

:: ANIMO MAGAZINE - NICE TO MEET YOU! ::

Special International Edition

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HELLO!

In this international edition of our magazine Boomerang you get a real glance of what young socialism in Belgium is all about. Animo young left is the youth movement of the Flemish socialist party in Belgium. Belgian politics is complicated, but we aren't! That's why we work together with our French speaking colleagues. Together we stand strong.

Animo is a vibrant and energetic political movement. We give young people a taste of politics from a left and socialist perspective. Together with its members Animo seeks to explore the political game, question it and raise awareness about the life and opinions of young people. As a political youth organisation Animo builds a fair, social and democratic society.

Street activism lies at the heart of Animo. Campaigning against injustice and for a better and more social future is one of our main goals. Together with more than hundred local branches we meet up for debate, congresses, master classes, and much more. But we look further. Injustice does not stop at national borders. Migration, human rights, development, international environmental policy: issues that can only be dealt with through international cooperation. Exchanging ideas with comrades abroad is not only inspiring, but makes us stronger as a worldwide movement.

Have fun reading about our actions and opinions. Meet Animo, meet the young left fire!

WANT MORE?

- Visit our website www.animoweb.be, learn some Dutch to get our points or just look at the pictures and shop around.
- Meet us at European and International events of socialist and social-democratic youth
- E-mail us info@animoweb.be to visit our headquarters in the heart of Brussels (Grasmarkt 105/44, 1000 Brussels)

ACTIONS & CAMPAIGNS

The range of Animo campaign topics is wide, from socio-economic themes to campaigning, housing, youth culture, feminism, LGBTQ rights and much more... Below you can find some of our recent campaigns.



Women Wanted... for elections

Women's rights are important every single day and month. But March is a special month in the Animo calendar, fully dedicated to women's rights, with International Women's Day being held on March 8 and Equal Pay Day also usually falling in this month.

2012 is a special year, with social and local elections. Although gender balance on election lists is legally required, young women often doubt to make their steps into politics. With this campaign, Animo encourages young women to stop doubting and raise their voices! A political world that reflects society is in our opinion much more representative, equal and simply better.

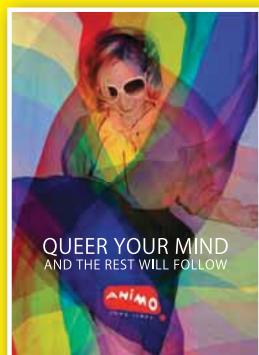
A room of one's own

Housing is a human right. However, affordable and decent houses remain merely a dream, and not more than that, for many people. In the whole of Flanders, more than 6.000 families are on the waiting list for social housing. In Brussels this percentage amounts to around 26% of its inhabitants. At the same time many houses in our country are empty. According to Animo this is a vast waste of resources. Not only is it a waste, having abandoned houses in your neighbourhood is also detrimental to the quality of life in these neighbourhoods. That is why Animo wants to tackle the ever increasing problem of houses being left abandoned and is continually pleading for more affordable and sustainable (in particular energy efficient) housing.



Queer your mind, and the rest will follow!

Queer your mind and the rest will follow! It was with this slogan that Animo took part in The Belgian Pride Day in Brussels in May. Open your mind and do not let yourself be misled by stereotypes. Animo wants a society where everyone can be itself. Straight, gay, bisexual, transsexual or transgender: does it really matter? All these labels should not be of any importance, as long as you feel happy.



Affordable and qualitative healthcare for everyone

Good health is priceless. But is it affordable? Unfortunately not for everyone. Certain groups in society seem to fall through the mazes of our social security. For them, good healthcare is simply unaffordable. Animo wants a society where everyone has access to affordable, high quality and accessible healthcare.

The end of Trafficking of Human Beings

Trafficking is probably the most repulsive result of a capitalist system that supports inequality. Central to each story of trafficking is the vulnerability of the victims through poverty, conflicts or other causes. Traffickers often promise their victims a better future or buy them from a person who already controls them. Through their weak position victims find it hard to escape the control of their traffickers. Victims of trafficking are of all ages and sexes, but the proportion of women involved is much larger.

