

Adopted by the EL Executive Board in Rome 18-19 February 2017

*Motion: Protest is not a crime! #JobstownNotGuilty*

The right to protest is under threat in Ireland. It is deeply worrying that a 17 year old was found guilty of false imprisonment because of participating in a sit-down protest against Joan Burton, then Deputy-Prime Minister. On 24 April, the first of three trials of 18 adults for 'false imprisonment' and related charges will commence. If convicted, they face a maximum sentence of life in prison. In addition to the devastation of the lives of the defendants and their families, a sentence of longer than 6 months would result in one of the defendants, Paul Murphy, former GUE/NGL MEP, being automatically removed as a Member of Parliament, therefore cutting across the democratic decision of those who elected him.

These convictions would have the effect of criminalising protest and sending a chilling message to all those who would seek to protest in the coming years – trade unionists, women's rights activists and others. As left-wing representatives across Europe, we, the Party of the European Left (EL), believe that protest is not a crime. In different countries, we have seen movements of people against austerity and they have often been met by attacks on democratic rights. We believe that it is vital to stand together because an injury to one is an injury to all.

The EL stands in solidarity with the defendants and the #JobstownNotGuilty campaign. We call for all the charges against protesters to be dropped and the right to protest to be defended.