

For an East – West solidarity of the social movements

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Social rights in an

enlarged Europe

For an East/West solidarity of social movements

Conference-debate on the initiative of the association Vereniging Bijstandsbond Amsterdam (Netherlands), of the network of the European Marches / Euromarches against unemployment, job insecurity and exclusions; with the participation of the European Network of the Unemployed.

(Brussels, 19-20 March 2004)

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Dedicated to the Euromarches walkers who marked out the path to European and international solidarities since 1997.

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Introduction

Jean-Guy Dufour

The European Union is now at a crucial time in its history. On 1st May, the E.U enlarges to include ten new countries, of which most are in a very difficult economic and social situation, and talks are now on for the E.U. to be governed under a Constitutional Treaty based on very liberal schemes.

Therefore, a recurrent issue comes out with more strength than ever: Will the European Union still be for a large number, an abstraction so far from our daily lives, and thus, the place where social damage, more and more deeply suffered by a large number of people, is planned?

Then, people may turn away more and more from it at the risk of all xenophobic withdrawals...

Or instead, will the E.U. bring about hope in a huge space of liberty for all women and men who are living whatever their origins; women and men who keep on with a fair relationship with the rest of the world, a place where the economy serves the man and preserves our planet? Then people will really feel concerned.

To pose the question of the *reality* and the *future* of social rights in an enlarged Europe is then a really burning issue!

The Conference –was a debate held in Brussels on March the 19-20 2004, whose report is the purpose of this book, it did not have the pretentiousness to cover the topic in its entirety. Though, it was an opportunity to exchange information and thoughts which will, we hope, be of interest to all those who

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struggle everyday, throughout Europe, as much in Eastern as in Western Europe, to make prevail the material and spiritual needs of all women and men, and to recognise the urgency to care for our fragile planet, and not the opposite.

During these two days, a hundred activists from organisations of the unemployed and organisations who struggle against unemployment and job insecurity from several eastern European and western European countries, trade unionists, and other experts made a statement on their view of European employment and social policies; on the treatment of the issue of unemployment and their consequences in each country. They had kept themselves informed on the situation in eastern countries, more specifically in Poland. They attempted to bring out the crucial issues and common perspectives for action.

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**A step in our marches:
Enlargement: a new issue for
Euromarches**

Since 1997, we, activists from organisations of the Euromarches, from all European countries, gather to march, to debate, to build this Europe of the peoples which one day will have to overtake today's Europe, dominated only by the ideology of capitalism.

This conference was a step further in our marches which we hope will help us to make new steps tomorrow with a lot of others.

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Panel of the Assembly "Social Rights in an enlarged Europe"
(Brussels, 20th March 2004)

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Opening session

Moderator: Christiane Maigre (Euromarches, Belgium), Piet Van der Lende (Vereniging Bijstandsbond, Amsterdam)

The rights of the unemployed and precarious: a stake for the democrats and the workers of the enlarged European Union

Anke van der Vliet, on behalf of Vereniging Bijstandsbond, Amsterdam

Dear friends and comrades

On behalf of the Dutch delegation and of the Euromarches coordination, I wish you a big welcome to this conference on the future of the Social Rights in an enlarged Europe.

In addition to the celebration of May Day, the first of May will leave a mark on the E.U. enlargement. From this day, a large section of the people of Europe will face an uncertain future in a common economic, and political framework.

At the Lisbon Summit, in 2000, part of this future was sealed. The purpose of this summit was to be in 2010 at the top of the global fight for competitiveness with a highly developed, knowledge-based economy. With the Nice and Lisbon summits, the aims of high levels of social security cover and full employment were declared. However, progress in these fields must be in accordance with the priority of competitiveness, although one can doubt that one really conditions the other.

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For us, Euromarches, as a constituent part of the alter-globalisation movement, the prospect of a social Europe is of the utmost importance. The European political union is not an end in itself, but a possible way towards a better world in which the processes of global integration in the economical, political and social fields fit together and grow in a democratic way.

For the moment, political integration follows the agenda fixed by capital and free trade. Political and social integration are far behind. These differences in pace generate lots of problems and contradictions.

We have to keep in mind this background in examining the EU enlargement and its major consequences for social issues in the former countries as in the new ones.

When we speak of the major consequences of enlargement, we feel worried about the political responses which will be given to the entrance of a great number of states, people, and economies with a very low level of social protection. We would hope for a reallocation of the structural funds to the acceding countries to help them to have their economy and their infrastructures restructured, maybe also to improve the social protection of their people.

Another possible effect is the convergence of the existing social protection systems and their financing. Given the lower level of entering countries, this might lead to a lowering of the current levels of social protection in the former EU countries.

A third possible effect is related to the consequences of free circulation of the citizens of Europe and the open market process.

To start with this third item, we can observe that Austria and Germany will close their frontiers to the citizens of new countries. In the Netherlands and in France, we can note the same xenophobia and chauvinistic reactions. In Ireland and in Great-Britain, the labour market will be open to everyone but social protection will only be given to the citizens of the former Europe.

Similar measures are under discussion in other countries; always in the background are considerations to "social tourism". The people who voted to enter the EU saw the rules of

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the game change from one day to another. Their market is welcome, not their workers, their poverty and their misery.

That way, EU enlargement seems to be the lever making it possible to skip some of the boundaries of the traditions of liberal democracy. Nowadays, even among the Greens and the Social democrats, formalizing the current, the unequal share of welfare and institutionalizing a two speed society is proposed. In order to justify this fact, xenophobia and chauvinistic arguments are being used in a rhetoric where politicians want to be seen as guarantors of the interests of their voters as consumers and taxpayers.

Today, the principle of the free movement of goods and people makes it compulsory for us to worry about the satisfaction of fundamental human needs (or their un-satisfaction) and of an equal share in wealth.

According to us, a social Europe is a Europe with open borders and rigorous rules on social protection of the most vulnerable people and of insecure workers living with low income.

As far as the convergence of social rights and social protection is concerned, it is clear that the EU Constitution draft , written by Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, did not ensure a basis of solid principles on social protection. Actually, the right to housing, to an income, health, employment, pensions and work security were not given the same attention as capital interests did. This text, in its neo-liberal rhetoric, asserts that each problem has its solution in the efficient functioning of the market. In such a design, social protection is by definition sacrificed.

As for the convergence of the rules of taxation and their control, a clear tendency to share the revenue in a more and more unequal way can be observed. Taxation rate of high income jumped from 62,3% to 48,3% on average, the value added taxes increase everywhere, profit taxes fell from 44,8% to 31,8%, approaching the very low average of the entering countries which is 23,6%. At the same time, social standards have deteriorated everywhere and spending on public services has stagnated. Everywhere, the tendency is towards the privatisation of pension systems.

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In view of these negative evolutions, we can see politicians confined to a framework of opening borders to capital and trade, and not to workers. While the neo-liberal view blames or neglects the victims of the free-market competition, international capital does what it wants to do, at the vast majority of people's expenses.

Finally, we will probably see a reallocation of structural funds in favour of the entering countries. One can wonder if these funds will offset the damage done to local production in an open market. As these funds are maintained at their current level, such a reallocation will cause contradictions and conflicts in such sectors as agriculture; for farmers as for farm workers, which could feed chauvinistic and racist reactions in return.

Dear friends and comrades,

Today we will focus on EU evolutions on global and national scales in relation to the enlargement process.

Four working groups will look at different issues from four points of view:

- Enlargement and its social consequences
- Income, job insecurity and social dumping
- Migration and the free movement of citizens
- Social and civil rights and the European

Constitution

We will then draw the conclusions and consequences in terms of strategy and the proposal of alternatives.

Dear friends and comrades,

It is clear that the leanings of prevailing forces are opposed to our aspirations for a better world. To protect the interests of the fewest, thousand of millions are spent on xenophobic measures, on terror and war.

We find encouragement in the rise of the alter-mondialist movement to which we want to contribute in our way. Together, we will fight against neo-liberal forces. By joining our forces together, we will overcome our weaknesses which arise

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from our dispersion and from our too "localist" projects and we will find new forces through international solidarity. The development of social forums all over the world encourages us. In this spirit, we welcome the participation in our work of our comrades from Central and Eastern Europe.

Tous Ensemble!

Thank you!

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**European Marches against unemployment, job
insecurity and exclusions
Who are we?**

The European Marches network is a flexible structure essentially based on a "European Coordination" which implements the largest unity through initiatives such as debates and mobilizations.

This network does not pretend any hegemony and it has connections with every national, European and global network which struggles against the consequences of neoliberalism (as for instance Social Forums) and support unemployed, precarious people and those excluded from the system.

European Marches are not a trade union network: it nonetheless counts on the trade union movement in its whole diversity in order to further the cause of the unemployed and insecure workers.

Independent of all political organization, The European Marches are open to exchange with any political group represented or not in the European Parliament in order to further the struggle against unemployment, job insecurity and exclusions in the whole Europe.

Created in 1996, European Marches against unemployment, job insecurity and exclusions / Euromarches organised in 1997 marches through out Europe in order to denounce mass unemployment and long term unemployment in all parts of Europe. Coming from Finland, Tangiers, Sarajevo, the marches went through out every European country to converge at Amsterdam where the EU summit was taking place. About 50 000 demonstrators joined the walkers.

The Summit of Amsterdam decided to organize from 1997 in Luxembourg and then every year summits on the issue of unemployment. From Cardiff to Thessalonica, passing through Lisbon and Seville, European Marches followed all these summits in order to make all the scandalous decisions known.

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The only remedy EU proposed consisted in giving an impetus to measures known as "active measures", forcing the unemployed to accept any job, whatever the wage and flexibility conditions.

On the eve of the mobilization on the occasion of the 2000 Nice Summit, Marches initiated the first European Assembly of the unemployed and insecure workers in struggle. Thus, every year and more recently in the frame of the European Social Forum, this assembly makes a statement on the situation of the unemployed and insecure workers, on their claims and their initiatives, on their participation in the different social movements.

Since the Summit of Nice, European Marches pay particular attention to any topic related with the Charter of Fundamental Rights and to the Constitutional process engaged within EU, in the process of enlargement. European Marches thus take part in the initiative of the Network for a Democratic and Social Europe.

To know more about us: www.euromarches.org

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**A concerted policy
and its consequences**

When we will see that the measures to which the unemployed and more or less insecure workers are confronted in all the countries of the E.U.'15 result from a concerted policy between States at European level...

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Drawing made by Titom for the platform "Stop unemployed hunting" from Belgium on the initiative of "Collectif solidarité contre l'exclusion" (Collective solidarity against exclusion)"

European Employment policies in the frame of globalisation

Judith Delheim (Euramärches Deutschland)

Whoever lives in a capitalistic system has no choice but to enter in a direct or indirect way into the game of competition. Then come the following questions: are we aware of that fact? - Are we looking for or do we defend room for manoeuvre for autonomous and united behaviours? Do we fight this system of competition? Do we develop solidarity, first of all with those who are the most excluded?.

We should discuss European employment policy in this background, analyse its contradictions and develop strategies to fight the competition system. As far as the European employment policy is concerned, actually it is only a labour market policy (the point is not to create more jobs, giving decent conditions of living, with a social utility, which thus could be justified in an ecological point of view), four points are fundamental:

- 1 - Employment policy cannot be separated from the overall European policy. It is in the last resort a neoliberal and militarist policy
- 2 - It's always a consequence of a pressure from the bottom
- 3 - also, employment policy always deal with real problems and in the first place, mass unemployment.
- 4 - It is the result of national policies which are different. Concrete differences might lead to angles of attack for left wing strategies (employment policy in Finland differs from England's)

The history of the employment policy is the one of a competition always growing. This takes the shape of a competition between firms and their employees, between States

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and economical regions on a worldwide scale. At the same time, the influence of groups and financial markets who became relatively independent increased, and at every level - worldwide - European - European Union - member States of the E.U.- regions and local community, the same happened with the most powerful capital. That is what E.U. and those who have the power wanted. Nethertheless, bureaucrats and governments do not want to accept consequences in its entire scale, including because pressure from the bottom and competition. To be clearer, firms want to succeed in the market and to lower the unit cost price, lower their contribution to society.

But society has been built in such a way that it gives them:

- skilled enough labour
- they have at their disposal necessary resources
- ensures the security of production sites and markets
- guarantee environmental factors such as clean air and water

So, in order to raise concrete market shares and profits, one has to deregulate and privatise, one has to reduce tax. But society has to function. Governments do fulfil these expectations, they deregulate, privatise, but they want to keep control on society issues. As public income reduces thanks to fiscal presents offered to groups and rich people, they increase the pressure on those who are dependant on social funds, asylum seekers, the poor, unemployed, retired. They demand that each one spend more on education, health, "employability", social welfare, without creating any conditions to give people the means.

In order to justify this, we refer to the "conditions ruled by competition between establishment sites". The E.U does reinforce theses trends, for in the end its policy is designed for the powerful and for those who govern us. When in the spring 2000, in Lisbon our leaders decided to make the E.U the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, most of them were social democrats. They were talking about full employment, sustainable development and social cohesion. What had happened? Mass unemployment and its cost went on growing for years and that is the reason why most of elections finally turned in favour of social democrats. In United States GDP and productivity increased while unemployment was declining. But at the same time in USA, criminality and the

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number of "working poor" increased also, which was refused by social democrats. The war in Kosovo revealed great technological gaps between European and American weapons systems. Some of the international ecological conferences bothered USA. This led our leaders to take up this challenge, though, they should have known that the one who wants to reach production costs lower than United States firms' cannot achieve necessary social investment – the one who counts on international competition cannot undertake ecological transformation – the one who wants to emerge victorious from international competition, exasperates competitors, increases and exports social problems as well as ecological damage, and reinforces the crucial issues of mankind.

European Union banks on competition and uses its employment policy in order to increase competition:

1) – it forces the unemployed to accept a paid job regardless of the guarantee of a decent life, of the sense of the work

2) – E.U. employment policy seeks to make most people efficient in the labour market, regardless of job creation for a start

3) – It seeks to help people and firms to be good for the global market

5) – It demands more mobility for workers

6) – It punishes those who suffered defeat face to competition

All these five points are worsened by the E.U. enlargement,

- the role of E.U. in the GATT,
- concrete activities in non-member countries,
- challenges to other actors in the global economy,
- militarization of foreign policy which causes another arms race.

It is precisely thanks to enlargement that our "powerfuls" and our "leaders" seek to take advantage of global competition. They continue to foster competition in the field of employment and thus wage and social democratic dumping because E.U. and its domestic market also growing -the labour market and cheap labour offer increases too – the number of bankruptcies and thus the number of unemployed rise in the countries about to join – E.U. principles of recommendation on

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employment policy are imposed on new members. All this under the slogan "we are creating full employment". Without ever defining what it means.

