



Coordinadora Estatal por la Defensa del Sistema Público de Pensiones



Faced with the recommendation of the European Commission to privatize and worsen pensions, an open call from COESPE (Spain) and SENIORENAUFSTAND / "Rebellion of the Elderly" (Germany)

In the midst of the pandemic that is devastating Europe and the world, the European Commission has presented a "Green Paper on aging" in Brussels. When reading it, it is clear that behind beautiful words like "solidarity" and "responsibility between generations" are very different objectives. What does the European Commission propose regarding pensions? There are two central objectives of this EU document:

- Increase working life to more than 70 years, while reducing replacement rates
- Strengthen private funded pension systems, to the detriment of public pension systems.

We note that: For almost 30 years, the same old neoliberal recipes have been presented to us in Europe, which can be summarized in the formula "privatize, work longer to receive lower pensions". Every year the immense pressure on the pay-as-you-go public pension systems increases. Whatever form it takes in any country, the objective is always the same: Reduce public pensions to poverty levels (or abolish them entirely) and promote privately funded pension systems. In reality, it is about pressure from the economically powerful, the big insurance companies, international corporations and financial capital like BlackRock, who find their complacent lobby in international institutions like the World Bank, IMF and EU. They want access to hundreds of billions in social contributions, contributions that are part of our salary.

In Denmark, for example, the regular retirement age will be gradually raised to 74 years. In many countries there are similar approaches. Is this going to be our future, the future of our sons and daughters and of our grandsons and granddaughters? We cannot and will not accept these EU plans and specifications. On the contrary, we want to go in the opposite direction: In Spain, COESPE demands that the latest pension reforms be repealed and that the pension at currently 67 years of age go back to 65. The same demands are made by the unionized working people of IG Metall and Ver.di in Germany: Instead of the pension at 67, return to the pension at 65. There are similar demands in France and other countries. We therefore strongly reject key retrograde points regarding pensions in the EU "Green Paper".

We can learn from the experience of other countries

In Spain, the "Toledo Pact" (commission of all parties with parliamentary representation) has been the framework within which the growing attacks on public pension have been built for decades.

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For example, the pension reforms of 2011 and 2013, which COESPE demands to be repealed. At the end of 2020, this pact has issued new "recommendations", at the center of which is "Recommendation 16": the introduction of private pensions that must be collectively negotiated by the unions.

But what has been the experience of workers in Germany, for example? The first offensive to introduce private pension systems was the Riester pension, introduced within the framework of the "Agenda 2010". What is the balance 20 years later? The net level of the public pension fell by 15%. And the Riester pension? A total disaster, most of the 16 million contributors have lost or will lose money, while insurance companies have pocketed huge sums of money. And more than 20% of pensioners live below the poverty line in the richest country in Europe.

We reject the private pension systems promoted by the EU and we commit ourselves in our countries to defend and expand public pension systems. In Germany, we say: our unions must get out of the infamous alliance for the privatization of pensions, which can only lead to a dead end. We need our unions on our side, in resolute defense of the public pension. In the same way, in COESPE in Spain we think that the large unions, CCOO and UGT, should reject "Recommendation 16" of the Toledo Pact on the privatization of pensions.

In Spain and France, hundreds of thousands of people have mobilized in recent years, in strikes and demonstrations, to defend the public pension system. This is a huge incentive to pensioners from all over Europe. Especially the great strike to defend the public pension in France, at the end of 2019 / beginning of 2020, has shown us the way: little by little, this strike was built from below. It has also been supported by the yellow vests, the revolt of the more precarious working layers, which we follow with sympathy. And thanks to the mobilization of hundreds of thousands of people from below, in the workplace and on the streets, unions that were on the fringes or that wanted to participate in a hoax called "social dialogue" were also drawn into the fight. These experiences are valuable to everyone, this is the way, in our opinion: from below, and always looking to the collaboration of the working class, both those that are retired and those that are active which is our best ally, because pensions are indirect, deferred salaries and form part of our salary.

We are very concerned about the welfare of pensioners of the future and of young people. Because governments in Europe, for decades, have privatized and bankrupted public health systems and they continue to do so during the pandemic. Therefore, they are responsible for the current disaster. And now, with the instrumentalization of the pandemic and the unspeakable suffering, and with the active support of the EU, they are going to produce a new wave of privatization and precariousness. The "Green Book" shows it clearly. Everything is at stake: public pensions, public health, labor relations governed by collective bargaining, state schools and universities.

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We sympathetically follow the resistance in particular of youth, who, in recent weeks, in Greece, Spain, France and other countries, have led the way in the demonstrations against the rise in precariousness with hunger lines, and against the "home university" that cannot replace a classroom. This resistance is making headway, despite the authoritarian measures of governments, which abuse the pandemic and want to prevent social resistance with special and repressive laws, etc. Youth is the future, we stand by their side and share their anger. We are against the precariousness of youth and of the elderly.

We have the commitment in each of our countries to fight against the recommendations of the "Green Book" of the EU and similar plans. We address all movements of retired people and pensioners from our countries and others, and we intend to exchange ideas on these central issues, to find ways of common action:

- **For the defense and strong expansion of public pension systems, based on the system of sharing and generational solidarity!**
- **Rejection of the introduction of private pension systems!**
- **Opposition to any extension of working life!**

About us

COESPE (Spain):

COESPE is the coordination of around 300 local platforms of pensioners at the state level in Spain, which have existed throughout the country since 2018, organizing rallies and demonstrations every week in dozens of cities to defend the public pension system. COESPE is completely independent of parties and governments. Its central motto is: "Whoever governs, public pensions are defended". With this motto, COESPE has already organized a central demonstration in front of the Parliament in Madrid on October 16, 2019, with more than 60,000 participants. The campaign for an independent audit of Pension fund accounts has been at the center of COESPE's activities in recent months. COESPE demands that all the funds looted (experts speak of more than 500,000 million), that all payments stolen from the workers, are returned to the single pension fund.

SENIORENAUFSTAND (Germany):

The "Elders' Rebellion" is an open collective of retired trade unionists from northern Germany. From Flensburg to Goslar and from Berlin to Bremen and Oldenburg, members of the unions Ver.di, IG Metall, GEW, IG BAU, EVG and DGB meet in a coordination group in Hamburg and locally.

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