

SOCIAL AFFAIRS FORUM NEWS / AUGUST 2014

Contents

SECRETARIAT UPDATES	1
POLICY UPDATES.....	3
PROJECTS AND ALLIANCES	5
NEXT MEETINGS OF THE SOCIAL AFFAIRS FORUM IN 2014	6
OTHER EVENTS.....	7

SECRETARIAT UPDATES

SOLIDAR Social Affairs Forum

Our next SAF meeting will take place on 1 and 2 December in Brussels, registration is open at http://www.solidar.org/spip.php?page=agenda&id_evenement=66

We will be able to cover travel and accommodation costs (according to SOLIDAR rules) for 1 person per member/partner organisation.

SOLIDAR Training Academy

The SOLIDAR Training Academy will take place on 3 and 4 November 2014 in Frankfurt, Germany. A detailed programme will follow soon.

The registration is open at <http://www.solidar.org/spip.php?page=agenda&date=2014-11-04>

We will be able to cover travel and accommodation costs (according to SOLIDAR rules) for 1 person per member/partner organisation.

SOLIDAR Social Progress Watch Initiative expert network

A “drafting team” was appointed during the meeting in Amsterdam with the aim of analyzing the inputs provided during the discussion and to present a proposal for a new SPWI to the working group. The drafting team is currently working on this. The “drafting” team is currently working on a proposal for the SPWI 2015 that will be shared with SAF members at the end of August.



SOLIDAR Social economy working group

The SOLIDAR Training Academy on 3 and 4 November will focus on two topics: Innovative social services - financing of and promotion for inclusive services. And: Attractive employment in social services for high quality services. The Academy will give space for discussions between members of the social economy working group and allow for peer learning and the exchange of best practices.

The next working group will take place in the framework of our Social Affairs Forum on 1 and 2 December.

Volunteering/active citizenship working group

Sabir Festival of Mediterranean cultures – For more solidarity in EU migration policy

In the last two decades, the island of Lampedusa, in the center of the Mediterranean has become a doorway for migrants arriving in Europe from the countries of Africa and the Middle East, often ruled by authoritarian regimes or dictatorships and often at war. The absence of fair and effective immigration policies and of an idea of reception in line with the international human rights standards, produce frequently humanitarian tragedies and problems and creates political and social tensions and conflicts. At the same time, the unplanned and improvised management of the arrivals fuels racism and public fear, manipulatively created in recent years through the rhetoric of invasion. This produces a negative image of the island, despite the solidarity attitude showed by inhabitants in many occasions.

In order to promote the idea of Lampedusa as the door to Europe, and not only a symbol of tragedies, SOLIDAR member ARCI – together with the October 3rd Committee, and the Lampedusa city council – is organizing the **Sabir Festival of Mediterranean cultures on 1 until 5 October 2014**. The event will bring together representatives of the civil society and institutions to promote a new idea of Mediterranean citizenship and solidarity. The dates were chosen to mark the first anniversary of the October 3, 2013, deaths at sea of 368 migrants.

SOLIDAR will take part of the event to call for a solidarity-driven EU's migration policy based on the indivisibility of human rights. In our view, the Dublin Agreement stipulating that refugees and asylum seekers have to ask for asylum in the country where they arrive as well as the populist and reactionary attitude of certain EU leaders towards migration policies contribute to diffuse a sense of isolation for the institutions in the isle. Therefore, it is time to change this pattern! Thus, it is needed to promote a rights-based approach to economic and social development in the country of origins and guarantees that the Post 2015 development framework promotes human development and social justice.

POLICY UPDATES

TTIP - German welfare organisations demand exclusion of social services

In a common [position paper](#), SOLIDAR member Arbeiterwohlfahrt (AWO) as a member of the German coordination organisation of welfare organization together with another network outlined their position on the ongoing negotiations of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) regarding social and health care services.

The paper sheds light on possible risks for the social and health service sector not only in Germany but Europe wide if a comprehensive trade agreement as currently foreseen is concluded, such as: the declaration of existing social and health standards as non-tariff-barriers to trade; an increasing pressure for economisation and rationalisation on personal social and health care services with a detrimental effect on their quality; a high degree of legal uncertainty caused by dynamic rules of liberalisation and the envisaged negative list approach.