Also in Belgium, people fall victim to trafficking. A couple of years ago, trafficking was mostly associated with sexual exploitation. Regularly stories surfaced about young African and East-European women who were smuggled to Belgium to become a prostitute. They receive shelter from specialised centres such as Payoke in Antwerp, Pag-asa in Brussels and Surya in Liège from the 1990's onwards. These specialised centres witness more and more a shift to forms of trafficking of human beings outside prostitution, like economic exploitation. Recently a case of economic exploitation drew a lot of attention in the Belgian media. There was the death of two Polish men. They stayed with nine other Polish men in inhumane conditions in the warehouse of the transportation company that employed them. Moreover their employer avoided the Belgian labour law by hiring them through the Polish branch of his company.

Fortunately a lot of organisations fight trafficking of persons. They focus on three aspects: prevention, protection and prosecution. The IOM organises awareness campaigns in areas that are very vulnerable to trafficking of persons. An important step to prevent economic exploitation is the ILO convention on domestic workers (C189). It guarantees domestic workers in the whole world certain basic rights like a minimum wage, access to social security and a decent organisation of working hours. The ITUC (International Trade Union Confederation) tries to establish the quick ratification of the convention by the "12 by 12" campaign. Their goal is to make

at least twelve countries sign the convention by the end of 2012. This way the convention will effectively come into force.

Secondly, much work still needs to be done on protecting the victims of trafficking. In some countries these people are often considered as offenders of the law and not as victims. This has to change. In Belgium they are attributed the statute of victim of trafficking of people. Victims are protected from their trafficker and get a permanent residence permit. As a consequence, they are obliged to collaborate with the justice system and they have to be assisted by a specialised shelter like Payoke, Pag-asa or Surya.

Concerning prosecution, it looks like our federal government will approve a number of crucial measures that have to fight subcontracts and false self-employment. Soon a project of law will be launched that holds a company responsible for the actions of its subcontractors. Moreover certain modifications were applied to the labour law of 2006. They will permit to trace false self-employment more easily and to fight it more efficiently. The socialist State Secretary of the Fight against Fraud, John Crombez, also plans extra examinations by the social inspection services. These measures are all going the right way, but as long as inequalities continue to exist, people will stay vulnerable to trafficking of human beings. Time for a social global alternative.



The Standard is Poor

Standard & Poor's lowered the rating of 9 European countries. Animo went to the Brussels stock exchange and launched its own rating agency. The goal of this action was to show that it is also possible to rate companies and countries on their social en ecological policies. Without any doubt, we gave the rating agencies as they exist nowadays a serious downgrade.

The judgement of rating agencies is taken far too seriously. The economic interdependence with 'big money' is simply too big for them to be impartial. Furthermore, history has proven that Moody's, Standard & Poor's and Fitch did not see the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers in 2008 coming. They gave the bank an AAA-rating, which is the highest degree of trustworthiness. All too often, rating agencies see austerity measures as miracle solutions, taking far too little into account that we should protect our social model. In addition, Animo thinks that rating agencies are not making their ranking based on the right standard: that of decency.

We believe that too much is being focused on creditworthiness, and far too little on trustworthiness and decency. Our rating agency specialises in social and ecological ratings, based on the social and ecological policy of a company or of a country. The Dexia bank for instance, which had to be bought up by the Belgian government, is in our opinion a symbol of the antisocial policies that caused the current speculation crisis. The bonuses for the Dexia top cannot be justified. Certainly not when the bank had to be saved with our money. Luckily there are also positive examples of companies that would get an AAA rating from the Animo rating agency. The Triodos Bank is investing in a better world. So here there are no investment funds that invest in arms trade or in nuclear power. A company such as Ecopower is scoring with the good service it is providing and with its renewable energy projects that are run in a cooperative way.



Image Animo

For each GDF Suez-Electrabel, a company that pays only 0,12% in taxes in Belgium, there should be more honest companies, that do see the value of solidarity and sustainability as they only way forward in Belgium and Europe. These companies get an AAA top rating from us. At this moment companies and countries are all too often only judged on their creditworthiness and not on their trustworthiness. While it should be exactly the opposite. Social and ecological standards should prevail over all others. Is it 'Standard & Poor's' or 'The Standard is Poor'?



