



## **CGTP-IN note on current struggles of the Portuguese Workers**

**The CGTP-IN considers that the workers and people's struggle is, as it always was, the decisive element to resist, reinstate, defend and attain rights and an alternative policy.**

The evolution of the social and labour situation in Portugal testifies that character, nourished by a balance of forces in Parliament which is now more favourable to the Portuguese workers and people. The State Budget for 2018 is one more step, despite its insufficiencies, which consolidates the already implemented positive measures and makes new way forward in the defence, reinstatement and achievement of rights and income for the workers – opening up the perspective that, with the intensification of the struggle, it will be possible to make new and more substantial steps in social justice.

Thus, between 2016 and 2018, it was possible to improve the living conditions of millions of Portuguese, namely with the adoption of the following measures:

- Elimination of the surcharge on Income Tax, by introducing more progressivity, with 2 new tax bands, a rise in the subsistence level amount, all of this leading to a global tax relief of workers' incomes of around 1.1 billion Euros until the end of 2018;
- The minimum salary rise to 530€ in 2016, to 557€ in 2017 and to 580€ in 2018;
- The general rise of pensions, particularly of the extraordinary increase contained in the 2017 State Budget and the amount inscribed for 2018, with which around 1.2 million pensioners will have an accumulated rise of 20€ in their retirement pensions, which had been frozen for many years ;
- More than 550 thousand children will have, in the forthcoming school year, free textbooks for the first and second stages of primary education;
- Around 1.1 million children are already benefiting from a rise in their family allowance;
- 91 thousand unemployed workers no longer see their unemployment benefit cut by 10%;
- 4 public holidays previously eliminated are now reinstated;
- There is a restitution of collective bargaining rights for workers of the state-owned company sector and of their pension complements that had been robbed;
- Public Administration employees saw their salaries and their 35 hour week reinstated, and got an annual rise of 120€ in their meal allowance. As from 2018, their career paths and

respective pay will be unfrozen, although in a phased manner, and will now be paid overtime, night work and quality time, which had all been reduced in previous Budgets;

- The Christmas monthly Pay, which had, in practical terms had been eliminated for all workers by the previous governments, will as from now be fully paid to all workers and pensioners.

However, the ground covered is still very insufficient, with a lot still to be done.

The CGTP-IN acknowledges and values these progresses but considers that it is necessary and possible to go further, in order to make it possible to free the country from the effect of decades of right-wing policies, of subordination to the interests of big national and transnational capital, from the impositions of the European Union and from the constraints of the Euro, of the Fiscal Compact, of the Stability and Growth Pact and from other European Union subordination mechanisms that prevent the inalienable right of the Portuguese people to their sovereign development.

Priority must be given to the country's economic and social development, and uphold workers and people's rights above the obsession for the deficit reduction and for the payment of an unsustainable debt and adopt a left and sovereign policy that may share the national wealth in a fair manner, puts an end to low wages' policies, efficiently fights precarious work and invests in the improvement in the quality of public services such as health, education, transport, social welfare, justice and local government.

The CGTP-IN is committed with the fight for a policy that, at national level, breaks away from anti-labour and anti-social legislation, repeals the more grievous labour laws, that complies with the Constitutional principle of collective bargaining, that implements job security and stability and that respects workers' rights.

This objective becomes even more important when the already announced prices increase, for the current year - with some of them, for essential goods, already being practised, with workers and their families paying the main burden - require a fair wealth distribution and a fight against workers' impoverishment, namely by significantly valuing wages.

2018 is a decisive year to guarantee – in the framework of current balance of forces in Parliament – the full reinstatement of rights that were usurped by decades of right-wing

policy and by the PSD/CDS government, and this means that trade union action, struggles and collective bargaining, in the grassroot and in the workplaces (companies and services) is the core issue for trade union action.

**We promoted intensive mass actions in different industries, sectors companies and workplaces**

The struggle was particularly strongly translated into the CGTP-IN National Demonstration on 18 November, in Lisbon, which was inseparable from many other struggles in companies and workplaces.

These actions and struggles have all been related to workers' essential problems – wages, working time and working hours, precarious work, defence of collective bargaining rights - with hundreds of strikes, demonstrations and rallies.

Particularly relevant were and still are struggles in : central and local government, Post Office and telecommunications, workers in call centres, car manufacturing, oil refineries, health ( doctors, nurses and ancillary staff), teachers, public transport, airports, hotels and restaurants, food processing, construction, retail trade and services, workers in defence industries, security forces, court clerks and bailiffs, banks and insurance, mineworkers, graphical, metal engineering, private security, entertainment and culture, textile and clothing, but also pensioners.

These and so many other struggles have put pressure on the employers but they also make more visible the class options of the Socialist Party government, particularly with regard to labour laws, where it shows its compromise with big capital and their interests.

Contrary to the existing needs and possibilities, the increase of the National Minimum Salary, despite the progress made by CGTP-IN's intervention and the workers' struggle – falls short of the monthly 600€, to start in January 2018, as defended by the CGTP-IN. The government, in tune with big capital, prevented that amount to be fixed.

**In 2018, the CGTP-IN and its Unions will continue these and other struggles, particularly aiming at:**

- Jobs with rights and fight against precarious work;
- Defence of collective bargaining and of the rights it enshrines;

- Revitalisation of the Campaign for Rights “Value work for a Portugal with a Future”;
- Removal of the Labour Code standards that undermined collective bargaining;
- Respect for the right to bargaining in Public Employment;
- Fixing of the 35 hour week for all workers;
- Ensuring 2 consecutive days of weekly rest, in general on Saturday and Sunday;
- Improving the conditions of night and shift work;
- Increasing the purchasing power of pensions and the reinstatement of the legal age of retirement at 65, plus access to an old age pension, without penalties, for all workers who have deducted at least 40 years of Social Insurance;
- Better Unemployment benefits;
- Improving access to public services, ensuring their universal nature, namely the National Health Service, State Education, Social Security, Justice and Local Government.

The CGTP-IN carries out strong efforts to mobilise all workers, departing from their workplaces (companies and services) to solve their problems and to have them converging in the struggle – **in March** there will be action on **the International Women’s Day, and a National Working Youth Demonstration , later the 25 th April** – Date of Portugal’s National and Democratic Revolution, **and particularly the 1<sup>st</sup> of May**, a moment in which workers’ specific demands – valuing work and the workers – will find a large expression.

As a Unitarian class Organisation of the Portuguese Workers, the CGTP-IN has also contributed to the strengthening of the internationalist struggle:

- We organised an International Trade Union Conference on “The Future of Work - valuing work and the workers” with the aim of contributing to the unity of purpose of the international trade union movement in defence of workers’ rights;
- In convergence with other solidarity organisations, we promoted events in solidarity with Palestine and of condemnation of the USA decision of recognising Jerusalem as Israel’s capital;
- We produced statements in defence of peace and against imperialist interference, aggressions and destabilisation, particularly of the USA, against the peoples of the Middle East ( Syria, Yemen and Iran) and we attended an International Conference in solidarity with the Syrian workers and people;

- We organised and participated in initiatives in solidarity with the struggle of the Saharai people, reiterating the defence of the end of the occupation of Western Sahara by Morocco, and the right of the people to self-determination and other rights;
- We promoted and attended events in solidarity with the struggles of workers and peoples of Latin America, against interference and destabilisation, in defence of their rights, democracy and sovereignty, particularly Brazil, Argentina and Venezuela;
- We sent a delegation of young trade unionists to the World Festival of the Youth and Students, held in Sochi, Russia.

### **International Department**

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