



Agreed Resolution

Committee Congress of the Union of Finance Personnel in Europe (UFE) in Copenhagen, 17 -20 September 2012

UFE represents the interests of employees of the tax and customs administrations in all grades across Europe, with 400,000 individual union members organised in 40 separate European unions from 20 countries.

Delegates to the Customs Committee Congress in Copenhagen have endorsed the following resolution to take forward key concerns of common interest amongst our member unions with the European Parliament, the European Commission, and for individual trade union representation to separate government administrations in our member union's respective countries.

UFE notes with concern that governments in almost all European countries have systematically and deliberately reduced the number of staff deployed on Customs activities over a number of years. The reports we have from respective countries across Europe indicate that there is a consistent and unrelenting increase in smuggling and other illegal trade activity, ranging from serious narcotics trafficking and firearms smuggling, human trafficking, a dramatic increase in cigarette and tobacco smuggling, a serious problem of mineral oil smuggling, particularly in Ireland and the UK, product piracy, as well as an increased terrorist threat to air and sea transportation. In addition, record amounts of VAT and other excise tax are going uncollected each year.

UFE believes therefore that there is a direct correlation between increased instances of illegal trade activity and failures to collect excise revenue and a continued reduction in staff. UFE believes that in order to address budgetary deficits, to properly tackle losses in revenue and to adequately protect borders and safeguard the citizens of Europe, it is entirely counterproductive and irresponsible to continue to cut the numbers of staff in the very department capable of collecting additional revenue and guarding against tax avoidance.

UFE therefore calls for an urgent and immediate investment in Customs administrations and a subsequent increase in staffing levels in all European countries. UFE is opposed to the 'austerity' agenda and programme of public sector job cuts which has been adopted across many European countries in order to allegedly tackle budget deficits. UFE calls on governments across Europe instead to invest in staff and adequate resources as the only viable alternative to tackle revenue losses and address the budgetary crises caused by irresponsible banks and big businesses.

UFE notes that there are some notable exceptions to this programme of continuing job cuts, and UFE recognises the advantage of stable policies in countries such as Sweden where the government has provided the Customs

administration with a stable budget without the need for cuts for the last six years.

UFE additionally calls on respective governments, the European Parliament and the European Commission to recognise the invaluable work undertaken by Customs officers. Our basic demand is to ensure that employees of respective Customs administrations are properly and adequately remunerated for their work and that due regard and respect is given for the health, safety and wellbeing of our members at work.

UFE notes in addition that there will continue to be inefficiencies in individual Customs' administrations as long as there is limited cooperation between separate countries' Customs administrations. To this end UFE supports any initiatives for cross-country and cross-border cooperation and for joint working initiatives.

UFE notes in this regard the emerging trend amongst some member countries to use the opportunity of the economic crisis to outsource public services to private sector companies, and for private sector companies to subsequently offer inadequate and under resourced services to the public whilst avoiding public accountability. Selling off public services to private sector companies is unacceptable and unsustainable, affects public confidence in respective governments and potentially compromises the security and individual rights of European citizens. UFE argues therefore for public services to be run by public servants for the good of the public and not for private profit.

UFE is additionally concerned about the increasing prevalence of attacks on the fundamental rights of trade unions the right for trade unions to organise workers and represent its members. These attacks range from the withdrawal of time for trade union representatives to be able to conduct union business, detrimental changes to the legal framework which limit or disrupt the ability of trade unions to conduct its business and to consult with members, and, in the case of our colleagues in Hungary, to actively obstruct and dismantle the structure and operation of the trade unions.

UFE believes that strong and effective trade unions are in fact a key indicator of civilised society in which governments and employers work in a sophisticated industrial relations framework for the benefit of both the business and of the workers.

UFE accordingly demands:

- **That immediate and urgent investment is made in Customs administrations across Europe to ensure that staffing levels are addressed and increased;**
- **That Customs officers and border staff are offered fair and adequate remuneration which reflects the commitment and professionalism of officers and the value which civilised society place on an efficient and effective Customs service;**
- **That all Customs officers are provided with protection at work, both in terms of the protection and safeguarding of their health and safety, and the wellbeing and support of officers at work;**

- **That all Customs officers are provided with a decent and consistent level of training;**
- **That where new states join the European Union and where this leads to the depletion or closing of a border control, guarantees shall be offered for the continued employment for those Customs officers;**
- **That public services are run by public servants for the good of the public and not for the benefit of private sector profit;**
- **That consistent and appropriate standards of control are applied across countries to control the cross-border traffic of goods and services, and that appropriate sanctions are imposed on member states where a consistent approach is not adopted;**
- **That all European countries respect the fundamental right of trade unions to organise workers and for trade unions to represent the interests of those workers without fear of obstruction or reprisal.**
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