



The Rise of Far-Right in Europe and the Impact to Labour

In accordance with the principles and role of ECTUN, Trade Unions in European capitals and regions have a responsibility to pay attention to urban and regional development policies from the perspective of defending and promoting the quality of life and work of workers and the respect of labour and human rights.

The annual ECTUN Conference in Madrid in November 2024 decided the setup of a Working Group to examine the rise of the far right in European Capitals and Regions, the impact on labor and the actions of the trade unions to face this threat.

ECTUN

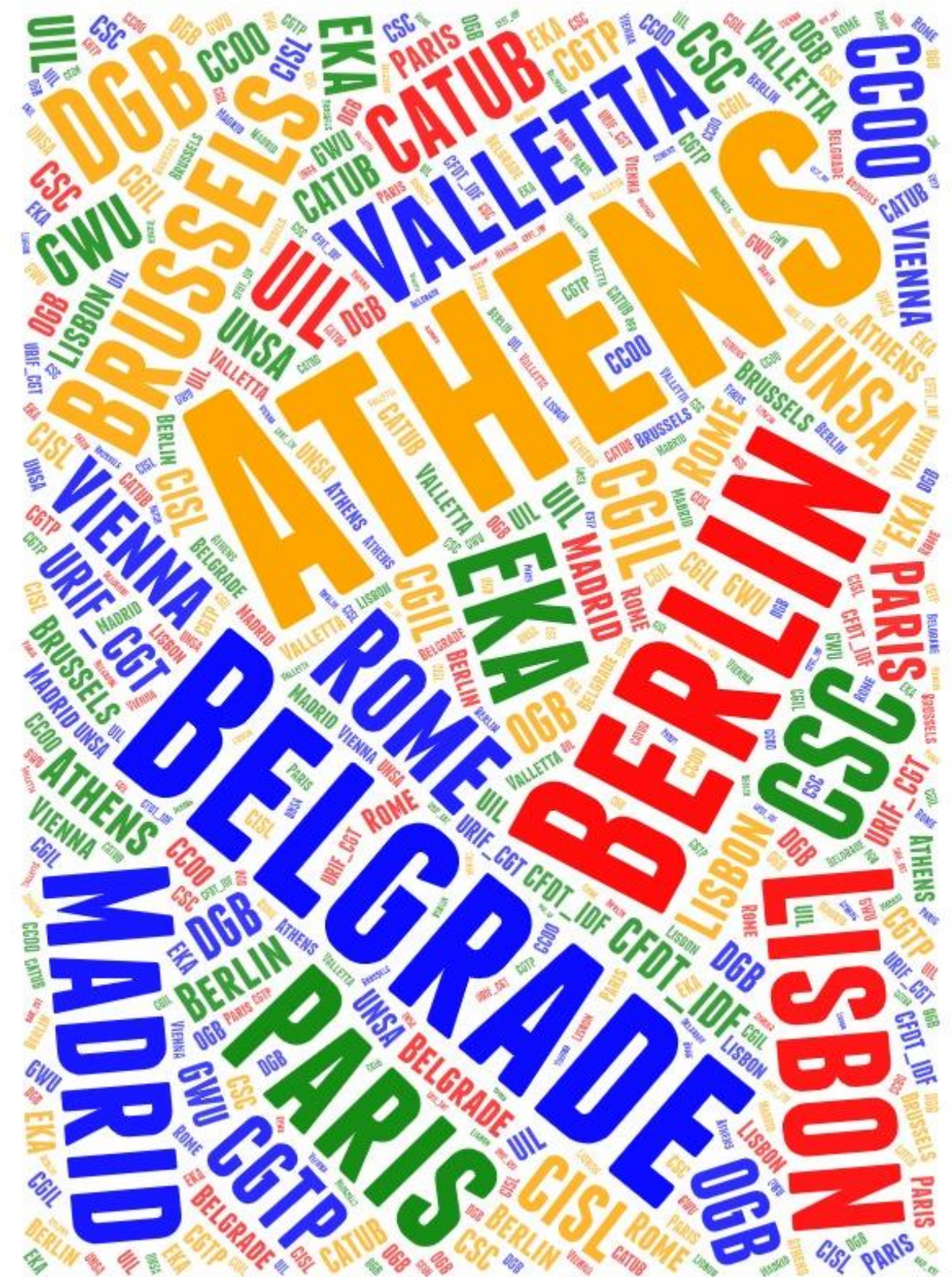
Capital Cities responded to the questionnaire

Athens, Belgrade, Berlin, Brussels, Lisbon, Madrid, Paris, Rome, Valletta, Vienna

Trade Union Organizations

EKA, CATUB, DGB, CSC, CGTP, CCOO, CFDT_IDF, UNSA, URIF_CGT, CGIL, CISL, UIL, GWU, OGB

This comprehensive network of trade unions across major European capitals provides a unique perspective on the challenges facing workers as far-right movements gain political influence across the continent.



