginning of the CAP, in the late 1950s, until today, millions of agricultural and forestry farms have disappeared and employment has fallen dramatically in this sector, across Europe. Technological progress does not justify this whole transformation.

The CAP favoured larger landowners by making support dependent on the number of hectares of land held in a way that was unrelated to production, employment, the multifunctionality of agriculture and its relationship with the territories, especially in southern Europe. intensive monoculture systems, with a focus on the artificialisation of the means of production, which created a great dependence on the agrochemical industry, which was brutally favoured by the CAP. Suppliers of inputs (fertilisers, pesticides, seeds, etc.) were more successful than the farmers themselves. This process had enormous environmental and socio-economic costs.

The allocation of support is concentrated: 32% of the total CAP budget is shared by 1.5% of the beneficiaries. According to a 2017 study carried out by a French university covering not only France, but also Germany and the United Kingdom, those farms with less environmental impact received less CAP support.

This model is not suitable for the future. The CAP should focus on reconciling agricultural and forestry production with environmental preservation, taking into account the diversity of territories, food sovereignty and an economy with a human scale, the right to health and social justice. It is urgent to start a democratic process that allows the transformation of current production systems through agroecology, replacing industrial products with ecological processes, ensuring greater preservation of biodiversity and water resources. This implies a paradigm change in the European agricultural policy, which has placed producers at the service of the agrochemical and biotechnology industry, the supplier of factors of production, and of the large retail chains, which present themselves as the only possible destination for their production, which translates into precariousness and instability.

Europe cannot continue on the path to free trade agreements and can no longer substitute public policies for the promotion of private agricultural insurance schemes. Bloco de Esquerda continues to strive for the CAP to achieve the common good objectives and to be a coherent and very present instrument in the fight against climate change.

## Scientific Research

The European Commission's approach to the question of Research and Science has been narrow and economic. It is invested only in the face of certainties of almost immediate and profitable return. This is all the more evident as the funding of research programs is increasingly being targeted directly to industry. For this reason, the European Commission has for several years sought an aggravated cut in funding for "basic science", which, from the outset, empties the social sciences and, in the medium term, does not offer the instruments for the necessary robustness of the National Scientific and Technological System (SCTN).

It is essential for any society to know itself. Such society can only do so with a serious and autonomous investment in the production and dissemination of Knowledge. To date, the proposals put forward and defended by Bloco de Esquerda have made it possible to correct some of the proposals of the European Commission, as well as to contribute to greater social and gender equality. We have embarked on an important path to combat precariousness that still prevails in scientific careers, which requires the effective application of what is enshrined in the European Charter for Researchers. A fairer distribution of funding is sought in order to include various social actors and not just large industry. This is a topic that needs constant attention, so that the European Commission's attempts will not become a reality in a future framework program.



## Culture

Cultural policies are an instrument for the production and transmission of knowledge. Bloco de Esquerda refutes a Manichean view of cultural policies, which combines the profitability of heritage with nationalist propaganda and the reduction of the past to a single history and a single culture. The critical view of the past is the centre of the development of future literacies and the main tool for their promotion are public services.

Since Portugal's accession to the EU, European policies for culture have functioned in a non-coherent way, presenting positively opportunities for modernization in some public services of culture and some internationalisation of scientific and artistic practices. However, the Creativity paradigm, introduced by the European Commission Presidency of Durão Barroso, has subjected all sectoral policies to a budgetary as well as a theoretical retreat, with the nuclear activities of cultural policies – heritage, archaeology, performing arts, literature and cinema – being pushed into a promotional role of entrepreneurship, namely tourism.

Policy for the territory is the key element in understanding the impact of European policies on Culture, in the current cycle, as well as the alternative choices that the left should promote. Examples abound: the withdrawal of support for film production and substitution by mechanisms of fiscal and financial incentives for multinational producers; the celebration of public-private partnerships – with the delivery of classified cultural heritage to hotel companies in the Revive Programme –, underpinned by financial guarantees from European funds. Simultaneously, the process of municipalisation promoted by the Government aims to dilute the specialised competencies of national bodies in the CCDRs (Commission for Regional Coordination and Development), breaking any hypothesis of having cultural policies common to the entire country.

