



European Elections 2019

solidar

Position Paper 1/5

ADVANCING SOCIAL JUSTICE IN EUROPE

SOLIDAR CALLS FOR SOCIAL INVESTMENT

In Partnership with:

thistimeimvoting.eu

Building upon the Pillar of Social Rights

The 17th of November 2017 marked a historical moment. The **European Pillar of Social Rights** was proclaimed and we cheered it. Indeed, it marked the **acknowledgement of the importance of social protection systems** which are no longer considered by the European Commission as an economic burden but rather as assets for making our social market economy more resilient. The European Pillar of Social Rights has no legal force and, in fact, its implementation entirely depends on the political willingness of the Member States and their regions. **SOLIDAR advocates for a comprehensive implementation of all principles and resulting measures contained in the Pillar** in order to guarantee the full range of social safeguards applicable in all EU Member States. What is more, SOLIDAR demands the Pillar to be implemented [consistently with the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs](#).

The adoption of a **progressive transformative agenda based on social investment to advance social justice across Europe** is our core demand. The austerity measures adopted after the crisis hit the vulnerable ones the most because they hampered the social protection systems in the countries that were hit the hardest by the crisis. Nothing can repair the sorrow caused by those dreadful choices. But we can and must prevent the same unjust measures to be applied ever again. To do so, we need a European Social Agenda.

Looking back at the EU policy-making history, EU law-makers refused to fully embrace upward social convergence as a goal for the EU, accompanied by strategies and policies to achieve it. Instead, it watered down even the Europe 2020 agenda - the only one entailing some provisions for a progressive social convergence.

Upward social convergence is necessary to reverse the growing social and socio-economic disparities between and within member states, and advance social justice all over Europe. To achieve that, the Pillar for Social Rights is a cornerstone laid for further implemen-

tation not the finish line. Today, 118 million people (23.5% of the population) are living in or at the risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU, 22 million are unemployed and 23 million are working poor. [The root causes of inequality cannot be solely fought against on the national level.](#) **This is why we need the EU, we must join forces and make this our priority. The European elections are the opportunity to do so.**

Delivering tangible outcomes

So far, the Pillar was followed up by three legislative procedures. The commitment to ensure [predictable and transparent working conditions](#) all over the EU, the protection of [posted workers' rights](#), and the final adoption of a Directive on [Work-Life Balance](#).

SOLIDAR welcomed the advancement of these directives as they guarantee a first minimum set of rights to be enjoyed by every worker in Europe. But more can and has to be done.

The Social Rights have to be entailed in the European Semester

Only after the adoption of the European Pillar of Social Rights some consideration has been given to social policies in the European Semester, but not enough. For SOLIDAR, the **emphasis of social issues in the European Semester must continue and be strengthened to make sure that the economy is at the service of its citizens and not the other way round.**

Putting citizens' faith back into the European project is vital to advance it rather than letting a few play off each other the many. This advancement is achieved through inclusive social policies ensuring that **the benefits of a sustainable growth are shared commonly within and across EU Member States.**

At the end of the day, why should Europeans care more about fiscal stability than investing into the healthcare system? Priorities should be balanced. Moreover, the scope of the social indicators must be enlarged. First of all, as the European economic governance should aim at a [Sustainable](#)

[Development](#) model, the indicators we use to measure the progress of our societies must be consistent with this ultimate goal. Secondly, [social investment is](#) much broader than employment policies. It entails **investments in education** (formal, non-formal and informal); investments in **social services**; and investments for **social inclusion**, including the provisions for granting a living to everyone and the integration of migrants.

SOLIDAR supports the call for changes in the European Semester that would enable an improved balance of social and economic governance and restore trust in the Semester process. The **Social Rights Monitor** is the new tool that SOLIDAR will release right after the EP elections in order to provide with an essential tool for policy makers to assess the importance of prioritising social investment in the European Semester process.

Social objectives over capital and profits

The **social sector** often referred to as the “third sector” is one of the **strongest engines of employment growth and social inclusion** in Europe. As the largest sector in terms of employment in the European Union, the social sector has shown, despite recessions, consistent employment growth. In many Member States, the third sector has taken over the provision of social services that fill the gaps left behind by the lack, or mismanagement of public institutions. By definition, it **produces the very much needed social value** and promotes inclusion, while at the same time, **re-investing its profits in people and their capacities**.

For SOLIDAR, social objectives and the **well-being of people must be prioritised for capital and profits**. [The social economy is thriving](#) towards this direction, thanks to its emphasis on solidarity, a primacy of values and democratic participation, and its aim to reconcile economic and social issues. We are convinced that the social economy must expand in size and magnitude to achieve a sustainable transition of the economic and political landscape.

SOLIDAR advocates that European Institutions and Member States must involve and consult the social sector that constitutes the backbone of a resilient and prospering society in its decision making. We highlight that the involvement of the social sector in monitoring committees and the effective implementation of the Partnership Principle are of crucial importance.

Progressive solutions to move forward

It needs political ambition at Member State level and by the European Institutions to deliver strongly on the European Pillar of Social Rights, and for tangible progress on the concrete outline of the principles enshrined in the Pillar.

What we demand is for the EU law-makers - including the Member States - to be brave and bold enough to navigate the EU project out of the bleak waters it got stuck into. Instead **we demand a vision of Europe that is progressive, sustainable and thus truly inclusive**.

Eager to know more?

Check out our publications

- [European Parliament votes in favour of a stronger European Social Fund](#)
- [Delivering the European Pillar of Social Rights to tackle inequalities](#)
- [The European Pillar of Social Rights – a basis for upward social convergence?](#)
- [Provisional agreement on the Directive on Transparent and Predictable working conditions reached](#)
- [Policy Update: Directive on transparent and predictable working conditions – Small steps in the right direction](#)
- [The revised Posted Workers Directive \(PWD\) and the European Labour Authority \(ELA\)](#)
- [The Social Economy – Putting the individual and social objective over capital](#)
- [A Social Europe is achievable – with a coherent strategy and political will!](#)
- [European Conference: The unsustainable burden of inequalities - How the implementation of the EPSR can lead to the achievement of the Agenda 2030](#)
- [Sustainable Equality: the Report of the Independent Commission 2019 - 2024](#)

solidar

Rue de Pascale 4-6
1040 Brussels
Belgium
T +32 2 500 10 20
F +32 2 500 10 30

Twitter: @SOLIDAR_EU
Facebook: SOLIDAR
www.solidar.org
solidar@solidar.org

Responsible Editor:

Conny Reuter

Author:

Elisa Gambardella

Layout:

Eugeni Brigneti Masgrau

Published in January 2019 © SOLIDAR

SOLIDAR is a European network of membership based Civil Society Organisations who gather several millions of citizens throughout Europe and worldwide. SOLIDAR voices the values of its member organisations to the EU and international institutions across the three main policy sectors; social affairs, lifelong learning and international cooperation.