



Radical Options for Scotland and Europe

For public ownership and democratic control

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Briefing 61 September 2023

Scottish Government's 2023-24 Programme

[Programme for Government 2023 to 2024 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot)

This was launched on 6 September by Humza Yousaf as First Minister. It has three key themes: Tackling Poverty; Building a fair, green and growing economy; Delivering effective and efficient public services.

The verdict from the Fraser of Allander Institute is that there is little new in it. Programmes already announced will continue – with occasional small additions. Some very controversial legislation, such as the Social Care Bill, strongly condemned by the trade union movement, will also continue. Nothing will be done to resolve the biggest problem: the massive financial pressures on local government services. Nor, it seems, is there much for the NHS.

There will be legislation to control short-term (mainly holiday) lets. But little if anything to tackle homelessness. On child care there will be funding for two year olds 'who will benefit most' – with reference to 13,000 additional places but not when or where. Private providers of child care will be required to pay £12 an hour. £9m is promised to enable 1,000 most disabled to living more independent lives. Fuel insecurity payments will be continued till March.

But tricky issues are postponed. The working group to consider Council Tax reform will 'continue its work'. Proposal on tax reform are promised for 2024.

Trades Union Congress: TUC Principles for Devolution 2023

This four page document was issued in August to develop a 'clear, shared narrative around what needs to happen to ensure devolution delivers for working people' that is also 'relevant across the diversity of devolution arrangements across England and Wales (and wider UK)'. It proposes the following principles

Solidarity: 'building solidarity between the regions and nations of the UK ... equality of esteem and treatment'

Social Partnership: 'formal social partnership arrangements to balance out employer interests' ... 'equal status' ... 'new spaces for political, trade union, civil society and business partners'

Devolution ... ensuring trade union recognition ... no detriment

Employment standards: above and beyond UK standards ... locally relevant

Further devolution where 'there is a clear case ... improve workers' lives'

Devolution should further democracy, devolution, transparency: 'truly reflective of needs ... not another administrative bureaucratic layer ... to empower local actors ... ensure .. social partners are constitutionally written into governance structures...'

Locally responsive public services No a way of government passing on responsibility devastating cuts

Funding for devolved authorities should be fair. Should match need and be for multi-year periods

Adequately provide for **shared responsibilities** – where these exist

Tackle regional inequalities where these exist.

EU struggling to achieve growth (Eurostat)

In second quarter of 2023 the EU economy recorded no growth.

EU	0.0
Germany	0.0
France	0.5
Spain	0.4
Poland	-2.2
Sweden	-0.8
Italy	-0.4

in July 2023 Germany saw a -0.9 decline in exports.

ETUC: ‘Collapse in Workers Purchasing Power’

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) has written to the European Commission President about the collapse in workers purchasing power while corporate profits and dividends increase. Payouts to shareholders increased by 10 per cent in the second quarter of this year following a 14 per cent increase in 2022. Average wages, on the other hand, grew by only 4 per cent last year against a background of a 10 per cent rate of inflation driven primarily by the growth in corporate profits.

Immigration: EU Court of Justice legalises ‘push-back’

On 7 September 2023 the EU Court of Justice ruled that the Greek government and Frontex acted within EU law when they deported a Syrian family without giving a legal hearing to their previously lodged appeal to stay. This decision is likely to have long-term consequences in terms of the admission of immigrants as asylum seekers.

So far this year over 3,000 people have died trying to cross the Mediterranean – with a callous indifference shown by EU border police and every legal attempt made to exclude independent rescue charities. Deaths crossing the English Channel are inexcusable – but many less have taken place (390 over the past 23 years).