The EU can no longer serve as a vehicle for the regression of cultural policies. For this reason, Bloco de Esquerda advocates a structural change in the application of European policies, focusing on the public re-functionalisation of heritage, museums and monuments; in the reconstruction of public services that guarantee plurality of cultural offer in the territory; in mediation for literacies and on internationalisation inside and outside Europe.

## Real rights in the digital world

Digital rights are already recognised by the UN as human rights, but in legislative terms, and in a digital era, this is far from having an effective result. The legislative response has always been reactive or defensive. There are grey areas and the immensity of doors to open to new realities have not aroused the interest of the legislator to create at least a minimal set of ethical standards, giving way to the emergence of data manipulation schemes and wills such as Cambridge Analytica, or the proliferation of fake news through networks and social platforms.

Nonetheless, to date, legislators' concerns about digital rights have been dominated only by the market perspective and the economic interests involved. On the contrary, the guarantee of digital rights as human rights or the effective protection of personal data has been actively challenged. The cybersecurity legislation itself, which should aim at a safer cyberspace for all, has a market approach.

In certain cases, conflicts between digital rights and other rights are created but only, once again, to obtain advantages for the great economic interests and not for the true rights' holders, as it is the case of the recent controversy around article 13, among others, of the directive on copyright in the digital market. In this debate, we stand on the side of defending digital rights and against the introduction of censorship in this area of freedom, not in opposition to copyright. In fact, a true and just defence of copyright, which we also defend and respect, is not protected by these articles, which are intended solely to protect and benefit the great publishing industry. This is an example where legislation represents a fundamental loss to both the rights it seeks to regulate and claims to protect. We will continue to fight for the defence of the neutrality of the internet, for an internet as a space of freedom and to which all can access equally.



Digital disinformation is also a threat to democracy itself because it is based on the promotion of hatred, lies and manipulation, seeking to intoxicate the public debate. The fight against disinformation implies policies to promote digital literacy in educational policies, as well as measures to support the press, namely through the Google Tax. But it also implies a political fight that must be taken by all the parties that are running in these elections.

### **Revolving doors, ethics and transparency**

In an age of increasing discrediting of citizens in public and democratic institutions, the European Union and its institutions must be ethically sound, transparent and ethical. Conflicts of interest, the use of public funds for personal campaigns, circulation between senior international posts, promiscuity with lobbies, the functioning of institutions at the service of financial interests and not citizens cannot continue to be the scene of evident conflicts of interest. Cases such as that of former Commissioner Georgieva who prepared her candidacy for the UN during the exercise of her duties at the European Commission by former President of the European Commission Durão Barroso, who after 18 months was officially hired by Goldman Sachs, or from Commissioner Cañete from the oil lobby to the climate and energy portfolio, are good examples of what needs to be avoided, how much there is to do in terms of transparency and ethics. But they are also examples of how revolving doors work because rooms are contiguous, because institutions function to serve the financial interests and lobbying of large corporations. The revelations of Monsanto Papers show just how Bayer Monsanto manipulated and influenced glyphosate licensing decisions; and the role of Goldman Sachs during the last financial crisis and how much it has profited from European decisions is well known.

It would not be enough for the EU to be serious, it also has to look serious. And at the present, it is neither. Bloco de Esquerda advocates a timeless and complete record of absolute incompatibilities, as well as lists of the various studies that underpin the decisions, documentation of their origins, and exhaustive and public records of all contacts with lobbies, as a guarantee that the EU will be at the service of its citizens.

