

European Manifesto for a People's Europe 2014

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Yes to Democracy

No to Corporate Rule

Bríd Smith MEP Candidate for Dublin

PEOPLE BEFORE PROFIT

What the European Union likes to call “democracy” increasingly works to defend the interests of big business, not the people of Europe. The Brussels corporate lobby is large, active, well-funded and well-connected. Therefore it has the power and the money to shape a large proportion of the legislation that comes out of the EU. If we consider the fact that as much as 50 per cent of our domestic laws now originate in Brussels, the direct impact on our lives of corporate Europe is considerable and it is growing.

Real Democracy – End the rule of the corporate lobbyists:

The Corporate Europe Observatory has exposed how BusinessEurope – one of the most powerful business lobby groups in Europe – is working hand in glove with European Commission to force through neoliberal reforms. This includes echoing BusinessEurope's demands for ‘wage flexibility’ in order to keep labour costs down to make their profits rise. The European Commission is prioritising policies that mainly benefit transnational corporations instead of supporting workers rights and essential public services.

If elected Bríd Smith will shine a light on their activities and seek to drive them out. She will fight for a democratic Europe that is built on solidarity.

No Water Charges:

The EU Water Framework Directive is clear. Water charges should fully recover the cost of drinking water provision and waste-water disposal. It is industry not individual households that use, by far, the highest proportion of water. Yet the majority of the cost of water is been forced on to ordinary people through water charges of €560 per household per year.

Brid Smith and People Before Profit are completely opposed to water charges.

Defend Public Services – Stop Privatisation:

The EU bureaucracy pushes an endless agenda of privatisation and wants to cut back on public spending at all costs. The Irish government has already sold off parts of Bord Gais to a British company with a record of hiking up gas prices to bolster profits. This agenda of privatisation is clearly an ideological approach designed to support the ever more discredited neoliberal economy. It only benefits a small group of wealthy individuals, bankers and transnational corporations.

This insistence on entrenching neoliberalism is also profoundly anti-democratic. When given the chance, European citizens have voted against privatisation, demonstrating, for example, their resounding rejection of water privatisation in the 2011 referendum in Italy. Across Europe people are building powerful anti-privatisation campaigns to stop public services being sold off, like the campaign here in Ireland to stop the sell-off of our forests.

Brid Smith says no to privatization. Instead we should tax the rich to fund our schools and hospitals.

Cancel the National Debt: The European Central Bank and their Irish allies have made us responsible for the private gambling debts of bankers. Each year we will spend €9 billion in interest payments on the national debt. In fact, according to Eurostat, Ireland has paid 42% of the total cost of the European banking crisis, at a cost of close to €9,000 per person (does not take into account the €18bn put in from the National Pension Reserve Fund). The figures show that while the banking crisis cost Berlin €40bn, Ireland is liable for €41bn. If we factor in the size of population and GDP of the EU's biggest state, the crisis has cost Ireland 25% of GDP and Germany 1.5%.

Even though the banking system has been allowed to destroy the lives of working people in Europe, new banking regulations that could go somewhere to protecting us from such future occurrences continue to be prevented by the powerful banking lobby who are worried that it may put a small dent in their obscene profits.

A vote for Brid Smith is a signal that the Irish people want to unilaterally cancel EU imposed debt.

Real Jobs – Not Forced Labour Schemes: There are approximately 5.7 million young people currently unemployed across Europe. The EU promotes schemes like the "Youth Guarantee" but when it comes to funding schemes adequately they fall short. The ILO estimate that €21 billion would be needed to invest in jobs for young people yet only €6 billion has been put aside.

In Ireland, in the last budget €35 million was directly cut from young people, yet only €14 million was given back via the Youth Guarantee. Governments across Europe are forcing young people into unpaid internships and forced labour schemes where young people work for 22 months for as little as €1 an hour.

Brid Smith stands for real jobs and proper government investment in public sector jobs and training.

Workers Rights

The EU has recently established a 'nominal unit labour cost' measure which seeks to limit wage rises over a three year period. The EU Commission is trying to block strong health and safety measures under the guise of removing 'red tape'. Sometimes EU directives can be used to improve workers conditions. But, invariably, the Irish government tries to weaken these mild measures.

Brid Smith will highlight every directive that can be used to help workers and fight for them to be made Irish law. She will act as a watchdog for workers rights; she will not take the massive 'fat cat' EU salary but only the average workers' wage and will donate the rest to political campaigning for working people.