AWO and Paritätischer demand the exclusion of social and health care services from the TTIP negotiations to guarantee the retention of high standards regarding consumer, workers, patients', data, environmental, health and social protection rights.

Furthermore, the high degree of secrecy maintained around the negotiations is being criticised. The European Commission keeps refusing to publish its negotiation mandate and all relevant negotiating documents. A comprehensive involvement of civil society is therefore not possible and obviously not desired.

The envisaged Investor-to-state dispute settlement (ISDS) must be abandoned to avoid the establishment of a parallel private international justice system which is unnecessary given the high standards of the European and US legal systems. As the recently finalized Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) has included an ISDS provision, we are concerned that this will be used as a blue print for TTIP, and allow US based companies to use their Canadian branches to present their complaints against European states.

Please find the SOLIDAR briefing paper on TTIP [here](#).

Call for Fair and Responsible Recruitment of Social Services Professionals abroad

Social and health services of high quality are an essential part of our European welfare system and are based on a universal social protection approach and the principle of solidarity. More specifically, quality social and health services guarantee the implementation of fundamental rights for all, ensure the creation of comparable living conditions and opportunities and contribute actively to enhance the physical, mental, cultural and social capacity of individuals to participate fully in society.

SOLIDAR has been working, also with other networks, for many years to support the improvement of working conditions in the sector. The main objective is to promote the sector's attractiveness as well as to stress the importance to provide an appropriate legal, political and financial environment.

In recent years, different developments across Europe are directly impacting the delivery and quality of social and health services. Due to an ageing society, increasing demand for social and health services and a shortage of skilled professionals in the sector, German non-statutory welfare organisations started looking into alternatives for attracting qualified personnel.

Since a few years now, they have been recruiting staff at a small scale outside Germany, partly with the support of the federal or state governments. This procedure doesn't come without risks regarding the fairness of mobility, wage dumping and the lowering of quality standards.

In a common [statement](#), SOLIDAR member Arbeiterwohlfahrt Germany (AWO) and the German umbrella organisation of non-statutory welfare services (BAGFW) take position on the issue of recruitment of foreign workers for the social and health sector in Germany.

They call for the respect of the following principles for fair and responsible recruitment abroad:

- Respect of the World Health Organisation guidelines for the International Recruitment of Health Personnel
- Simplification, standardisation and acceleration of the recognition of professional qualification
- Prohibition of commission fees to protect foreign staff from abuse and fraud
- Intensive preparation regarding language and culture of the host country
- Awareness of differences regarding qualification and activities between the professional fields in the home and the host country
- Equal conditions for foreign and national staff at the workplace
- Possibility of permanent residence and family reunification
- Comprehensive and long-term support for professionals in the workplace, e.g. mentoring programmes

The recruitment of staff abroad cannot replace a professional strategy to secure a sufficient pool of qualified personnel in Germany which needs better recognition and appreciation of the work in the social and health care sector as well as improved work and wage conditions.

European Commission conference on the EU 2020 Poverty target

In the context of the ongoing mid-term review of the Europe 2020 strategy, the European Commission is holding a high-level conference on **9 October 2014**. The aim of the conference is to take stock of the target to reduce poverty by 20 million people by 2020 and to define the way forward for the EU and the Member States.

If you are interested in attending please register using the link below by 19 September (no reimbursement of travel costs foreseen):

https://secure.destree.be/ei/getdemo.ei?id=453&s=_EVC0ULG41

PROJECTS AND ALLIANCES

PESSIS II

After the mid-term seminar that took place in Brussels on 5 June, the final conference of the project will be organised on 23 September in Brussels followed by the final project partners' coordination meeting. More information and the agenda will be sent around soon.

Negotiating Improvements for working Carers of Adults (NICA) project

After the second steering group meeting at the end of May, the next meeting will take place on 3 and 4 September in Bulgaria. Currently, a tool kit for employees is being developed and the final report is being drafted.

