



THE BOLKESTEIN DIRECTIVE: NO !

**It's against solidarity, it's against subsidiarity, it's against the constitution:
It's against the Europe we want**

Brussels, June 04, 2004

On 13 January 2004, European commissioner Fritz Bolkestein submitted a directive proposal relating to services in the internal market. It aims at liberalisation and deregulation of all service activities in Europe.

“Some services of general interest are not fully satisfied by markets alone (...). Therefore, it has always been the core responsibility of public authorities to ensure that such basic collective and qualitative needs are satisfied (...) wherever market forces cannot achieve this” (from the green book “Services of general interest” of the European Commission).

In view of this statement of the EU commission itself the EU rejects the present draft ‘Bolkestein Directive’ and demands a new proposal by the coming EU-Commission.

The draft directive applies not only to all services offered to companies and consumers (ranging from advertising, recruitment, including employment agencies, to trade, cleaning services and construction, but also to public services as health care, education, culture, audio-visual media, the services of local authorities All these would be regarded as pure merchandise that are fully dependent on the laws of the market, without account being taken of their specific character and their social aims.

Also threatened is the whole social economic sector, in particular the integration of underprivileged groups in the employment market.

Commissioner Bolkestein wants to eliminate all obstacles to the development of service activities and the completion of the internal market.

These ‘obstacles’ are, however, often rules imposed by the government with the intention of guaranteeing everyone better services, to protect employees, to ensure the sound management of public resources, to impose price standards, guarantee everyone access to services, and guarantee the quality of the services.

These rules can prevent free services from turning into a sort of jungle in which the only rule that matters is immediate profit.

In the longer term, the consequences of this directive threaten to be catastrophe for all of us:

- The **dumping practices at social, fiscal and environment level** threaten to be encouraged;
- Social attainments come under one-sided pressure: lower pay, longer working hours, increasing flexibility – without any compensation
- Health, education, culture and audio-visual resources will just become merchandise, so subject to the laws of the market;
- Public service sectors run the risk of automatically and irrevocably becoming privatised and/or liberalised.

This directive proposal therefore comprises a direct threat to the European social model without taking account of democratic rules. Indeed, the right of the government to defend and expand specific social models is made dependent on marketing interest and the competition.

Especially the **principle of the “country of origin”** comes down to a legal incentive to move to countries with the least strict legislation at social, fiscal and environment level, and the setting up of letterbox companies which at rock-bottom prices will be able to swarm out from their registered offices over the whole territory of the Union. Since in a broadened sense this also concerns employment agencies, a total **breakdown of the existing employment markets** in the EU member countries seems to be intended.

By scrapping a large number of licensing procedures, the ‘Bolkestein Directive’ would make it impossible to impose the following on providers of **health services**

- Compulsory minimum and/or maximum prices for medicines and fees
- Minimum standards for personnel in hospital and rest homes
- Subsidisation standards taking into account the specific way of financing health care;
- Quality standards relating to care.

EU-Member States would also lose a large part of their autonomy when making fundamental choices concerning the organisation of health care. In other words: this would ultimately mean the end of any public health policy worthy of the name.

The consequences of the ‘Bolkestein Directive’ in its present form would therefore be

- **Against the European Social Model**
- **A replacement of the idea of a European Political Union by a mere integration of the EU into a spiral of increasingly thorough world wide liberalisation without any attention to the social aspect (that is completely neglected within the World Trade Organisation)**
- **Against a European Union organised by the principle of subsidiarity**
- **Against a European Union as described in the coming EU constitution.**

From this understanding, EUCDW and its member organisations cannot else than protest against this draft directive. We expect, that the next European Commission – in light of the then adopted European Constitution – will withdraw the present text and take up new efforts to put forward a proposal that lives up to the expectations of a European Union of values.

Furthermore, in order to prevent chaotic developments in the European employment markets, the adaptation of the employment condition in all EU countries is urgently required – and not an adaptation that offer employees the least possible protection, but an adaptation that secures – following the EU constitution – a high level of social protection.

The European Union of Christian Democratic Workers (EUCDW) consists of 23 workers' organisations from 15 countries and is an association of the European People's Party (EPP).

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