

Decent Work and Quality Jobs in Europe

16 Recommendations for the Europe 2020 Strategy

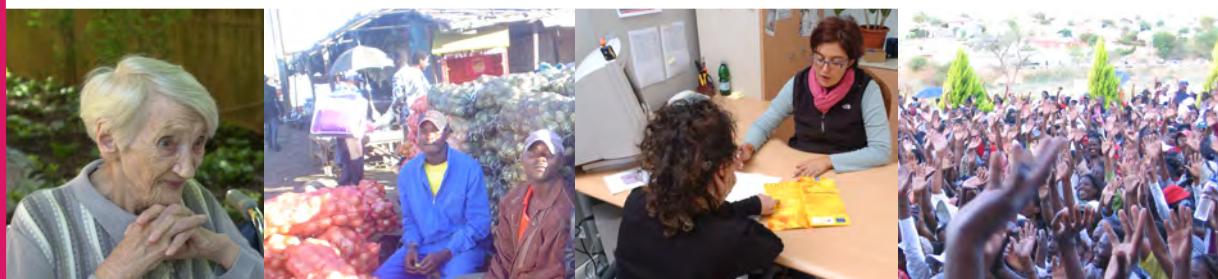


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	1
SOLIDAR's Key Recommendations for the EU 2020 Strategy	2
PART I - Assessment & Challenges	3
10 Years of the Lisbon Strategy	3
PART II - SOLIDAR's 16 Recommendations	5
Quality Employment and Active Inclusion	5
Social Economy and Social Services	9
Education and Lifelong Learning	11
Better Governance	13

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SOLIDAR is a European network of 53 NGOs
working to advance social justice in Europe and worldwide.

SOLIDAR lobbies the EU and international institutions in
three primary areas: social affairs, international cooperation and education.

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Published November 2009

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Photo of Social worker with lady

FOREWORD

The European Union has been implementing the Lisbon Strategy over the last decade with the ambition of making Europe's economy the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world. Despite this ambitious goal and the creation of 18 million new jobs, the Lisbon Strategy has not addressed certain crucial points and in SOLIDAR's view should be re-oriented to focus in particular on the two challenges of social cohesion and climate change. In this briefing paper, SOLIDAR presents 16 recommendations to the European Commission, European Parliament and European Council on how to ensure decent work and quality jobs in Europe, and how to promote the social economy and lifelong learning for all by 2020.

The current debate to formulate a Post-Lisbon Strategy - or Europe 2020 Strategy - is taking place in the midst of a systemic economic crisis which is impacting on the financial systems, the real economy and labour markets of all European economies; and as a consequence, negatively affecting the living and working conditions of many people across Europe.

With roughly 80 million people living in or at risk of poverty in the EU, including roughly 19 million working poor, this crisis will continue to have negative impacts over the next 3 to 5 years, in particular for economically vulnerable and socially excluded people, which SOLIDAR member organisations work with and provide services for, for whom economic recovery will only take effect with a certain delay. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) predicts that we are looking at a potential jobs crisis that might last up to eight years because of rising long-term unemployment and the informalisation of the labour market.

To address these challenges, SOLIDAR urges the European institutions to orientate the Post-Lisbon Strategy towards making economically competitive and innovative societies in an increasingly globalised world by realising fundamental rights, the creation of equal opportunities and life chances, decent working and living conditions, adequate social protection and access to affordable, high quality services of general interest for all European citizens.

We need to work together to change Europe. We need to put people first and provide better living and working opportunities for all. We need to change the current paradigm to a Europe which puts economic growth and public policies at the service of a greater quality of life and sustainable development. With these 16 recommendations, we put forward our view of how to reach these aims. Together, we must try to make Europe the most competitive region in terms of social cohesion and social inclusion. Together, we must be a force for change!



Conny Reuter
Secretary General

SOLIDAR'S KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE EU 2020 STRATEGY

As of the 24 November, the EU will be developing a policy strategy for the EU for the next 10 years, as a follow up to the current Lisbon Strategy. It is being developed in the midst of the worst economic crisis since the 1930s, the social consequences of which include rising unemployment and more social exclusion, especially for the more vulnerable and disadvantaged people in European countries.

The EU therefore needs to re-orientate the Strategy towards one which will move towards ensuring that decent work and quality jobs become a reality for all European citizens. To do this, it is therefore essential that the EU include concrete measures to ensure the realisation of fundamental rights, the creation of equal opportunities and life chances, decent working and living conditions, adequate social protection and access to affordable, high quality services of general interest.

