

ELA newsletter

Solidarity of Basque Workers

The XIII ELA Congress has highlighted that it is in a strong position to face the future and with great internal cohesion

READY TO FACE UP TO FUTURE CHALLENGES



Thank you everyone for your backing. Your support makes the trade union stronger to continue with its work. The ballot box has shown that we are in a good position, that we have great internal cohesion. And that is very important. That cohesion allows us to focus all our forces to face our external problems. We are going to need that"

Those were the first words of Adolfo Muñoz Txiki after being re-elected General Secretary by the Congress. In fact, the 736 delegates at the congress gave their strong support to the list headed by Adolfo Muñoz: the list, proposed by the National Committee, obtained the backing of 89.91% of the votes.

Yet even though the election of the team that will run the central offices for the coming four years was one of the most important moments of the Congress, it was not the only one. The Congress, whose slogan was "LANKIDETU" (expression without a literal translation, but which has come to mean: JOIN, GET ORGANISED, SIGN UP...) spent its first day on the presentation and discussion of the report of the work that had been carried out in the last four years. Adolfo Muñoz Txiki and the Deputy General Secretary, Amaia Muñoa, were the ones entrusted with presenting the management report on behalf of the outgoing Executive Committee.

The leaders of the twelve regions and the four ELA professionals federations responded to the report before it was unanimously approved by the accredited delegates in the congress. The first day of the congress ended with a moving tribute to a historical militant of the organisation, Valentín Bengoa.

After approving the management in recent years, it was time to set out the lines of action and the challenges for the coming years. The second day of the congress began with the presentation, discussion and approval of the Dossier, which set out the strategic lines of action for the coming four years. The delegates then proceeded to approve the nine resolutions on different issues, including the audit request and the writing

off of the unlawful debt, the right to decent housing, in order to guarantee the sexual and emotional diversity, for a humane prison policy, for the universal right to justice, for public media, etc.

Both the speech and the resolutions were unanimously approved. The election of the Executive Committee was then held. As was indicated at the start of this report, the list submitted by the National Committee had wide support.

Along with the delegates, the Congress was attended by a good number of guests, including a large international delegation. They all witnessed the running of the Congress and undeniably helped to enrich it with their presence and participation. We would like to thank all of them.



Audit of membership



During the presentation of the Management Report, mention was also made of the membership figures and revenue and expenditure of the trade union during the 4 years between the congresses. The importance of internal and external transparency in this

area was stressed. Reference was therefore made to the audit conducted on 11 December 2012. For the third time, ELA organised a check of its membership data, performed by journalists from different members of the media and the financial institutions through which the members pay their monthly dues.

International Seminar

In the run-up to the Congress, an international seminar entitled *Social and Trade Union Alliances: an Essential Strategy against the Neo-liberal Plundering* was held on the 22. Different alliance experiences on the international and national stage were analysed during the seminar. Thus, Adolfo Aguirre Fito, International Secretary of the CTA (Argentina), spoke about the experience of *Rio +20; People's Summit*, Jacques Letourneau, President of the CSN (Quebec), analysed the *2012 Student Struggle in Quebec and the Role of the Trade Unions* and Eric Toussaint, CADTM (Belgium), tackled the experience of the *Cancellation of the illegitimate Debt; from the Third World to Europe*. Laura Gonzalez de Txabarri and Mikel Noval from ELA discussed the Alter Summit process in Europe and the alliance experience that is currently being developed in the Basque Country, respectively.



Speech by Adolfo Muñoz "Txiki" to close the Congress after his re-election as General Secretary

"LET US EMBRACE THE CHALLENGE: TRADE UNIONISM IN THE FUTURE AS WELL"



CONGRESS CALLS FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

Individual and collective. Work continues tomorrow. That is the driving force of our organisation. That is all of us, all the congress delegates. The ELA project depends on us. Taking part in this Congress, even more so in the current climate makes those of us here accountable.

The changes that we have analysed here in the Congress means trade unionism is facing a huge challenge that we have to address. I call on militant awareness, on team work in all areas to build the only instrument that the workers have in the current climate to defend our interests. I call on us to embrace the –slightly adapted– Euzko Herriko Laborantza Ganbara slogan: Tomorrow also trade unionism!. Tomorrow also trade unionist!

Indignation is not enough. It is a power struggle. Our message has to go beyond mere indignation and

has to be very clear. Let us say it clearly, without complexes and without beating around the bush. Get organised. Join the trade union. Make your collective defensive instrument strong.

DESCRIBE THE CURRENT CLIMATE: IMPASSIVE CAPITALISM. POLITICS HAS ISOLATED US

The animal, the beast, is loose and has bolted. Politics has let it out of its cage. And the beast, which has always been ravenous, is after the disenfranchised. The beast destroys the weak. The beast wants to eat alone. It is capitalism, released from its shackles.

It is important to use language without complexes: this is the class struggle Capital that is more globalised than ever with a political power that is more irrelevant than ever, except to do the bidding of capital, to follow, its orders. Who has opened the cage and let out the beast? Politics, which has deserted its post.

We believe in politics and we demand it. We call on the parties to resuscitate democracy before it is too late. Neo-liberalism scorns democracy and has fascist components inside it.

