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Advancing social justice in Europe and worldwide

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SOLIDAR Weekly Round Up 14-09-2012

Editorial: More Union? More ambition! More courage!

by Conny Reuter, Secretay General

On Wednesday, the President of the Commission made his annual speech on the State of the Union in the European Parliament in Strasbourg. His comments on a lack of fairness and equity between Member States, credibility in policies and a crisis of confidence were absolutely right. For us, this is the reason why citizens in many countries are turning away from this singular and historical project. He called for “new thinking” and a “new direction” and gave his response as “the decisive deal for Europe”.

There is no doubt that Europe is at a pivotal moment, but is the call for banking, fiscal and political union new? What is missing are courageous political decisions to build up a social union. Yes, we can be proud of our European Social Model, but this model is being increasingly threatened and weakened as a result of austerity measures and the introduction of market and competition, for example in the health and care sectors. These consequences were not part of his speech, this policy not question marked.

Nevertheless the President of the Commission did open a window of opportunity by proposing a new Treaty which we have understood will include a new social pact or social protocol. We do need not more nice phrases or open method of coordination, we call for a “hard” law on social policies to ensure a socially cohesive and inclusive Europe. This is the challenge for the trade union movement, social civil society organisations and progressives in Europe now.

Congratulations Harlem!

We congratulate Harlem Désir in his new position as Secretary General of the Socialist Party (PS) in France. We are pleased to see this friend of SOLIDAR – who chaired the SOLIDAR Silver Rose Awards for 3 years in a row - and convinced European now leading the PS.

He has an outstanding past in civic movements as co-founder of the French anti-racist association, SOS Racisme, and promotor of the slogan “Touche pas mon pote” in the 1980s. As an MEP he was – and will remain - a precious ally in our fight for fair globalisation, social standards and decent work in trade policies. Bonne chance and bon courage Harlem!

European Solidarity and the Karlsruhe Decision

This week, Germany’s highest court, the Federal Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe, gave a ruling which clears the way for the ratification of the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) by Germany. This is not only an important victory for pro-Europeans, it is also an important step towards more democratic control as the decision increases the access of the German Parliament to information on the ESM. But this is not going to be the end of an ongoing controversy on the degree of solidarity between Member States.

As a recently published survey by SOLIDAR German member AWO confirms, there is still a lot of work ahead for politicians to convince people, especially in Germany, of the benefits of the EU. The poll revealed that 68% of the 1000 citizens polled would like to see less solidarity by the Federal Government with “weaker” EU countries. “The results show that there is little solidarity with Europe in Germany” said Wolfgang Stadler, AWO Chairman. He continues: “The federal government should stop scaring citizens on a daily basis with new scenarios on the costs of Europe and instead start finally explaining why Europe is important for us.” [Read more...](#)

International Cooperation

SOLIDAR Calls for a Humanitarian Space in Syria

Since the outbreak of violence in March 2011, many thousands of people have fled from Syria to neighbouring countries. In recent weeks the exodus from Syria is growing and threatens to overwhelm international relief efforts, confirms UNHCR, the UN Refugee agency. SOLIDAR members [ASB](#), [NPA](#), [AWO](#), [Volkshilfe](#), [MPDL](#), [Solidarité Laïque](#) and [Solidaridad Internacional](#) are exploring possibilities on how to further strengthen international relief actions through field offices in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Turkey.

The most serious humanitarian disaster though is taking place within the country. Tens of thousands of people are displaced and people are dying due to lack of access to desperately needed medical care. An end to the atrocities is essential to allow the international community to take immediate relief action in Syria and a humanitarian space has to be guaranteed for those in need.

EU Commitment to Place Human Rights at Centre of International Policies

With the adoption of the Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy in June 2012, the EU expressed its commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights “in all areas of its external action without exception”. To enhance the effectiveness and visibility of the EU human rights approach, former Greek minister of foreign affairs, Stavros Lambrinidis, took office on 1 September as the first EU Special Representative for Human Rights.

SOLIDAR will be monitoring this encouraging commitment and expects, together with its members and partners, an ambitious EU agenda placing human rights at the center of all internal and external policies in a decisive and coherent way. Against this background, SOLIDAR will host on 17 October a [Round Table](#) in the European Parliament, where human rights defenders from Colombia, Hong Kong, Zimbabwe and Pakistan will share their stories and urge European policy makers to “walk the talk”.

Social Affairs

Proposal For Monti II Regulation Withdrawn

This week, the European Commission withdrew its proposal for the so-called [Monti II regulation](#). The proposal which intended to clarify the exercise of the right to take collective action within the context of cross-border service provision, was stopped by Member States in June objecting to the proposal on the basis of a violation of the EU principle of subsidiarity.

Originally, the proposal was issued in a legislative package on posting, comprising an Enforcement Directive for the posting of workers as well as the Monti II Regulation. Across Europe, trade unions criticised the latter, saying it undermined the right to strike as guaranteed in art 28 of the European Charter by giving equal importance to the right to strike and economic freedoms. The European Trade Union Confederation is now calling for the European Commission to put forward a proposal for a social progress protocol to be attached to the European Treaties clarifying the relationship between fundamental social rights and economic market freedoms. Read the [ETUC press release...](#)

Network News

Read Italian member **Arci**'s [newsletter](#).

[Donate to Solidar Suisse](#)'s campaign to help Syrian refugees.

[Read](#) Spanish member **ACPP**'s news.

Read Belgian member **Solidarite Socialiste**'s [press release](#) on attacks against its Colombian partner organisation, IPC.

[Sign up](#) for Italian member **ISCOS**'s debate in Turin on 26 September on a development programme promoting environmental protection, employment promotion, rights and social cohesion in Italy and globally.

Read Italian member **AUSER**'s [latest news](#).

Partner News

Read the [latest article](#) by our Israeli partner **Workers Advice Center** on the bad employment situation of Arab women in Israel.

Helpage International will host a [roundtable](#) at the European Parliament on 4 October, called 'Age-friendly EU development cooperation'.

The PES group in the Committee of the Regions published the [outcome document](#) of its Rijeka conference: '10-point Socialist agenda for industrial renewal in Europe'.

The European Ombudsman launched a [new video clip](#) called: Tangled up in EU administration? The European Ombudsman can help you!

Calender

October

7: World Day for Decent Work

17: Making Migration Work for Development conference

SOLIDAR is a European network of 59 NGOs active in over 90 countries working to advance social justice in Europe and worldwide. SOLIDAR voices the concerns of its member organisations to the EU and international institutions across the policy sectors social affairs, international cooperation and lifelong learning. For more info: www.solidar.org

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