SOLIDAR has put together 16 recommendations for the Post-Lisbon Strategy of which the main points are:

QUALITY EMPLOYMENT AND ACTIVE INCLUSION

- SOLIDAR recommends developing a European Employment Guideline that specifically deals with active inclusion and the inclusion of people with multiple needs; or add this aspect to the existing Employment Guideline 23 "Expand and improve investment in human capital".
- SOLIDAR recommends updating Employment Guideline 18 ("Promote a lifecycle approach to work") by further developing the Barcelona targets on child care, in particular for children aged 3 and younger, to improve framework conditions to better reconcile work, family and private life.
- SOLIDAR recommends introducing targets for quality jobs and decent work to cover workers in standard and non-standard employment and to strengthen measures – within flexicurity strategies – to improve qualifications and competences in the framework of vocational training and lifelong learning.

SOCIAL ECONOMY AND SOCIAL SERVICES

- SOLIDAR calls for the full recognition and promotion of the social economy as an alternative economic model, as it links economic activities with the realisation of social, health, employment and housing policy goals, not only to respond to needs at a local level but also as source of employment.

EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

- SOLIDAR recommends setting ambitious targets for participation in lifelong learning at both EU and national level for 2015, with specific targets to increase the participation of low skilled men and women, and to give high priority to the implementation of existing national strategies on vocational training and lifelong learning.

BETTER GOVERNANCE

- SOLIDAR recommends coupling the Social Open Method of Coordination (OMC) with EU financial instruments, most notably with the European Structural Funds (ESF), to strengthen the social and active inclusion strand of a Post-Lisbon Strategy and financially back active inclusion measures that should be integrated in the Employment Guidelines. A Community Anti-Poverty Programme also needs to accompany the reinforced Social OMC.

PART I – ASSESSMENT & CHALLENGES

10 YEARS OF THE LISBON STRATEGY

On 23 and 24 March 2000 the European Council gathered in Lisbon and adopted an ambitious agenda to be delivered by 2010. The agenda covered a broad range of topics: internal market, macroeconomic challenges, research and development, labour market, social cohesion and social inclusion. Its main aim was to make the EU "the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion, and respect for the environment by 2010". To achieve these goals, a new European multi-level governance system was developed called the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) in the areas of social inclusion, migration, education and youth.

Bad results in economic and employment growth, research and development, and unimplemented structural reforms led to a mid-term report in 2004 (the so-called Kok-Report) reviewing the Lisbon Agenda. This report highlighted problems related to an overloaded programme, insufficient coordination, diverging priorities and a lack of political will by EU Member States. As a consequence, in 2005, a revised Lisbon Strategy was developed moving the focus of the strategy to growth, jobs and competitiveness through the adoption of "Integrated Guidelines"¹.

1. ITS ACHIEVEMENTS...

- The Lisbon Strategy supported the convergence of employment policies across Member States, like the reorganisation of public employment services and the promotion of active labour market policies, and supported a better coherence between employment, social protection and fiscal policies.
- The Lisbon Strategy gave more stability and continuity to political agendas for economic and employment policies within Member States; inspiring new dynamics between national and local authorities, and encouraging new kinds of institutionalised cooperation amongst national ministries and between European institutions.
- The dynamics and processes set up by the Lisbon Strategy contributed to the impressive jobs growth up until mid-2008, including 4.4 million jobs (1995-2006) in health and social services.
- The Open Method of Coordination (OMC), the governance structure created by the Lisbon Strategy, created opportunities to find consensus on new ideas; allowing for reinforced political commitment from different stakeholders including national governments on common objectives, and for decisions adapted to the diversity of national situations. It also set incentives to better involve a broad range of stakeholders, including civil society organisations.

2. ITS FAILURES...

- Whilst the initial Lisbon Treaty in 2000 offered a balanced approach to policy, the revised version of 2005 moved away from this balance and focused on growth, jobs and competitiveness. SOLIDAR has consistently criticised this change pointing out that these new priorities were made at the expense of policies to promote social cohesion and social inclusion for all EU citizens.
- Many governance deficits hindered national stakeholders from taking ownership of the strategy and the transparency of agreements achieved between Member States and the European Commission have not increased. This includes: not provoking relevant national debates, social partners not always finding their appropriate place in the processes at national or EU level, and national parliaments being weakly implicated.
- Pro-active policies and clear policy priorities and targets from governments are needed on issues like gender equality, the fight against discrimination, and access to child and elderly care, as greater social cohesion does not automatically result from an increase in economic growth and labour market participation rates.
- The Lisbon Strategy has not adequately addressed the challenge of increasing disparities in income and wealth. Labour market segmentation entails an increase of non-standard contracts and atypical and low-paid employment. This means that for millions of Europeans, employment actually no longer protects against the risk of poverty and that, in a mid and long-term perspective, the pensions of people in precarious working conditions will be insufficient for a decent income at retirement age.

