

THE EUROPEAN YEAR 2010: COMBATING POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life. While poverty persists, there is no true freedom. In this new century, millions of people in the world's poorest countries remain imprisoned, enslaved, and in chains. They are trapped in the prison of poverty. It is time to set them free.

Nelson Mandela, Make Poverty History Campaign 2005

Recent numbers show that today 84 million Europeans – or 17% of the European population – live at risk of poverty. This kind of poverty should not be seen as simply the lack of financial resources and income, this poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon, encompassing the notion of vulnerability, precariousness, lack of opportunities and denial of basic human rights.

Despite the efforts deployed in the past, a significant proportion of the European population still lives in destitution and has no access to basic services. For this reason the European Union designated 2010 as the **European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion**. Key objectives are to raise public awareness about the issue, give a voice to those who daily experience poverty and renew the political commitments of the EU and its Member States to combat poverty and social exclusion.

Today at the Annual General Assembly 2010, SOLIDAR and its members welcome this initiative taken by the European Union to put the fight to reduce poverty in the spotlight. In particular, we call for the introduction of targets on quality jobs and decent work; the development of a European Employment Guideline that specifically deals with active inclusion and the inclusion of people with multiple needs; the reduction of labour market segmentation; the strengthening of the role of measures to improve vocational training and lifelong learning qualifications and competences; and measures and projects promoting the integration of people outside the labour market under the European Social Fund.

SOLIDAR pledges today to keep on fighting to reduce poverty and all forms of social exclusion and inequalities in the distribution of income and wealth, also after 2010. SOLIDAR demands that social justice and social cohesion will become the centre pillar for the work of the Union, and in particular within the Europe 2020 strategy, by investing more in the social infrastructure education and culture. Let's build a Europe for everyone, where all women and men can live free of poverty and social exclusion!