

**Continental report Europe for the 2<sup>nd</sup> World Women's Conference of grassroots women, 13-18 March 2016, Kathmandu, Nepal**

No.	Text
(1)	With about 50 states and 742 million people Europe is the second smallest continent.
(2)	Europe's most important association of states is the European Union (EU) with 28 member states and 505 million inhabitants. 19 countries have the same currency, the euro. 22 countries of the EU are NATO members. 7 per cent of the world's population live in the EU, yet 25 per cent of the world's gross domestic product are generated here. It is the world's biggest domestic market and struggles against the USA, China and Russia over the rank as the strongest imperialist power. Within the EU, Germany followed by France and Great Britain are the leading economic and political imperialist powers.
(3)	The other side is the development of a strong force of female and male industrial workers. They constitute almost one quarter of the 218 million working people in the EU. In Europe in the last 130 years strong women's, youth, environmental and other social movements and organizations arose. This made possible that in hard struggles great social achievements, education opportunities, women's rights in constitutions and laws, as well as measures for environmental protection were attained.
(4)	However, the social reality is stamped by the capitalist striving for profit, the exploitation of humankind and nature and by the usufructuary use of the neo-colonial exploitation of many countries of the world. Equal rights by law and many real improvements for the lives of the masses of women have been attained. However, the double exploitation and oppression of the masses of women because of their sex is still the basis of the capitalist system. Therefore, in spite of many very different concrete situations, the women of the world basically have the same problems and must struggle for the same common goals! Even female heads of government or ministers will not relieve us from that!
(5)	The official rate of unemployment in the EU is about 10 per cent. In single countries it is even more than 25 per cent, like in Greece and Spain. About half of the young people have no jobs there. Many of them emigrate.
(6)	The single states must subordinate to the legal and economic frame of the EU. We witnessed this especially in and after the world economic and financial crisis from 2008 to 2014 in the case of Greece. The burdens of the crisis have been brutally shifted to the backs of the masses. The left government Tsipras, in which the masses of people had placed a lot of hope, in the end succumbed to the dictate of the Troika of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), European Central Bank (ECB) and European Commission. Dramatic wage cuts – even of the minimum wage by 25 per cent, of the pensions by 5 to 15 per cent and planned further 15 per cent, in the social and health-care system, poverty, hunger and homelessness for millions of people have been the consequences. The supposedly generous billions of EU loans to Greece have gone directly to the creditors, mostly to the big international banks of the imperialist core countries. The Greek women write: <i>„Everything has gotten worse and worse in the last 4 years. They are taking away more and more of our rights, which we had fought through in our struggle, in the name of the indebtedness of the state. In the name of the capitalist crisis, in the name of prosperity.”</i> In the end, nowhere in Europe have the burdens of the crisis been paid by those who caused it, but by the population instead. Following a phase of shock and paralysis in the face of the illusions about the Tsipras government,

No.	Text
	the masses in Greece, and especially the workers and women, in the last weeks have begun to struggle again, for example with several general strikes.
(7)	In general the industrial workers make up the backbone in the struggle against the shifting of the burdens of the crisis. On 14 November 2012 the first cross-border strike which was jointly organized by the unions in 14 European countries took place. In Greece the steel workers in Aspropyrgos went on strike for 9 months. For 10 years the Opel workers in Germany prevented the closure of their factory by their struggles and strikes. In the end they did not succeed in preventing it. But thousands of automobile workers and miners carry on the torch of the courageous struggle! The miners in Spain, Bulgaria, Germany, Poland and Ukraine are struggling against the closures of the mines and against plans for fracking, which is extremely harmful to the environment. In all the struggles the women play an important independent role.
(8)	Many people in Europe do not trust the bourgeois politicians any more. Only 42 percent went to the polls at the last European elections in 2014. The mood is polarizing. On one hand, more leftist parties are being elected like Tsipras in Greece, Podemos in Spain. On the other hand dangerous nationalist, right-wing populist and fascistic parties like PiS in Poland or the Front National in France are being pushed by the ruling powers or even enter into government like in Hungary or Poland. Mass demonstrations against the government are becoming more frequent like in France against the state of emergency after the terror attacks in November 2015 in Paris.
(9)	Currently the EU has entered a state of open crisis regarding the issue of refugees which can escalate to the breakup of the EU. A real internationalist mass movement mainly of women and young people receives the currents of refugees coming mainly from Syria and Afghanistan and welcomes them warmly and helpfully. The governments – like the German one - are partly pretending to be practicing a “welcome culture”. But in reality they are outbidding each other with reactionary measures. Ten thousands of people have drowned in the Mediterranean Sea, borders are being closed and asylum laws massively tightened. The present strategy originating from the German government and employers' associations consists of sealing off the external borders of the EU against refugees in cooperation with the fascistic Turkish Erdogan government. The internal Schengen area is to be kept open due to economic and political interests. Thus it tolerates and promotes the brutal acts of the Turkish government against democratic, critical people and the Kurdish liberation movement. The people of the world, however, are looking to the hopeful struggle of the population in Rojava for freedom and democracy, women's rights and equality.
(10)	In France, Switzerland, Sweden, the Netherlands or Germany the women's movement together with migrants and “sans-papiers” is campaigning for their political and social rights, the protection and self-determination of women who have fled. Imperialism is creating new causes to flee every day – and the masses of the people and especially women in the respective countries are to pay! So in Germany the family reunion has been restricted. That means that the men as laborers are allowed to come, but women and children are supposed to remain in war and misery!
(11)	More and more women in Europe are gainfully employed. But the percentage of women with part-time or mini jobs and very bad wages is disproportionately high. The Swiss women say: <i>“Part-time work is involuntary wage sacrifice! The women's congress of the Swiss federation of trade unions has answered this with the demand for the 30-hour workweek with full wage compensation.”</i> In the entire EU 77 percent of women are gainfully employed, even 68 percent of the mothers. Single mothers, their children and pensioners are most often affected by poverty. In all European countries there is an income gap between men and women between 20 and 33 percent for the same work.