SOLIDAR will organise the final conference and dissemination event on 22 October in Brussels.

Partner search: Informal Social Networks as tool to counter the non-take-up of social security benefits and social services

EU Programme: Erasmus+ Erasmus+ Volwasseneneducatie (Grundtvig) Europa voor de Burger

'*Samenlevingsopbouw*' is looking for an exchange on methodologies to counter the non-take-up of social security benefits and social services. As an important tool, the organisation is experimenting with 'Informal Social Networks'.

Respond before: **30/09/2014**

Organisation

"*Samenlevingsopbouw*" counts 8 regional institutes and one support institute for Community Development in Flanders and Brussels. The Community Development sector has some 300 subsidized community development workers and falls within the remit of the Flemish Minister for Welfare, Health and the Family. Community development is a way of strengthening civil society by prioritising the actions of communities, and their perspectives in the development of social, economic and environmental policy. It seeks the empowerment of local communities: geographical communities, communities of interest or identity and communities organised around specific themes or policy initiatives. It strengthens the capacity of people as active citizens through community groups, organisations and networks on the one hand; and the capacity of institutions and agencies (public, private and non-governmental) on the other hand to work in dialogue with citizens to shape and determine change in their communities. It plays a crucial role in supporting active democratic life by promoting the autonomous voice of disadvantaged and vulnerable communities. It has a set of core values/social principles covering human rights, social inclusion, equality and respect for diversity; and a specific skills and knowledge base.

Partners searched

- Organisations for Community development (European Community Development Network)
- Organisations and groups working against poverty
- **Social Services** (of local and regional authorities or of civil society)

Problem definition

Non-take-up of social security benefits and social services

5% of the population lives minimum one month in a situation with no social protection. These citizens are rightful claimants of a minimum benefit, but they're getting no psychological, financial nor material support. Looking at the global social rights, 60% of the global population are rightful claimants of social rights without getting it.

'Samenlevingsopbouw' is looking for methodologies to counter the non-take-up of social security benefits and social services.

More info: <http://www.kcse.eu/informal-social-networks-tool-counter-non-take-social-security-benefits-and-social-services>

Who cares? Reconciling work and care responsibilities for dependent family members

Together with the European Trade Union Confederation (**ETUC**) **FERPA** and **EPSU**, **SOLIDAR** is involved in the project "Who cares? - Reconciling work and care responsibilities for dependent family members" that aims at collecting experiences from real life of how to facilitate reconciliation of working and family-life obligations. It can be a concrete contribution to meet the policy aspirations of the Social Investment Package and other policy targets about promoting active ageing and having more people working longer.

During the spring meetings of the Social Protection working group and the Women's Committee we presented the project objectives and activities. So far, a first round table was held on 3rd June in Brussels. A questionnaire was sent out to all our affiliates. The next stage will be three regional one-day workshops to be held in Stockholm, Milan and Berlin in October. The first workshop will be in Stockholm on **10 October** (languages: Swedish, English). The second will be in Milan on **17 October** (languages: Italian, English and French). The third will be in Berlin on **28 October** (languages: German, French).

Each of these workshops will deal with four main themes:

1. The situation of those being cared for and their carers and the level of awareness of the issue in public debate
2. Policy framework in different countries and helping and hindering factors in the policy framework
3. Existing practices in collective agreements or at company level to support working carers
4. What needs to be done to support carers: key issues for policy makers and social partners

Don't hesitate to contact Elsa if you need more information or wish to register to one of the 3 workshops.

NEXT MEETINGS OF THE SOCIAL AFFAIRS FORUM IN 2014

- **Training Academy: 3 and 4 November 2014, Frankfurt**
- **Social Affairs Forum: 1 and 2 December 2014, Brussels**



solidar



OTHER EVENTS

- **23 September (Brussels):** PESSIS 2 Final Conference
- **1-5 October (Lampedusa):** Festival of Mediterranean Cultures (see article above)
- **22 October (Brussels):** NICA final conference
- **20-21 November (Brussels): European Platform Against Poverty (EPAP) Convention**

SOLIDAR is a European network of 60 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