In the end, full employment must mean a job allowing everyone who wants, to get the possibility to have an activity able to give a decent living condition, with a sense. The united struggle to defend, reinforce and expand workers and the unemployed's rights, and to develop economic democracy, constitute the main strategy to make this vision a reality.

The right to benefits won't be guaranteed at the European level : this may lead to a complete unravelling of social rights!

Marie Paule Connan (Euromarches, Belgium)

What is the European strategy for employment.? a methodical unravelling of the social structurations through putting pressure on people whose incomes are the lowest.

What about the European Constitution ? Indeed, the string would be pulled out. The right to benefits would be removed. There would be no possible recourse to any right.

Since 1997, the EU employment policy aims at putting into question the rights of work and the collective agreements.

The Euromarches against unemployment, precariousness and exclusion analysed the Employment chapter of the Amsterdam Treaty when it was signed; they immediately alerted people about the risks of social suffering that it would create.

The announced mechanism aimed to destabilise the most fragile categories of workers and the unemployed. The chosen vocabulary was particularly condemning: *unemployability, unadaptability, lack of entrepreneurship.*

The EU Treaty since 1997 indicates that the employment policy has to be compatible with the Broad Economic Policy Guidelines (BEPG.)

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What were these BEPG ?

Reading the European Commission's reports on that subject, we realised the consequences of concretising that compatibility:

“To obtain the desired results, in order to level down the wage scale there needs to be a 20-30 % decrease in wages costs for low skilled work, as happened in the States in the 70-80s.

In order to be efficient, such a measure would imply in Europe the same decrease in unemployment benefits and social benefits to escape the “poverty trap.”

Such a method would create a more unequal income distribution and could create categories of the working poor, who could not live on their wages.

In the States, this induced a change of orientation, with the implementation of a social aid scheme called *Earned-Income Tax Credit*

In Europe this would mean that part of the money spared on unemployment benefits would have to be directed to other forms of social transfers and would not help in lightening the strains on public spending.

“Such a decrease in wage costs would be hard to implement in the EU; it is possible nevertheless to go this way, by reaching pragmatic collective agreements between social partners, through implementing ‘insertion’ wages for the long term unemployed.”
Communication from the Commission entitled “Growth and Employment in the stability-oriented framework of EMU — Economic policy reflections in view of the forthcoming 1998 Broad Guidelines”

The ECOFIN BEPGs motivate and build the national systems according to an irreversible rhythm which imposes each year “recommendations” that States have to make reports on. These reports are evaluated and concluded with reprimands if they aren't implemented.

This evaluation is always in the same terms, repeated every year :

“Some progress has been made, but the decision makers have to continue their efforts. The member states have to tackle the lack

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of flexibility in their labour markets, take measures to reform their benefits systems”

Seven years later we can now see that this strategy has been completely implemented.

The future of the European strategy for Employment.

The European Commission has written a series of communications which announce the complete domination of the decisions of the economic and finance ministers (Ecofin council). ”through the rationalisation of the European process implemented for coordination in the fight against social exclusion by the European strategy for employment, for the implementation of the European interior market . (privatisation of public services). and the BEPGs.”

The BEPGs will be the motor of this planned process every three years. For that the ECOFIN council has announced its priorities which are a new reinforcement of sanctions towards people threatened or touched by unemployment or social exclusion. The member states will be asked to change their benefits systems so that “they favour participation in the labour market and avert the poverty and unemployment trap “ They also will have to reform their taxation systems and wage systems “ so that they take into account the link between social evolution , price stability and the labour market conditions.” The economic and finance ministers also ask to reinforce the efficiency of the active programmes of the labour market to improve the mobility of workers to increase manpower in all employment categories “ (Older people immigrants and young people.)

In order to imagine the future as it is scheduled by the dominant ideology of European institutions we have to link this unique process (iniquitous !) of coordination of economic policies of competition for privatisation of public services, and of social protection including social inclusion , health and pensions and the exclusion of rights to benefits from the list of common rights of the EU members.

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The future of the rights to benefits

The EU charter of fundamental rights, integrated in the European constitutional project, doesn't recognise the right to work, neither a right to social benefits. In rights (pensions unemployment benefits, etc) Nor the right to a living income, nor the right to housing but it only recognises the freedom to work and to look for employment in another member state. The access to benefits and to social aid where they exist. There is no question of justiciable rights but only objectives to reach "according to the modalities established by the communitarian EU rights legislation and the National legislations. Moreover, .this charter doesn't mention transnational rights to trade union action and to strike.

On the contrary, the constitutional project imposes very precise and drastic convergence criteria on the market, on currency, on the liberalisation of public services and the decrease in expenditure on social protection .

The states are free to do what they want with their social protection systems under the condition that they reduce their expenses in the social field, nothing is obligatory which implies that redistribution of wealth is not scheduled .

Can we imagine a reaction and a proposal of a European law which would aim at social progress ? When we read the constitutional project it seems impossible, as the unanimity of the 25 member states would be needed.

Some very big inequalities exist already between the 25 States and they could even deepen.

The European constitution would then be the basis of the organisation for the levelling down of rights and of the utmost social dumping. Obviously we are waiting for something completely different.

This constitution shows a strong regression .compared with the international agreements after the Second World War. In the 1948 Human rights declaration and in the 1961 Turin social charter the aim was to place these obligations on all states:

1) The right to social aid (we call it the right to income)

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- 2) The right to access social services
- 3) The right to unemployment benefits
- 4) The right to a pension

Our objective of the levelling up and of the implementation of a European collective solidarity system could be possible only if these rights were obligatory in all 25 states. This solidarity would be effective if it was expressed according to a percentage of the wealth of each country.

We expressed this demand before this European constitutional project. We expressed it as 50% of GDP per head .

We never imagined that these rights could be put into question.

Yesterday , before 2000 we said : “We have rights, we want more.”

Today the European constitution project says “tomorrow you won’t have any social rights anymore.”

This is not acceptable!!

How is the European Employment seen in each country?

This report of numerous different speeches on the topic tries to summarize the essential issues without losing the diversity.

Jean-Guy Dufour

Netherlands

The European policy which, aims at reducing social security expenses, making work as cheap and flexible as possible, forcing people to accept a low paid job to live, is implemented by the Dutch government as follow:

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- Social income cuts in comparison with wages
- Introduction of a personal contribution in welfare expenditures and in the access of public services
- Employers are in charge of sick leave in order to limit them as much as possible
- Establishment of a single counter for social allowances and unemployment benefits in order to monitor any accumulation
- Wage freeze during two years on the basis of an employer – trade union – government agreement
- Entitlement cuts to unemployed benefit
- Demand of compensations for social income as the acceptance of an inclusion plan

Following these trends, the Leijnse parliamentary commission propose the so called "*capucino model*" which aims at reorganizing the current social protection system on the whole with three levels of social incomes: a very low income guaranteed by the State for every citizen, an insurance based on wages and an insurance based on individual savings.

Belgium

The European employment policies are implemented as follow:

- There is an increase in the number of the "subsidised jobs system" targeting some specific groups: the Rosetta plan offers one year term contracts for young people and the Activa plan concerns long term older unemployed, etc. The beneficiaries of these plans are the employers who take advantage of the situation to make a lot of workers under the normal regime redundant to replace them by low cost jobs. As a result, this system does not create any jobs but shares the labour cost between employers and tax payers.
- Two years ago, the beneficiaries of the minimum guaranteed income (minimex) were obliged to accept an individual inclusion plan; that did not give rise to much opposition. Socialist deputy Vanderbrook's plan wants now to extend this system to all unemployed receiving benefits for a

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more than a 15 month period. They will have to sign a commitment to look relentlessly for jobs which we know are non existent. If their efforts are judged insufficient, they will be removed from the list!

Germany

In Germany, the red-green coalition devotes itself to a general social destruction in the frame of the Agenda 2010, without any resistance from other parliamentarians. The social welfare state, guaranteed by the Constitution is being reappraised and so is the social order set up after the war.

The Agenda 2010 plans the dismantling (privatisation) of protection measures in the case of illness, old age or redundancies as well as the abolishment of long term unemployed status. The four "Hartz' laws" orchestrate this leaning. In the labour market, short terms contracts have noticeably increased, their basic salary is based 20- 30% under tariff standards, redundancies are facilitated, unemployment benefits are lowered, one has to accept whatever job is proposed, regardless of qualification level and former salary. Unemployment benefit in the case of long term unemployment is abolished.

Since social and political elites refuse every employment policy that could be really creative of jobs, it has become possible for an unemployed person to live without job nor benefits. This is a return to poverty:

- The reduction of the unemployment benefit term to a maximum of 12 months (only people older than 55 can benefit from an 18 months allowance) – in relation with their former job. That excludes 30% of the unemployed from the unemployment benefit regime
- The Long-term unemployed who received until now, a benefit in relation to their former wage (53%) and gave them the right to a job corresponding more or less to their skill

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will see their rights in 2005 reduced to a minimum under the poverty limit (345 € a month in ex FRG and 311 € in ex GDR), which will leave them no more than 4,5 € a day to eat.

· In theory, they have to take into account the cost of the rent, but the restructuring of Job Centres, which give a job and grant benefits, according to private sector criteria. This increases the arbitrariness of the decision-making and leads to families being forced to find lower rental housing in case the actual rent is considered too high. This "social income" is conditioned to household resources. That means that half a million of people will lose their right to benefits

- This new regime will also change the actual welfare regime. Until now, it was designed among other things to give additional allowance in case the salary was lower than the social benefit. The new social benefit will be given only to those who cannot hold a job: the disabled, old people, ill people... The number of persons able to get social benefit will fall from one million to about 200 000.

It is odd to think that the Bertelsman Foundation (government think tank) thinks that this is still too much, that this new unemployment benefit should be halved !

The reasoning invoked by the Hartz law is clear and needs no comment: "we are right to have this demand towards the unemployed, and this demand has no limit , for the costs they are for society must absolutely be reduced".

These measures will lead to the development of very low wages sectors in the field of health, domestic help, etc. which will hit women more particularly. A great many people will be encouraged to work in temporary jobs, or they will be urged to become "free workers".

Hundred of thousands of people will be purely and simply thrown into misery.

Spain

There has been in Spain for about ten years a big decline in unemployment, unemployment fell from 20% to 11% (but it is still high, 16% for women). Although this is still the highest rate in the former Europe.

In five years, GDP has increased by 40%, but the income per capita only increased by 31%. Most of all, the economic growth which resulted was very unequal and left a lot of people excluded : 8 million people, (more than the one fifth of the population) live under the poverty limit, on 280 € a month. Almost a half of Spanish workers are out of work or have precarious jobs, the rate of precarious jobs has kept constant at about 30% these last ten years or about four million workers. As for part-time jobs, 80% are women.

The Illegal economy has developed. More and more people, above all young people, women and immigrants continually go from unemployment periods to precarious jobs, keeping them in insecurity and poverty. A lot of women have to work in such sectors as domestic cleaning work or domestic help in which employment legislation is quasi non-existent.

The Spanish social protection system, as a heritage of Francoism, is low. Nowadays, a minimum income of 300 € (56% of the minimum wage) is given to only 200 000 persons. 50% of the unemployed are deprived of any kind of social benefit, and those have been reduced these last years.

Fortunately, a dramatic degradation of the situation of the unemployed and rules decided by the Aznar government in 2001 concerning dismissals could be avoided thanks to two general strikes and huge demonstrations in 2001 – 2002. An enlightening precedent for all!

The Spanish case shows that in the step from dictatorship to democracy, fighting for guaranteed income is really essential

France

With the aim to give of giving weight to wages, there is a collusion between employers and the government to reduce rights and unemployment benefits and to bring them under conditions. This fits into the scheme of a general aggression against all the social rights.

For two years, three attacks with regard to unemployment benefits have been implemented:

- The one concerning the entertainment workers regime (Intermittents) which has given rise to an enormous and well-known fight which is still going on.
- The activation of the "minimum integration income" (RMI) with the implementation of the "new minimum employment income" (RMA). This is a part-time contract for a period of 9 months which can be extended to 18 months, paid in accordance to the minimum wage rate which is given to the employer. The result: a surplus of 133 € a month for the RMA recipient, for 80 hours work. The labour cost for the employer is thus worth 4 € an hour instead of 10.5 €
- A cut in the entitlement period for the 'specific solidarity allowance' (ASS); (70% of the poverty limit). The entitlement period was until then unlimited.
- A cut in the entitlement period in the frame of national insurance and the hardening of the conditions of access to unemployment benefit decided at the end 2002 by the UNEDIC unemployment insurance system

The retroactive application of these last reductions to the unemployed, registered before the end of 2002, in violation of the PARE contract (an employment action plan), which was though inequitable, put an early end to the rights of 250 000 unemployed at the beginning of 2004, 660 000 will follow. Among them, a lot of executives reacted strongly and took the UNEDIC to court, these actions were backed by unemployed organisations on a large scale. (During the drafting of this work, we learnt that the unemployed have won justice in their cases)

Greece

Since the development of neo-liberal policies, a frontal attack against social rights which are already very weak is being carried out.

The economic growth in Greece has been one of the strongest in UE these last years, but not everybody takes advantage of it. Employers profits are on average twice as much as the EU's average but 25% of the population live under the poverty limit, which is also twice as high as the EU 's average. More than 15% of workers are immigrant and have no rights at all, which is a misfortune for them and also for all Greek workers, because they are used by employers to make put pressure on wage levels. Equal rights between Greek workers and immigrants is therefore all the more necessary.

More than 70% of the jobs that have been created for the past five years in Greece, are flexible jobs. Moreover, more than 35% of the work is illegal! A very strong minority of workers are actually forced to work 45, 60, even 65 hours a week in two, not to say three jobs to survive.

The government recently swung over to the right. During the election campaign, the President of the socialist party proposed to introduce work without social security for at least five years for the young seeking a first job. Everybody pointed out that in that case, employers would make current workers redundant to replace them by young workers.

Then, is everything so dark? Not if we keep in mind the victory following the huge mobilisation of the Greek people, three years ago, against the social security project of reforms!

Ireland

In Ireland, unemployed organisations are included in the discussion process with employers and trade unions. This is a good point you should try to achieve in other countries. This is a good way to make things progress, for instance, the government

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just decided that from 2007, 30% of ? would help the growth of businesses, and subsequently 40% should be dedicated to the growth of unemployed benefit, which would make these benefits increase from 134 €a week to 144 €a week.

On the other hand, the government raised the working time necessary to obtain rights to get benefits from 49 to 52 weeks. Furthermore, it is stated that the unemployed will have to prove they looking for a job. This is felt to be a humiliation and we are trying to reduce the possible impacts of such a policy.

In addition, economic growth in Ireland is strong, though, the number of people living under the poverty limit increased from 15% to 22%. We have to work on a better share of economic growth. The minimum wage in Ireland is 7€ that's the highest in Europe. That is good, but employers say that such a high level of minimum wage reduces jobs possibilities. We as unemployed organisations must fight to have good levels of wages without any loss of jobs or decrease in the level of unemployment benefit. We consider that a good balance between wages and unemployment benefit is important.