Social Media: The Far-Right's Digital Weapon

AfD is a leader in social media campaigns.
Fast, professional, wide reach. Currently
focussing on TikTok.
Germany (DGB)

Despite the "cordon sanitaire", Vlaams Belang
influences right-wing parties to push
demands even further to the right. They
dominate social media and understand
algorithmic workings perfectly.
Belgium (CSC)

They have hundreds, if not thousands of fake
profiles constantly spreading lies and hatred,
rewriting history. The lie circulates and
becomes truth for many people.
Portugal (CGTP)

They promote hoaxes, smear campaigns
against trade unions and progressive parties,
as well as hate campaigns against the most
vulnerable groups.
Spain (CCOO)

Massive dominance of the far right on social
media is a key reason for their power of
discourse. TikTok is particularly problematic
because it reaches very young people.
Austria (OGB)



Digital Manipulation

1

Bypassing Traditional Media

Direct communication without filters, mass dissemination of images and discourse

2

Controlled Image Modernization

De-diabolisation strategy with young personalities presenting a sanitized facade

3

Strategic Disinformation

Manipulation through disinformation and misappropriation of facts to serve their narrative

4

Digital Mobilization

Organized effective campaigns with active online communities driving engagement

Trade Union Responses: Fighting Back at Every Level

01

Workplace Education

Educating workers about far-right programmes and goals, demonstrating how these parties work against worker interests through speeches at work meetings and awareness campaigns.

02

Community Mobilization

Political talks with parties to prevent cooperation, strengthening democratic networks and alliances, organizing democracy festivals and supporting local democratic structures.

03

Strategic Exclusion

Incompatibility decisions excluding simultaneous membership of far-right parties and trade unions, following "No stage" principles for events and platforms.

Germany's Three Principles (DGB)

1. DGB officials do not take part in AfD events
2. DGB does not invite the AfD to its own events
3. If third parties invite both, discussions are held with organizers

France's Educational Approach (UNSA)

Published detailed guides to counter far-right ideas, providing arguments and resources to help activists deconstruct populist and xenophobic narratives, accompanied by educational videos.

Comprehensive Union Strategies Across Europe



Workplace Interventions

Clarifying contradictions of far-right parties, helping workers reflect to combat falsehoods and lies. Creating plenaries with films to stimulate debate and group dynamics that promote reflection and discussion on extreme right issues.



Community Engagement

Contacting and carrying out joint actions with associative movements, particularly immigrant associations. Creating events that promote enlightenment and fight against hate speech among the population.



Democratic Defense

Organizing common actions against racism and xenophobia, defending Republican values of fraternity, solidarity, and democracy while firmly opposing far-right programs considered dangerous for social cohesion.

"Trade unions have a very important role to play in contact with workers, contributing through their action in the workplace to the defence of democracy, the fight against hate speech, building and promoting the values of solidarity and unity among workers."

Policy Failures That Fueled the Far-Right Rise



Social Support Failures

Ineffective support for the most vulnerable populations, declining public services, and growing social inequalities creating feelings of abandonment in many regions.



Economic Insecurity

Economic crisis affecting middle classes, low wages, corruption, absence of rule of law, and inequality within legal systems fueling discontent and existential fears among workers.



Democratic Deficit

Crisis of confidence in traditional parties, major lack of interest among politicians leading to loss of confidence, and dissatisfaction not sufficiently addressed by established parties.

France's Structural Issues

The rise reflects **30 years of structural political failures**: declining public services, ghettoization, lack of common integration project, perceived security laxity, and housing crises particularly affecting Paris and working-class suburbs.

Austria's Analysis

The political left was cowardly against 1990s neoliberalism, became fragmented, focused on cultural rather than class struggles, and experienced bureaucratization after being strong for too long.

ECTUN's Roadmap Against Far-Right Extremism

1

Information Warfare

Coordinated information and awareness-raising campaigns exposing the lies and corrosive role of far-right groups, making visible their anti-labour positions in European Parliament and institutions.

2

Strategic Communication

Create common labels like "ECTUN: Trade Unions against Fascism in Capital Cities" and "ECTUN: Trade Unions against Racism and Xenophobia" for incorporation into union materials and websites.

3

Educational Campaigns

Information days on far-right impact on economy, public services, and citizens' rights. European campaigns appealing to progressive vote and fighting false information.

