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**EuroMarch**

# Aims without frontiers

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**International Viewpoint spoke to Michel Rousseau, a member of the secretariat of the European Marches Against Unemployment, Job Insecurity and Social Exclusions**

[www.euromarches.org](http://www.euromarches.org) about the European Social Forum in Florence.

[[http://internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/03\\_Euro\\_march.jpg](http://internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/03_Euro_march.jpg)] European March - Cologne 1999

*More than five years after the big demonstration against unemployment in Amsterdam in 1997, what is happening with the European Marches?*

As luck would have it, the European Marches has just met in Amsterdam to discuss the situation of the unemployed and insecure workers in Europe as well as the network itself. After a short-lived relative fall, unemployment figures are rising again throughout the European Union (EU). The Lisbon and Barcelona summits have led to increased insecurity of work. Hence the necessity for the organizations of the unemployed to strengthen themselves on a European scale to fight against this mass long-term scourge. This is not easy; after the movements of 1997/1998, the unemployed organizations found it difficult to resist alone against ever more ferocious neo-liberal offensives with the return of the hard right in EU governments.

Only a consistent relationship of forces can beat back the bosses and their governments. The general strike in Spain, just before the Seville summit and prompted by Aznar's measures against the unemployed, shows the necessary and possible convergences with the trade unions that are possible. It is no longer enough to mobilize for protests. We need to score some victories over those who create unemployment and poverty. If not, the most deprived layers will turn to populist demagogues, as seen at the elections in Austria, Italy or more recently in France.

*Concretely, what are your perspectives for mobilization?*

We think that to count at a European level, where the decisions are taken, we have to elaborate common demands capable of building unitary struggles beyond national frontiers. Easy to say, not always to do. Europe is really diverse. For example, how do we fight on the question of income whether you have a job or not, whether you are young or retired? If, on the eve of an unprecedented expansion of the EU, we want to oppose policies of wage, fiscal and social dumping, we need to demand the same social and wage minima in every EU country.

Therefore, we are organizing a European day of debate and mobilization on October 30, 2002 on the question of income. Apart from the income question, we have to fight on a European scale for all social rights. The new European constitution being prepared by the ad hoc convention has reached a total impasse on these rights. That means we face an unprecedented regression of everything won through long struggles in the national contexts. We want to intervene on this terrain and the European Social Forum in Florence should be an opportunity to reaffirm social rights; rights like the right to work, to income, to housing are not for sale in an EU reduced to a vast free trade area.

*What do you intend to do in Florence?*

We've waited a long time for this! We think that, while struggles in the national frameworks are still useful and necessary, we need to establish ourselves at the European level. The bosses have been constructing their Europe for more than 50 years and for our part we are very late, at the associative as well as the trade union or political level.

At the ESF, for the first time tens of thousands of activists will meet together to think through and define an action

strategy for another Europe in another world. Certainly the organizations of the unemployed, the organizations of those 'without' - without work, without housing, without papers, must make sure they are heard at such assemblies and we have to deepen the 'expertise', we have to trace perspectives of struggle.

So, at Florence we are proposing a 'European Assembly of Unemployed and Insecure Workers in the Struggle', with seminars on insecure work and income. We will participate in seminars organized on social rights, the convention, the conference of those 'without', in the final assembly of the social movements and so on.

We hope that Florence will allow us to elaborate unitary objectives of struggle for the social movements on a European scale. Already we feel this is being concretised: the very open process that our Italian friends have practiced for the preparation of this Forum has already borne its fruits.

We have been able to note that all the organizations now seek contacts in every country to transform themselves into 'European networks'.

We want to accelerate these convergences in Florence, coordinate our forces to oppose neo-liberal policies which sow misery across the richest continent on the planet. In this 'unipolar' world, the task is urgent!