

CGTP-IN COMMENT ON EMPLOYMENT IN PORTUGAL IN 2012



According to the Eurostat, in August 2012 the unemployment rate in Portugal was 15.9%, meaning a figure of real unemployment of 1.393 million (adding the available inactive and the part-time under-employed). This in a country with a population of 10 million and an active population of 5.5 million. For the under 25, the official unemployment rate is 35.9%. Both indicators went up since the last year.

Social protection for the unemployed covers less and less workers and people. Right now, only ¼ of the unemployed has an unemployment benefit, with the government wanting to shorten the period of payment and, once again the amount (around – 10%, fixing it at 377€, under the poverty line, which is 421€).

Job precariousness remains high: over 20% is the official figure, but it is surely higher if we include false self-employment which the Labour Inspection does not control. Precariousness is mostly hitting the young (over 50%).

If the proposal of the 2013 State Budget is not turned down in Parliament, the situation will even get worse. At the best, Portugal will register a 1% recession and an official unemployment rate of 16.4%, but indicators will surely be worse, since the government is under evaluating the macroeconomic scenario, and giving it no credibility.

What we are facing is a massive destruction of jobs. By the end of the third year of the “troika” and government programme, Portugal will have lost 428 thousand jobs. This incredible figure highlights also the weakening of our productive fabric, not only demonstrated by the unemployment rate but also by other indicators, including the return to massive emigration leaving our country.

There is also an accelerated and deliberate policy of wages reduction. In public administration with successive wage cuts and confiscations; in the private sector with the freezing and obstacles to collective bargaining by the employers; in social protection with lower unemployment benefit amounts; in employment policies, with measures that promote precariousness and low wages and with job centres offering only low paid and casual jobs.

Nominal remunerations are strongly dropping (both minimum wage and employment volume). The national minimum salary reflects on the drop of purchasing power (-1.5% in 2011 and - 2.7% in the current year).

All in all, a very serious employment situation which has only got worse with the “austerity” policies implemented by the Portuguese government, in agreement with the EU and the IMF.

For all this, we have more than enough reasons to continue our struggle against exploitation and impoverishment, for a Portugal with a future. This is why the CGTP-IN has called a General Strike for 14 November, the same date in which the ETUC is appealing to a European Day of Action and Solidarity. Thank you very much.

Deolinda Machado
Executive Board member

Confederação Geral dos Trabalhadores Portugueses