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Onderwerp: SOLIDAR Weekly Round Up 25-01-2013



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Editorial: Much ado about nothing?

Conny Reuter, Secretary General

On the anniversary day of the Elysée Treaty British Prime Minister David Cameron finally delivered his speech on Europe. In spite of the excitement this generated throughout Europe there was nothing substantially new, but it did contain many risks for the mid and long term. Is it right to reduce Europe to the single market and a free trade zone? Can we imagine a country whose financial industry plays such a dominant role wanting to give up any means of influence and co-decision?

He cited 'social affairs' as one of the issues that should be up for renegotiation but – not surprisingly - failed to address the essential point, namely the current socially imbalanced policies and the question of how to move towards a Social Union which would guarantee social cohesion and high social standards for all. Instead he made a thinly disguised attack on the working time directive.

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Civil Society ready to engage in the European Year of Active Citizenship

After the official launch of the [European Year of Active Citizenship](#) by the Irish Presidency and the Commission at the beginning of the month, the European Commission has organised a first thematic conference on the European Year under the title "Making the most of the European Year of Citizens" which was opened by Irish Minister of State Lucinda Creighton and the Economic and Social Committee (EESC) President Staffan Nilsson. There was a common understanding on the crucial importance of the year, notably the need for European citizens to be invited to debate the future of Europe, to acquire more knowledge about their rights and about how they can contribute to the design of policies.

From the [civil society side](#), SOLIDAR Secretary General Conny Reuter underlined in a [video interview](#) the opportunities that

this year represents, despite the low budget it has been granted compared to previous European year initiatives. In this time of crisis, “European fatigue” has set in. Many citizens have become disillusioned with Europe, which they see as the problem rather than the solution, particularly given the continuing democratic deficit and the gap between the institutions and citizens. Civil society organisations are ready to engage.

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Social Affairs

MEPs call for youth guarantee schemes

During the Strasbourg plenary session last week, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) voted in favour of a resolution calling on EU employment ministers to agree to a Council recommendation on the introduction of youth guarantees in all Member States. These guarantees are an instrument to ensure that young people in the EU are offered a job, continued education, training or apprenticeship within four months after becoming unemployed.

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INNOSERV project on facebook and twitter

As a project partner SOLIDAR invites you to join the INNOSERV project is on [facebook](#) and [twitter](#).

Enlargement

Social Services Provision in the Western Balkans - Kick-Off Conference

On 21 January, the European Commission hosted a [kick-off conference](#) for 18 civil society projects financed in the context of the Civil Society Facility (CSF) of the EU Enlargement Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA) with 150 participants from the Western Balkans and other EU accession countries. These new projects are centered on the clusters of social development, governance and environmental/energy issues.

In this framework, the project “Improving the provision of social service delivery in South East Europe through the empowerment of national and regional CSO Networks”, coordinated by German SOLIDAR Member Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund (ASB) and involving regional CSO partners as well as the SOLIDAR Secretariat, aims to build CSO capacities for civic empowerment and influence on public reform processes.

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International Cooperation

Thailand: human rights defender and labour activist sentenced to jail

On 23 January, the Bangkok Criminal Court condemned human rights defender and magazine editor Somyot Prueksakasemsuk to 10 years of jail. As highlighted by the Clean Clothes Campaign, Somyot - in detention since April 2011 for the publication of two articles deemed insulting to the monarch* - has been convicted solely for the exercise of his right to freedom of expression and opinion and the right to participate in public life. Today's verdict is a serious blow to the rule of law in Thailand and will further contribute to self-censorship. See the Clean Clothes Campaign [press statement](#).

The European Union has condemned the verdict and highlighted in a [statement](#) that it seriously undermines the right to freedom of expression and press freedom. SOLIDAR and the [Global Network](#) join the call on Thailand to act in compliance with its binding international legal obligations to respect and protect basic rights, and for this unjust verdict against Somyot to be overturned on appeal.

European and Arab progressive actors join forces

Progressive actors from all around the Mediterranean Sea came together on 19 and 20 January in Cairo at the conference [A common vision for a progressive Arab world](#) organised by the PES, the Global Progressive Forum and the [Arab Social Democratic Forum](#). More than two years after the beginning of the Arab Spring the progressive forces are beginning to understand that they have to stand together and develop a common policy aimed at the socio-economic development, good governance and human rights. SOLIDAR Secretary General Conny Reuter underlined the commitment to a strategy for social justice in the MENA region and in particular a focus on freedom of association. Civil society was involved in the revolution from the beginning and is still an important actor. In order to collaborate more closely and form alliances, progressive forces need active support and further empowerment. SOLIDAR and its members contribute to this goal by engaging in many Arab countries based on a [common strategy](#).

Lack of coordination and austerity measures: the wrong way out of the crisis

According to the [ILO Global Employment Trends \(GET 2013\) Report](#) published this week, an estimated 202 million people will be unemployed across the world in 2013. This situation is exacerbated by austerity measures and uncoordinated attempts to promote competitiveness in several European countries that have increased the risk of a deflationary spiral of lower wages, weaker consumption and faltering global demand.

The Report devotes particular attention to efforts needed to promote youth employment (nearly 13% of those under 24 were unemployed in 2012) and identifies three types of interventions to tackle it: i) enhancing young people's employability; ii) encouraging youth entrepreneurship; and iii) ensuring that young people are afforded rights at work, including the right to organise and bargain collectively, and adequate social protection.

Read the [press release](#) and consult the [full report](#).

Education

Ireland's Education priorities for EU Presidency

From 1 January 2013 to 30 June 2013, Ireland has undertaken the Presidency of the Council of the European Union for the seventh time, with the main priorities of: promoting sustainable economic growth and jobs and strengthening Europe's competitive advantage; restoring stability and confidence through effective governance for Europe, and supporting growth

and reform.

SOLIDAR, which is working to [promote the recognition of skills and competences](#) acquired in non-formal and informal working environments, welcomes the policy focus outlined by the Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairí Quinn T.D. He stated that *“improving training, skills and access to education will play a critical role in equipping citizens, particularly young people, to find work and in attracting investment into the EU”*.

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Network News

Belgian member **Solidarité Socialiste** participated in the [African Social Forum](#)

Italian member **Auser** has [news](#)

Luxemburg member **OGBL** published a [newsletter](#)

Partners News

French PS leader Harlem Désir and **German SPD** leader Sigmar Gabriel published an article about the 50th anniversary of the Élysée Treaty in [French](#) and [German](#)

EUCIS LLL published a [newsletter](#)

ETUC, Social Platform, EEB and **CONCORD** sent a [letter](#) to the European Council about the EU budget 2014-2020

ETUI invites you to their [conference on the European labour market](#) with commissioner Andor

Confrontations Europe organises a [conference](#)

European Women’s Lobby calls on you to join the [One Billion Rising campaign](#)

Pour la Solidarité opens the European year on Citizenship with a [forum on civil dialogue and participation](#)

Read the **PES** [newsletter](#)

PICUM has a new [bulletin](#)

AK Europa shares its [newsflash](#)

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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