

SOLIDAR conference
“Together for a Social Europe”
Resolution and Conclusions
Paris, 25 June 2008

Over the last 60 years, SOLIDAR member organisations have been struggling for a Social Europe which meets the expectations and needs of the citizens and in particular the most vulnerable. Based on conclusions from the Paris conference “Together for a Social Europe” **SOLIDAR wants to deliver the following powerful messages to the French EU Council Presidency, to European institutions and to governments across Europe:**

We want a Europe:

- That builds on fundamental rights, solidarity, justice, equality, non-discrimination, on fair chances in life and decent working conditions for all, on the full societal inclusion and participation of all citizens, and on sustainable development.
- Close to the expectations, needs and aspirations of European citizens.
- That recognises and promotes the values of our organisations as set out in SOLIDAR’s mission statement and that acknowledges the principles guiding our daily work, such as respect for the dignity of persons and the reinvestment of possible surplus according to the objectives of our organisations.

We call upon the French EU Council Presidency in the second semester of 2008, on the Czech and Swedish EU Council Presidencies during 2009, on European institutions and on policy makers and governments across Europe to **make clearer commitments to a Social Europe** and to **deliver on tangible, coherent and coordinated policies** and on tailor-made programmes and actions supportive of this overarching goal.



ONE – A REAL AND NEW SOCIAL AGENDA

Europe needs a real and new Social Agenda adequately addressing (new) social risks and problems in our societies such as

- An increasing number of working poor and of persons in precarious jobs in spite of the creation of 15 million new jobs across Europe in the last decade;
- Growing inequalities in life chances and the distribution of income and wealth;
- Persisting discriminations on the grounds of gender, age, handicap, ethnic background and/or race, sexual orientation, religious belief or philosophy of life, both in the labour market and beyond in all spheres of society, not least with regard to accessing services of general interest;
- Already noticeable and future social consequences of climate change.

TWO – SOCIAL EUROPE TO BE LEITMOTIV OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION & CIVIL DIALOGUE AS IMPORTANT INSTRUMENT

SOLIDAR calls for **Social Europe to be the leitmotiv of European integration**, with the objectives of social cohesion, social inclusion and sustainable development on an equal footing with the currently prevailing growth and job focus.

- European citizens have to feel that Europe deals with their needs and concerns in practical terms and this is based on tangible results of European policies or programmes.
- Reinforce or build up trust in the EU to set priorities and implement **policies promoting pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality**.
- This implies a shift in policy priorities - European citizens have to regain ownership of the European project, after having brought peace, stability and an increase in wealth and welfare during the last 50 years.
- **Civil society organisations have a crucial intermediary role** in this regard by building on a strengthened **civil dialogue** at European and EU Member State level.
- SOLIDAR supports a reinforced and effective Open Method of Coordination in the fields of social policy and migration and integration with comprehensive involvement of social NGOs at all stages of the process (including adapted procedures and timelines) in order to advance exchange of good practice and experience and policy coordination across Europe.

THREE – MIGRATION AND INTEGRATION POLICIES BASED ON CIVIL & HUMAN RIGHTS

A Social Europe based on solidarity also means **integration policies and measures for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers based on civil and human rights**.

- **Intercultural learning and intercultural dialogue** are the premise for living together in a society based on mutual respect and cultural diversity.
- SOLIDAR calls upon all EU Member States to ratify the UN convention on the rights of all migrant workers and members of their family (18 December 1990; in force as of 1 July 2003).
- SOLIDAR refuses migration and integration policies exclusively or predominantly building on utilitarian considerations given the challenges Europe will have to face as a result of profound demographic and social changes.
- Issues such as low pay, low status, unsociable work schedules (night, shift and weekend work), lacking or insufficient social protection linked to jobs in some sectors where the EU is experiencing staff shortages, such as in long-term care with increasing numbers of undocumented migrants, have to be tackled.
- Migrants and EU citizens alike should be offered good working conditions and comprehensive social protection systems including in the health and care sector.

- In the field of **integration policies** a multi-stakeholder perspective and **partnerships** between public authorities, social partners, civil society organisations/social NGOs and representatives of migrants have to be implemented.

FOUR – (SOCIAL) SERVICES OF GENERAL INTEREST

SOLIDAR calls for **adequate legal and political frameworks** at European level and within Member States to guarantee and promote **access to education, life-long learning and quality services of general interest**, in particular in the field of social and health services of general interest.

- SOLIDAR supports the full application of the principles of non-discrimination and transparency in this regard and the full respect of users rights, users choices and user participation in the design and evaluation of these services.
- The concept of **general interest** needs to be brought back/strengthened in the debate around social services of general interest (SSGI) at EU level as the point of departure and main reference. **General interest concerns/objectives have to prevail** in case of conflict with Community competition, state aid, public procurement or internal market rules.
- Sustainable social infrastructures (social protection schemes; services of general interest) with strong elements of **solidarity** (across income groups and generations), important shares of collective financing and building on the responsibility and political decisions of the competent public authorities are needed.
- In this context **strong and independent social NGOs/civil society organisations/social economy organisations**, involving both qualified professional staff and volunteers, operating based on **specific sets of objectives and values** and reinvesting possible surplus in favour of their advancement, play a crucial role. They need a level playing field on evolving social markets and in view of cross-border activities in the internal market.
- SOLIDAR calls upon the European Parliament, also by using its extended competencies in the framework of the co-decision procedure once the Lisbon Treaty has entered in force, in support of the principle of subsidiarity and to safeguard framework conditions allowing the competent public authorities in the Member States to make full usage of their competencies and responsibilities in view of the organisation, regulation, financing and evaluation of (social) services of general interest.
- SOLIDAR calls upon Member States governments, the European institutions and the European Parliament to make full usage of Art. 14 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) and Protocol No. 9 on SGI once the Lisbon Treaty has entered in force to achieve the objective set out in the bullet point above.

FIVE – EXTERNAL DIMENSION & DECENT WORK

Social Europe also has an **external dimension in an increasingly globalised world**. SOLIDAR and our international partners in the Global Network aim for a fair partnership between continents based on

- **Social protection rights** which are fundamental rights for everybody;
- **Decent working and living conditions** also within EU Member States and worldwide;
- **Core labour standards and a broad range of social considerations** need to be respected and implemented in EU trade policies and in public procurement.

Europe's future can only be social!

For further information please see the [Background document prepared for SOLIDAR conference "Together for a Social Europe"](#) (with a list of links to SOLIDAR papers, documents and campaigns)