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Advancing social justice in Europe and worldwide

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SOLIDAR Weekly Round Up 30-11-2012

Editorial: ANNUAL GROWTH SURVEY - the right remedies?

by Conny Reuter, Secretary General

This Wednesday, the European Commission adopted the 2013 Annual Growth Survey (AGS), which kick-starts the third European Semester for better economic policy coordination. The AGS aims at aligning Member States' budgetary and economic policies with the Stability and Growth Pact and the objectives of Europe 2020 Strategy. Like in 2012, the AGS 2013 sets out five priorities designed to guide Member States through the crisis to renewed growth: pursuing differentiated, growth-friendly fiscal consolidation; restoring normal lending to the economy; promoting growth and competitiveness for today and tomorrow; tackling unemployment and the social consequences of the crisis; and modernising public administration. Furthermore the "youth guarantee" is suggested in the Commission's Youth Employment Package that is announced for 5 December.

The AGS refers rightly to the social dimension of the crisis, calls for "investments in education, research, innovation and energy" and "to ensure the effectiveness of social protection schemes in countering the effects of the crisis" through the development of active inclusion and by strengthening "the link between social assistance and activation measures". But how are the call for the "modernisation of social protection schemes" and "reforms of pension systems" to be understood? Taking into account the current political make-up of the Council, it will not go in the direction of social consolidation.

When it comes to employment the AGS points (p.10) measures "to facilitate flexible working arrangements within firms, reduce severance pay for standard contracts and simplify individual or collective dismissal procedures" and "steps" which have been taken "to enhance flexibility in wage determination" and "easing the conditions for firms to opt out of higher-level collective bargaining agreements and the review of sectorial working arrangements" as well as others made "to limit the tax burden on labour, notably for the low paid, as part of broader efforts to shift the tax burden away from labour"? Is it seriously claiming to undermine social dialogue and decent working conditions? At least it is in line with DG ECFINs employment report and can be considered a neo-liberal agenda.

In the first years of the crisis the so called automatic stabilisers have proven their effectiveness and the strength of our social protection scheme. Decent work and the respect of collective bargaining and industrial relations are an essential part of our social system which SOLIDAR has always defended (link to DWIR) on the same level as freedom of association and human rights. Together with our partners from Social NGOs and allies from the trade unions we will have to have a very close look at how the neo-liberal elements of AGS 2013 will be translated in the country specific recommendations for 2013. Maybe the response will require more than one action day!

Social Affairs

Social Innovation Does Not Replace Investing In Social Inclusion

At a joint Eurofound-SOLIDAR conference on active inclusion and social innovation, SOLIDAR Secretary General Conny Reuter stressed that social inclusion is a pre-requisite for the creation of a just and cohesive society in which each individual can fully participate and realise his or her potential. Current austerity measures jeopardise economic and social cohesion in Europe and cause social hardship while turning a blind eye to the longer term social costs. The director of Eurofound, Mr. Juan Menéndez-Valdés, highlighted that the different strands of the active inclusion strategy need to be implemented in a more integrated and coherent way. This was confirmed by European Commissioner László Andor, who stated that "we need to sustain social investment into human capital and social cohesion to avoid much higher costs in the future" – a thought that will be reflected in the social investment package that will be issued in the first quarter of 2013. Read his full speech. Some of the most relevant messages from SOLIDAR members can be found in the latest **SOLIDAR**

[briefing](#) that was launched at the conference.

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International Cooperation

UN Vote on Palestine

65 years after the UN plan of the division of Palestine the UN voted yesterday with 138 in favour, 9 against and 43 abstentions for the upgrade of Palestine to a non-member observer state. This is a huge success and necessary step for the recognition of the undeniable rights of the Palestinian people!

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Update on the Situation in Egypt

Our Egyptian partner organisation Center for Trade Union & Workers' Services has issued a [press release](#) concerning the latest developments in Egypt.

SOLIDAR Joins Trade Unions in the Closing Conference on Decent Work for Domestic Workers

The closing conference of the ITC-ILO, ETUC and EFFAT project “Decent Work for Domestic Workers” took place at the ILO's International Training Centre in Turin, Italy, on 27 and 28 November. SOLIDAR participated in the conference as a partner of the [12 by 12 campaign](#) for the ratification of ILO Convention 189 on Domestic Workers. About 50 participants from national trade unions, and European and international organisations gathered to discuss past achievements and future challenges.

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The World Social Forum on Migration Pays Tribute to the Victims of a Workplace Accident in Bangladesh

At the initiative of the Bangladesh Institute for Labour Studies (Bangladesh) and LEARN (Global Network Asia), during its 3rd plenary session the [World Social Forum on Migrantions](#) respected one minute's silence to pay tribute to more than 100 workers killed and injured in a fire in Bangladesh earlier this month.

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Education

SOLIDAR-CEMÉA Round Table on Building Learning Societies: Recognition and Validation of Learning Outcomes of Social Work and Volunteering

On 28 November, SOLIDAR and its member CEMEA hosted a joint round table at the EESC in Brussels as part of the EUCIS-LLL lifelong long learning week bringing together education and training practitioners, social service providers, representatives of EU Institutions and researchers to discuss ways to recognise and validate learning outcomes of social work and volunteering. The round table, attended by more the 75 participants, stressed the importance of developing mechanisms for the validation of non-formal and informal learning at the Member State level that will allow for the recognition of skills, competences and knowledge acquired through volunteering and social work. Please click here for the [agenda](#) and the [briefing paper](#) that was handed out.

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Migration

SOLIDAR Calls on the EU to Live Up to Its Commitment to Migrant's Rights

In a message to a conference hosted by SOLIDAR's Spanish member ISCOD on « Decent Work in the Development Effectiveness Principles», which took place on 21 November 2012, SOLIDAR called on the EU to honour its commitments to human rights and labour standards, such as the Charter of Fundamental Rights, as well as to ratify ILO Convention 189 on Domestic Work and the UN Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and their Families (ICMW). This situation is worsened by the crisis and austerity measures. Migrant rights are human rights! Follow the link to read the [full statement](#).

Network News

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

Italian Member **Auser**'s latest [updates](#).

U.K. member **GFTU** invites you to join an [online learning course](#).

Italian member **Legacoopbund** has a [press release](#).

Belgian member **Pour la Solidarité** has [news](#).

Partners News

CTUWS has a [press release](#).

UNRWA has an [update](#) on the situation in Palestine.

EAEA has a [press release](#).

ETUC has a [press release](#).

Inclusion Europe wants to invite you to a [round table](#) in Brussels.

The [latest news](#) from the PES.

Social Platform has [news](#).

Agenda

5-7 December: Second Annual Convention of the Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion

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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