DISCRIMINATION AT WORK: OR HOW DISCRIMINATION ALREADY CAN START AT YOUR APPLICATION

With Animo's May 1 action 'Strong in Work' we wanted to emphasise Belgium's strengths in terms of productivity, but first and foremost: how to make things better for everyone. And for those that are underpaid or unemployed in particular.

First and foremost it is important to make a distinction between two incentives for discrimination at recruitment. A first form of discrimination is based on the (bad) taste of the employer. On the basis of irrational motives, like prejudices, an employer doesn't want to be associated with a certain group or minority in society.

A second, more complex, form of discrimination is based on statistical generalisations of group characteristics. To save costs and troubles, employers often look at easily observable characteristics, when deciding who to hire. Demanding a language certificate is for example a cheaper alternative to the organisation of your own language exams. This also explains partially the contemporary focus on diplomas, since they point to certain competencies without further examination of capacities. Another example of a current practice is not considering female applicants for physically demanding jobs because men are in general statistically stronger than women. Generalisations lead to estimation errors and cannot deal with the complex diversity among employees. Nevertheless the employer will always work the same way as long as the cost of gathering information –“the information cost”- about an individual employee is bigger than the expected loss when hiring a less strong candidate. The fact that this practice still appears today, proves that for a lot of companies statistical discrimination still brings suf-

ficient cost advantages against the information cost when screening each individual candidate.

Statistical discrimination is thus not really inspired by a value judgment, but by a rational analysis of costs. This does not mean that such discrimination should be allowed, because this economic form of discrimination is neither fair, neither efficient. The generalisation is unfair towards atypical members of a certain group who find themselves above the average when considering the relevant characteristic, like the very strong woman. For members situated at or under the average an individual inquiry would not make a difference, since they will not fulfil the rightly established demands. Prohibiting statistical discrimination would cost a lot more for all companies who will have to test each of the many applicants for the necessary characteristics. However, this situation can only be avoided if group members with atypical characteristics can prove this to an employer in a credible way. The government has the responsibility to support the atypical group members through offering active guidance and free certification procedures. Statistical discrimination is inefficient because it is very demotivating for employees who are often hit by it. Why would they still invest in capabilities or be enthusiastic if they know that a potential employer will not notice this thanks to a few simple generalisations?

An alternative model for energy. Will the light really go out tonight?

When 'renewable energy' is mentioned, a lot of people immediately think about solar panels, wind mills and... that is about it. However, there is so much more to renewable energy than these types of energy source. There is no lack of innovative and sustainable alternatives. Some of them produce energy in a decentralised way. Others depend on large central energy production, like wind farms, hydroelectric stations, solar panel fields, but this evidently raises the question where we will find the space for these projects.

That is why it is important to go for renewable energy projects on the European level. Think about the North Sea ring, a ring of wind farms at the North Sea, or of DeSertec, a joint project of Europe and North Africa that plans to fill part of the desert with solar panels. In the future these projects will be able to produce a considerable part of our energy.

Less is more

An important element in our durable energy story is also saving energy, an element that received a high priority by the different governments in our country. Insulation and energy efficient domestic appliances grew in popularity. In 2006 the "energy cutters" were launched, a socio-economical project that educated and guided people to execute energy saving measures. The Flemish govern-

ment also wants to concentrate on the energy efficiency of new buildings. In 2007 the norms for industrial buildings and schools were made more strict, from 2012 onwards all new buildings in Flanders have to fulfil these stricter norms. Eventually one wants to pass to passive buildings, a construction method that results in houses not needing extra heating or cooling and this during the whole year. Renewable energy is thus not only the production of, but also the saving of energy, because the cheapest and most durable energy is the energy that you don't use.

Still waters runs deep

The production of renewable energy is not constant and often shows strong fluctuations. To face these strong fluctuations we need forms of energy production that can be started quickly and

that as a consequence can guarantee a constant energy production. To find an answer to this problem we have to look again for a European energy network. On moments when the North Sea ring or DeSertec produce insufficient energy amounts the European hydroelectric stations (mostly situated in Scandinavian countries) come into play. Easy to engage and thus the perfect alternative to compensate the loss of production capacity.

Policy makers are still confronted with a lot of choices that have to give direction towards a durable energy model. That is a story of investing in a smart way and saving in an even more smart way. To choose for social and durable energy, that is good for us and for all generations to come, is a real choice for the future.