### **Defend countries**

Bloco de Esquerda rejects the discourses that undermine the role of national democratic institutions. National States were the space in which labour rights, the welfare state, freedom and political rights were established. What the politics of today shows us is that the struggles of the left can only be won when there is strength and movement and where there is democracy. National democracies must regain areas of sovereignty confiscated by an EU of very low democratic intensity and governed by a technocracy that despises them. The left, on the contrary, relies on democracy and people's ability to choose their way. The societies with the highest quality of life in the world have been built around a demanding democracy in which social and labour rights play a constituent role. Bloco de Esquerda does not accept less than that. We reject the crisis as a new normal and claim the right to security and happiness.

### **Portugal: dismantle the debt trap**

Economic growth and job creation in recent years, coupled with the ECB's quantitative easing policy, led to a reduction of 10 percentage points in the Portuguese debt ratio from 129.2 to 119.2%. This process confirmed Bloco de Esquerda's assertions, both when it argued that a growth policy was needed to respond to over-indebtedness, or when it demanded that the European institutions act against speculation.

However, the fact that the ECB's extraordinary measures coincide with heavily restrictive fiscal policies not only conditions their impact on growth, but also favours unequal growth and the formation of bubbles in financial markets. In this context, the warnings being made about the interruption of the ECB's extraordinary measures and a rise in benchmark interest rates are a growing threat to this fragile economic recovery and to the financing conditions of the Portuguese economy.

In fact, the Portuguese debt remains absolutely unpayable. This has been obscured by the asset purchase policy, although it will become increasingly evident when such support is withdrawn. Thus, debt restructuring remains unremitting. By the end of 2018, 14 countries were in breach of the 60% public debt limit. Some of these countries do not need debt restructurings, but a multilateral solution for the debts of all over-indebted economies would benefit the entire European economy. The bloc argues that Portugal should contribute to this solution, which is the most desirable and beneficial stance for a different policy at the service of the people. Unfortunately, the Socialist Party does not seem to agree, which would be the most realistic scenario to solve the problem of inequality in Europe and allow investment in Portugal.

The case of Greece shows that the inflexibility of the European institutions in the restructuring of debts to institutional creditors goes so far as to break down written agreements. The third memorandum signed with Greece promised a debt restructuring if the Greek government complied with the measures imposed. The Greek government obeyed, but the European institutions tore their commitment.

The Greek lesson is simple: anyone who destroys a country in return for European support will only be able to destroy the country. Anyone wishing to defend employment, the welfare state, economic development and democracy itself cannot accept debt blackmail and must therefore adamantly defend the rights that shape democracy. If the country is placed before an ultimatum by European institutions to impose new programs to destroy our economy and the rights of those who live and work here, Bloco de Esquerda will assume the defence of democracy against blackmail, including full mobilisation of the powers of democratic sovereignty and the untying of Monetary Union. Anyone who rejects this hypothesis is assuming that whatever is imposed by Brussels shall be accepted.

The restructuring proposals that have emerged are manifold, as are their origins. The movement *Manifesto dos 74* showed that there is now a broad consensus in Portuguese society about the unsustainability of the Portuguese debt, a consensus that has encouraged several concrete proposals. The Working Group on debt, in which Bloco de Esquerda embarked, was a significant moment because it represented the existence, for the first time, of a political majority that recognises the unsustainability of the Portuguese debt and the need for its restructuring.

Bloco de Esquerda defends a multilateral restructuring of the debt but does not condition the defence of the country to the existence of a solution of this nature. The Portuguese debt is unsustainable and there is no realistic plan that does not go through its restructuring. Bloco de Esquerda will defend the sovereignty of our democracy to impose a restructuring that returns the Portuguese debt to levels of sustainability, drastically reducing debt burdens and freeing up resources for a rights and development policy. Human rights are worth more than speculation.