4

Coordinated Action

Joint declarations, synchronized mobilizations, simultaneous demonstrations in capital cities, and sharing of effective strategies across European trade unions.



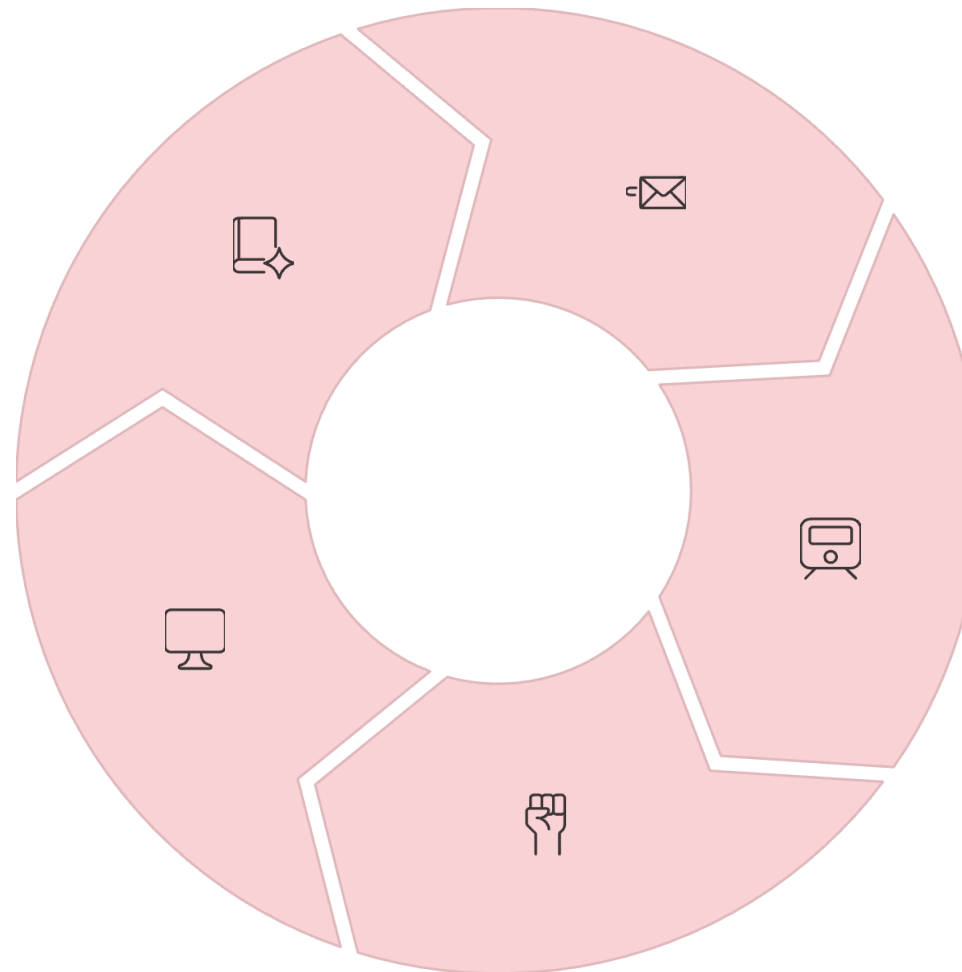
Comprehensive Action Framework

Educational Campaigns

Leaflets, videos, debates, actions in companies with multilingual anti-fascist toolbox

Monitoring Systems

Trade union observatory against far right, annual European Anti-Fascist Day mobilization



Communication Strategy

"Trade unionism, not the far right" campaigns breaking right-wing social media dominance

Training Programs

Anti-fascist trade union referents, cross-training, sharing strategies between organizations

Solidarity Networks

Support for trade unions under attack, trade union-democratic municipality pacts

"Scientific findings and practical experience show that organised workers tend to vote less often on the right. This is another reason why we must continue to build up trade union organisational strength." - OGB Austria

Building Resilience for Democratic Future

14

Union Organizations

Across 10 European capitals united in fighting far-right extremism

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Capital Cities

From Athens to Vienna, coordinating anti-fascist trade union responses

30

Years of Failures

Structural political failures that enabled far-right rise must be addressed

Key Principles Moving Forward

- **Solidarity instead of division** - focusing on cohesion and fair work for all
- **Democracy and co-determination** - making democratic processes visible in everyday workplace life
- **International cooperation** - solidarity beyond borders through European trade union work
- **Personal resilience building** - strengthening colleagues who face anti-democratic agitation

Working Group

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We thank the members who responded to the questionnaires. We hope this publication will be useful in your union activities as we continue the fight for democratic values and workers' rights across Europe.