¹ Integrated Guidelines: Common Guidelines of the Lisbon Strategy for macroeconomic, microeconomic and employment policies that were previously kept separate, but then were integrated, hence the name.

3. A NEW STRATEGY FOR A NEW WORLD...

The current debate to formulate a Post-Lisbon Strategy - or Europe 2020 Strategy - is taking place in the midst of a systemic economic crisis that has not been seen since the great depression of the 1930s. It is impacting the financial systems, the real economy and labour markets of all European economies and negatively affecting the living and working conditions of many people across Europe.

This crisis will continue to have negative impacts over the next 3 to 5 years, in particular for economically vulnerable and socially excluded people for whom economic recovery will only take effect with a certain delay. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) predicts that we are looking at a potential jobs crisis that might last up to eight years, because of rising long-term unemployment and the informalisation of the labour market. If both trends take root, the negative effects of the crisis will be long-lasting, thus yielding significant hardship and depriving the economy of valuable recourses².

Despite the quite impressive economic growth rates across Europe and the creation of 18 million new jobs over the last decade, and even before the emergence of the crisis, Europe has been witnessing growing inequalities in life chances, income and wealth, persisting exclusion and discrimination of various groups in our societies over the last decades. Europe currently has roughly 80 million people living in or at risk of poverty in the EU, including 19 million working poor.

Over the last decade, Europe has been marked by important structural changes in the economy³:

- Pronounced shift from manufacturing to service industries
- Rapid increase in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the EU (at a faster rate than GDP growth).
- Improvements in information and communications technology have expanded the scope for the relocation of production via off-shoring and outsourcing; particularly in the services sectors.
- Increase in global migration, with an increase in the number of foreign workers and foreign-born population in most EU countries.
- Underperformance in innovation - measured as the percentage of national income spent on research and development - as compared to the OECD average.

The main winners from globalisation in the EU over the last 10 to 15 years are the owners of capital (given that capital's share of economic rewards has increased relative to labour across the world), and workers in the top half of the earnings distribution –especially those at the very top of the income distribution. The biggest losers, at least in the short run, are people who have lost their jobs in industries that have been the most badly affected by increased global economic integration and the relocation of production sites – particularly where those jobs have very specific skills which cannot be used in other jobs.

4. THE CHALLENGE FOR 2020

When developing a policy strategy for the EU for the next 10 years, the challenge is how to best reconcile, on the one hand, the move towards economically competitive and innovative societies in an increasingly globalised world with, on the other hand, the realisation of fundamental rights, the creation of equal opportunities and life chances, decent working and living conditions, adequate social protection and access to affordable, high quality services of general interest for all European citizens. Europe needs to move towards:

- Sustainable economic development
- Creating green and quality jobs
- Promoting decent working conditions for all workers - independent from contractual status
- Strengthening social cohesion
- Building a socially inclusive Europe

Furthermore, to develop a European Social Model (ESM) on the basis of universally accessible systems of education and health, “institutionalised solidarity” within comprehensive social protection systems and a well articulated social partnership, SOLIDAR advocates for an ESM as an important reference point for the strategy.

The current crises shows the unsustainability of a model where competitiveness and growth do not serve the people first. In reorienting EU policies we also must not forget about their external dimension. For SOLIDAR this in particular means the promotion of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda ensuring that all people have the right to work in dignity. For this to be achieved, the Post-Lisbon Strategy must also fundamentally rethink the EU's trade policy *Global Europe* in order to ensure trade and investment, facilitate sustainable development and decent work.

² ILO, The financial and economic crisis: a decent work response, 2009

³ IPPR, Structural Economic Change and the European Union, December 2008

PART II – SOLIDAR’S 16 RECOMMENDATIONS

QUALITY EMPLOYMENT AND ACTIVE INCLUSION

1. ACTIVELY ADDRESS SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND WORKING POOR

The crisis has highlighted important issues that the Lisbon Strategy has not managed to settle. Unemployment rates in the EU27 were at more than 9% in mid-2009 and are predicted to only increase over the next months, according to Eurostat. This means that roughly 80 million people are living in or at risk of poverty, including about 19 million working poor⁴. The EU has to face, now more than ever, the interlinked challenges of labour market integration, social inclusion and working conditions.