### **Rebuild the Welfare State**

Over the past few years, the right has attacked the Welfare State's institutions in every possible way: through concessions, public-private partnerships, hiring services, professional "sangria", increasing payments, opting-out, direct funding of private institutions, etc.. Everything has served to remove the universalist vocation and degrade the quality of public services. As with the privatisation of public enterprises, Health, Education and Social Security have to be ruined and discredited so that full privatisation can be a possible end.

In the concrete management of public services there has been a constant tightening in spending (in particular in investment), at the same time as hiring with private companies has increased, the main factor of expenditure. In the last political cycle, there was a partial reversal of this trend, a reversal which, however, is not enough to liberate the Welfare State, particularly in the area of Health, from the parasitism of the private. However, the National Health Service, Public Schooling and the Public Social Security System continue to enjoy

mass popular support, which must be mobilised for one of the central struggles of our time: the defence of free, universal, quality, jointly financed public services.

The National Health Service and Public Schooling have been heavily constrained by budget restrictions, but also by Brussels impositions. For example, troika pressures for reducing the number of civil servants have nothing to do with the rigor of public accounts. The insufficiency of human resources in Public Health and Education has only led to hiring with private companies, one of the biggest factors of expenditure in the provision of these services. Under the pretext of fiscal consolidation, the right and the European institutions have drained public services of the human resources necessary for its functioning, making their provision more and more dependent on the private, who use this dependency to widen their profit margins at the expense of public accounts.

The same applies to the reorientation of the Community budget and cuts in cohesion policy. As much of the public service investment is financed by the Community, the EU's militaristic and security drift takes place at the expense of developing or even maintaining the infrastructures which provide the most basic public services. Cutting Community funding in these areas, together with budgetary constraints covering public investment, pushes struggling states into mixed provision schemes, with increasing concession and hiring with private companies, disrupting public services with a loss of quality and negatively impacting public accounts.

Nevertheless, perhaps the most revealing aspect of the strictly ideological nature of the pressure for the privatisation of public services is the flexibility that has been introduced in budgetary constraints, provided it is negotiated with the European institutions to implement structural reforms. An explicit example is the privatisation of public social security systems, which entails extremely high costs for a considerable period of time, because the termination or reduction of contributions precedes in decades the end of pensions to be paid. This shows how the rhetoric about budgetary rigor is purely instrumental in the discourse and policies of the European institutions. While pushing Member States to cut or freeze pensions from their public systems, undermining the citizens' confidence in them, European institutions are willing to authorise absolutely disastrous privatisation processes.

Bloco de Esquerda calls for an end to the pressure exerted by the European institutions on the privatisation of public services, either through European policies or through the reorientation of Community funds, or through agreements with other economic areas such as TISA. Bloco de Esquerda defends investment in public services and public provision and management, as a condition for guaranteeing its quality and universality and does not accept that this policy may be conditioned by European impositions.

### **Public Housing in Portugal and Europe: it's time**

Portugal has never bet on a genuine public housing policy and has surrendered the provision of an essential right – and a primordial one in guaranteeing access to other rights – in the hands of private institutions. In Portugal, only 2% of the housing stock is public.

On the other hand, policies guaranteeing the right to housing went mainly through measures to support credit for home ownership, which makes Portugal a country where the housing response is guaranteed by subsidised loans controlled by banks.

In 2012, with the “Assunção Cristas Law”, the liberalisation of Local Accommodation promoted by Adolfo Mesquita Nunes, the Gold Visas and the intensification of the Regime of Non-Habitual Residents, as well as frameworks of extremely liberalised regulation of investment funds, Portugal became deeply vulnerable to the international capital market, which since then has destabilised the Portuguese leasing market.

If this multifaceted vulnerability is not enough, the crisis crushes the incomes of those who live off their jobs, and the investment banking and international finance proliferates while thousands of people hand their house to banks. In major cities, the financialization of lands has gained a staggering speed and capital gains have increased exponentially over the last 4 years.

