



## EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung's motto for 2013 is "Prospects for Young People". What is important to us in this area on the one hand is their views, i.e. discovering more about young people's attitudes and exchanging ideas with them. On the other hand, our view is toward the *prospects* available to young people, that is, their opportunities for the future and the political framework required to realise these. Relevant issues in this context include sustainable politics, political participation and future-proofing our social security systems. However, when one looks towards Southern Europe and particularly the labour markets, the outlook for young people is anything but promising.

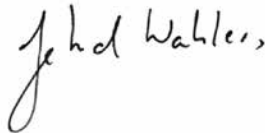
Particularly in the southern member states of the euro zone – Spain, Portugal, Italy and Greece – youth unemployment is extremely high. In Spain it is nearly 55 per cent; in Greece, 64 per cent of 15 to 24-year-olds are unemployed. Many of those affected are very well qualified and are seeking to make use of their knowledge and acquired skills. The fact that they are not able to do so in their home countries is partly due to structural reasons. These originate in inadequate education and training systems and, not least, in an overregulated labour market. Current legislation tends to protect the person in a job, whatever their qualification and, as is the case in the public sector in Greece, disregards the question as to whether the particular job needs retaining. The trade unions also play a major role in preventing more favourable dynamics that would result in greater economic growth, a reduction in the pressures on the social security systems and savings in the public sector. In the private sector, it has been and still is young employees on temporary contracts who are the first to lose their jobs.

Ever greater numbers of young, well-qualified southern Europeans see no prospects in their own country. They are drawn to other European countries, particularly to Germany. Last year, the influx of southern Europeans to the Federal Republic has seen a shift in pace. A 45 per cent rise was recorded for Spain, followed by Greece and Portugal with 43 per cent each and Italy with 40 per cent. In total, almost 120,000 people migrated to Germany from these four countries. Young, well qualified people from Southern Europe working in this country for a while is beneficial to all sides. It takes the pressure off the strained labour market in their home country, they can plug labour gaps in Germany, the money they send back to support their families boosts the domestic economy there and finally, working temporarily in Germany means that they gain further skills and practical experience. Particularly in technical occupations, a long spell of unemployment carries the risk of failing to keep up with developments in the field. Not least, their search for a job in an economically more successful foreign country also helps the young people to avoid a psychological trap, namely the feeling that they are already on the scrapheap at their young age.

It is not surprising that the dissatisfaction of young people in Southern Europe is reflected in their voting habits. During the 2012 elections, young people in Greece voted for populist or extremist parties in greater proportions than the population as a whole, thus propping up political fringe elements that are not interested in reforms and a consistent austerity policy. 34 per cent of Greeks below the age of 24 voted for a radical party: the fascist Chrysi Avgi (Golden Dawn) or the coalition of the radical left Syriza.

In December 2012, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung opened an office in Athens. Our involvement in Greece is geared particularly towards young people. We support young entrepreneurs and start-ups on the ground in order to help provide a more solid base for the business ideas of students and young people embarking on a career to facilitate their medium and long-term success. Further objectives include the provision of support to reforming endeavours, promoting an exchange of ideas between Greece and Germany and supporting civil society forces in their efforts to foster a democratic environment. The impression that the

existing policies and economic order are not capable of procuring prospects for young people will only crystallise if the reforming efforts in Greece, as well as in the other euro zone countries of Southern Europe, don't achieve a successful outcome. That would have serious long-term consequences: a loss of confidence in democracy, its values and its institutions.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gerhard Wahlers," with a stylized flourish at the end of the word "Wahlers".

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