

Europe coordinators of the World Women's Conference of rank-and-file women

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To the Europe committee of the World Women's Conference

To the Militant Women's Council („Kämpferischer Frauenrat“) in Germany

Report of the Europe coordinators

About the 2nd Europe conference on January 26th 2013 in Amsterdam

for the preparation of the 2nd World Women's Conference 2016 in Asia

Delegates of the 2nd Europe Conference were (in alphabetical order of the countries):

from **Denmark** a representative of the Gender Equality Center

from **Germany** three representatives of the Kämpferischer Frauenrat, Women's organisation Courage and trade-union

from **France** three representatives of Femmes de l'Île and of the World Women Process

from **Greece** two representatives of the steel worker's women from Aspropyrgos

from the **Netherlands** three representatives of the 8th March committee

from **Russia** one well-known representative of the women's movement

from the **Ukraine** three representatives of the coordination council of Worker's

from **Switzerland** three representatives from trade-unions and Migrant organisations

from **Serbia** one representative of the "Women in Black"

from **Spain** two representatives of the "Coal Women in Struggle" from Asturia

(names and e-mail addresses are known to the European coordinators)

Women from Portugal, Italy, Belgium, England and Austria are still involved in the process of the World Women's Conference, but unfortunately couldn't participate. Enrolled was also a woman from Iceland who couldn't go due to a decease. Guests were the CENI-Women and other Migrant organisations. Unfortunately a representative of the International Women's Alliance also couldn't attend on short-notice, but has sent affectionate regards. The women's organisation Courage/Germany also delivered a short welcoming speech.

An affectionate welcoming speech came as well from the Asian coordinator Sheila.

The 2nd Europe Conference was led by the Europe coordinators Monika Gärtner-Engel (Germany) and Halinka Augustin (Netherlands) and by their substitute Angélica Urrutia (Germany).

All in all 70 people participated with numerous women and men as guests (from the Netherlands, France, Switzerland, Germany, Belgium).

The meeting was very **successful** and a good step forward in the consolidation and expansion of the association of world women in Europe. All decisions and resolutions were agreed upon with one consent by all delegates.

The essential results:

- **Women from new countries** have entered the world women process with first time attendant representatives from Denmark, Greece, Russia, the Ukraine, Spain. With the delegate from Serbia the movement of the Women in Black is again represented in the world women process;
- The **composition** of the Europe Women **expanded**: with the steel worker's women from Greece and the miners from the „Mujeres del Carbon en Lucha“ (coal women in struggle) from Spain, with one well-known and anchored representative of the women's movement in St. Petersburg, Russia and with the Women in Black from Serbia. The connection of the militant women's movement and the worker's movement has ad-

vanced;

- The delegates took responsibility for the world women process. The delegate from Ukraina for example wants to take the **reorganisation** of a militant women's movement at the Krim into her hands and wants to lean on the experiences from her European sisters;
- A joint proposition of the Europe women for the preparation and realisation of the **2nd World Women Conference 2016 in Asia** was agreed upon in collective responsibility. (see resolution sheet);
- The next, 3rd Europe Conference will take place in early 2014 in Paris, the French women meanwhile propose Saturday, 8th February 2014;
- Agreed upon with one consent was a positioning of the world women from Europe concerning the standpoint of the coordinators in Latin America. Their criticism/positions towards the European world women in the resolution was replied upon on one consent. (see resolution);
- The **joint** responsibility for the expansion of the World Women Process in Europe was strengthened with the method that previous countries take initiative and responsibility for the attracting of the militant women's movement in new countries. Proposition should be handed in by March 26;
- The world women in Europe support the **1st International Miner's Conference** from March 1-3 2013 in Peru and send the Spanish miner Esperanza there as **their representative**. All countries counsel which contribution they could make for the travel costs, Germany has taken the main responsibility (see resolution sheet);
- The coordinators will present short appeals for the three struggle days approx. six weeks earlier, which will be supplemented by the women of the countries;
- A starter packet for „newcomers“ and all people interested in the WWC-process will be compiled with a powerpoint-report of the World Women's Conference in Caracas and the further work after that as well as the documents of Caracas on CD;
- All country reports which are mailed to the coordinators will be on the homepage and will be translated step by step – depending on the possibilities of the translators;
- Campaigns and petitions in the Internet shall be signed by the coordinators, also in order to make the world women more known..
- At the end **resolutions** were passed for the solidarity with the European worker's struggles and against their political discrimination; against the war in Mali; to the European Commission to the protest against the planned cut-back of the food bank (PEAD) in the EU, against the murder of the three Kurdish revolutionaries Sakine Cansiz, Fidan Dogan and Leyla Söylemez in Paris, against the governmental attacks concerning the benefit to the public of the German women's organisation Courage.