Processes such as the privatisation of Fidelidade, with the delivery of real estate assets to vulture-funds, tend to exacerbate financialization and aggravate the lack of housing response. Notwithstanding urban rehabilitation, the housing crisis has intensified since 2014 and the decisive response to public investment and the reversal of fiscal dumping and real estate capture instruments by banks and real estate funds has not been a policy adopted by any government.

In fact, the current government continues to focus on creating financial instruments and attracting international investment as a means of financing construction and rehabilitation in Portugal. Urban rehabilitation has been at the service of tourism and foreign investment, lands have been artificially valued, and there are still too many vacant buildings, many of them belonging to Banking and Real Estate Funds. In addition, public housing is under pressure to guarantee the response to the majority of the population that earns an average income of 800 euros. However, its construction is consistently postponed.

For that reason, it is necessary to intervene decisively and to change the paradigm in the form of property of the cities, and the State, with the responsibility of decades of abandonment, has a duty to invest in a way that guarantees the Right to Housing. In that sense, the answer is a decided investment in Public Housing, the creation of a National Housing Service and the guarantee of public rental responses that protect the occupants of the market's "winds and storms".

But there is also a need for a response that discourages the financialization of the land, the accumulation of apartments and vacant houses, namely by Banking and Investment Funds, and that these assets are at the service of the social function of housing. In the case of tourism and services, which render unusable the building that previously had a housing function and intensify gentrification, there must be a strong intervention limiting the solution presented, which guarantees a balance between the necessary tourism response and a greater response at the housing level, channelling the tourist flow to less central areas of Portuguese cities and preventing the transformation of more housing units into tourist services.

The solidarity and mobilisation of European cities against the housing crisis is essential and has been evident. Again, the European Union has not followed the democratic will of the people, by allowing and encouraging competition between Member States, as a rule, in attracting investment, which finances the land of each country and at the same time allows the abandonment of large parts of the territory. Fiscal and social dumping mechanisms, as well as the attraction of international capital, cannot operate freely, and that is precisely what the EU has allowed. Also in housing, it is time to intervene and stop financing.

Bloco de Esquerda advocates a housing policy in which public provision is not limited to social housing, but rather has the capacity to put pressure on the market. This objective has been conditioned by budgetary constraints, either because they cover investment expenditure or because of the pressure they have created for the disposal of public assets, either directly or through the privatisation of public enterprises. In addition, measures are needed to discipline the housing market, discouraging speculation, concentration and absenteeism. This involves the imposition of rules on the financial system in its relationship with real estate: acceptance in lieu, limits on the concentration of ownership by funds and banks, and compulsory provision of repossessed property, after six months.

### **Work at the centre of democracy again**

The attack on workers' rights is probably the longest cycle of European policy. Forty years ago, Margaret Thatcher was elected Prime Minister of the United Kingdom for the first of three terms, in which labour rights were attacked in a way that was unprecedented. European integration is part of this long cycle, only possible thanks to a consensus that united the right and the socialists in a political consensus in which "labour market flexibilization" was and is a central point. With advances, retreats and particularities, the trend of these four decades is constant: the precariousness of labour relations, the change in the relation of forces between capital and labour, and the increase of inequalities and poverty were a constant.

With every wave of deregulation, the promise was always the same: a deregulated labour market would eventually lead to more employment and better wages. The promise, never fulfilled, continues to be renewed by the European institutions, when they call for new deregulatory measures. The very architecture of the European Union and the Euro have created a system of competition among states, where the main variable

of adjustment is wages.

The era of precarious labour has in fact brought the exact opposite: anaemic growth, a reduction in the share of labour in income, and an increase in inequality. The liberal hegemony that has guided European integration is destroying what remains of the post-war social contract, the most prosperous period ever in Europe.

Bloco de Esquerda defends the rescue of labour rights that have been destroyed. We advocate a system of labour protection in which permanent contracts are the rule, precariousness is eradicated and collective contracting re-covers the overwhelming majority of workers. We want the principle of labour protection to re-orientate all labour legislation, leading to the desirable increase in wages and the conditions for the exercise of democracy, which includes democracy in the workplace.