Finland

At the end of the 80's the unemployment rate in Finland was very low, below 3% of the labour force. The globalisation of the financial markets in combination with the rise in the loans rents in Germany led as in many other western European countries to a breakdown in the economic activity with bankruptcies followed by a fast rise in unemployment. The unemployment rate was at its peak in April 1994 with 16.6 %, the second highest in EU at that time. Since then the unemployment has declined very slowly. The visible unemployment, persons registered at the employment office without job and ready for work, was in January 2004 at 9.5% with an additional 1 % of the labour force in employment policy programmes.

During the years of high unemployment, the neo-liberalistic recipe to fight unemployment has gained ground in the discourse.

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Although the most severe suggestions to cut income-taxes, social benefits, the right to unemployment benefits and to let the income disparity grow and to introduce a low income labour market have been rejected, the direction is clear – the rights of the unemployed have in many ways suffered.

The unemployment benefit system was introduced in 1985 and two years later young unemployed and long term unemployed got a subjective right to get a state subsidised job for at least six months, which qualified them for a new 500 day period of unemployment benefit. In 1992-93 this system was destroyed. This resulted in a huge growth in long term unemployment, increasing income disparities and growing dependency on income support and in reality created a second level labour market for persons entering working life via employment schemes.

A European social policy?

Social policy is officially under the exclusive control of each member state, except in the fields of health and safety at work. It is just a consultation between member states on their social policy which can be developed on a European scale.

Actually, having a look at the situation in each country shows the evidence that this consultation, when based on consensus, leads to the application of the same political trends in every country. Now, the fundamental line of this policy, specifically since the 1997 Luxembourg and 2000 Lisbon summits is to implement social measures with the aim to improve European economic competitiveness with the to United-States and Japan. Social issues are only seen from this point of view. In this background, member states exclusive control means that the social rights deterioration implemented in each country does not come up against any minimum standard established on a European scale. The draft Constitution enables governments thus to carry on indefinitely that trend, denying the establishment of any minimum standard.

Here is the debate:

Do we have to take note of this situation and struggle for social rights in each country?

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Must we struggle for closer cooperation between states who would be ready to guarantee progressive social standards, as foreseen in the draft treaty, in other fields?

Must we increase pressure to obtain at last, satisfying social standards on a European scale that would be compulsory in every state in the case that they are higher than national legislation?

Consensus has been reached on two points though:

- A struggle at the European scale is necessary if we want to ensure that the decided European policies do not deprive of financial means progressive social and employment policies.
- The current European immigration policy enables employers to use at massive scale illegal work in order to put pressure on wages and working conditions. Only one fight is possible: to claim the same rights for every people living in the European territory regardless of their origin.

All quiet in the Eastern side?

Before the EU enlargement to ten new countries was official, unemployed organizations had started to have relations between West and East. Our Polish and German friends have already built a regular relationship. Many of our Polish friends could participate in the European Assembly of the Unemployed and insecure workers in struggle in the frame of the European Social Forum in November 2003. Their active contribution was very instructive and enabled us to better conceive how we could struggle together for a Western and Eastern Europe of Social Rights.

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The "new Europe" in the European assembly of unemployed and insecure workers in struggle, ESF Paris, Saint-Denis, 2003 (Photo: DR)

The social issue in Poland and in the new accessing countries to European Union: view of an expert

Bruno Drweski (researcher at the National Institute of Eastern Languages and Civilizations)

For the last fifteen years, the countries from central and Eastern Europe have gone through extreme social and economic upheavals. The unemployment rate in Poland jumped from 0% (they even had to face a shortage of workforce that provoked a mobilization of the authorities against what they called the "social parasitism", i.e. the refusal of being employed) to an unemployed rate of 20% before its temporary decrease to 10% and then went up to 20% today. We can find though, small areas of relative prosperity (large centres and western areas); they are located in the middle of areas with endemic unemployment the rate of which can exceed 30%.

This evolution led to the decomposition of the social fabric, with its consequences: passivity, delinquency, drugs, alcoholism, etc. Areas touched by endemic poverty are the ones where agricultural and mining activities were concentrated as well as the ones located along the future EU Eastern borders, which were affected very hard by the social and economic consequences due to the creation of the "Schengen wall".

The liberalization of the economy, the disengagement of the authorities, the decentralization in a liberal process, the privatization of firms and public services, the withdrawal of self-management structures in firms, restrictions to the establishment of trade-unions in new firms and, last but not least, the adoption by the governments (often officially social democrats) of labour codes in keeping with ultra-liberal dogma, together with the restrictions of access to benefit for unemployed. Not all that contributed to ensure a stable growth, contrary to what "ideologists of transition" had foreseen; not to mention the question of the revival of activity and labour.

On the other hand, these policies have led to the generalisation of unemployment, precarious working conditions, delinquency,

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corruption and immigration to the west of precarious population who were sometimes replaced by even more precarious migrants from the East and the South.

Political reforms introduced a system of regular changes without any alternative, abstention reaching often over 50%, the increasing role of charitable activities often undertaken by churches, the fundamentalism growth, the increasing xenophobia and the increasing remoteness of each marginalized area.

Nowadays, Poland has practically removed entirely its system of administrative control of recruiting and working conditions. It seems that the levelling down of the regulation has already started. The current Polish government even theorized this evolution vis-à-vis the EU authorities, claiming that attempting to impose a "European Social Model" was contrary to the respect of the European diversity and social relations respectful of national traditions...actually fifteen years old!

Today, we can notice that in the East like elsewhere, the "necessary" supranationality is pointed out when it comes to national social rights, and the specificity of national conditions, not to say local traditions is spread when one wants to prevent levelling up of social rights at international or European scale.

In this situation, supporters of minimum social standards tend to separate into three sensibilities, seemingly contradictory:

- Pro-European who hope that their fellow-citizens will be able to benefit from social minimum standards in the frame of Europe, thanks to the existence of a European social model, which still have to be built and seem in any case more credible than the rebuilding of social gains issued from the socialist period mainly dismantled today.
- The anti-Europeans tempted by religious or national fundamentalism counting on charitable structures and a protectionist policy to preserve jobs and existing companies.
- Eurosceptics who tend to consider the rebuilding of national structures taking up certain of characteristics of socialism and

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inclining towards potentially developing open economies in the post soviet Eurasia and in the Far East.

These distress and scatter of critic circles confronted to the current evolutions enable the division of most the underprivileged population, also marked by uncertainty. In front of the fast "illegitimacy" of almost every moral and political authorities, fragmented mobilization are taking place, leaving though a growing place to more and more deep and global thinking and critical analysis on:

- The role that national, international, regional and local authorities can play
- The unused potential of economic and social creativity existing at the confluence of European societies
- The revitalization linked to the development of a rail system joining up Western Europe, post soviet Eurasia, Far East, Middle East, Southern Asia

The new EU members are in this background a key area with their geographic situation, their demographic, scientific and intellectual potential. Regarding these discontinued opportunities, the awareness of existing hindrances to development possibilities coming from:

- The generalization of liberal policies tending to prevent from living and working in the country due to the development of the irrational free movement of workers.
- The dogmatic rigidity of the functioning of European institutions and of supranational financial centres
- Negative consequences for the whole Central and Eastern Europe of the opening of their borders to Western European goods together with the restrictions of access of their workers to European labour market.
- The withdrawal of the cross-border trade systems and their related economic activity along European eastern borders

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following the building of the "Schengen wall", which particularly disrupted the most unsecured areas located between the Black sea and the Baltic Sea.

- The absence of strategic policies as far as economic development and public transportation construction are concerned.

The contradictions produced by the effects of the liberal economy clearly appears with the general implementation of illegal work and informal trades and the necessity to have several jobs while the process of socialism "cleaning" was supposed to introduce a transparency in the economic reality compared to the hidden reality of the former period.

It is clear though that the development of a Paris-Berlin-Warsaw-Moscow-Peking- Tokyo road extending the construction already carried out of a rail system enabling the transshipment of containers open possibilities to open up economies and implement new logics of development. This work, needing public investments, should also take into account the need to develop in parallel communication axes towards Middle East and Southern Asia.

We must keep this background in mind when we analyse the specific policies on social issues and deadlock causes which on one hand lead to a crazier and crazier financial flow and delocalizations, the generalization of the atomization of unemployment and precariousness.

Located at the centre of the line linking the European peninsula to its Eurasian "*hinterland*", the new EU members have a privileged place to become a symptomatic element of the deadlocks and contradictions in the current society, of which unemployment, i.e. the waste of creative abilities; has become a central element. Mass unemployment constitutes the emblematic expression of the sick and parasitical global capitalistic economy, replaced by European and international financial institutions. Central and Eastern Europe is henceforth confronted in a particular brutal way to the division of societies and to the globalization of financial flows.

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These negative processes are coherent and logical. They at the same time spontaneous and planned, and they go through the disintegration of existing social links and the deterioration of legal conditions that enable the legitimization of interventions issued of the basis of societies.

The role of Central and Eastern European countries is to push down social conditions in the whole Europe, encouraging also the implementation of a global security order, which was demonstrated by the war against Iraq.

Here is the importance for us to give hope to new precarious inhabitants in the East, through contacts making possible to get round national and international prevailing information flows and prevailing circles of power inside EU.

Here is the importance to demonstrate the necessity to struggle in the field of national, international and European laws. Now, in the new EU member countries, social legislation has been extremely revised downwards, moreover, they are rarely applied. Tendencies in that spirit of laws go in the way:

- of social security reforms tending to a regional division
- of decentralization policies granting public authorities prerogatives in the social and educational field without guaranteeing any grant like those previously allocated at national scale.
- of pension, unemployment benefits as well as benefit entitlement restrictions
- of the increase in the number of free zones as social rightless areas spreading in their environment, the dismantling of public transport contributing to the creation of rural pockets of unemployment for people henceforward unable to move to seek a job or forced to migrate in very precarious housing and working conditions.
- of the restriction in the application of the Labour Code in other sectors than public sector, this encourages the

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"profitability" of private sector and an increasing precariousness, under the effect of competition, of real working conditions in public firms.

All these changes lead to the emergence, until now unknown, of poor, homelesses and illegal workers. These evolutions were made possible thanks to the sudden and fast dismantling of social structures created under socialism, to the sudden appearance of mass unemployment creating a stampede atmosphere, to the metamorphosis of political, economical and financial elites issued from communism in spokespersons for social liberal policies, to the metamorphosis of elites issued from the dissidence in spokespersons for neoliberal ideology, to the bureaucratization of trade-unions issued from communism and opportunism or even the careerism of most of unionist leaders coming from anti-communist sphere of influence, to the existence of mutual aid families and clan networks linking urban to rural areas enabling thus to reduce shocks issued from the introduction of capitalism.

However, nowadays, the progressive dismantling of part of the social system and the impoverishment of circles and institutions able to ensure some minimum social aid make more and more ineffective the protection that made the first stage of transition possible.

From now on, the elites and the "nouveaux riches" of Eastern and Central Europe count on NATO to ensure their internal and external security, on their own social positions and on the EU institutions to ensure a minimum social stability.

In view of these evolutions, we are witnessing increasing mobilizations taking various forms and still divided. They go from movements of protest of xenophobic type in the most populist trend to the growth of new small forces represented by trade unions, unemployed, homelesses, antiglobalists, alterglobalists...

All that means that the process of disintegration of the social system has come to its term. We are witnessing to a difficult reconstruction, which could enable to get out of the "action and pensée unique". The necessity to see emerging a social dynamic between European societies becomes more and more pressing. It

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must target institutions, legislations, decision-makers and the "nouveaux-riches".

And the question of Polish unemployed

(Extract of the intervention of Ryszard Dul, Committee of the unemployed of Pomerania)

Poland is passing through a very serious social and economic crisis. Unemployed are like guinea pigs in their own country, a "human subcategory". They are experimenting new policies on us qualified as social policies. Nevertheless, nobody is interested in us, neither the politicians, be they left or right wing, nor trade unions –except at the time of the elections or in a demonstration - to fill buses. It is sad to say so but we have no rights.

They liquidate all social aid, as alimonies, leaving for one child only 170 zlotys (42€ minimum wage being 170€, or aid for babies to support poor families, or maternity benefits. The government strikes at the most vulnerable, single mothers and defenceless children.

The law on social assistance stipulates that the minimum allowance covering poverty is worth 15 zlotys. It is really infuriating! Soon, retirement age for women will be raised to 65 years old while unemployment is increasing. However, in addition to their job, women look after their children and do housework. They reduce as well aid for disabled and elderly people. The Health care system is inefficient: people have to pay doctors and dentists out of their own pocket under the table. Although in theory, we have a public health system.

The Constitution says that every citizen has a right to social protection, but corrupted politicians do not even respect the laws they voted themselves.

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Extract of the intervention of Barbara Radziejewicz, Committee of the unemployed from Mazuria

In Poland, we live in one of the most unfair social systems in Europe.

From 1996 to 2001, the proportion of persons living under the biological minima jumped from 4,3% to 9,5% and the number of families living under the social minima trebled representing now about 60%. There has not been any economic crash though...

In our region of Warmia Mazuria, we have more than a million undernourished children.

Here is the "shock therapy" designed to go towards market economy since 1989. This experimentation ran into a brick wall: we have a sick market and a sick state. We have come back on the way of primitive accumulation of capital, of the transfer of the poors' subsistence to the riches' wealth.

In 2005, we foresee the arrival of 900 000 young workers on the labour market but only 290,000 new jobs. The number of unemployed will increase by a hundred thousand people.

We want to live in a country where everyone should be able to reach his aspirations and ambitions, in a State treating everyone as an equal in a unified Europe and in the world. Therefore, we must join our forces and the struggle for local issues to the struggle against global capitalism, for fundamental values such as liberty, equality, tolerance, justice and social solidarity.

What in the future?

What is at stake regarding the issue of social rights for the European people? What crucial issues should we keep in mind to make our initiatives join in order to better contribute to the construction of the democratic and rightful Europe for which we yearn?

These are some questions that have been worked on in the conference in the frame of the round tables which reported the conclusions of the working groups and of a general debate.

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European Assembly of unemployed and insecure workers at the 2003 European Social Forum (Photo: DR)

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Unemployed, workers, insecure workers, unified for a democratic and social Europe

Georges Debunne, former general secretary of FGTB and former president of ETUC

Dear comrades, Dear friends,

All along in my union activity I kept on saying again and again that the struggle against unemployment could not forget unemployed people. The struggle for purchasing power could not only be at the workers profit. Everybody knows that mass unemployment creates a balance of power in favour of the employers. Any "competition" between unemployed and workers is harmful for the one and the other. Unemployment benefits, when decent and secure jobs are not available, usually protected wages and those who were working.

