

NEW
STRATEGY
ORIENTATION

Mobilising for social justice in Europe and worldwide



BUILDING LEARNING SOCIETIES



ORGANISING
INTERNATIONAL
SOLIDARITY

solidar
FOUNDATION

solidar

Mobilising for social justice in Europe and worldwide

SOLIDAR was founded in 1948 to encourage international cooperation between social aid organisations from the labour movement. First known as International Workers' Aid the organisation set up its headquarters in Brussels in 1995 and was renamed SOLIDAR.

SOLIDAR as a network based on values and principles of **freedom, equality, solidarity and democracy**, unites through its member organisations more than 9 million citizens.

We want to continue to be the drivers for change, contribute to building a fair and more equal society, and to social justice in Europe and worldwide.

This document has been voted by our members during the SOLIDAR General Assembly of March 2015 based on the debates held in the Social Affairs Forum, Education Experts Network and the International Cooperation Forum.



Chapter 1:

GLOBAL POLITICAL CHALLENGES

We have had seven years of global economic and social systemic crisis driven by unprecedented greed which almost resulted in the collapse of the banking sector, weakening the entire global economy. **The much heralded ‘self-regulation by the market’ has proved yet again that it cannot contain the situation.**

The paradox is that the same thinking which led to the crisis still prevails as part of the management of the crisis and the austerity policies adopted. Arguments like “too big to fail” justified the use of trillions of Euros of public money to save the private banking sector but simultaneously had a disastrous effect on household finances and drove even more countries deeper into crisis.

The **primacy of rules of financial capitalism over democratically legitimised politics** has become apparent again. Unemployment has increased, more and more people find themselves excluded with decreasing living standards. Fragmentation and stigmatisation have become part of the fabric of communities.

Although the discussion about new **sustainable development goals (SDGs)** has started, indicating that most of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have not been achieved and going as far as to state that due to the crisis some achievements have been reversed. As the *Review on Employment and Social Developments in Europe*¹ showed, **imbalances in and between EU Member States are still increasing** this leads to rising unemployment, in particular youth unemployment, increasing numbers of working poor and increasing poverty.

But crises are also opportunities; public political awareness is increasing and creating an **opportunity for policy change**. Social cohesion and inclusion are back on the political agendas, as is a vision of a real economy which creates decent work within a controlled and transparent financial economy, and which invests in education, culture and in social protection schemes. Networks such as SOLIDAR and its member organisations are calling for this.

In this context, SOLIDAR as a European based network with global outreach recognises **four main political challenges** :

1.1.

Social injustice and inequalities

In 2013 almost **202 million people (74.5 million young people) were unemployed** around the world; precarious employment accounted for almost 48% of total employment; 839 million workers were living on less than 2 Euros a day; and **7 out of 10 people in the world lived in countries where inequality has increased** over the past three decades. There are an estimated 232 million migrant workers around the world. If current trends continue the global unemployment crisis is set to worsen, with even sharper increases in the number of young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs). In addition to the jobs crisis, worrying trends emerge when we look at consumption; **17% of the world’s population consumes 80% of the world’s resources**, leaving the remaining 20% for almost 5 billion people. Hunger and malnutrition are likely to increase. Already, **more and more people are finding it difficult to buy food** leading to exclusion, de-socialisation of vast parts of the populations on one hand, and a rise in new risks and new inequalities on the other. The division between outsiders and insiders, and also the newly emerging distributional conflicts have laid

1. European Commission Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, *Employment and Social Developments in Europe 2014* (December 2014), <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=113>



the foundations for an unprecedented erosion of society and thus, is undermining commitment to a common effort to work out a way out of the crisis together.

1.2. Democracy and freedom of association

Defenders of human rights, social movements and trade unions have come under growing pressure from regimes that are determined to marginalise or eliminate all perceived sources of opposition and dissent. **Encroachment on freedom of association and peaceful assembly is spreading.** Democracy per se has come under pressure. In 2013, 54 countries showed overall decline in political rights and civil liberties. A sense of ‘modern authoritarianism’ has emerged that seeks to breach the rule of law while maintaining an appearance of order, legitimacy and prosperity. This ‘modern authoritarianism’ seeks to dominate not only the executive and legislative branches, but also the media, the judiciary, civil society, the economy, and the security forces. Last but not least, democratically legitimised governments have been replaced with, business-like caretaker governments or ‘false majority’ governments backed by the Troika; **taking away the possibility for people to voice their concerns and decide upon their own future.** Democracy is also undermined by the programmes of uncontrolled secret services and the unlimited demand for personal data collection for business reasons. Trade unions speak of a 4th industrial revolution where workers, employees and citizens are losing control of privacy and self-determination. Democracy is not the building block in a new world order. The BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China) stand for emerging markets, but not emerging democra-

cies. In the Western world democratic legitimacy and transparency of political decision making is decreasing and is legitimised by the false need to fight terrorism and to implement crisis austerity.

