

Privatising pensions and raising the pension age is a European policy



The General Secretary of the pensioners of the World Federation of Trade Unions, Kim Boix, explains to "[Haravgi](#)" that the attack on workers and pensioners in France is part of EU policies. It also documents the situation in Spain and the attack on the pension system and the public health system. As he notes, these are policies implemented at the expense of the working and popular strata in order to overcome the capitalism its systemic and structural crises.

Interview with Yiannis Kakaris

We are currently witnessing the major strikes and mobilizations taking place in France for the pension system. Is this a European policy? How are the rest of Europe affected?

The struggle of the working class (and as part of it of pensioners) in France is not only European, it is global. Capitalism, in order to have money and

overcome its systemic and structural crises, imposes (through the International Monetary Fund) the privatization of pensions.

Today, there is more money in public pensions around the world than in private banks, and the leaders of capitalism want to grab that money. An important step in this direction is the downgrading of the public pension system by raising the retirement age and reducing the money paid to pensioners each month.

The European Union adopted, to this end, on 22-3-2022, a binding regulation: "European Individual Pension Scheme", which gives large private banks the exclusive right to manage future pensions.

But in reality almost 90% of private pension funds go bankrupt, starting with those created by Pinochet in Chile with the help of the yellow unions (they supported him, and continue to support him, to get money for their leaders).

How high is the quality of life of pensioners in Spain in view of the policies imposed in terms of privatisation of social security and pensions?

Today, there are about 10 million pensioners in Spain. Most of them receive a pension below the minimum wage (currently €1,080). Medications are not 100% free, and sometimes retirees (as in the US) have to decide whether or not to eat, depending on the payment for medications.

To combat this reality, there is a large unitary movement (which has brought tens of thousands of demonstrators to Madrid many times) that every week demonstrates in front of the headquarters of public administrations in more than 300 cities.

Thanks to this struggle, Spanish pensioners received an 8.5% increase in our pensions at the beginning of 2023, while in collective bargaining the yellow unions, those that obey the bosses, accepted increases of only 3% on average.

The European Union demanded the privatisation of pensions in order to pay the Spanish state its fair share of the funds raised in response to the [COVID-19](#) pandemic.

What are the most important problems facing the working classes in Spain?

The main problem is, as in the entire capitalist world, that wages are much lower than the wealth produced by wage earners and therefore do not allow them to live decently (while the big capitalists, with the capital gains they steal, hoard most of the planet's wealth).

While companies are doubling their profits, wages are losing purchasing power every year because they are rising less than the increase in the cost of living caused by inflation.

A complementary problem is the obedience (in order to continue receiving millions in financial subsidies) of the Confederation of Trade Unions "CCOO" and the General Union of Workers "UGT" to the orders of governments and employers, betraying the workers they claim to defend. In May this year, these unions signed a state social pact with wage increases of only 4%, when inflation is already above 10%. That is, they accept another loss of more than 6% in the real income of wage earners.

In the last decade there has been a major effort to privatize public health, especially in Madrid. Apart from Madrid, is something similar being pursued in other parts of Spain? What is the situation in Spain's public health system?

The fight to defend public healthcare is now a reality in every corner of Spain. In almost every city, unifying platforms have been created to defend Public Free and Quality Health. These platforms are coordinated to stop the privatization process imposed by the European Union and encourage health professionals to participate in the popular struggle. Thus, there have been actions by professionals not only in Madrid, but also in most of the big cities.

Currently, exacerbated by decisions taken during the [COVID-19](#) pandemic, the public health system is increasingly providing care to patients, often over the phone instead of face-to-face visits, has increased already long waiting lists for surgeries and is referring an increasing proportion of medical care to private health.

How do you assess the action of WFTU pensioners?

The World Federation of Trade Unions created the sectoral TUI (International Union of Trade Unions) of Pensioners at its 16th congress (Athens, April 2011). TUI conferences have made this part of the WFTU grow: the first took place in Barcelona (Spain) in 2014 and the second in Bogotá (Colombia) in 2019. Today, we have already organised around 80 trade unions from more than 60 countries at TUI.

As a sign of our progressive strength and organization, we will organize the 8th World Pensioners' Struggle Day on October 1st, with activities on 5 continents. Summaries of our activities can be found at: [News | Pensionistas.info](#)

It contains videos, photos and documents in 13 languages, including Greek, which summarize our activity in the 9 years of our existence.

Moreover, we are the only global pensioners' organisation. There is no other on the planet, because the yellow unions, those who deny the existence of the class struggle, have not succeeded (for the time being) in creating a global structure of pensioners' organizations.

As a branch of the WFTU we are recognized by the ILO (International Labour Organization), which invites us to its World Congresses. On the IOC website you can see and read the speeches we make every year to governments and employers' organisations around the world.

Our struggle is getting better and better coordinated every year, and our class enemy is increasingly concerned about our fighting capacity.

All that is needed is to get all the class unions to organize the pensioners and coordinate them with our global work.

If this becomes a reality, we will have the potential to influence 20% of the world's population and 30% of people with the right to vote.

Pensioners can be of great help in the struggle against capitalism and imperialism on a global level, which are the main objectives of the WFTU.

*Translation: Gabriela David

