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Advancing social justice in Europe and worldwide

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SOLIDAR Weekly Round Up 11-01-2013

Editorial: Just another European Year?

2013 been declared the European Year of Active Citizenship. With the European elections next year and perhaps a new

European convention, this European Year will provide an excellent opportunity for the debate on the future of Europe and the involvement and participation of its citizens in the process. Polls in most of the Member States show an increasing rejection of Europe or at least an increasing level of skepticism. This European Year, although with a budget of only €2 million for the whole EU 27, shall be used by civil society organisations like SOLIDAR to tackle the central questions: what does active citizenship mean today and what is its future outlook, within the European democratic framework?

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Social Affairs

Employment and Social Developments in the EU: growing divergence and higher risks of long-term exclusion

On 8 January, DG Employment published the second edition of the [Employment and Social Developments in Europe \(ESDE\) Review](#), offering an analysis of the economic and social situation in the EU in 2012. In the past year, several Member States suffered escalating debt crises resulting in decreased public spending. Since social and employment trends differ fundamentally between different parts of the EU, finding the right policy responses at European level is a challenging task. The report confirms a new pattern of growing divergence regarding unemployment rates, which is most striking between the North and the South of the eurozone.

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Social progress in modification of public procurement rules

On 18 December, the Parliament's Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee (IMCO) adopted its [report](#) on the proposal for a revision of the EU Public Procurement Directive. Progress has been made with regard to simplified rules and a higher contracting out threshold for social and health services as well as specific provisions more adapted to the nature of these services. There was also a vote in favour of a better use of public procurement to achieve social and other societal goals.

A major success was the abolition of lowest cost as an award criteria for social services and other services directly provided to the person. Instead of simply accepting the lowest bid, public authorities should go for the "most economically advantageous tender" (MEAT) which could also include life cycle costs or social objectives such as buying from firms with a particular social profile. In addition to this, quality was made a mandatory element in the award criteria for contracts concerning social and other personal services. Alternatives to public procurement in the provision of social services were included to make it clear that the directive does not question the right of public authorities to provide services themselves. The vote also confirmed that Member States are free to organise the provision of compulsory social services and other services as services of general economic interest or as non-economic services of general interest. Finally, the parliamentary report specifies that the directive does not affect the way in which Member States organise their social security legislation.

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Failed negotiations on the working time directive

The European social partners failed to reach an agreement on the revision of the EU Working Time Directive. Since November 2011, European social partners have been attempting to conclude an agreement which would amend the existing EU Working Time Directive (2003/88/EC), and should be implemented by a Council decision.

Major disagreements were – like in the past – over on-call time. Employers' representatives decided against a recognition of on-call time at work as working time. Trade unions found this unacceptable, pointing out the negative health effects on employees. This is the second time that negotiations on the revision of the EU Directive have failed, which means that the 'old' directive from 1993 remains valid. The European Commission now has the opportunity to come forward with its own proposal – although an earlier attempt in 2009 failed after conciliation talks between the European Parliament and the Council concluded without agreement on the Commission proposal.

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Balkans

Project on social service delivery launched on 1 January

On 1 January, the 4-year project 'Improving the provision of social service delivery in South East Europe through the empowerment of national and regional CSO Networks' was launched. Coordinated by German SOLIDAR Member **Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund (ASB)** and involving the SOLIDAR Secretariat and regional partners, the project aims to build civil society organisations' (CSO) capacities for civic empowerment and influence on public reform process as well as to strengthen CSO Networks dealing with Social Services Delivery in the Western Balkans Region. The official kick-off conference of the project is foreseen for March 2013.

International Cooperation

Domestic Workers still lacking effective legal protection: ILO report

2012 brought significant progress for the rights of domestic workers including seven ratifications of the ILO Convention on Decent Work for Domestic Workers (Convention No. 189).

Nevertheless, the recently published ILO report '**Domestic workers across the world**' shows that 1) Domestic work, being performed behind the doors of private households, still remains a sector often 'invisible' and unprotected by national legislation; 2) only 10 per cent of all domestic workers are covered by general labour legislation to the same extent as other workers. 3) More than one-quarter – or some 15.7 million domestic workers – are completely excluded from the scope of national labour legislation.

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Three Kurdish women activists shot in Paris

During the night of Wednesday 9 January, three Kurdish women activists were killed in the Kurdish information centre in Paris. The three victims were Sakine Cansiz, one of the founders of the Workers Party of Kurdistan (PKK) who was in the past imprisoned in Turkey and had the status of political refugee in France, Dogan Fidan, representative of the Brussels-based Kurdistan National Congress (KNC) and Leyla Soylemez, a young activist working on diplomatic relations and as a women's representative on behalf of the PKK.

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Network News

UK member **GFTU** invites you to their [National Youth Conference](#).

UK member **GFTU** presents its [day schools and round tables](#) for 2013.

Danish member **FIC**, Estonian member **JMK**, Lithuanian member **LLES**, Spanish member **mpdl** and Romanian member **Ado Sah Rom** published the [final report of the joint project 'How to fight youth unemployment?'](#)

Partners News

European Policy Center organises the contest '[The European Parliament - Why should I care?](#)'

Agenda

23-24 January [EESC Open Space Event](#), launch of the European Year of Citizens 2013, Brussels

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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