1.3. Nationalism and populism

Feelings of disenchantment, hopelessness, insecurity and exclusion have been fostered in people as a consequence of the crisis and its immediate aftermath. When this seed is sown, – as we can learn from history – it reaps populism, nationalism and extremism. Particularly in Europe, a false ‘establishment’ versus ‘populist’ dichotomy is being created on the basis of **anti-parliamentary, anti-party and anti-immigration rhetoric**, paving the way for the rise of right-wing populism and a **boom for anti-semitism, islamophobia and xenophobia.** It is part of the (neo) liberal strategy to break up the social compromise and our welfare state, and to undermine its core principles of solidarity, democracy and social justice; presenting it as a threat to the European project of peace, prosperity and progress for all. A new feature in the debate on the future of the European social model has emerged; one that highlights social dumping as the result of intra EU migration, fueling the rhetoric of “free loaders” and “benefit tourists” that sets people from Western Europe against people from Central and Eastern Europe; from Southern Europe against Northern Europe.

1.4. Wars and conflict resolution

In the last few years the **number of violent conflicts around the world increased.** Civilians are the first victims. War is the breeding ground for massive violations of human rights including unlawful and inhuman killings, torture, forced displacement and starvation.





It is imperative that all actors on the international stage, starting with the United Nations Organization, assume an active involvement in the **attainment of stable and peaceful solutions** to the ongoing conflicts.

One of the most important achievements for peace and security in Europe was the compromise agreed by the vast majority of states on the continent, including the former Soviet Union, and also by the United States and Canada, of the Helsinki Final act. In it states pledge that “their frontiers might be modified, in accordance with international law, by peaceful means and by common agreement”. This achievement, the aim of which was to put an end to armed conflicts in Europe, cannot be discarded. **It is not possible to accept the unilateral modification of frontiers by any country.**

Any action that is undertaken in relation to war and violent conflicts must, at all times, be in **accordance with international law** and **respect the human rights** of all citizens of the country. In this perspective, all the parties involved in the issue are called to act with responsibility and are urged to uphold as a priority in their policymaking the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

Chapter 2:

OUR VISION AND MISSION

Against the background of the grim global political challenges detailed above, SOLIDAR has a clear vision for **Social Justice in Europe and Worldwide**. Together, SOLIDAR and its members consider Social Justice as:

- The *equal distribution* of wealth, knowledge, income and power within our global societies;
- The ensured *access to quality social services, lifelong learning and social protection* for all financed through progressive taxation and not subject to market liberalization;
- The implementation of a guaranteed *social contract* so that all people have decent work, lead a fulfilling life, are empowered to be active contributors to their societies and can participate in democratic processes;

To achieve this vision, SOLIDAR and its members work actively together to fulfill the following mission:

- We strive for a **Social Europe** that promotes a European social model based on active inclusion, social cohesion and universal social protection where all members of society have access to affordable and high-quality social and health care services; that recognises and promotes the social economy as an alternative model for inclusive prosperity; and that promotes people’s empowerment and social engagement.
- We strive for **Universal Social Protection** based on a rights-based approach to development, with economic, social and cultural rights (ESCRs) at the heart of development; that provides an enabling environment for civil society, social movements and independent workers’ representatives (trade unions); that ensures a trade and finance system that respects human rights, international labour standards and tax justice; and a practice of humanitarian intervention based on solidarity and partnership.
- We strive for **learning societies** in which each member’s personal contribution is valued, where skills, competences and knowledge are



both shared and developed; that recognises and values the learning outcomes of non-formal and informal learning; that promotes social inclusion of vulnerable people and in particular young people not in employment education and training (NEETs) through vocational education and training (VET); and that ensures access to quality education and lifelong learning in order to promote social justice.

- We work to strengthen **active citizenship and volunteering** for social cohesion by ensuring that the benefits of volunteering are legally recognised, that financial and infrastructural barriers preventing the involvement of volunteers are eradicated and that the skills and experiences gained through volunteering are recognised.
- We work to **guarantee fundamental rights** for everyone in Europe and worldwide, that ensures access to quality social services for asylum seekers, migrants and internally displaced people; that respects the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights in all spheres; that places solidarity between people and between states at the heart of its policies.