Nowadays, that's the other way round. Obligations are imposed on the unemployed and if they refuse a precarious, flexible and insecure job, disciplinary measures are imposed, until the point of losing unemployment benefits. Because of that, the minimum wage is less and less respected in collective labour agreements.

It is absurd! Even workers are getting poor! Job cuts are massive. Everyday, we hear that thousands and thousands people will be made redundant. Restructuring plans, relocations, concentrations follow one another leading a all together to the proliferation of precariousness.

Work cannot be degrading, neither demoralizing nor leading to exclusion. It must be the basis of continuity in life and must guarantee a decent and dignified living standard.

The current policy does not answer at all to these human needs.

A collective and united jump against social exclusion mechanism is now vital towards unemployed, homeless people, the ones deprived of access to culture, and the ones deprived of

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papers, their children and those who can only count on social incomes.

Fundamental rights must be engraved in the European Constitution. This rush to the abyss run by capitalism must be stopped. The time has come to say no to this hegemony of capitalism, to set objectives and to enter into action to at last achieve a democratic and social Europe.

The issues on the question of the social rights, a point of view from unionists and leaders of organizations networks

Round table: moderator: Ingrid Schindler (ALT – Thüringen) and Kalle Kunnas (President of ENU)

The challenges social movements have to take in a Europe in the grip of liberal ideology

Summary of Annick Coupé's intervention (Union syndicale – G10 solidaires)

The European construction is being carried out in the grip of the liberal ideology. For more than a quarter century, a Europe giving primacy to competition has been implemented. In the name of competition, public services have been attacked, fiscal and social dumping was set up as a doctrine, social rights for workers and unemployed were called into question.

The year 2004 will constitute an extremely decisive new stage with the EU enlargement the 1st of May and the drafting of a "European Constitution", even if it has fallen behind and if the adoption should be postponed until the second half of the year 2004. Not only the draft Constitution does not make any break with the past but on the contrary, it adopts the principles of liberalism and integrates all liberal policies carried out by governments and the European Commission. In view of these facts, it is urgent to build European mobilizations.

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Social movements are late as far as the European construction is concerned. This political arena is not sufficiently occupied, even if initiatives have taken place for several years: the 1997 demonstrations organized by European Marches in Amsterdam, in 1999 in Köln, in 2000 in Nice and in 2002 in Seville; the meetings in the frame of the European Social Forum (Florence in 2002 and Paris in 2003), we also have to keep in mind the initiatives of trade unions.

As we saw one more time in the debate of the conference, the same liberal logics apply in our different countries and produce the same damages: increase of unemployment, of precariousness and poverty, destruction of the solidarities, weakening of the social protection of workers and unemployed...The same objectives are set everywhere: labour cost cut and implementation of competition between workers.

We must not forget in our reflection that women are particularly effected by these anti-social attacks.

We must say out loud that we refuse the basis of the European construction and the current draft constitution which ratifies liberalism, competition and market as the foundations of Europe.

We must carry the demand of high level fundamental rights and the indivisibility of these rights, social, economic, political rights must go hand in hand with the notion of residence citizenship. We cannot accept the fact that there are rights on different levels and the citizens from countries coming in EU do not have the same rights as those living in the member states.

We must build long-lasting links with the social movements of the new member states to make their mobilizations known, for they pursue actions which we can see in our debate. The next ESF in London must enable us to tighten bonds, in the continuation of what has been done in Florence and Paris.

The 1st of May 2004, date of the enlargement, must be an opportunity to take positions and to have mobilizations which affirm the necessity of social rights in the 25 member Europe. To

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take symbolic initiatives in the new members' borders might give us a chance to claim this demand.

We want the development of a Europe which helps economic, social, and political rights harmonization from the top: a right to quality jobs with a decent wage, the guarantee of an income support and a pension for decent living conditions, the right to social security with a guarantee of an equal access to healthcare, extension and consolidation of public services and of tools for solidarity. The whole involves at first the subordination of the company law and competition law to the respect of the fundamental rights.

Organizations of unemployed, trade unions and movements of citizens, we need to build together strong European mobilizations to lay the Europe of rights down, against the Europe of profits.

Common social rights to every resident in the European Union

Pierre Barge, General secretary of FIDH – AE general secretary of LDH

We can only start with a certain number of assessments before we wonder about the way to participate in the construction of a social Europe in balance with a Europe of the markets.

A Europe where markets competition and rights competition coexist

The economic growth from 1945 to 1974 is mainly related to the growth of the domestic market of "Nation States"; in 1945, the world trade represented only 7% of the global production, it reached 15% in 1973. This growth was accompanied with the construction of a system of social rights guaranteeing social cohesion, what is commonly called the "European Social Model".

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With the 1974 crisis, we witnessed the collapse of whole sections of the economy, the rise of the unemployment rates and exclusion. The economic restructurings which accompanied the economic recovery of the 80's were caused by the will of the opening of the markets and a preference for a competitive economy. The new economic growth is characterized by the increase of imports and exports of goods reaching at the beginning of this century 30% of the global production. Nevertheless, this growth has not been accompanied with a decrease of the social inequalities. In Northern countries, precariousness reaches more than 10% of the population. In Montpellier, in France, the remarkable economic dynamics of the area have not enabled the reduction of the unemployment rate which remains at 13% of the working population. There are 55 million poor and socially excluded people, people "abandoned" by the economic growth in Europe.

This situation is the reflection of a globalization affecting social rights run by the setting of competition between states, which are legitimate carriers. The globalization of the economies was not accompanied by a real collective construction of social rights on a worldwide scale, nor even on a continental scale.

There are definitely two international texts: the United Nations' "International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural rights" and the European "Social Charter" signed by a very large number of states. But pact and charter do not allow lodging protest and thus, states are not answerable on an international level.

EU countries do not escape this logic of competition of rights, either on the extracommunity or on the intracommunity scale. They are all together confronted by the social competition of southern countries. They are in competition when 60% of their external trade are made between them.

In reference to the "European Social Model", the development of the Europe of markets should have been accompanied in parallel with the construction of a social Europe, based on the model of what had been done in every state when growth had its origins mainly in the internal market. What happened was the contrary. Under the pressure of competition, social gains inside every state have been reappraised; the

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transition to the 25 members' Europe may well accelerate this process.

In the countries that will join Europe, the social system is deteriorating under the effect of structural adjustment policies and privatizations. Unemployment is massive, the part of informal work is progressing, and so is rightless work. The precariousness and impoverishment of the population becomes more pronounced, discrimination and marginalization of minorities such as the Roma is exacerbated.

In the integration process of these countries, more attention was given to the respect of civil and political rights than to economic and social rights. Political, civil, economic and social rights are though as any right indivisible.

However, there have been opportunities to build the social Europe claimed by the European social movements. The drafting of the European charter of fundamental rights, the writing of the draft Constitutional Treaty were opportunities to give residents of the Union similar social rights and to link economic competition and rights competition. To build Europe on a basis of common fundamental rights, and then, enlarge it to new countries giving their inhabitants the same rights, isn't it building a Europe of rights from the top instead of a construction from the bottom by the competition?

Acting collectively for social rights, for fundamental rights, recognized for all residents of European countries

As for the leagues of defence of human rights – European association for the defence of human rights, we are involved in claiming a Europe of the Social Rights, and more largely a Europe of Rights. Rights are indeed universal, indivisible, they must be the same for all, but rights are never achieved. They are collectively built rights and their construction must be effective today, specifically at regional and international scale. At European scale, we must progress toward a Constitution in which fundamental rights would be the basis of European institutions and European citizenship would be recognized for all permanent residents, whatever their nationality. We have to express our demands but also to give ourselves means to be heard.

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For that, we must jointly work out proposals and demand that they are taken into account at European scale. It is then necessary to build networks and have meetings. In November 2003, we set up the European network for a democratic and Social Europe (REDS) together with several associations and trade unions. This network aims at exchanging, discuss, have a deep reflection around democracy, citizenship, social rights, equality and peace.

We have several meeting at the end of May in Rome, in October in London with the ESF. We must as well organize ourselves to act jointly towards governments for European decisions are taken in the frame of the European Council of Ministers, the European Parliament and the European Commission to impose choices we would have worked out together.

Women and precariousness in Spain

Summary of Catalina Borrero's intervention (Women group of the CGT-Spain)

On the occasion of this conference, we have made analyses on the casualization of labour for more and more workers in the enlarged Europe, the growth of poverty and the increase of inequalities. However, we have not talked about a very numerous and insecure group in every country: women.

Being a woman and young in Spain is synonymous with precariousness; this specific group are especially the beneficiaries of fixed term contracts (3 days, 3 weeks, 3 months) and part-time daily jobs, not that they would have made a choice, but for that these are the only jobs they could find. They earn between 25% and 30% less than men with the same skills and the same careers.

Women's activity rate in Spain is one of the lowest in Europe and unemployment rate one of the highest (15, 9%) twice high as for men.

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There are especially insecure groups among women as for instance cleaning women who have a specific social security regime leaving them with no rights, widows with derisory allowances, migrant women without papers and prostitutes for whom working conditions approach slavery.

In the other hand, Spanish state brings up the rear in Europe as far as social expenditures are concerned; we have for instance very few schools for children from 0 to 3 years old and very few old persons' homes.

Men do not take many responsibilities at home and do not look after the age and the infirm. In 80% of cases, women hold this job with a very high cost for their physical and mental health.

If we add the privatization of public services, the more and more insecure working conditions and social allowances cuts we are witnessing a generalization of insecure life. That is why the CGT decided to give an impetus to the struggle against precariousness with this aim of making a deep diagnosis of the reality and to give itself tools for a better struggle. We try to stress not only on precariousness in the field of employment but also on some more hidden aspects: precariousness in life, satisfaction of the needs of people.

For instance, we all need medical care and to take care of those who need treatment and we have less and less possibilities to satisfy these needs because we have neither time nor means given that firms want us to work 24 hours a day.

In this working group, there are people from any sector, specifically the most insecure; in order to pool our specific struggles, the difficulties we have to face, to find the methods and the alternatives most efficient against this blight on society.

These alternatives must come from an awareness of people of the causes and consequences of precariousness, from a greater solidarity among workers even if working conditions are different, from the connection of different point of views with the social movement, at both the national scale and European scale. They must also come from the will to change this society which is based on the accumulation of capital instead of the satisfaction of the needs of people.

The Unemployed in Russia

Summary of Eric Aragon's intervention (member of the working group on Eastern enlargement of the ESF), from data given by Carine Clément (Attac-Russia)

Unemployment rate following the ILO standards: 8% of the working population (5, 8 million). Unemployment rate officially registered by the state services: 2, 2 (1, 6 million of whom 32400 in Chechnya).

The difference finds its explanation in the fact that unemployment benefits are infrequently paid and employment services are very limited.

Since the 2001 reforms, funds from employment do not run the benefits system anymore. The funds are integrated into a state budget line. It aims at reducing the amount of allowances by setting a maximum (the regional subsistence level) and at reallocating to everybody about the same amount. Before 2001, employers used to pay a contribution to the fund for employment equivalent to 1,5% of the wage bill. Since the 2001 reform, they pay a "single social tax" equivalent to 28% and covering at the same time pensions, health insurance, unemployment insurance and any other social insurance (family etc.). Needless to say that in the frame of the reform bills of the new government, there is a cut of the "single social tax" to 20%.

Most of the unemployed do not receive any allowance (even among those who have registered, 20% to 50% do not have any allowance). Those who have not registered do not receive any allowance.

As for those who are registered, if they refuse more than two proposals of a job in a ten day period, they are removed from the list. It is forbidden to remain for more than one year on the list... the amount of the allowances is highly regressive. In theory, allowances are based on the salary of the last three months. They actually represent on average between 10% and 30% of the average wage: i.e. in January 2004 from 600 to 1800 roubles a month (so from 15 to 45 euros). In 2001, less than half of all beneficiaries were receiving allowances worth around the

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minimal ceiling, i.e. from 100 to 300 roubles (3 to 10 euros) a month or from 6.7 to 20% of the subsistence level.

It is important to highlight the importance of hidden or informal unemployment as well as of illegal work. As far as non registered and non entitled unemployed are concerned (among whom the great majority are workers who "voluntary resign" following strong intimidation by the management), one also has to add the workers with a fragile or completely illegal status, illegal work, low paid jobs, informal work etc. A great many workers remain on the firm's list of employed (in order to get a status, and to benefit from the social services of the firm) but they actually work elsewhere or in the firm, in a position outside the official accountancy of the firm.

The situation of undeclared unemployed is characterized by the low level of allowances and the quasi-inexistence of professional qualification programs and assistance programs for obtaining employment. Women and elderly people are the most affected (middle aged men prefer using informal work).

There is hardly any unemployed movement claiming a rise in allowances. There are psychological brakes – "being unemployed is disgraceful, it is parasitism" – and social brakes – the 'atomization' of the unemployed.

The struggles that have taken place occurred right after the closure of firms, when the workers collectives still existed. Then it was about the struggles for the collection of debts owed to employees using different forms of action in order to recover a part of the remaining assets after the selling off of the company assets (for instance in Ajero-Soudjensk near Volodia).

The other problem in relation to struggle is informal work or unemployment. In my opinion, it is even more important though more difficult to use the traditional methods of struggle. That's the economy of individual survival and resourcefulness (which concerns almost everyone, including workers formally employed with full status). How to organize people? At this time, there is no real example in this field.

Ideas and prospects:

- The political struggle for the implementation of a real welfare state and the respect of formal law and rules at work

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- Social activities of practical and economic aid to the unemployed, workers of resourcefulness and informal workers
- The classic trade union struggle for the defence of the rights of formal workers, which could serve to motivate other workers to get out of informal work.

Prospects of openness require the highlighting of the European movements of unemployed in the arena given to us.

In the frame of the European initiatives such as the ESF, we have present the issues of the East in a determined way by proposing for instance, that a general assembly of the ESF takes place in one of the eastern countries such as in Poland or Hungary.

The working group on "Eastern enlargement" in the ESF is willing to continue to fully play its role as interface between Eastern countries and the ESF and to help to carry out the demands of Eastern countries.

A European and misogynistic constitutional treaty which usurps women's conquests

Sonia Mitralias (Greek coordination of the Women's World March and of the Greek Social Forum)

It is undeniable that under the pressure of the feminist movements and their struggles, the protection of women rights could appear in numerous international and European treaties. Significant progresses – though always insufficient – of the last decade are now being reappraised, even worse, they are erased by the neoliberal constitutional treaty improperly presented as a "European Constitution".

It is no accident that this treaty frontally attacks the most fundamental rights, equality between men and women which is not included in its "values" but only in its "objectives". It is no little difference! Beyond the value highly symbolic of this "omission", there are practical consequences that are tantamount to a categorical refusal to implement means (legislative, administrative, cultural) with a view to achieving

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this equality in all the fields of social life (employment, work, income, etc.).