Protect our Environment from Corporate Interests

Big Business uses its power and influence to undermine basic environmental protection. A recent proposal from the European Commission to tackle climate change was gutted after by lobbying from the fossil fuel industry. This type of lobbying creates a serious barrier to efforts to move away from dirty fossil fuels and transform the energy system. Instead the plans give a green light to the socially and environmentally damaging practice of 'fracking', the process of extracting hard-to-reach natural gas through hydraulic fracturing that is being championed by Big Oil as the new energy frontier.

Brid Smith opposes fracking and the nuclear power. Our planet can only be saved by a shift away from a competitive, for profit economy to one based on social need. We need democratic economic planning rather than spurious market driven mechanisms that do not work. Alternative energy sources need to be developed on the basis of public ownership not private greed.

No to TTIP (Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership)

The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership or TTIP was negotiated in secret between governments and business and will be used to weaken social, environmental and economic standards on both sides of the Atlantic (to create an 'enabling environment' conducive to business), It will give corporations the right to sue governments who try and legislate in the public interest, e.g. by banning GMOs, fracking or other socially and environmentally harmful practices. It will also give business a huge say in all future regulations. In short, TTIP will undermine democracy and the role of elected governments while further empowering the rights and role of corporations.

Brid Smith will oppose trade agreements that arise from secret negotiations and which are designed to free corporations from greater public regulation.

Against EU Militarism – For a Europe of peace and freedom

EU Military expenditure in 2010 amounted to €194 billion which was the equivalent of the annual deficit of Greece, Spain and Italy combined. The EU Commission is actively promoting an EU arms industry through its Defence Industries Taskforce. Foreign interventions- often led by a former colonial power – are occurring more frequently. We are opposed to the growth of EU militarization and its increasing tendency to act at the behest of US foreign policy and NATO. We would like to see the EU adopt the same position of neutrality as that enshrined in the Irish Constitution (though in practice often undermined by the Irish government).

Brid Smith will expose and oppose any support for the arms industry. She will oppose EU imperial ambitions and demand it stop interfering in neighbouring countries, such as Ukraine. She will actively support peace movements in both the EU and countries like Russia. She will highlight the US's continued use of Shannon airport and demand that the airport return to its neutral status.

People Before Profit's Vision for a Different Europe

Brid Smith and People Before Profit are not 'anti-Europe' – quite the contrary. It is the way the EU is run that we object to. We urge the closest cooperation between the Irish people and all the peoples of Europe. We positively welcome the people who come here as migrants and contribute so positively to Irish society, just as Irish migrants have contributed to so many countries round the world. We stand in solidarity with all those Europeans, be they Spanish or Greek, British or Polish, who are suffering from and resisting the austerity policies imposed by the EU commission, the European Central Bank and the IMF.

There is immense wealth in Europe. The economy of the European Union has a GDP of over €12.894 trillion which makes it the largest economy in the world if treated as a single economy. Our vision is of a Europe where this wealth is placed under the democratic control of its people and distributed fairly to serve the interests of the people.

Such a Europe would easily be able to afford free and good education for all its children and students; free and good health care for all its citizens; free and clean water for everyone; decent social housing for all its families and individuals.

We want to see a Europe in which education; health, water and housing are treated as basic human rights, not commodities or sources of private profit.

We want to see a Europe that treats all its citizens equally, regardless of race, nationality gender, sexual orientation or religion. We oppose racism, xenophobia, sexism, homophobia, and religious intolerance.

We want to see a Europe that is at peace with the rest of the world and treats it with respect and equality.

We want a Europe that gives more not less aid to those suffering poverty and starvation in the Global South which in the past has suffered so grievously, as did Ireland, from British and European colonialism.

We want a Europe that plays a huge positive role in protecting the environment and combating both the causes and the consequences of climate change. We call for a ban on fracking throughout the EU and for a massive shift to renewable energy (solar power, wind power, tidal power).

We understand that bringing about this vision for an alternative Europe will require much more than electing MEPs. It will need a huge mobilization of people power across the continent. But, as the Indignados movement in Spain, the mass demonstrations in Portugal, and the great resistance in Greece have all shown, this is possible.

If elected Bríd Smith will use her position to encourage the mobilization of people power in Ireland and across Europe in every way possible.

PBPA European Manifesto