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Advancing social justice in Europe and worldwide

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SOLIDAR Weekly Round Up 15-02-2013

Editorial: Small scale start up – the FTT!

Conny Reuter, Secretary General

The proposal to introduce a Financial Transaction Tax (FTT) is finally on the table. Fifty years after the Elysée Treaty, France and Germany have taken the initiative, with the support of nine other EU Member States, and more to follow.

Speculation was at the origin of the crisis. Instead of a banking system that serves the economy, a high-risk gambling system was introduced. Instead of raising salaries and boosting purchasing power, private debt accumulated through loans on anything and everything was the paradigm.

Instead of serving the needs of clients, speculation took over. Some see this system as a prolongation of Cold War style tactics, including the editor of the conservative newspaper Frankfurter Allgemeine, Frank Schirrmacher. In his recently published book he accuses the market movers and shakers of letting their egos take over, applying the single logic of algorithms, and losing control of the machinery of casino capitalism.

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Social Affairs

EU budget vote endangers social cohesion across the Union

Despite all the rhetoric about the need to better integrate economic and social policies and to build a sustainable economy, EU leaders agreed last week on a historical net reduction of the [EU budget for the 2014-2020 period](#). This will have a major impact on the future development of the EU and decisively hamper efforts to achieve the social objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

The deal reached at the European Council limits the maximum possible expenditure for an EU of 28 Member States to about EUR 960 billion (including Croatia), equivalent to 1% of EU Gross National Income. The overall expenditure ceiling has been reduced by 3.4% in real terms, compared to the current budget (2007-2013).

SOLIDAR considers EU cohesion policy and ambitious investment in education and training programmes as key to an inclusive and sustainable recovery from the crisis and the development of social progress across the EU, as Secretary General Conny Reuter expressed in [last week's editorial](#). With a reduced budget for the ESF and, even worse, the abandoning of a minimum share of 25% for the ESF from the overall Structural Fund budget, Europe will not be able to face the challenges of growing inequalities, persistent poverty and social exclusion and the need to invest in a knowledge-based economy. The budget cuts reflect a dangerous shift towards national interests to the detriment of jointly agreed EU objectives. We cannot cut our way to prosperity!

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EU Social Dialogue newsletter launched

The European Commission launched the second edition of the [EU Social Dialogue newsletter](#). Published three times a year, it provides a broad picture of developments in European social dialogue, taking place at cross-industry level and

through 41 **sectorial social dialogue committees**.

SOLIDAR strongly advocates for social dialogue as a key to decent work and quality employment. The results of SOLIDAR project "[Making Industrial Relations work for Decent Work](#)" highlighted that "outsider" groups, like young, migrant and low-wage workers, often face conditions of unequal treatment, indecent work, limited access to social protection, and insufficient representation in and by the traditional employer-employee relationship and social dialogue. Furthermore, "[Promoting Employers' Social Services Organisations in Social Dialogue](#)" is crucial to improving working conditions in the social and healthcare sector, making it more attractive for employees and using the significant employment potential in the sector.

Migration

SOLIDAR co-authors joint CSO Letter on Migration and Development to European Commission

As a member of CONCORD, SOLIDAR co-authored a [joint letter](#) by Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) sent on 11 February 2013, which calls on the European Commission to make a rights-based approach to migration the cornerstone of the EU Position on the UN High-level Dialogue (HLD) on International Migration and Development on 3-4 October 2013. In particular, the letter calls for the mainstreaming of strong legal provisions for migrant rights, decent work, social protection and the portability of social rights in EU Migration Policies. The majority of migrants constitute a vulnerable group that is mainly driven by development related push factors, notably the lack of decent work opportunities, unemployment and poverty, and which faces an "exploitation trap" in countries of destination. A truly rights-based approach to migration and development will therefore have to be based on migrant rights, decent work and social protection. Migrant Rights are Human Rights!

International Cooperation

EU Multi annual financial framework: what's in there for development?