Is that a mere omission or a fully conscious act of the initiators of this treaty? Given that a great number of feminist associations had asked in vain for the inclusion of the principle of gender equality in the "values" of the constitutional treaty and that so did the very official "working group on Social Europe" at the beginning of 2004, it is clear that the members of the European Convention decided to devalue, even to erase knowingly and intentionally this principal.

These refusals of the Constitutional Treaty to promote in practice the gender equality contradict though the disposition of a series of conventions and of international and community treaties that represent a step backwards to several decades of women's condition. Useless to say that after the introduction of this constitutional treaty, inequalities still scandalous between women and men will have a tendency to last and also to get worse because:

- The treaty will prevail over national Constitutions and former Community Treaties which planned specific practises for women.

- The Constitutional Treaty is not committed at all to such actions and concrete measures

As a conclusion, even if the Constitutional Treaty finally incorporates the Nice Charter of Fundamental Rights, gender equality will remain a vague and ineffective "objective" of EU for the text is very limited and remains below the community patrimony when it comes to the promotion of positive actions for this elementary right.

The contempt of the members of the convention for women also manifests itself when it comes to face the blight of men's violence they suffer daily only because they are ... women. Then, it is no accident that the Constitutional Treaty do not include among EU objectives the prevention and the fight against the violence suffered by women. It is here a serious step back for a certain number of guidelines of EU institutional bodies used to refer to "physical, sexual and psychological violence" against women, considering it as a form of discrimination suffered only because women are women.

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This "forgetting" becomes even more serious given the fact that the right in EU only deals with the question of violence in the frame of its dispositions about "trafficking in human beings", ignoring on the other hand any other expression of violence. Besides, even though "trafficking in human beings" (which though remains out of these objectives) is mentioned in the article 17 of the Constitutional Treaty among the crimes that should be fought thanks to the harmonization of criminal laws; this article says nothing about violence against women, about racism or xenophobia! Such "forgetting" is too eloquent so as not to reveal the will of the neoliberal initiators of the Treaty to launch full-scale attacks against the rights and liberties most of European citizens gained. This very, very misogynist Constitutional Treaty celebrates the united front of neoliberalism and patriarchy...

LISBON AGENDA: More and Better Jobs?

Eric Conroy (General Secretary of INOU, Ireland)

The Lisbon Agenda social goal of the EU is "to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion". The Lisbon strategy also aims to make "a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty" by 2010. The INOU welcomes the fact that the Taoiseach has named the Lisbon strategy as one of his priorities for the Presidency, and specifically that of more and better jobs. We are concerned that some Government statements and some media coverage describe the Lisbon strategy as being only about a particular narrow version of competitiveness. The Lisbon strategy agreed to a 10-year process (2000-2010) based on three pillars: Sustainable Economic Growth, More Employment & Quality Employment and Social Inclusion.

The Lisbon Agenda is annually reviewed at the Spring summit of the EU. With Ireland's presidency of the EU, Bertie

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Ahern will be chairing this year's discussions at the next summit in March held in Brussels. Therefore, the Lisbon Agenda was the first item on the agenda of the plenary of Sustaining Progress in January 2004. General Secretary Eric Conroy spoke at the plenary on the above aspect in the following terms.

In the debate on making Europe “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world”, the emphasis is generally on the top end of the market. This means high education and hi-tec jobs for all. The think tank set up by the Tanaiste Mary Harney to see where these hi-tec jobs will come from over the next ten years is part of this policy position. This is fine in itself, but is slightly unreal in its aspiration. We must not lose sight of the need, in the first instance, of jobs for all and at all levels of the labour market. Any job, with the National Minimum Wage in force, is better than no job at all. When a job is secured, it should be seen as a stepping stone to a better job with suitable supports (eg education, training, ALMP's) in place to enable workers to move up the value chain in job quality and pay. This is part of the Welfare to Work Continuum. Some people, for very valid reasons, will not be able to aspire to high education and high technology jobs. They must not be excluded in their search for jobs. What we need is a holistic approach where job creation takes place at all levels of economic activity.

In addition there are people, for good long term and short-term reasons, who cannot aspire to the labour market. If “greater social cohesion” is to have any meaning they must not be left behind in this more dynamic Europe. Therefore measures like the non-progression CE mooted in the ill-fated report of the Standing Committee of the Labour Market and the High Supports Process must be encouraged and fostered.

The Employment Taskforce Report (chaired by Wim Kok) raised important issues in raising employment rates and lowering unemployment levels in Europe up to 2010. 40% of the 14 million unemployed in 2003 are long term unemployed – this amounts to an alarming figure of 5.6 million people who are experiencing the misery of being out of a job for 12 months or more. This will be a difficult (but not insurmountable) problem to solve in the context of the Lisbon ideals.

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The Lisbon employment rate targets are challenging – 70% overall, 60% women and 50% older workers (age 55-64). Current overall rate of 64.2% is expected to rise to 65% by 2005 - thus the midterm target will be missed by 2%. The rate for women has increased sizeably in recent years to 55.6% (especially in Ireland during the boom years) but there is no room for complacency in meeting the Lisbon target.

However, there is a major challenge in reaching 50% for older workers by 2010. To achieve this Europe will have to employ an extra 7m. workers in this category over the next 7 years – 1m. p.a.

Thus current policies to reduce the exit age from the workforce and disincentives to work after normal retirement age must be turned around. If no change takes place, and given the changing demographics of an ageing population, it will put enormous burdens on pension funds and social provision. Longer working lives will mean more employment taxation to help social provision for those outside the labour force and underpin Social Inclusion.

In maximising employment and encouraging participation in the labour market, we must not lose sight of those already in the labour market, but without a job, and especially those who are long term unemployed. In Ireland, Fas in its recent review of the labour market, has decided that greater emphasis should now be given to up-skilling the existing workforce, rather than the unemployed. Again we say there should not be a priority for one sector over another. A holistic approach is called for in addressing the training needs of both low-skilled workers and the unemployed. This will ensure that we achieve a dynamic economy, meet our Lisbon targets and foster social inclusion – a win win situation.

With enlargement on 1 May, achieving the Lisbon targets will be even harder to meet. The average unemployment rate of the 10 accession countries is 15% (Poland is 20.6% - echoes of Ireland in the 1980's) as against the current rate of 8.1% for the EU-15. Their employment rate is 56% (v. 64% for EU-15). In addition, there is concern that the low rates of pay in these countries may lead to companies relocating there – as has

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happened already with one company moving its operation to Poland.

We also want to draw attention to the Lisbon goal to address regional disparities in employment rates.

There are job closures occurring all the time in rural areas, most recently in Cahirciveen and Waterford. There are now no manufacturing jobs in Cahirciveen. Dublin is getting bigger and bigger at the expense of the rest of the country. It is worrying that companies are prepared to forego IDA grants for a regional startup and set up instead in Dublin. We must have balanced regional development to ensure that jobs are spread in rural areas.

So, there is a great deal of work to be done and the Taoiseach has made an important issue of it during his presidency of the EU. We applaud him for it and look forward to seeing concrete action on the components of the policy. We reiterate the comments of Pat Cox, President of the European Parliament, who said that “the Lisbon Process has already produced too many words”. He called for the erasing of excessive conclusions, put emphasis on target outcomes and more focus placed on action. Among these actions, should be more investment in Research and Development. This is specially true in Ireland. This will lead to new products and services, and hence safeguarding of existing jobs and the creation of new jobs.

However, in all the endeavour to get more and better jobs in a competitive environment, we must not lose sight of the human and social side of the equation. Many strategies that take into account the social aspects of unemployment, often seem to be mainly underpinned by the objective of economic efficiency. Such reviews of Employment policies should rather be based on the needs for social cohesion, and the needs for people to live in dignity, as overarching priorities.

Ewa Hinka, Secretary of the Federation of committees of defence of rights of the unemployed, Pomerania

For more than a decade, we have suffered a social and economic system of misery and humiliation of a People living in

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an extreme poverty! So the question is: when will we have a better future?

For years, we have been harped on about the fact that the way we were following would lead us to Europe, to its living standards, to its decent wages, to its pensions and social protection. These predictions proved to be untrue. With the construction of a ferocious system exploiting workers and unemployed, making possible the emergence of unthinkable fortunes in a country where children go to school with hunger, where retired have to choose between medicines and food, where voiceless unemployed do not have anything left, we follow a way that will lead us to the third world.

Nowadays, left-wing and right-wing politicians do not talk anymore about rejected people, of those who are deprived of rights engraved in the Constitution, literally erased from the social memory, they even dare to say that we are responsible for that situation. They predicted a great future was taking shape. Under the former regime, we used to live modestly but we had a job, social protection and laws were written down and respected.

For several years, we have been observing the economic and social policies of the voivodie of Pomerania and the way regional authorities deal with the issue. That's why we firmly claim that the region of Pomerania does not find its limits with the borders of the former voivodie of Gdansk. We did not establish the new administrative region and we demand a balanced development of all its components.

We make common cause with the workers of the Gdansk shipyards and we understand their problems. But we cannot permit that 200,000 unemployed from the voivodie of Pomerania and their families remain the passive witnesses of political jostling between rapacious politicians, avid for power and that thousand of policemen are sent against innocent people claiming their rights.

For politicians, democracy means: bloody and barbarian capitalism, selling off and looting of national wealth, bureaucratization and string-pulling for friends, 80% of citizens living on the misery limit.

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The unemployment rate is 20% in Poland and 40% in our voivodie, which liberates in us the determination to struggle for bread. Is it for such a Poland that our parents and grandparents struggled?

We warn you: the social movement is growing, we are more and more numerous. We do not support this kind of democracy in which some live in opulence meanwhile others go through garbage, and in which there is not any place for all.

We demand the financial means to reduce the consequences of unemployment, for social aid, for public intervention and public benefit work. The current share of financial means does not satisfy us. We feel we are being robbed by large multinationals. Gdansk is getting more attractive, but at the expenses of the communes and districts.

Report of the four working groups

Moderation: Angela Klein (Euromarches, Germany), Patrice Spadoni (Marches Européennes, Canal Marches)

Working group on immigration

Jean-Louis Chesnau (APEIS), reporter; Fred Heyar (ACC, Luxembourg), moderator; Yves Martens (Collectif Solidarité contre l'exclusion, Belgium); Goumbale Ibrahima (Sin Cobas, Italy); Lara Winter (Marches Européennes, France); Luigia Pasi (Sin Cobas, Italy)

We have to highlight the fact that we are going about the topic of immigration in Brussels, the place where the European Commission has its headquarters and where the Council of Ministers of the European Union meets. Here, the

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future of Europe, our future and our children's future is decided, most of the time without knowing it. We cannot apprehend the issues of immigration without taking into account the three other topics of the other working groups:

- European Enlargement : new situation and outlooks for the social movement
- Income, insecure jobs and social dumping
- Social rights, citizenship and constitutional issues

In the other hand, we have to take into account the global, geopolitical and macroeconomic background, in which we our analysis is centred.

The issue of immigration is particularly important because it concerns everyone. It takes into account the history of people, all people, as the history of our country of origin and the one of the countries where we live, be they chosen or not. It hits our cultural, linguistic and sociocultural diversities, that are the history of humanity.

Immigration hits us in a subjective and affective way, because it is not a questioning about the identity, and that whatever we think about this issue, whatever our certainties and doubts about what is good or not for migrant populations.

As it was mentioned in the conference, Europe is being built, without us the unemployed nor the insecure workers, without any consultation at all with the most underprivileged, on basis which are not ours. The same is true of immigrants.

In this working group, we were Belgian, Dutch, French, Italian, Italian of Senegalese origin, of Luxembourg, that means that it was not a representative panel of the 25 members' Europe. Though, we could observe common statements:

- We have noted more and more xenophobic and aggressive behaviours towards the immigrants. They are very often the expression of an exacerbated nationalism due to economic difficulties.
- These immigrant populations are coming to Eastern Europe to find a job, to be able to feed their family, but also to learn, to educate themselves.

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- More and more frequent attacks against some immigrant communities are the striking expression of the inequalities of which they are the victims.
- Without job, homeless, they suffer even more than the others social violence.
- They are exposed to discriminations, to xenophobic and racist attacks, which sometimes find their expression in violent physical attacks.

Some of us are wondering about the possible choices between action, reformism and revolution, in a background of urgency.

Associations and committees of support to immigrants, we are daily confronted to the distress and the solitude of these women, men children who cannot speak the language of the host country, who have great difficulties in expressing themselves, who have lost their traditional bearings.

It is clear that immigration is integrated into the capitalist logic of employers and politicians who advocate the liberal economy. It is one more way in the human management of employment. Immigrants, who are at everybody's beck and call, are considered as a commodity like any other. They are used as a means at the disposal of a strategy leading to always more money for pension funds and the well-off and once more less share of wealth for the most underprivileged.

One example among many: in Saint-Nazaire in France, the shipyards (Chantiers de l'Atlantique) hire more and more foreigners (even exclusively foreigners for some specific qualifications). For instance, Polish welders trained in the Polish shipyards that do not build any ship nowadays. They earn more than in Poland but less than French workers. Moreover, they are hired by foreign firms that do not fall under French law.

Today, in Spain, in Andalusia, under paid Moroccans in farms are replaced by Romanians less stricken by local racism.

In conclusion, the working group takes over on its name the Italian proposal from our friends Sin Cobas Immigrants that the European Marches should make as soon as possible a call to institutions, European and national organs in order to: defend the

right to regularizations for all immigrants, to claim the closing of the detention centres (and to halt immediately all construction plans) where immigrants waiting to be deported are cooped up in unacceptable conditions and often victims of unbearable physical brutalities.

Social rights, citizenship and constitutional issues

Michel Rousseau (Marches Européennes) reporter; Sonia Mitralias (women worldwide march) moderator; and Leo Gabriel (Euromarches, Austria)

Since its birth in 1950 with the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), the economic and liberal Europe never stopped strengthening and structuring enlarging at the same time from six to 25 members. The social issue is quite another story. If the Council of Europe signed a Social Charter in 1961, if the ETUC was created in 1973, we had to wait the end of the century to see the beginning of a debate on the place of the social rights in EU. It took place in a background of mass unemployment and long term unemployment, of reappraisal of social gains in each country in order to "not impede competition". An ad hoc convention was in charge to draw up a Charter of Fundamental Rights. It was proclaimed at the Nice Treaty and then integrated in the draft constitution. All the organizations think it is widely inadequate, more particularly as far as social rights are concerned for it simply ignores them. Some organizations think that it is "better than nothing", others think that nothing is better than this unacceptable text. Indeed, the labour rights, particularly the right to an income to live, does not appear.

