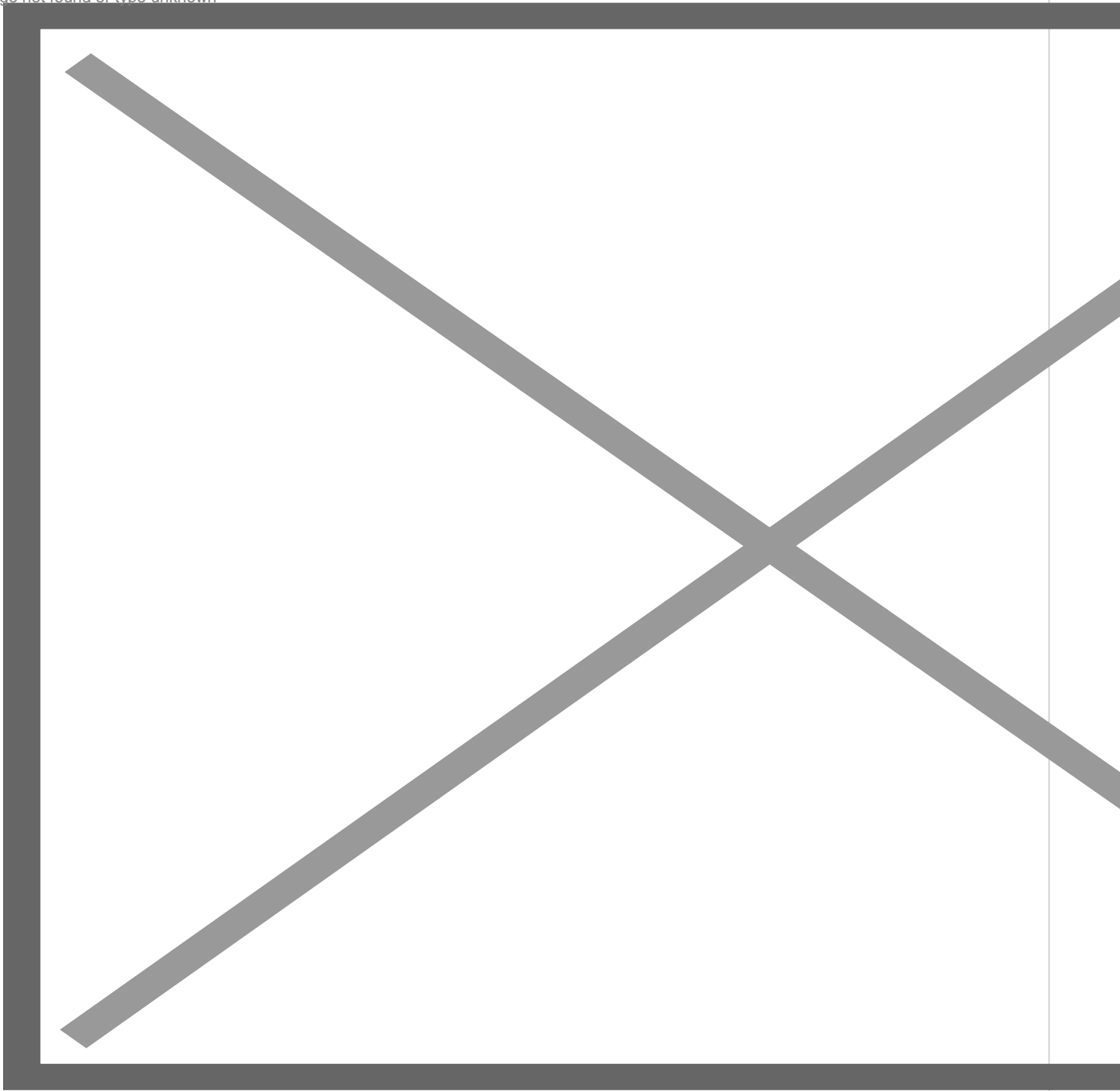


Impatient and agitated trade unions

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Europe union agitation. Image:UGT

By Roberto Morejón

With the height of the COVID-19 pandemic behind us, trade union agitation was reborn in Europe, demanding new and long-standing demands.

Strikes, street protests, union meetings and other pronouncements have gained strength in recent months.

From France to the United Kingdom and on to Portugal, Greece and Spain, the demands were heard loud and clear in the face of what many describe as severe blows to a once highly publicized residual welfare state.

Both workers and retirees insisted in their street and other demonstrations on evidencing what they consider as aggressions to social protection mechanisms, health, education, social security and basic services rates.

Of course, the most followed public demonstrations of the unions in the Old Continent in recent months were those in France, where they demanded a reversal of a reform of the retirement system proposed by the nation's president, Emmanuel Macron.

The United Kingdom followed France in the list of countries with the greatest workers' upheaval in Europe with strikes by teachers and railway workers, as well as in the health sector.

In Spain they also lamented what they presented as a healthcare system afflicted by a lack of personnel specifically in Madrid, the capital.

The insufficient response or simply the ignorance of the governments to strike actions and other types of actions, crowned the union displacements.

This was compounded by irritation at the high prices of food, energy and essential goods and services, in circumstances where wages and pensions were not being increased.

The European Trade Union Confederation set as its priorities for the current year the search for solutions to mitigate inflation.

In the opinion of union leaders, the rank and file must engage in more vigorous collective bargaining with employers and demand job and income protection.

Of course, in the face of phenomena aggravated by instability in times of military conflict in Europe, European trade unions cannot forget past unsatisfied grievances, such as the undervaluation of women's work and wage inequality with men.

In contrast to those who predicted the decline of trade unions, Europe has seen growing demonstrations of impatient and worried wage earners and pensioners in its streets.

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