The Europe conference was **opened** culturally by our Dutch hosts, who have prepared the conference outstandingly. It was followed by a moving **commemoration of the murdered combatants of the women's movement**, the three Kurdish revolutionaries Sakine Cansiz, Fidan Dogan and Leyla Söylemez, our Iranian friend Manijeh from Hamburg, and the young student Jyoti Singh Pandey, who died in the aftermath of the bestial rape and became a catalyst of a wave of the struggle against violence on women.

The **decisions** concerning the agenda, the internal rules of procedure and concerning the records were agreed upon on one consent. For that matter the principle that each delegation has three votes was clarified, independent of whether the delegation constitutes of one or three delegates. It was worked after the principle of consent in order to capture the set of opinions. The guests were also able to participate on the set of opinions and the discussion was temporarily opened for them with a one minute time allotted for speaking.

Afterwards the delegation's **country reports** followed, for which 10 minutes of presentation and 10 minutes of discussion were scheduled. One learned about encouraging as well as up-setting stories and many questions were aroused. The delegate from **Denmark** reported that it is hardly possible to get a job as a migrant and even more so as a Muslim, even if you are qualified. She criticized that integration is regarded as a complete abandoning of your own culture and tradition.

The delegates from **Germany** reported that the country has not become more women-friendly under chancellor Merkel's rule, but that Germany's leading role in the EU and in the international imperialist competitive battle is led on the back of the masses and especially on women. The women from **France** reported self-confidently about the women's part in Sarkozy's fall and how their situation has worsened since Hollande's government despite all the promises that had been made. As one of the side effects of the world economic and financial crisis domestic violence is increasing but women are lifting their heads and there is a very dynamic women's movement developing in France. The women from **Greece** reported that a lot of families do not have money anymore, electricity and heating are turned off and the government is issuing emergency laws ordered by the Troika, as for example conscripted working. Child allowance was annulled, instead a tax on children was introduced. The delegation from the **Netherlands** criticized the triple to fivefold increased costs for health care in the Netherlands. They could give account of important struggles of the working-class and women's movement, among others about the caregivers, the workers of the harbor museum etc. The militants women's movement in the Netherlands has been strengthened in the world women's process considerably and has developed further. The woman from **Russia** regards the changes in family legislation as a big threat. Unannounced inspectors are allowed to take away the children of political active women for absurd pretenses, as for example that objects lying on the floor are endangering the child, in order to put them under pressure. The woman from the **Ukraine** reported that there had been more rights for women in the Soviet society but no social progress anymore. That has led to a very weak women's movement today. Girls and young women are under pressure of sexism, prostitution and women's trafficking – equality is trampled on.

The delegation from **Switzerland** reported that women suffer from almost only part-time jobs, which they are forced into because of missing childcare offers. That lead to increased old-age poverty among women. There is a strong women's movement, also due to the fact that the struggle for the right to vote had to be fought until 1971 (and 1990).

