

Berlin Declaration “Changing Course – For a Good Life”

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Prevent the destruction of social systems and end exploitation of nature!

In December 2012 people from trade unions, academia and politics met in Berlin to discuss alternatives to today’s social development. They pooled experience and knowledge in order to learn from one another and to formulate the necessary change of course.

The financial crisis that has plagued the global economy for the last four years shows us that financial market-driven capitalism is a mistake. Economic instability is just one of its consequences. It affects all sections of society. Insecure and precarious employment is becoming more and more common. Public services are being dismantled. Political resignation threatens democracy from within. Pretended economic constraints are employed to put pressure on or to prevent the democratic decision-making process. While a small group amasses outrageous wealth, an increasing number of people cannot earn enough to live on. The unemployed are being pushed to the margins of society.

Those in work must not become the plaything at the mercy of the economy. The economy is not an end in itself. It has to serve the needs of human beings and should be based on values such as solidarity, justice, dignity and respect. Democratic decisions must determine the direction and the rules for the economy. They have to create the conditions for a free life in solidarity and self-determination for everyone. Step by step, we must initiate the conversion to a sustainable economic development. It is time to change course!

IG Metall stands up for a change of course. Its international conference entitled “Changing Course – For a Good Life” provided important impetus for change. IG Metall has received support from trade unionists, academics and politicians from all over the world.

- The dominance of the financial markets must be broken by applying consistent regulation. The financial sector has to serve the economic development instead of controlling it. A financial transaction tax must be introduced, even if initially it can be realized only in parts of Europe. Capital should be diverted into investments for qualitative growth.
- The ecological restructuring of the economy must stimulate employment and must be driven forward with the necessary speed. Employee codetermination can give the restructuring a broad basis and a spirit of solidarity. Industrial manufacturing remains the foundation of economic development. We need a sustainable industrial policy in which ecological, social, economic and democratic aspects go hand in hand.
- A fair distribution and taxation is crucial for eliminating social divisions. Overcoming these social distortions must also be a key task for educational and social policy. Growing inequality in society has become the largest obstacle to social progress.

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- A life in security and dignity is impossible without protection of the social welfare state. The abolition of services and the privatization of social risks must cease. Safeguards against life risks should be elaborated and financed on the basis of solidarity.
- The deregulation of the labor market must be stopped and insecure employment must be eliminated. Everyone must be able to make an adequate living from their own work. The guiding principle is good work that protects health, is safe, and promotes people’s specialist and creative skills.
- We want a Europe based on solidarity, whose citizens stand by one another during crises in particular. We call for a Marshall Plan for the countries affected by crises. We want a world economic order that is rooted in solidarity, provides everyone with fair opportunities to develop their potentials and gives them equal life opportunities.
- We claim work and future prospects for the young generation.

Changing course for a good life is not a project that is aimed to change the remote future. The trade unions are addressing the contemporary social development.

If we can manage to make work safe and fair, to bring about decent living wages everywhere, to reduce inequalities in education and to curtail social divisions, we will fundamentally change the face of society.

We are not alone. All around the world there are trade unions, political parties and social movements promoting a change of course. Controlling the finance markets, directing the global economy, and limiting both climate change and poverty are tasks that can only be organized globally. Fostering cooperation across borders is one major precondition for changing course.

This congress was attended by participants from 60 countries, who came to find answers for a change of course that reinforces democracy and social responsibility and makes ecologically sustainable development possible.

A change of course for a good life!