WHAT IS COMING IS VERY HARD

With or without a bailout... Budgets with many austerity measures; Pension Reform; another possible Labour Reform that the CEOE –Confederation of Spanish Industry– is demanding, unemployment benefits... In short, plundering.

Austerity measures are one option. But it is not just the only one. And fiscal policy is part of the alternative. Not counting all the tax fraud (which is scandalous), 1,850 million euros a year could be collected just in the Basque Autonomous Community (BAC) alone...

- If the average income declared

for professional and business activities on the Income Tax Return were the same as the one that we declare as income from work, there would be 300 million in Income Tax and 270 in VAT. In total, 570 million euros.

- If the maximum rate for Income Tax was raised to 56% (without any more changes to the rates and allowances), 300 million euros would be collected.

- Returning to the 2008 Equity Tax: 80 million euros

- Establishing a nominal rate of 35% for Corporation Tax (which was the rate prior to the reforms): 900 million euros

Which is just the tip of the iceberg...

If we had the same tax pressure as the average in Europe, the amounts raised would come to over 8,000 million euros. There isn't any money?

What do we have to tell Basque governors? That they are going to make cuts because they want to. That it is impossible to cut 1200 millions euros without that affecting jobs, public services and social spending. A staggering 11.4% of the Budget. That there are alternatives to the cuts.

Yet again, they want to call the structural understanding between the government and employers as social dialogue ELA is not going to be a bystander to this farce.

NEO-CENTRALISM AND NEO-LIBERALISM

Sovereignty requires acts of disobedience. And, nowadays, social issues is a great opportunity. In the BAC, if the political parties and Basque Institutions approve the system (Reform of the Constitution, Stability Act and Basic Legislations), they e –now the PNV– are going to manage an administrative delegation of the Spanish Government.



The State has unified neo-liberalism and neo-centralism. There is no bilateralism. It is pure regression in every sense. We have an abertzale (sovereignist) majority in the Vitoria-Gasteiz Parliament (48 out of 75) where, unfortunately, nothing is being done with that. Can we demand that they follow through and work together to defend the Basque decision-taking sphere.

That is what we believe in ELA and that is what we are demanding. The panic at the democratic confrontation with the State is a straitjacket that, if it is confirmed, will unfortunately set the way for the devaluation of the Basque national project. We do not want that.

The democratic struggle for the sovereignty of our people requires much more than the fight at the ballot box. The greatest handicap is the inability to work together, to agree some minimum requirements that commit us daily, that open up a process.

ELA is reiterating its commitment to discuss targets, strategies and allies. Not by downplaying the social issues.

ALTERNATIVE, ALLIANCES AND MOBILISATION

No coverage of the governments and employers. The social achievements are the result of bottom-up pressure. That has always been the case.

Alliances. We have to explain why they are essential. And we have to be resolute. Because power has to be constructed. We have to be capable of providing a strategic dimension to a social and trade union alliance to defend a social agenda, with alternative proposals, lobbying all politicians and mobilising society.

TRADE UNION AUTONOMY

We are not a partisan instrument. We want a relationship with the parties based on respect for trade union autonomy. Our partisan independence, which is financial, is the marrow of ELA. And we are going to defend it.

We want the people who are in ELA and, in turn, belong to political parties feel at ease in the trade union, knowing that ELA is not an instrument either of their party or of any other. We believe that if they have joined ELA, it is because they want their trade union to defend their interests. And it is what ELA does without asking to which party they belong.

We do not imagine a country –ours– where the institutions and parties take decisions and the trade union says nothing. That is not our country. And we do not imagine the left in the Institutions seeking to be engaged in left-wing politics suppressing the outside lobbying. That is impossible.

NO LEGISLATION PREVENTS US FROM FOCUSING ON ORGANISATION

That is outside the remit of the law. All told... What other function does a trade unionist have that is more important than the organisational aspect? However, we are not saying that it is easy. We are just facing a challenge and we have accepted that it is difficult. But there is no other way. There is no counterpower without organisation, there is no collective bargaining if the trade unions are not in the work centres. It is a collective challenge. How, through whom and where?

Trade union leaders. Our responsibility is to invigorate Trade Union Sections, militants and delegates. Guaranteeing that we work with a plan in companies.

Militants. The current climates requires trade union militants to embark on a difficult task in companies; an active role for trade unionism. It is a treasure and makes work more difficult: Trade unionising a work centre.

Delegates. We have 9,084 delegates. That is a great deal, isn't it? Yes, there are many of them. How to reach them, the quality of the meetings, the link that they have with the trade union. Yes, link. Trade union work depends on that link

Place: the work centre. With work plans. Trade unionism is at stake in companies. The margin for improving trade unionism is there. To create a trade union space. It will simply not be possible where we do not have those persons. Not for corporate trade unionism; not at all. From a class approach, taking the vision of trade unionism, of collective bargaining and the society model to the work centres. Doing so really strengthens our project.

What do we need to do that job? Everything that is necessary and we can do to implement that; including the organisational adaptations that we decide on. The trade union is at stake in the work centres. It may seem commonplace, but that is not the case. It is the main task with which we leave this congress. And that has a name: *Lankidetu!*

THE CONGRESS IN IMAGES