In the coming years, by following the New Strategic Orientation, SOLIDAR and members will work together to realise this mission in three thematic programs:

1. **Realising a Social Europe**
2. **Building Learning Societies**
3. **Organising International Solidarity**

Chapter 3:

NEW STRATEGIC ORIENTATION

3.1.

Realising a social Europe

SOLIDAR's main objective in the field of Social Affairs is to improve progress towards a more social Europe. Against the background of our European social fabric which has been seriously damaged by the economic crisis and by the effects of one-sided austerity policies, the SOLIDAR family of civil society organisations will advocate for a policy change that puts social consolidation back at the heart of EU policies.

Our members represent civic movements, bringing together millions of individuals, as well as service providers. They offer social and healthcare services, social services responding to needs across the life cycle as well as training and lifelong learning for vulnerable, socially excluded, disadvantaged and underprivileged people, migrants and asylum seekers. They have a long-standing tradition in the field of social services, education, training, leisure and cultural activities. As civic movements they contribute to the social cohesion of local communities, encourage civic engagement and mobilise social capital. They cooperate closely to promote solidarity, active inclusion and people's empowerment in order to fight increasing poverty and social exclusion, rising levels of unemployment and declining citizens' trust in the European project.

The following areas will particularly increase in importance in the coming period:

- **Together for Social Europe:** Strengthening the capacity of SOLIDAR civil society organ-





isations to monitor policy developments, to participate in EU decision making processes and to provide evidence-based recommendations on the direction to be taken to tackle the social crisis and increase more active inclusion and social cohesion.

- Strengthening the **social economy** is our contribution to a smart, sustainable and inclusive development of Europe. Social economy actors are a pillar of our democratic society; they promote the quality of living together, ensure the peaceful environment of our social system and improve the lives of many people. They concentrate their economic activity on the achievement of social and sustainable goals, value skills, competences and knowledge and constantly develop innovative approaches.
- Continuing to promote people's **access to affordable, sustainable and quality social services** as a way to guarantee the implementation of fundamental rights for all and to contribute actively to enhancing individuals' and especially vulnerable persons' societal participation and active inclusion. SOLIDAR will work together with its members and European partners to improve the capacity of civil society organisations which provide social services and to strengthen their role in civil dialogue as well as in the EU decision making process.
- Raising the voice of our members involved in **active citizenship and volunteering**. People's empowerment and social engagement are crucial aspects of the creation of a more cohesive society in which every individual can fully participate and realise her/his own potential and contribute to the well-being of their communities.
- Ensuring the social dimension of enlargement and integrate partners from **Southern and Eastern Europe** into the European Union.

3.2.

Building learning societies

The fundamental values of solidarity, equality, participation and social justice are the cornerstones of the process of building inclusive learning societies, where people are given opportunities to develop and to cooperate as free and equal individuals. SOLIDAR works towards creating an inclusive learning society on the grounds of openness and democracy, where all members have an opportunity to participate in lifelong and life-wide learning opportunities. This enables personal emancipation; enhances an individual's full civic, social and economic participation in society and the development of human talents – to ensure that everyone achieves the maximum according to his or her abilities.

SOLIDAR members have a long-standing tradition of empowering people through lifelong learning, and actively promote social cohesion, active inclusion and participation in society. The network brings together workers' education associations, trade union education institutes and popular education movements. Our members work to prioritise non-formal and informal (adult) learning as a tool to empower people to fully participate in society, in particular socio-economically vulnerable groups such as young people, migrants, people in precarious working conditions and the working poor.

The following areas will particularly increase in importance in the coming period :

- **Building inclusive learning societies** : to strengthen non-formal and informal learning (NFIL) to promote active citizenship, democracy, intercultural learning and to combat all forms of discrimination, including racism and xenophobia, and to develop a strategy which actively supports the creation of learning societies and learning workplaces.

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- Recognising the added value of **non-formal and informal learning** to the development of the skills needed to bridge the gap between labour market needs and available qualifications and of formal education and vocational training by establishing learning pathways to enable the transition between educational systems.
- Promoting **validation of skills, competences and knowledge** acquired through non-formal and informal learning within society and in the workplace.
- Making **lifelong learning** a reality and fostering participation of people in education and learning, especially those who are far from formal education and have a weak income position for example young adults who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs) and school dropouts, as well as highly educated unemployed people whose skills are at risk of deterioration.
- **Promoting vocational education and training.** Together with our members and partners we will work towards greater recognition of vocational training in the world of work.
- **Promoting methodological innovation :** providing a space for members to exchange educational and training tools and practices, and promoting methodological and technological cooperation and innovation for better education.
- Investing in education for social justice. Promoting the **international dimension of non-formal and informal learning** and strengthening development cooperation instruments to strengthen the transformative learning aspects embedded in adult education, popular education and workers' education.