### **Overcoming dependence, decarbonising the economy**

The greater asymmetry resulting from the process of European integration, aggravated by the adherence to the Euro, is the result of an unequal integration process, which has caused colossal economic imbalances. Between 1996 and 2014, the indebtedness of the Portuguese economy increased from 13 to 119% of GDP. The narrative of spending aims precisely to conceal the true nature of the country's economic problems: a hasty, deficient and highly damaging integration that not only failed to solve, but also aggravated the dependency factors of our economy. Thus, a response from the left to the crisis must attack the factors of economic dependence of the country.

In addition, many of these dependency factors are directly related to the use of fossil fuels. This is clearly the case for the insufficient investment in renewable energies, but also in sectors whose weakness has environmental and financial impacts, such as public transport, urban rehabilitation and energy efficiency, extensive and local farming and cattle raising, among others.

The challenges of energy transition and decarbonisation imply a policy of development and public investment. The country has unique conditions to produce renewable energies and for local farming. This commitment is essential and implies, not only the end of the paradigm of fossil energies, but also the rejection of the false alternative of nuclear energy. The focus on highly polluting and globalised business models, with increasing emissions and externalities, must therefore be reversed. The transport of live animals must be stopped, and the construction of new dams must stop. The possibility of exploration of the continental shelf, through its delivery to extractive monopolies of hydrocarbons or minerals present in the deep sea, must be brought to an halt, under penalty of an action more and more harmful to the country and that will intensify exposure to climate change. Biodiversity and the local economy should be privileged in fisheries policy, with a focus on fishing diversification campaigns and the valorisation of a policy of the sea, soils and non-extractive water. The human right to water must be guaranteed through the maintenance in the public sphere of water and sanitation services of a policy of limiting agricultural crops that consume excessive resources, water and soil, or the use of harmful phytopharmaceuticals to the ecosystem.

### **A new model of food production**

Discussing agricultural and food policy today has much to do with how regions and countries can build a more sustainable future. It is necessary to build heterogeneous food landscapes that are integrating producers and consumers in a relationship of proximity and democracy. The current retail oligarchy often determines production methods and standardises agricultural and food systems, degrading their resilience, because it ignores a set of social, economic, and ecological regulatory factors that are characteristic of each location. The consequence is enormous socio-economic and environmental destruction. Responding to this attack requires that agricultural and food policy be treated as a whole, with a democratic and sovereign basis, but not a nationalist one. The necessary changes that the future requires in the production systems, with greater environmental preservation and food quality, will only be possible if they are accompanied by transformations of the same magnitude at the level of the entire food distribution and marketing chain. It is for this challenge that we need the common agricultural policy and the ongoing climate change only underlines its urgency. The time has come to put the right to food and the way to food sovereignty at the heart of the CAP. It is imperative to go to the root of problems and establish market regulation policies to ensure that those who produce food are not left unprotected and, on the other, to stop enriching those

who distribute those foods.

### **Democracy is now**

Bloco de Esquerda offers a proposal in the European elections to defend democracy, in all its dimensions. Commitment to labour rights and the welfare state, to economic development and the energy transition, to freedom and equality, is more important today than ever before. We will promote these goals in every field.

We maintain the project of a Europe of democracy, freedom and solidarity. It is this compromise that requires a stance of noncompliance to the European Union, the Treaty of Lisbon and the rules of the Euro. The ultraliberal project has been dominant in the process of European integration since its inception; but today we observe its most aggressive and dangerous manifestations. That is why defending a democratic Europe is to defend democracy in all fields of political struggle, starting where it shows to be fiercest: in the states where one was born.

Bloco de Esquerda is running for the European Elections of 2019, ready to counteract the ultraliberal and authoritarian drifts, ready to defend the rights of labour, the Welfare State and democracy. For a Europe of people who decide their destiny, we are ready.