The struggle to maintain and to extend social rights on a European scale is therefore a burning issue. From the Nice summit in 2000, and then the summits of Brussels in 2001, Thessalonica in 2003, on the occasion of the European Social Forums in Florence and Paris, some networks like the European Marches, Transform, the leagues of the Human Rights met in order to compare their analysis and expectations in the fields of

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social and fundamental rights on the European Continent. Thus, at the end of 2003, we created the Network for a Democratic and Social Europe "for a democratic Europe, of citizenship, of social rights, of equality and peace" (see in the appendix the summary of the work done by this network; the working group wanted to add the right to strike at European scale to this work). This network intends to participate to the debate on the draft constitutional treaty and above all to take the necessary initiatives to maintain and expand social rights in the whole Europe, in texts and in facts. All the more reason! After the fiasco of the Brussels intergovernmental conference in 2004, according to the members of the working group, the speeding-up of the schedule gives a specific importance to the process which began, making necessary a continuous vigilance and mobilization of citizens and of the people of EU.

Income

Euromarches, Belgium; Chrystelle Blanc Lanaute (AC!, France); Willi Lüpkes (Euromarches, Germany)

The working group first looked into the German situation in the frame of the implementation of the Agenda 2010. The planned Schröder government reforms are akin to the analyses Euromarches have been doing for years on the Broad Economic Policy Guidelines (BEPG), and on the employment guidelines negotiated by the national governments and the European Commission.

The German Agenda intends to merge unemployment benefits, which traditionally are under the social insurance regime with the assistance regime. The amount of the benefits has been reviewed downward. The new regulation imposes on unemployed to accept any proposal of job, whatever the income conditions (including after one year of unemployment, if the proposed job salary is lower than the salary negotiated by trade

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unions in collective labour agreements) and whatever the qualification of the person concerned.

That takes place more widely in a context of deterioration of employment, with an increase of redundancies that employers are trying to make easier and a boom in fixed-term contracts. Care services are on the way to increased privatization, retirement age has been raised and a cut has been made in pensions meanwhile tax relief on big incomes increase.

The current situation in Germany is close to the one of other countries, as the members of the working group noticed: poverty is increasing, having a job does not protect anymore the workers and the unemployed are forced to accept very low paid and insecure jobs in order to keep their entitlement to low benefits.

From this statement, discussions were about the minimum income, the minimum wage, and the minimum amount unemployment benefit should reach. The conclusion issued from the members of the working group is that it is necessary to make the difference between minimum income and minimum wage in analysis and stances. It is though indispensable to keep in mind that these two sources of income, to which we must add unemployment benefits, are connected. Thus, employers, the European Commission, and national governments agree to strongly reduce (or sometimes abolish) the level unemployment benefits in order to have the level of wages lowered.

Unemployed are thus directly concerned by the issue of the minimum wage, traditionally handled by trade unions, so it is for workers and trade unions who must get involved in the defence of a high level unemployment benefit and minimum income.

The question is then the question of the demand we should put forward. Looking at the diversity of the situations in Europe, the European Marches have proposed for several years to define the amount of unemployment benefits and those of the minimum income to demand in relation with a percentage of GDP in each State. The figure of 50% of GDP per inhabitant was suggested to value the minimum income to which every inhabitant in EU deprived of income should be entitled to.

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The participants discussed this amount and agreed to pursue their comparison of the national situations in order to know if this claim remains the most adequate to national realities. The aim of the working group is clear: the definition of a widely applicable demand is a priority as far as minimum income and unemployment benefits are concerned in order to stop the impoverishment of the unemployed and to protect workers by preventing new wages cuts.

European Enlargement

Jacques Desideri (AC! France), reporter; Christian Köpcke (Euromarches, Germany), moderator; Franck Slegers (Euromarches, Belgium)

Enlargement. Christian Köpcke situates the importance of this opening for Germany and particularly the regions on borders. Standards of living are different, living conditions in the East continue to get worse and corruption is expanding (in Poland, one has to pay the job centre to get a job!)

In the East, enlargement is seen as a way to expand the market, to make people work for a lesser wage and to delocalize.

The question of supporting Eastern unemployed organizations still remains: developing cooperation, exchanges, know-how and experiences, the mutual knowledge.

In Germany, we discussed a lot the enlargement and its consequences. We start to know each other, to be enriched with our differences.

Eastern situation. The Polish leaders of unemployed organizations mention the future: most part of Polish people expect positive effects with the entrance to Europe, particularly the youth. In Pomerania, unemployed organizations have been existing for eleven years, it is the result of a social revolt which took place with the increase of unemployment to 28% and the occupation of official administrations. The Committee for the defence of the unemployed was then created as a declared

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association. They came to France to get some contacts and to talk about the Polish reality which is not the official reality.

Poland and Eastern European countries made the choice to open to the West but contacts were practically closed with the East (agreements with Russia must though be respected). Maybe Poland could have been a neutral country, self sufficient in the economic field.

Illegal, undeclared, informal work is important. There are also hidden unemployed people.

Our fears, our proposals. For the French (and others), there are two major risks: the delocalization of firms (with redundancies) and the arrival of workers coming from the East who accept very unfavourable conditions. As we can see, Spanish lorry drivers are exploited (with the lowering of working hours, working conditions and wages) and take the place of French lorry drivers.

We must work out alternatives responses and have proposals. For instance, the labour code must be respected everywhere, the harmonization of wages and working condition must guarantee both Eastern and Western workers.

We must break pictures, break the fear, struggle against xenophobia, build common power struggle.

As far as the minimum income is concerned, 50% of GDP per inhabitant is worth about 400 euros meanwhile the average wage is worth 400 euros and the minimum wage 200 euros. But prices continue to grow and inflation is very strong.

We thought about a tax on machines and not only on wages, in order to tax firms who make profits and hire very few workers.

We have to highlight two leads: *residence citizenship* and the *same social rights for all*, and to lay stress on social rights (civil and politic rights are not sufficient). We want jobs for all, more and better jobs, qualifying training that should be adapted for all. We want to struggle against all forms of precariousness, fixed-term contract, part-time...

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Social rights must be engraved in the European Constitution.

Building struggles all over Europe? The European Marches have managed to build a common demand on the issue of income: a guaranteed income that should not be lower than 50% of GDP per inhabitant.

We have implemented European common action days, the 30th of October is the income day like the May day: the same day, the same demands all over Europe. We plan to organize common demonstrations at the borders the 1st of May. In Dublin, a European demonstration with delegates from everywhere will take place.

We all have a great work to do to inform and explain our actions. We can develop twinning between our organizations.

What means? To develop exchanges, to meet, to develop struggles, all this has a cost and we have very few means to make social rights improve in Europe. Could we implement a European subscription to support the struggles of the unemployed? That would allow us to raise money and get recognition.

Unemployment organizations today have neither financial means nor recognition. Though, in Ireland, unemployed organizations are recognized and are full social partners.

Relations with trade unions. Workers and unemployed are represented by different organizations, can a worker's union take into account the problems of the unemployed. Workers have been divided between those who have a job and those who are deprived of job.

In Germany, there is a beginning of collaboration between workers and unemployed organizations, as seen in the demonstrations in the 3rd of April.

In Poland, trade unions remain too politicized and have very little presence in private firms. Unemployed organizations are not supported at all by trade unions who did not do or say anything when unemployment benefits have been lowered. Today, unemployed are jealous of workers and are treated as layabouts or tramps...

If we want to progress and build a power struggle in our favour for more social justice and less inequalities and exclusion, workers and unemployed will have no choice but getting allies,

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their organizations (trade unions and associations) will have to work together.

Seven burning issues which are conditioning prospects

Synthesis of the speeches which followed the round table and the working groups (Jean-Guy Dufour)

E.U. Enlargement: how can our hopes overcome our fears?

An interesting experience of common knowledge has been developed between German unemployed organizations and Polish's ones through selective initiatives and the development of informal relations. All think it is necessary to develop this movement, specifically around practical projects. It is also useful to take the most of official initiatives of exchanges and cooperation as the Euroregion of Pomerania.

Such a cooperation not only enable to help one another but also to better know each other, to better understand the situation of each one and thus to better struggle against xenophobic reactions that might expand. This cooperation enable thus to make rise together the demand for the same high level rights in the East as in the West.

Indeed, we know that great fears exist among the populations, in the East as in the West, about the consequences of the enlargement. In the East, there is a fear of the disappearance of entire sectors of activity which have too much to catch up, in the West, the fear of the competition of eastern workers who make do with a very little, of the loss of European subsidies to be shared with new countries without any increase of the total amount, of delocalizations of activities from the West to the East. Are these fears justified? It is very difficult to say so now and we will have to observe very closely the evolution of the situation.

But what is sure is that the European economic and social policies produce unemployment and precariousness and these policies might make the enlargement dangerous for people,

not the enlargement in itself which, on the contrary increases the possibilities for Europe to pursue another way than the one of liberal globalization by reinforcing its economic self-sufficiency. There is then only one parry: to act in order to gain indivisible rights in the East as in the West of E.U. and a recognized citizenship with no differences between those who live in its soil, regardless their origin.

Wages and guaranteed minimum income? How? What level?

The 2010 agenda of the German government means that thousands of workers – above all women – will have to accept wages that are lower than the minimum provided under the collective labour agreements. In the fields of cleaning, hotel business, gross salaries fluctuate already between 944 euros and 1380 euros a month. So, the demand of a minimum wage, until now non-existent in Germany, is growing. Thus the food union claims a gross minimum wage worth 1500 euros a month. The services union Verdi wants to develop the struggle against workfare for unemployed. On the contrary, IG Metall, representative of a sector in which the balance of power is better, fears that the institution of a minimum wage makes wages lower and that the contractual system that makes the strength of German trade unions suffer from such measures. Here is the importance of the demand for a high enough minimum wage. The idea to propose the Agenda 30-10 in oppositions of the 2010 Agenda is spreading: 30 hours a week for 10 euros an hour at the minimum.

In all the countries, the discussion on the minimum wage level is related to the one of a guaranteed minimum income for the unemployed. Everywhere, employment policy drives the tendency to lower these minimum standards and opposed to that, positions are very different. Is a difference between the minimum wage and the minimum income necessary? Should we index them to the GDP or to the average wage? Should we envisage a daily minimum wage calculated from a set of goods which would be guaranteed in whatever period we live; with or without a job, as think the entertainment workers in France? At the moment, the Euromarches demand a guaranteed minimum income equal to 50% of GDP per inhabitant and, in its principle at any rate, this demand is quite consensual. In spite of that, we must enter in a

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deep discussion derived from specific knowledge about the way the minimum wage is calculated in each country.

Without the recognition of residence citizenship for men and women living in Europe, whatever their origin, we are all weakened in the struggle for our rights

The working group on immigration made a clear statement on the most frequent tragic situations of migrants in the current E.U., be they native from Eastern Europe or from elsewhere. This situation allows a great deal of employers to hire them legally or illegally, at low costs, putting thus a great pressure to lower wages in a lot of sectors of activity (shipyard, building trade, farming, etc.). It is the necessary for all to obtain immediately from E.U. and from member states the right to regularization of all immigrants and the closing of detention centres. Beyond, the recognition of the residence citizenship giving the same rights to the residents on the E.U. soil, whatever their nationality, is a demand shared by all the movements members of the Network for a democratic and social Europe.

The crucial choice for Europe: the economy must serve the rights and not the other way round!

The issues raised by the working group on "social rights, citizenship and constitutional issues" are of utmost importance.

The European construction will be able to lead to the adhesion of people only if it means that the economy serves the real progress of social rights meanwhile today, we notice the opposite in most countries.

The cooperation between trade unions, unemployed organizations and social movements must improve

Usually, this cooperation is at the present time very insufficient. From this point of view, we can note two contrasting situations.

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In Germany, the success of the demonstration against the 2010 Agenda of the red/greens governmental coalition, which was organized in November 2003 together with trade unions and organizations of the Alter-globalization movement deeply changed the relations between trade unions and the social movement. The 3rd of April, demonstrations will be very important and unemployed organizations will express themselves. The trade union Verdi is giving a more and more significant place to unemployed and demands around the minimum income or the minimum wage progress inside trade unions.

In Poland, on the contrary, the situation is disastrous from that point of view. Trade unions, which still exist merely in State services, ignore completely the unemployed and their demands except when it comes to be present in demonstrations.

In France, the CFDT implements jointly with the employers very hard attacks against the unemployed.

A big effort of giving people information on the stakes of the European Constitution is a must: only the people can decide on the Constitution

This is a unanimous assessment: the people know absolutely nothing about these stakes. It is catastrophic when we are aware of what the consequences of the fact of having set in stone the current social policy direction may be.

We have to use all possible means to change this situation: a large diffusion of very simple material, and of initiatives ; for instance, on the occasion of the May day, or else the initiative of the Spanish Consulta, or of action days.

Every time we inform, it is important to spread our alternative counter-proposals.

Beyond the information, we have to insist on the demand that the people must be consulted in the frame of a referendum. Whatever the analyses made on the Constitution, it is unacceptable for any democrat to see this Constitution not

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submitted to the European people to decide. Around this demand, all democratic parties and all the organizations of the social movement have to be able to unite.

Working on the development of a European social movement

For the Euromarches, one of the essential characteristic of the European social movement is that it has to demand an open Europe not participating in the domination and exploitation of other countries but, on the contrary, establishing fair cooperation with them.

We have to note that social movements, both in associations and trade unions, do not manage at the present time to make an efficient European coordination group, with forces likely to oppose the social policy of the current Europe.

Consequently, the replies to these attacks only exist by country, in scattered formation, depending on each country's agenda according to the directions decided by states on the European scale, as for example the issue of pensions. It is therefore essential to promote means to make social movements more effective.

There will be no construction "from the top" of a European social movement: the social movement works through practical initiatives and through the organization of real international social struggles as well as through the increase in the number of horizontal links between grassroots activist and collectives acting in several countries, associative activists, unionists, activist from the alternative and alter globalisation movements...

We have contributed to that since 1997, modestly, although in advance of many others, with the organization of the first European marches against unemployment, job insecurity and exclusion. These marches symbolically started in Tangier and Sarajevo. We feel happy to see that these mobilizations have taken a more international course these last years. The "March" to come is the one which will lead us to a world without any borders, a world of freedom and social justice. We are drawing the lines of this March, it will take the form we give to it, all of us together !

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How to go ahead?

Without further delay, let's prepare the next steps...!

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1st May 2004, Paris, Place de la République "Europe is enlarging, lets enlarge social rights!"

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Call of the Social movements for a solidarity East / West

Call on the initiative of the network of European Marches against Unemployment, Job insecurity and Exclusions.

On the 1st of May 2004, The E.U. will open to ten new countries. Once again, the E.U. construction gives priority to financial stakes rather than the rapprochement of the people of Europe, the most elementary rights and freedoms, more particularly the rights and liberties of the most underprivileged, precarious people, immigrants, and unemployed. Indeed, while capital and wealth are free to move in any direction, workers from the new countries are in advance suspected of "Social tourism" and greeted by the EU'15 governments by a "you are not welcome"

We, activists of the European social movements, associations and trade unions, on the contrary declare our will to break up all the borders and to establish active solidarities between the social movements of the E.U.'15 and the 10 new countries.