The representative of the "Women in Black" from **Serbia** criticized that women are ripped of their jobs and therefore their dignity. There are huge parts of Serbia which are completely impoverished and economically ruined. That has an especially hard effect on women. A lot of them are looking for an way out in religion, although the hostility towards women is quite obvious in the orthodox church.

The women from **Spain** reported about the dramatic effects of the economic crisis for women. A "reform" of labour law allows the companies to cut wages, change working hours and dismiss employees. Often women are so engaged in solving direct matters of surviving that advanced political and social questions are displaced. The "Mujeres del carbon en lucha" founded in the miners' struggle against pit closures in Asturias play an active role and have organized themselves.

The **coordinator's report** gave account about our work and enabled the new women to get a picture of the successes and problems so far and the challenges lying ahead in the world women's movement (see attachment). In the discussion we presented the idea of the World Women's Conference of rank and file women again, because quite a few of the participants had not been in Caracas themselves. We gave account of the extensive work that has been done to realize the decisions of the 1st European Conference and informed the European "worldwomen" about crucial developments in the worldwide engagement preparing the second World Women's Conference 2016 (see report).

On our 2nd European Conference we also discussed **the differences at the 1st worldwide meeting of coordinators** in September last year and about how the dissents of the Latin American coordinators can be treated in a way that the common basis and work in the worldwomen process is strengthened.

Unanimously the delegates approved of the basis of the 1st WWC with the two pillars (decision-making general assembly of the elected delegates and mass program). Several participants emphasized the principle of elected country-delegated because it strengthens also the democracy within the women's movement of the respective countries. In the discussion all contributions were in favour of making decisions on the World Women's Conferences.

Another important topic was finances. The financial independence of each country is important, all agreed. The discussion showed that there are already many initiatives: fund-raising dinners, selling of handicraft, pictures, specialties, the Greek women will produce a film about the steelworker's struggle and their wives and collect money with that. All this has to be developed further.

Opening the discussion for guests proved to be successful because of further constructive contributions and ideas, among others the decision for a youth conference in the context of the 3rd European Conference as suggested by a young female guest.

The by-election of a second substitute could not be carried out because no candidates were nominated. This issue is to be discussed in each country until the 3rd European Conference 2014, where the by-election will take place.

At the end the above mentioned **resolutions** were presented and passed – all unanimously, too. The discussion and working out the resolution against the war in Mali was an object lesson for managing the extended principle of consensus – the unity in condemning the war with its cruel consequences for girls and women as well as the controversial positioning concerning the military intervention of France and Germany were included in the resolution.

The **World Women's Conference's homepage** is still only managed by Geli from Mannheim with big efforts. The conference thanked her but also took the demand to look for more women to support her.

Finally lovely presents for the guests were handed out. The women from the Netherlands had prepared a gift bag for each delegation with Dutch tulip bulbs – “We let the seed of the women's movement flourish”. For their work as caring hosts, their preparation being a crucial condition for conduction this considerable workload in the proposed time, they were given thanks to.

The **translation** was again organized with great expertise and excellent equipment by “Solidarity International”. Because of an exploding number of participants the big interpreting facility had to be brought to the Netherlands, set up there and managed. The voluntary technician as well as the mainly young and female voluntary **interpreters** performed very well, which was appreciated by everyone.

In the **closing words** the coordinators thanked all the participants for their contributions. It ended saying “**The world women's movement of rank and file women has a bright future**”.

With a delicious **dinner** all braced themselves for the celebrations afterwards, where women's movement was taken literally. In alternating contributions of a Turkish-Dutch singer and guitarist and an international music composition of the French women we danced joyfully and cemented our friendship

For Sunday morning the Dutch hosts had prepared an impressive women's movement and antifascist **tour** in a working-class quarter of Amsterdam, which was compelling despite rain and coldness. During the **final lunch** in a pizzeria the frozen hands and feet defrosted again and there were many more private conversations so that the farewell was not easy.

Shouting “**Paris, Paris, we will go to Paris**” we put ourselves in the mood for the next reunion in 2014.