3.3.

Organising international solidarity

With inequality, encroachment on democracy and social unrest increasing internationally, the SOLIDAR network of civil society organisations will give increased attention to the objectives of improving social justice for all, democracy-building and the fair distribution of resources.

Our members are active in development cooperation programmes as well as humanitarian assistance. We are recognised as a key international partner in achieving sustainable and inclusive development in many fields. SOLIDAR will continue to develop the “SOLIDAR brand” with donors and the EU community in Brussels, facilitate improved access to funding and policy processes for its members, while also facilitating strengthened contact between member organisations in various field countries.

The following areas will particularly increase in importance in the coming period :

- **Building a global civil society movement :** by enlarging our alliances and partnership on a global level with trade unions and other networks which share our values and principles – especially networks of migrants, women, youth and grass-roots organisations. SOLIDAR will be a visible and outspoken participant on the global level and will facilitate members' participation in international events such as the World Social Forum and thematic and regional events.
- Developing and strengthening a strong campaign around organising and the **freedom of association**; maintaining a global SOLIDAR voice on the right to organise and civil and political human rights, combined with support for members with campaign material and operational tools for political lobbying, pressure and





media work in both home countries as well as programme countries.

- Promoting global campaigns to support members and our sisters and brothers in the trade union movement by focusing on **decent work and social protection**; poverty; unemployment; free trade; and the need to strengthen ILO conventions.
- Developing mechanisms for **swift facilitation of cooperation between members involved in humanitarian work** as well as support mechanisms for others who wish to support such action.
- Promoting social justice campaigns with specific focus on the **Middle East and North Africa** (Arab States) region.

Chapter 4:

OUR TOOLS

To achieve and to implement the above vision, mission and objectives of the New Strategic Orientation, we will build on the following tools which will be used to their full extent in close cooperation with our members and partners:

- **Alliance building**: working together with **progressive civil society organisations** (Social Platform, CONCORD, EUCIS-LLL, Social Services Europe, Civil Society Europe, European Working Group for Social Protection and Decent Work, Brot für die Welt), **foundations** (Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation, Foundation for European Progressive Studies, Global Progressive Forum), **trade unions** (ETUC, ETUI, ITUC, ITUC Arab States) and **progressive political forces** (S&D Group, Party of European Socialists, Progressive Alliance, Greens,

GUE/NGL) to advocate for common positions and objectives.

- **Advocacy**: seeking to influence and to strengthen our position at **European** (European Commission, European Parliament, EESC, European Council) **and International Institutions** (ILO, ILO ILC/ACTRAV, UN, World Bank) regarding the above objectives.
- Promote **activities** such as **conferences, seminars and roundtables** that engage members and partners (from the field) in relevant EU and international decision making processes, utilising good practice, identifying needs and proposing evidence-based policy recommendations in support of the objectives.
- **Academic analysis**: building a network of academics and think tanks that gives an analytical dimension to our evidence-based policy recommendations and can further strengthen our advocacy.
- **Ensure funding** through **active lobby campaigns** matching the needs of members and providing **technical support to members and partners in order** to access (EU) funding, provided through SOLIDAR communication and advocacy.

TOGETHER FOR SOCIAL EUROPE

Is about

- > Active Inclusion and Social Progress
- > Social Economy
- > Active Citizenship and Volunteering
- > Social and Health services



We strive for

- A European social model based on active inclusion, social cohesion and universal social protection where all members of society have access to affordable and high-quality social and health care services.
- The recognition and promotion of the social economy as an alternative model for inclusive prosperity.
- A Europe that promotes people's empowerment and social engagement.

BUILDING LEARNING SOCIETIES

Is about

- > Non-formal and informal learning
- > Vocational Education and Training
- > Decent Work for Young People



We strive for

- Building learning societies in which each member's personal contribution is being valued, and skills, competences and knowledge are both shared and developed.
- Social inclusion of NEETs through vocational education and training.
- Access to quality education and lifelong learning in promoting social justice.
- A Europe that recognises and values the learning outcomes of non-formal and informal learning.

ORGANISING INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

Is about

- > Decent Work and Universal Social Protection
- > Freedom of Association
- > Humanitarian Solidarity



We strive for

- A world where economic, social and cultural rights stand at the heart of development.
- An enabling environment for civil society, social movements and independent workers' representatives (trade unions).
- A trade and finance system that respects human rights, international labour standards and tax justice.
- A practice of humanitarian intervention based on solidarity and partnership with members and partners abroad.

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