We refuse indeed, any attitude of withdrawal, which would lead to the closure of the EU15's to the workers of the new EU countries; we refuse also all the attempts aiming at relying on Enlargement to lower the existing social rights whilst overexploiting the workers of the EU's new members.

We demand:

- **the levelling up of all social rights in Europe** which means not only the respect of those rights existing in the different countries but also a democratically controlled process of extending the best social rights to the less privileged countries.

- **The enlargement of social rights everywhere in Europe in order to defeat precariousness and misery.** Elementary social rights such as the right to housing, to employment, to health, to education, to culture, to real gender equality, the rights to transports and fluids, the right to land have to be recognized and implemented throughout Europe. The right to a guaranteed income to live must be recognized in all the EU

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countries; a mechanism of wealth redistribution, according to a common percentage of GDP per head in all states, (this would take into account the disparities in terms of wealth production and unify demands and rights, we suggest this percentage could be of 50% of the GDP)

- **The freedom of movement for all human beings living and working in Europe**

We demand a full freedom of movement, activity and settlement in all E.U. countries, for the inhabitants of the new member states as for those of all the countries of the world. We refuse to suffer the consequences of the competition between Eastern and Western legislations; therefore, we firmly demand the general development of social rights, in opposition to the EU construction logic, a liberal logic of obedience to capitalist interests.

We are extremely critical of the current draft Constitution, which, if adopted as it is, would have disastrous consequences for social rights, for its contents and because it does not guarantee: unemployment benefits, pension schemes, social benefits, the right to housing, access to social services and health care would not be guaranteed anymore.

Only the emergence of a European social consciousness and of a European social movement, only a massive and active mobilization of populations, workers, unemployed, insecure workers and the development of grassroots social struggles will enable the building of a new future. This way, an active solidarity between the social movements of the 15 and of the 10 becomes with the 1st of May 2004 enlargement an imperious necessity.

That's why, we, activists of the European social movement, NGO's and trade unions of different European countries, are committed to follow this path.

How to implement it?

Some clues for the implementation of the call

In order to make the objectives of this appeal progress, the Euromarches is willing to contribute following several directions.

First of all, we must work to give to the European assemblies of the social movement issued from the process of the

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social forums more efficiency, to get the basic means necessary to ensure an effective convergence of the struggles for social rights in Europe, particularly, all the struggles aiming at causing a fall of the unemployment, precariousness and exclusion policies.

The network will also work on the process of preparation of the European social forums in order to make more involved in issues concerning workers, unemployed, insecure workers, immigrants and all social issues concerning the vast majority of the European citizens.

Given the fact that European citizens are not much informed about the stakes of the draft Constitution, the network will take part in initiatives aiming at redressing this situation and will plead for a European campaign on two demands:

- The Constitution cannot be decided without any consultation of the people
- It must include social rights and must not assert as a principle the current ultraliberal direction as an essential principle of E.U. , almost non revisable.

In order to make progress mutual knowledge and cooperation between Eastern and Western European movements, the Euromarches organization committees will develop twinning between Eastern and Western committees.

In this spirit, the network will endeavour to develop exchanges and common initiatives with the European Antipoverty Network (EAPN) and ENU.

At last, the networks of ENU and Euromarches are launching an appeal towards the Irish Presidency of E.U. to consider unemployed associations as representative in regard of the European institutions.

Jean-Guy Dufour

1. Unemployment evolution in Europe since 1997

(source: Eurostat until 2002, completed until 2003 for some countries according to national sources) in % of the working population (people with a job or looking for one).

Note: these figures give an idea of the important relative difference of unemployment rates in the countries of the EU'15 or in the different countries of the countries acceding on the 1st of May 2004. They show as well the big difference between these acceding countries and the ones of the EU'15. At last, they show that in the E.U.'15, the unemployment rate lowered everywhere between 1997 and 2001 with a period of sharp growth, then, it usually rose again with the new period of low growth since 2001. We can also notice that everywhere, women are more affected by unemployment than men.

Though, these figures give an estimation more or less underestimated by the real unemployment rate. For instance, in France, we can estimate they represent about 65% of the registered unemployed. In fact, this underestimation is also very variable from one country to another. Indeed, it hides essentially the precarious work and imposed part-time work phenomenon corresponding to short-time working and often to situations of great poverty. This phenomenon is for instance very important in the United Kingdom, which makes apparently good statistics relative.

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In %	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
UE '15 (women and men)	10	9,4	8,7	7,8	7,4	7,7	
UE '15 (women)	11,6	11,1	10,2	9,2	8,6	8,7	
10 new acceding countries the 1 st of May 2004(women and men)				13,6	14,5	14,8	
10 new acceding countries the 1 st of May 2004(women)				14,8	15,5	15,6	
Germany	9,7	9,1	8,4	7,8	7,8	8,6	
Austria	4,4	4,5	3,9	3,7	3,6	4,3	
Belgium	9,2	9,3	8,6	6,9	6,7	7,3	8,0
Denmark	5,2	4,9	4,8	4,4	4,3	4,5	
Spain	17	15,2	12,8	11,3	10,6	11,3	11,6
Finland	12,7	11,4	10,2	9,8	9,1	9,1	
France	11,8	11,4	10,7	9,3	8,5	8,7	9,7
Greece	9,8	10,9	11,8	11,0	10,4	10,0	
Ireland	9,9	7,5	5,6	4,3	3,9	4,4	
Italy	11,6	11,7	11,3	10,4	9,4	9,0	
Luxembourg	2,7	2,7	2,4	2,3	2,1	2,8	
Netherlands	5,9	4,8	4,2	3,8	3,4	4,1	5,3
Portugal	6,8	5,1	4,5	4,1	4,1	5,1	
United Kingdom	6,9	6,2	5,9	5,4	5,0	5,1	
Sweden	9,9	8,2	6,7	5,6	4,9	4,9	
Cyprus				5,2	4,4	3,8	
Estonia	9,6	9,2	11,3	12,5	11,8	9,1	
Hungary	9,0	8,4	6,9	6,3	5,6	5,6	
Latvia		14,3	14,0	13,7	12,8	12,8	
Lithuania		11,8	11,2	15,7	16,1	13,1	
Poland	10,9	10,2	13,4	16,4	18,5	19,9	
Slovakia			16,7	18,7	19,4	18,6	
Slovenia	6,9	7,4	7,2	6,6	5,8	6,0	
Czech Republic		6,4	8,6	8,7	8,0	7,3	

Euromarches are working to be able to give much more significant information on all these issues in the future.

2. Poverty in Europe

(Sources Eurostat, community panel of households)

The European official definition of poverty is as follows: are considered as poor people who live with an income 60% lower than the median income ; half of the population live under this level of income. According to this definition, Europe could include on average 17% poor people. The situation in the different countries is one again quite scattered around this average. Portugal has a more than 20% poverty rate, the rate is a little below 20% in the UK, 16% in France or in Germany, 11% to 12% in Denmark or in the Netherlands.

We can see that there is very little correspondence between these situations and official rates mentioned below. This results of course from the remark we have already made about these figures. Poverty finds its source in total unemployment but also in the thousand different forms it takes, in other words, precarious work which is not taken into account in official figures. Thus, the relatively good figures on unemployment in the United Kingdom hide a situation actually very bad regarding the number of poor.

In addition, social protection systems are very different from one country to another (see further); so is family solidarity. The realities people live are thus very different. Nonetheless, the fact remains that the figures mentioned above show that poverty is not a marginal reality in Western Europe. As for the East, the speeches we heard throughout the conference have been eloquent...

We also have to notice that poverty in Europe is related to an evolution of wealth redistribution produced with capital and work that has been very unfavourable to workers for 25 years.

In France for instance, the proportion allocated to workers jumped from 67% to 57% from 1981 to 1997 and then stagnated. That is worth 280 € a month less for the working population (worker or unemployed) if we compare the situation with what it would be with 1981's distribution!!! We can be puzzled by the official and unanimous way European states deal with some issues such as pension, healthcare or unemployment funds.

3 – Resources guarantees in the different European countries

(source: synthesis : "The break of the unemployment social protection system in the E.U", work done by Marie-Paule Connan from data of the MISSOC (Mutual Information System on Social Protection) and from a study realized for the E.C. by the *Gesellschaft für Versicherungswissenschaft und gestaltung* in 2003).

Germany: a federal law guarantees a minimum income (Sozialhilfe) which precise amount is set by the *länders*. This income is granted without any condition of age and is unlimited as long as the person does not find any other resource. Accommodation and healthcare expenses are completely covered. The Sozialhilfe is cut by 25% in case the person refuses a job considered as acceptable. This pressure will be much stronger with the new measures of the 2010 Agenda.

To give a rough idea of the Sozialhilfe monthly income:
single person: 322 € couple without child: 660 € couple with two children: 1074 €

Austria: The guaranteed income (*Sozialhilfe*) is defined by regional laws and is quite different from one *Länd* to another (from 382 € to 496 €). The conditions of allocation are the same as in Germany.

single person: 382 to 496 € couple without child: 549 to 719 € couple with two children: 979 to 1237 €

Belgium: The Minimex is allocated to persons without any mean of support older than 18 years old, it is uniform in the whole country.

single person: 572 € couple without child: 763 € each extra dependent person 381 €

Denmark: The Socialbistand is defined by a national law. It is allocated to people older the 18 years old without any mean of support. It can be cut by 30% if it is considered that the person has refused a job without any valid reason. Health care expenses are covered and housing benefits might be added.

single person: 686 € for the ones under 25 and 1025 for others; couple without child: 2129 € couple with two children: 3028 €

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Spain: the *renta minima* is defined by regional laws and is allocated to very few people. The people are entitled for a 12 month period that can be renewed. The beneficiaries are the persons only older than 25 years old unless they have children.

The amount goes from 180 to 228 €

Finland: the *Toimeentulotuki* is defined by a national law. It is allocated to people older than 18 years old as long as the person cannot improve his situation. Specific housing benefits might be added. The amount differs according two categories of region.

single person: 370 € or 354 € according to the region;
couple without child: 630 € or 600 €, couple with two children: 890 € or 850 €

France: the minimum income scheme (RMI) is defined by national law and by departments (French territorial division). It must go with inclusion measures more and more conceived as "activation" measures. It ensures incomes which levels are limited as shown below. People entitled must be older than 25 years old unless they have children, and those who have legally been residing in France for at least three years. Health care is free of charge and housing benefit can be added.

single person: 418 €, couple without child: 627 €
couple with two children: 877 €

Greece: no guarantee of resources

Ireland: the *Supplementary Welfare Allowance* is defined by a national law. People older than 18 years old without any mean of support are entitled for an unlimited duration. There are also employment schemes encouraging unemployed to get a job or studies. Supplementary allowances for housing can be allocated.

single person: 515 € couple without child: 856 €
couple with two children: 1237 €

Italy: the *minim single o vitale* is defined by regional laws. The amount is set at local level according to individual situations. Health care is free of charges for the beneficiaries. Housing benefits can be allocated in some regions.

single person: from 232 € to 372 €

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Luxembourg: The guaranteed minimum income is defined by a national law. People older than 25 years old are entitled for an unlimited duration. In addition, some housing benefits can be allocated. As for health care, the health care insurance is obligatory.

single person: 919 € couple without child: 1378 €
couple with two children: 2004

Netherlands: the *Algemene Bijstand* is defined by a national law in relation with the net minimum wage (100% for a couple, 50% for an isolated person). Local authorities can allocate some supplementary aids up to 209 € People older than 18 years old are entitled for an unlimited duration though people under 23 have a reduced rate. The allowance can be cut or suspended in case of refusal to work.

Isolated person: 523 € couple with or without children:
1041 €

Portugal: the *rendimento Minimo Garantido* is defined by a national law. It is set at national level and allocated to people older than 18 (or younger if they have children), for an unlimited duration as long as resources are insufficient. Health care is guaranteed. The payment is accompanied with social inclusion measures.

Isolated person: 138 € couple without child: 277 €
couple with two children: 415 €

United Kingdom: The *Income Support* is defined general rules and is allocated for an unlimited duration to any person older than 18 years old, declared unfit to work and not reaching a minimum of resources. Incentive measures for employment have been set up, there are also aids for health and housing.

(Including health care and housing benefits) single person older than 25: 728 € couple without child: 1004 € couple with two children: 2540 €

Sweden: the *Socialbidrag* is defined by a national law. It is allocated for an unlimited duration without any condition of age. Health care and housing expenses are covered when necessary. It is compulsory to seek a job.

single person: 338 € couple without child: 569 €
couple with two children: 987 €

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Summary of the main points

The following table summarizes the previous information. A rough indication on guaranteed minimum incomes in the countries which joined the E.U. on the 1st of May 2004 has been included. The last column takes up the Euromarches demand of a guaranteed minimum income of 50% of GDP per head.

(data Eurostat on the 1st of January 2003)

4. Unemployment benefits in the different European countries

(data Eurostat on the 1st of January 2003)

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	Monthly GDP per Head Calculated in euro PPS (current prices)	Monthly minimum income in Euro (isolated person older than 25) (Source: Missoc 2001)	Poverty limit (60% of the monthly median income)	Euromarches demand of a monthly guaranteed income of 50% of GDP (per person for an isolated person)
Germany	2 018	634 +housingt	586	1 009
Austria	2 171	382 to 496		1 085
Belgium	2 055	584	543	1 027
Denmark	2 306	1 065 + housing	704	1 153
Spain	1 603	180 à 228	253	802
Finland	2 003	355 to 371 + housing		1 001
France	1 938	406 +housing	539	969
Greece	1 303	-	201	652
Ireland	2 308	515 +housing	413	1 154
Italy	2 030	305	307	1 015
Luxembourg	3 751	919 +housing	922	1 875
Netherlands	2 188	623 +housing	747	1 094
Portugal	1 429	138 +housing	180	1 215
United Kingdom	1 936	340	467	967
Sweden	1 939	338		969

Future member States (in euro)

Cyprus 1 542		771
Estonia 817	32	708
Hungary 992	114	496
Latvia 725	59	363
Lithuania 642	39	321
Malta 975		487
Poland 767	102	384
Czech Republic 1 108	70	554
Slovakia 925	35	462
Slovenia 1 333	176	666

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Germany: in accordance with the social code, financed by obligatory social contributions of all workers, the unemployment insurance is allocated for a period depending on the age and on the duration of contributions to the unemployed who can justify at least 12 working months in the last 3 years. The unemployment assistance, financed by tax, complements the unemployment benefits for people who have exhausted their rights. The benefit rates are 60% of the net salary for unemployed without children and 67% for unemployed with children. Specific measures are set for older unemployed

Austria: a system very close to the German system is defined by the law. Benefit rates are 55% of the net salary for the unemployment insurance and 92% of the minimum income for the unemployment assistance.