The European Council reached agreement on 8 February 2013 on the next multiannual financial framework (MFF), which defines the budgetary priorities of the EU for the years 2014-2020. For the first time in the EU's history there has been an agreed reduction in the budget in comparison to the previous budget period: EU governments agreed a budget ceiling of €960 billion for the EU's expenditure for the period 2014-2020. The chapter on the role of the EU in the world, which includes the EU's development and humanitarian budgets, remains similar to levels in the current budget framework. The European Council also agreed that the European Development Fund- which finances the EU's cooperation with countries in Africa, the Caribbean and Pacific under the framework of the Cotonou Agreement - should also remain at the current level.

Ahead of last week's EU Summit, EP Development Coordinators sent a [letter](#) to EU ministers underlining that "EU aid costs each European only €0.50 per week.... Any agreement on the MFF should protect this investment, which represents only 6% of the total budget and has significant impact. In the past five years it has paid for more than 10 million children to go to primary school and provided 32 million with clean water".

The agreement reached last week at the European Council is still subject to adoption by the European Parliament. SOLIDAR trusts Members of the European Parliament will make an effort to revise the Council's decision.

EP Human Rights Committee committed to the cause of Thai labour activist Somyot

Two weeks ago, SOLIDAR together with the Clean Clothes Campaign and the Global Network addressed a [letter](#) to the European Parliament ASEAN Delegation and the Human Rights committee to call their attention to the Bangkok Criminal Court verdict condemning the human rights defender and magazine editor Somyot Prueksakasemsuk to 10 years in jail for exercising his right to freedom of expression and opinion and the right to participate in public life.

SOLIDAR welcomes the commitment of MEP Barbara Lochbihler, chair of the Subcommittee on Human Rights, who in response to the CSO letter contacted the Thai Embassy in Brussels to express her regret and disagreement with the Thai authorities' views on the freedom of expression. In their reply, the Embassy denied any human rights violations and referred to their *lèse-majesté* law which protects the Royal family from "defamation or hate speeches".

Education

Investing in education

Last week the heads of state and government of all EU Member States reached an agreement on the next EU budget for 2014-2020, that for the first time ever will decrease. One example of the impact of this is the proposed new programme for education, training, youth and sports – Erasmus for All. Following the conclusions on the [Multiannual Financial Framework](#), a total of 4 million people will benefit from the education and training opportunities offered, instead of the proposed 5 million.

The UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon at the last World Economic Forum in Davos [stated](#) that education should be a top priority not only because it fosters economic growth, but also due to its transformative potential to empower people and transform lives. "By influencing people's attitudes and behaviours, education is a key channel for better mutual understanding, tolerance and respect for each other". SOLIDAR members who work specifically with socio-economically vulnerable people – direct beneficiaries of the programmes, hope that this message will be kept in mind when taking the next steps towards a final budget decision , namely in the discussion in the European Parliament and later in the final vote.

Network News

Spanish member **Solidaridad Internacional** invites you to the [ODM \(MDG\) Festival](#).

French member **Fédération Léo Langrange** published [e-Blocnote n54](#).

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

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

Partners News

World Social Forum update

European Year of Citizens 2013 Alliance is on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#)

Read the [12 by 12 newsletter](#) on the Domestic Workers' rights campaign.

FEPS has [Fresh News](#).

Social Platform [press release](#) on active inclusion.

PES [press release](#) on the EU budget.

The **Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies** published a [press release](#) on new NGO law

ETUI invites you to its [monthly forum](#)

ILO Brussels [news update](#) on jobs, social inclusion and growth

Agenda

20-21 February: SOLIDAR [International Cooperation Forum](#), Brussels

5 March: SOLIDAR Round Table, [Promoting work-based learning: Dual VET systems – European Experiences](#), Brussels

6 March: SOLIDAR, FEPS and FES Round Table, [Enlargement: how the candidate and potential candidate countries perceive accession in the light of the current crisis](#), Brussels

26-30 March: [World Social Forum](#), Tunis

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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