

Dear readers,

The Spring Alliance website <<http://www.springalliance.eu/>> is online!

I am sure you already know everything about the Spring Alliance! But just in case, I would remind that this civil society initiative for the promotion of a social and green European agenda was launched on 29 and 30 January 2009, at a Kick off Conference in Brussels. The Spring Alliance is a participatory movement to ensure that the European Union puts people and the planet first. It is initiated by three leading European civil society organisations: the European Environmental Bureau <<http://www.eeb.org/>>, the European Trade Union Confederation <<http://www.etuc.org/>> and Social Platform <<http://www.socialplatform.org/>>. But the Spring Alliance aims to be much broader than that and wants to become a network of members from all corners of civil society and beyond: social organisations, trade unions, environmental organisations, development NGOs, fair-trade associations, anti-poverty campaigners, consumers organisations and representatives from the research and business community. The Civil Society Contact group fully supports this initiative.

So do visit their website and get engaged!

Enjoy your reading!
Laetitia Sédou

participatory democracy and civil dialogue

* Commission consults unions, business amid fears of unrest

With EU under threat of rising social unrest as citizens feel the effects of the economic crisis, the European Commission has for the first time invited business and social representatives to attend one of its weekly meetings.

Read more on euobserver <<http://euobserver.com/9/27661/?rk=1>>

- * Another EP report highlights the need for a formal recognition of the role of CSOs

The European Parliament adopted on 19 February a report on social economy which is likely to encourage an effective acknowledgement of the role of social economy actors in the development of a sustainable social and economic model and highlight the need to a formal recognition of civil society organisations through the adoption of European statutes for associations, foundations and mutual societies and invite the European institutions to adequately include these actors within their social and civil dialogue practices.

Read the ECF press release

<http://act4europe.horus.be/module/FileLib/ECF_Press_EPreport_SocialEconomy.260209.pdf>

Access the full EP report <<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+REPORT+A6-2009-0015+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN&language=EN>>

Transparency of EU policy making

- * European Commission policy agenda for 2010 weak on transparency

The Annual Policy Strategy for 2010 outlines policy objectives in four areas: economic and social recovery, climate change and sustainable Europe, putting the citizen first, and Europe as a world partner. But the Commission paper's tiny chapter 2.5 about Better Regulation and Transparency is quite disappointing, with 4 lines dedicated to a possible "one-stop-shop" register with the EP and improvement of transparency regarding the end beneficiaries of EU funds.

The Annual Policy Strategy is the first step of the Commission's planning system. It aims to launch the interinstitutional dialogue on the priorities for next year and to prepare for the Preliminary Draft Budget which the Commission will be presenting in April. These priorities will be then subject to a dialogue with the other institutions before being confirmed by the new Commission.

read the EC press release

<<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/277&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=fr>> and access the full text

<http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/synthesis/doc/en_act_part1v6.pdf>

- * EU accused of relying on insiders to tackle financial crisis

EU leaders handling the economic downturn are relying on the advice of a high level group dominated by 'financial industry insiders' implicated in the current crisis, says a new report published today by Corporate Europe Observatory, SpinWatch, LobbyControl and Friends of the Earth-Europe.

The report "Would You Bank on Them?", examines the track records of members of the EU's high level group of financial "wise men", who are charged with helping to frame Europe's response to the meltdown in the financial sector.

Read more on TheParliament.com <<http://www.theparliament.com/latestnews/news-article/newsarticle/eu-accused-of-relying-on-insiders-to-tackle-financial-crisis/>>

Read the press release <<http://www.corporateeurope.org/delarosierepressrelease.html>> of the authors of the report

Access the full report <<http://www.corporateeurope.org/docs/would-you-bank-on-them.pdf>>

* MEP Drcar Murko protests against "unbalanced influence of lobbyists" in EU's "Great Apes Debate"

A leading European politician has taken an unusual stand against what she describes as excessive lobbying by the drugs industry in the European Union's heated "Great Apes Debate" over animal testing. Slovenian liberal Mojca Drcar Murko said she was unsure she would achieve anything by withdrawing her backing for proposals she guided through the European parliament, but she wanted to highlight the unbalanced influence of lobbyists.

Read more on Reuters

<<http://www.reuters.com/article/rbssHealthcareNews/idUSLN70970520090224>>

Lisbon Treaty

* Czech saga further delays ratification of Lisbon Treaty

<http://news.euractiv.com/Go/index.cfm?WL=87006&WS=62620_4105711&WA=7899>

The president of the Czech Senate has said that a debate on the Lisbon Treaty originally scheduled for April could now be delayed until May, renewing suspicions that Prague may fail to ratify the treaty before the end of its EU presidency. EurActiv Czech Republic reports

Read more on Euractiv <<http://www.euractiv.com/en/future-eu/czech-saga-delays-ratification-lisbon-treaty/article-179752>>

EU elections

* Big groups to retain power in EU parliament

The balance of power in the European Parliament would stay broadly the same if elections were held today, national polls indicate. The mainstream parties would lose some ground, while far left and far right parties would gain.

Read more on euobserver <<http://euobserver.com/9/27664/?rk=1>>

interesting links

* Useful links on EP elections

EP elections website

<<http://www.euoparl.europa.eu/elections2009/default.htm?language=en>>

CSCG toolkit

<<http://www.act4europe.org/code/en/materials.asp?Page=262&menuPage=262>> for the 2009 European Parliament

* European citizen's consultation 2009 on EU economic and social future

This ECC 2009 project is co-funded by the European Commission's "Debate Europe". After online consultations in all EU languages to end in March, there will be 27 identical conferences in each member state, gathering in total 1'500 citizens. April will see the adoption of recommendations and the final event will be the European Citizens' Summit, attended by 150 participants from the 27 Consultations, to be held in Brussels on 10 - 11 May 2009. Here, citizens will finalise a set of European recommendations and debate these with European policy-makers.

To know more about this project and check what is going on in your country, click here <<http://www.european-citizens-consultations.eu/contenu/about-project>>

The EU Civil Society Contact Group brings together eight large European platforms of public interest organisations in the following fields: culture (culture action europe), development (CONCORD), environment (Green 10), human rights (HRDN), lifelong learning (EUCIS-LLL), public health (EPHA), social (Social Platform) and women (EWL). Together we work to develop the dialogue between civil society organisations and the EU institutions as an essential part of strengthening participatory democracy.

www.act4europe.org <<http://www.act4europe.org/>>

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