Belgium: Defined by the law, unemployment benefits are financed by an obligatory contribution of workers. They are allocated for an unlimited duration under the condition to have been working for 312 days in the last 18 months or 624 days in the last 36 months. Their level is defined by a percentage of the previous average salary limited to 63 € a day, 60% the first year and 44% the following years for a single person, 60% for people with dependant family members, 55% the first year for "co-inhabitants" (unmarried couple living under the same roof) without dependent family members. Specific measures are set for older unemployed.

Denmark: defined by the law, the principle is based on the voluntary contribution of the worker. Benefits are allocated on the condition to have been working 52 weeks during the last 3 years and to have been affiliated to a fund for at least one year. The entitlement duration is one year (6 months for young under 25's), then at the most 3 years on the condition to participate in different measures against unemployment. The benefit rate is 90% of the reference salary and limited to 1624 € a month (1232 for young under 25). Specific measures are set for older unemployed.

Spain: The unemployment insurance is defined by the law. It is financed by obligatory social contributions. It is allocated to unemployed who have worked at least 360 days in the last 6

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years for a period from 4 months to 2 years according to the paid contributions. The amount is worth 70% of the reference salary for the first 182 days and then 60%. Specific measures are set for older unemployed. The unemployment assistance complements the unemployment benefits during 6 to 18 months at the most for people who have exhausted their rights. The unemployment assistance is worth 75% of the minimum wage during the first 6 months.

Finland: Defined by the law, the system is made of an unemployment insurance divided in two parts: a basic allowance for those who have worked 43 weeks during the last 24 months with a minimum of 18 hours a week and an allowance proportional to incomes for those who affiliated to a voluntary fund during the same period. The entitlement duration is 500 days. The basic allowance is a bit less than 23 € and the proportional allowance adds 42% of the difference between the daily wage and the basic allowance. Young people aged 17 who have not finished their training course or the ones aged from 18 to 25 who refused employment schemes or training are excluded from the system. Specific measures are set for older unemployed. The unemployment assistance covers those who are not entitled or have exhausted their rights. The amount is equal to the basic allowance.

France: The unemployment insurance is defined by long term agreements between employer's organizations and trade unions that administrate the UNEDIC which is a private law organization. These agreements must respect the principles of the labour law and thus be officially approved by the government. The financing is ensured by contributions based on the salaries paid by employers and workers. The duration of entitlement vary from 7 to 42 months in accordance with the previous working period and the age. The amount is worth 57,4% of the gross salary of reference. A specific solidarity allowance (ASS) takes over the unemployed insurance for the unemployed who have exhausted their rights, under some conditions, specifically the level of the family income. At the most, the ASS is worth 13,57 € a day (19,47 for older unemployed aged more than 55). Until now, the entitlement was unlimited, but the question was raised to limit it to 2 years, Nevertheless, this measure is under discussion. There are some complicated systems for older unemployed.

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Greece: Defined by the law, the unemployment insurance is allocated to unemployed workers who have a sickness insurance affiliation to a social security organization, and who have worked at least 125 days during the last 14 months or 200 days during the last 2 years before their redundancy. The duration of the entitlement depends on the duration of the previous working period. The amount of allowances is worth 50% of the daily wage or 50% of the monthly salary depending on the worker's status. Specific measures are set for older unemployed.

Ireland: The unemployed insurance system is defined by the law. It is financed by obligatory contributions taken out of the salaries. Allowances are allocated to unemployed who have paid contributions during 39 weeks in the year before their redundancy or 26 weeks during the two previous years for an entitlement of a maximum of 390 days. The allowances are uniform

And are worth 475 € Specific measures are set for older unemployed.

The unemployment assistance, financed by tax takes over the allowances for those who have exhausted their rights, it is depending on resources conditions and is worth 475 €

Italy: defined by the law, the system covers full unemployment and short time unemployment. Allowances are given to unemployed who have paid at least 52 monthly contributions in a 2 years period. People are entitled for a maximum of 180 days (270 for unemployed older than 50). The amount is 40% of the salary of reference for the 3 last month preceding the redundancy with a limit of 760 € for salaries below 1644 € and 913 for the others. As for short time unemployment, a supplement is added on the salary to workers in firms of specific category and locality which do not fit with demanded conditions enabling to be under the full employment system. There is not any specific measure are set for older unemployed.

Luxembourg: Defined by the law, the system ensures an unemployed allowance to those who have worked at least 26 weeks during the year before the redundancy. The standard duration of entitlement is one year and can be extended to 182 days for unemployed who have difficulties to find a job, it can also be extended to durations depending on the duration of

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affiliation for people older than 50. The allowance rate is worth 80% of the salary of reference. Specific measures are set for older unemployed.

Netherlands: The system is defined by the law. Allowances are allocated to unemployed who have worked at least 26 weeks in the last 39 weeks. The duration varies between 9 months and 4 years. The allowance rate is worth 70% of the last salary with a maximum daily amount of 159 € Specific measures are set for older unemployed.

Portugal: Defined by the law, the system is based on a social insurance regime compulsory for workers. It is completed by the unemployment assistance for those who are not entitled to unemployment insurance. Allowances are allocated to those who have worked at least 540 days during the last 24 months before their redundancy, for a period going from 12 to 30 months at the most and according to the age. The amount is worth 65% of the salary of reference. The unemployment assistance is allocated to those who can justify 180 working days during the last 12 months. The entitlement periods follow the same rules as the unemployment insurance but when assistance allowances are allocated after people have been allocated insurance allowances, the duration is divided by two. The amount of the unemployment assistance allowances are worth 80% of the minimum wage. Older unemployed are compulsorily retired when their rights are exhausted.

United Kingdom: defined by the law, the system provides an unemployment allowance financed by compulsory social contributions of workers and an assistance financed by tax. Allowances are allocated according to family resources conditions for a period of a maximum of 182 days as far as insurance is concerned and an unlimited period for the assistance. The basic rates of these allowances are 340 € a month (204 for young aged 16 – 17, 268 for the 18-24) and 523 € for a couple. There is not any specific measure are set for older unemployed.

Sweden: Defined by the law, the system has two constituents: an allowance proportional to the income (80% of the income) for people who chose to affiliate an unemployment insurance fund for at least 12 months; a basic allowance for people older than 20

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years old who cannot get the proportional allowance and who have worked at least 6 months, 70 hours a month. The basic allowance is allocated for 300 days at the most and is worth 29 € a day. There is not any specific measure set for older unemployed.

In the countries acceding the E.U. on the 1st May 2004-07-14

Estonia: an allowance of which the amount is uniform and allocated by the government for a 6 months period.

Hungary: an unemployment allowance is allocated during one year to those who have affiliated the unemployment insurance before they were declared redundant. It is worth 75% of the salary of reference the first 6 months and then 60%.

Latvia: Those who have been affiliated during 9 months in the 12 last months can benefit from an unemployment allowance during 9 months. It is worth 70% of the salary of reference (135 €).

Lithuania: an allowance from 39 to 72 € according to the previous duration of affiliation is allocated during 6 months.

Poland: one has to have worked and paid contributions to the "work fund" for at least 12 months during the last 18 months to be entitled to an allowance. It is allocated during 6 to 18 months according to the unemployment rate. Its amount depends on the working period. The basic allowance is worth 81 €

Slovakia: an allowance is allocated to those who have worked and paid contributions. The entitlement duration varies from 6 to 12 months according to the contribution duration. It is worth 60% of the salary the first 6 months and then 50%.

Slovenia: one has to have paid contributions during 9 months in the last 12 months to be entitled. The allowances are allocated for 3 to 24 months according to the contribution duration. They are worth 80% of the minimum wage.

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Czech Republic: an allowance is allocated during 6 months to those who have worked at least 12 months during the last 3 years. It is worth 60% of the net monthly salary for the first 3 months and then 50%.

An overview of the social situation in the European countries can be consulted in all E.U. languages on the website: www.socialismus.de

To consult Eurostat data:
<http://europa.eu.int/comm/eurostat/>

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"For a democratic Europe, of citizenship, social rights,
equality and peace"

Declaration proposed to the European Network for Social Rights in Europe (RED)

The democracy in Europe can only be based on a double foundation

European democracy can only rely on two foundations: the sovereignty of its peoples and of the citizens they consist of. It will grow from its representative local, national and European assemblies, the only ones who have the legitimacy to elaborate, propose and validate a Constitution of the European citizens.

The fundamental and social rights are indivisible and universal common goods for everybody and include the right for a healthy and sustainable environment. They have to be respected as much by individuals as by groups and peoples.

We want a Europe where citizens participate in promoting peace, social rights, justice, equality, freedom and openness to the world.

1. We, the citizens of Europe want a democratic Europe, a Europe which practices the values that it pretends to defend. A true charter of rights should be open to debate by all citizens who affirm the principles of universality, indivisibility and effectiveness of the civil, economic, political, social and cultural rights of all European residents, regardless of their nationality or origin.

This Europe must adopt all international instruments that protect freedom and economic and social rights. It should finally create a real democratic system that adopts whatever the parliament legislates, the executive governs and the judicial institutions decide. This is why it needs a real constitution that will guarantee and safeguard its people's rights and their freedom. Europe has

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to create institutions that allow the active expression and participation of its citizens.

2. We, the citizens of Europe, want a society based on equality and the respect for its diversity. That's why the constitution has to go beyond the recognition of equality between all women and men recognizing an equality that also respects their diversity and in particular on the professional level.

The women must be able to dispose freely of their bodies, especially with regard to contraception and abortion which should be free in access and cost. Sexual preferences should by no means be a pretext for discrimination. Social equality can only prosper in a Europe where the national and the Union's legislation seriously fight the endemic violence against women.

We want a Europe that guarantees the right for asylum of every woman who has become victim of sexist violence in her country of origin.

3. We, the citizens of Europe, want a social Europe. That's why we reject an economic model which opposes the sustainable development of the Union. We reject an economic model that produces unemployment, marginalises millions of people, considers competition and profit as its supreme values and disregards the environment. Europe has to stop accepting the reduction of social minima giving way to the claims of those who intend to instrumentalise the Union for their own economic interests. The economy has to be put in the service of a social development. This implies the design of an economic, social and fiscal policy which no longer contributes to institutions like the European Central Bank who fulfil their task without any democratic control. Europe has to recognise the need and the role of public services which are essential for its social and territorial cohesion and to the satisfaction of the basic needs of its citizens.

We want a social Europe based on the respect of fundamental social rights, such as:

1. The right for work, the right for a salary and the right for decent working conditions. Particularly we oppose the imposition of

precarious and part-time-jobs.

- The right for means of existence. Every person has the right for a minimum income defined by European standards according to the wealth produced by the Member-State he or she lives in.
- The right for shelter and housing. Common goods such as water should be recognised as public services and not be left to the market forces.
- The right for health care and the right for social protection.
- Family rights and children rights.
- The right of older people for a pension.
- The rights of the handicapped.
- The right for education.
- The right to culture.
- The right for free expression, demonstration and free circulation.

All of the social rights have to be guaranteed on the entire territory of the Union with the objective to improve the living and working conditions on the basis of achieving progressively their equality between the Member States of the Union. Each of the social rights has to be protected legally and factually.

4. We, the citizens of Europe, want a Europe open to the world. It

is our responsibility as Europeans to promote an international system based on the globalisation of rights, equality and solidarity. For this purpose Europe has to open up to the world changing radically its image of a besieged fortress. The Union has to respect everybody's right to circulate freely and has to put at the disposal of the citizens the necessary means to guarantee, as soon as possible, an effective freedom of settlement.

- The citizenship of residence therefore will be the indispensable guarantee for the social cohesion on the territory of the Union. This implies the recognition of an equality of rights of all its residents regardless of their nationality. From now on Europe has to recognise the citizenship of residence to all foreigners living on its territory and has to respect fully the right of asylum.
- The cultural identity of Europe is already a reality which should be broadened and diversified, especially in order to avoid the hegemony of a culture based on a dominant model. It is the

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responsibility of all of us to create a public space where this plurality of cultures which is the outstanding feature of our epoch is reflected.

5. We, the citizens of Europe, want a Europe of peace and want that this peace should be recognised as a fundamental value. Europe has to be a subject of peace and justice not only for the peoples of Europe, but for the entire planet.

We, the citizens of Europe, raise our voice to call for full recognition of all associations and trade unions as societal counterparts of the Union's institutions; because there cannot exist democracy without the active participation of the citizens and without the desire and the means for their participation. To conceive civil counterparts on the European level, to promote the representation of citizens beyond the boundaries of their national interests should be one of the priorities of each of the Union's institutions and of the European civil society as a whole.

This is why **we, the citizens of Europe,** conscious about the European challenges and the impact Europe already has and will have on our every day life call on all citizens of Europe and all organisations to mobilise in order to build a truly democratic Europe who respects the rights and freedom of all of us.

We therefore call to undertake a collective construction process aimed at the constitution of "Assemblies for another Europe" based on universal and indivisible rights for the citizenship of residence, equality, peace and democracy.

The participants of the conference have expressed their wish that a real right to strike at European scale be integrated in the list of the demanded social rights.

Resources

Social rights in the Enlarged Europe
Coordination and editorial secretary: Jean-Guy Dufour

- Euromarches website: www.euromarches.org
- Vereniging Bijstandsbond Amsterdam
Da Costakade 158
NL-1053 XC Amsterdam
Mail: bijsbnd@xs4all.nl
- Marches Européennes
17, rue de Lancry
F-75010 Paris
Mail: euromarches@ras.eu.org
- ENU France
47, rue de Clichy
F-75009 Paris
Mail: enu.france@laposte.net
ENU (Europe): kalle_kunnas@hotmail.com
- REDS
Réseau pour une Europe Démocratique et
Sociale
Network for a Democratic and Social Europe
Mail: reds@idh-france.org

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- Canal Marches

The Association was created in the wake of the European Marches in 1997. Canal Marches produced several documents to give a better knowledge of the Euromarches venture, to give voice to the "sans voix" (without voice) in Europe:

En Marche: documentary video, Patrice Spadoni; on the 1997 European Marches (to Amsterdam). 19 €paid postage.

Les sentiers de la colère, a book of Bertrand Schmitt and Patrice Spadoni, L'esprit frappeur, 2,30 € paid postage

Les rendez-vous de Nice, documentary of Vincent Goulet (2000), 19 €paid postage

La marche andalouze, documentary of Patrice Spadoni on the March from Clermont- ferrand to Seville (2002). 19 €paid postage

Order to Canal Marches
122, rue des Couronnes, 75020, Paris

- Marches Européennes

‘Social rights in an enlarged Europe’, a documentary in French on the European Marches; useful to have for public debates, with some extracts of the Brussels conference, highlighting some of the stakes of social rights in Europe, interviews with some of the activists of the struggle against unemployment from Poland, Finland, Belgium, Netherlands and scenes of the struggles of the unemployed in Europe.

Realisation: Canal Marches
VHS, 30mn. 10 €paid postage

Order to Marches Européennes
17, rue de Lancry, 75010 Paris.