No.	Text
	The Russian women write: <i>“Women make up 71% of the state employees in Russia, but only 12% of the highest leading officials.”</i>
(12)	In most of the European countries less and less children are born, only 1.6 per woman. One-person households and single parents are increasing. Less people get married. The bourgeois family system is in a deep crisis. Mainly men are sitting in the control centers of the capitalist power – only 4 percent of the executive boards are women. Despite their jobs, women continue to be mainly responsible for children, household, the elderly in the family. The task of entirely organizing the everyday life of society is resting on their shoulders! Often women are torn apart between family and job. This is being increased by the dismantling of social gains. The Greek women write: <i>“ When they are recruited women are forced to sign a document that they will not get pregnant. Older women are being dismissed and replaced by younger ones without any family commitments.”</i>
(13)	The World Health Organization WHO identifies violence as the biggest health risk for women. This is gross and sad reality, even in the countries of Europe pretending to be so advanced! It has many faces. Most of all women are exposed to violence in their family environment. They see themselves confronted with state violence when they stand for their rights in a militant way. The women in black from Serbia are being physically attacked and threatened with murder because they draw attention to war crimes and genocide during the Balkan war and far-reaching impunity.
(14)	The revival of the militant women's movement and their readiness to struggle on the basis of increased women's consciousness are clearly visible in Europe. In connection with the resolution of Caracas, the world women of Europe have actively taken to the streets on the three days of struggle on 8 <sup>th</sup> March, 1 <sup>st</sup> May and 25 <sup>th</sup> November, thereby strengthening their cooperation. For each of the days of struggle there were declarations from the coordinators and in many cases a series of events with which the women worked all over Europe. The discussion about societal perspectives and alternatives to capitalism is unfolding within the militant women's movement. The ruling powers are trying to put a stop to this by employing anti-communism. However, this is clearly less successful than a few years ago.
(15)	In November 2015 half a million women took to the streets in Madrid against the widespread violence against women. Young women and girls are defending themselves more consciously against harassment and sexism.
(16)	In the struggles of the European women the movement of the female workers and unionists plays a leading role. The cleaning women of the Greek ministry of finances successfully fought for their re-instatement and the cleaning women of the Paris hotels for higher wages. In the Netherlands cleaning and nursing employees have been leading an important and hard struggle for years for their jobs, their dignity and humane care. They are joining together in committees and linking with the struggle of the dockers. Child-care teachers in Germany have not only gone on a persistent strike for better wages and working conditions, but most of all for a higher assessment of so-called female jobs.
(17)	Self-confidently the French women say: <i>„The deterioration of the social situation and political attacks on the rights of women give rise to a rebellious reaction.“</i>
(18)	As environmental militants, women—and especially young women-- take on responsibility for the future of humanity. They are standing in the front line of protests, for instance at the Global Climate Conference in Paris, against gold mining in Chalkidiki/Greece, against the dumping of toxic waste in German mines. The young people from Spain write to us: <i>„In Aragón we have the constant problem with the reservoir dams. They are flooding villages and arable land. The women of „Aturando</i>

No.	Text
	<i>Yesa“ have been struggling for 20 years now for environmental protection, the protection of the earth and its dignity.“</i>
(19)	Whether in France, Russia, Serbia, Spain or Ireland: Women all over Europe are defending themselves against the attempts of fundamentalist groups of all religions to turn around the wheel of history. They are demanding and defending the right of abortion!
(20)	Women in Eastern Europe are evaluating their experiences in the formerly socialist countries, their destruction and the dismantling of women's rights following the collapse of the former Soviet Union. They say, „... <i>that the liberation of the woman and her complete equality in all spheres of life is unthinkable without fundamental social changes ... They are the result of a joint struggle and common work of women's organizations with other self-organizations of the toiling people.....,</i>
(21)	In Europe the women's movement is very diverse, but also split up. By the end of the last century there was a veritable decline of the independent women's movements. They were integrated into governmental institutions or absorbed by NGOs. The women's movement lost its mass character and "aged" visibly. The "World Women" are one of the driving forces <b>for a new upswing of the young, independent and militant women's movement in Europe. They work across borders, in an internationalist spirit, democratically, above party lines and financially independent.</b> The women's association "Courage" from Germany carried out pioneering work for these important policies which entered into principles of the World Women's Conference, too.
(22)	The world's women in Europe have organized four European conferences in Germany, the Netherlands, France and Greece. Women assume more responsibility in the world women's process and through these activities the women's movement in the respective countries has strengthened. The young women play an important independent role in this. They organized an own plenum at the 3rd European conference.
(23)	Each activity was combined with financial activities so that financial independence and international solidarity could be realized. Since Caracas we have collected and spent about 200 000 euros for the world women's work.
(24)	After the disastrous earthquake the European world women from France, the Netherlands and Germany collected donations of about 23 000 euros in April 2015 in Nepal. With the project "Joly" numerous trade-unionists from the German labor union ver.di made possible the employment of several organizers of the labor union of the textile workers "Garment Workers Trade Union Center" (GWTUC) in Bangladesh. These are fantastic successes of the "World Women"!
(25)	The world women in Europe have resolutely made the courageous fight of the Kurdish women in Rojava to their cause, for example with a solidarity tour through several countries. Young and older women courageously helped to build the health-care center in Kobane/ Rojava.
(26)	We world women from Europe are convinced: the worldwide militant movement for the liberation of women and all of humankind is in the upwind. We are proud to be part of it. Let us continue together on the path of organizing the masses of women for their liberation!