- SOLIDAR recommends developing an additional European Employment Guideline that specifically deals with active inclusion and the inclusion of people with multiple needs; or to add this aspect to existing Employment Guideline 23 “Expand and improve investment in human capital”.
- SOLIDAR recommends that the European Commission revises the Integrated Guidelines in the current Lisbon Strategy to include European Employment Guidelines for a period of 5 years.
- SOLIDAR recommends introducing an EU Framework Directive on Adequate Minimum Income (Schemes). This new instrument should comprise an agreement on a common EU definition of adequacy, on common methods to establish adequacy, as well as regular adaptations of income rates to increases in cost of living.

2. PROMOTE QUALITY EMPLOYMENT AND DECENT WORK

Although many people in the EU27 have full-time jobs, multiple jobs or receive pensions and benefits from social protection schemes, their income is still too low to protect them from falling into poverty, entailing the risk of exclusion from society. We believe that decent work could be a strategy to achieve sustainable development centred on people; and would build fair, equitable and inclusive societies implementing the principles of employment creation, workers’ rights, gender equality, social protection and social dialogue. Decent work is about equal access to employment, about fair salaries for workers to allow them and their families to live in dignity, about absence of exploitation, and about comprehensive social protection against the general risks of the life cycle. We would like to see the quality jobs and decent work agenda translated into European legislation, policies and programmes, with its key components and objectives reflected in the Post-Lisbon Strategy.

- SOLIDAR recommends the introduction of targets on quality jobs and decent work, including adequate income from employment, equal pay for equal work, and the fight against discriminations and comprehensive social protection systems also for those in part-time, temporary agency and other “non-standard” work. These should also refer to the importance of effective social dialogue to advance and defend these objectives (in the framework of a Commission’s Recommendation on quality employment and quality jobs).
- SOLIDAR recommends promoting quality jobs and sustainable enterprises through socially-responsible and green public procurement. This means using social criteria as award criteria: requesting that sub-contractors comply with exclusion and adequate selection criteria that must be demonstrated before the contract is awarded, and rewarding companies that uphold social, labour, environmental and fair trade standards.

⁴ Individuals which during the previous year were mainly at work (i.e. for a minimum of 6 months) and are living in a household with an income below the ‘at risk of poverty’ threshold that as a rule is set at 60% of median equalised income. Proportionally there are more women than men, working poor are 6% amongst employees and 17% amongst self-employed. In OECD countries 7% live in households with at least one poor worker, with higher poverty rates for families with children.

- SOLIDAR recommends working towards a legal framework that sets incentives for public authorities to opt for the best offer, that is to say the offer which fulfils both the requested quality levels and the intended goals of employment and social policies at both European level and within Member States⁵.

3. INVEST IN ACTIVE LABOUR MARKET POLICIES

A major risk of the current crisis is that unemployment can become structural in nature as many of the unemployed drift into long-term unemployment or drop out of the labour force altogether. In addition to economic recovery and anti-crisis packages, governments must keep up or scale up the resources for active labour market policies (ALMPs) aimed at helping job seekers find work. A key priority of publicly funded services is to provide effective employment services to a rapidly rising pool of jobseekers to ensure that the most vulnerable do not lose touch with the labour market and drift into inactivity. As the global economic crisis is spurring structural changes, measures to foster skills and training will help ensure that workers are well-equipped for new jobs. This is why SOLIDAR calls to shift the focus and resources behind active labour market policies from the “work-first approach” to a “train-first approach”, in line with proposals also made by the OECD.

- SOLIDAR recommends updating the Employment Guideline 18 “Promote a lifecycle approach to work” by further developing the Barcelona targets on child care, in particular in view of child care facilities for children under the age of 3, where for 2020 a target of 50% - or an increase of the share by at least one third compared to the current rate - should be set.
- SOLIDAR recommends developing a European Employment Guideline that specifically deals with active inclusion and the inclusion of people with multiple needs or to add this aspect to existing Employment Guideline 23 “Expand and improve investment in human capital”
- SOLIDAR recommends strengthening commitment to implement all pillars of the Commission Recommendation on Active inclusion by establishing concrete action plans and actively promoting regional action plans. SOLIDAR in particular calls for including additional principles under the “access to services” strand of this Commission Recommendation, for example including non-discrimination concerning access and use, rights and empowerment of users, and good working conditions for all staff.
- SOLIDAR recommends developing a “joint approach” to active inclusion through on-going structured dialogue with the people actually experiencing poverty and social inclusion, together with the NGOs and trade unions that support them.
- SOLIDAR recommends that employment policies actively address still existing gender differences with regards to pay and unemployment-related entitlements under social protection schemes.

4. REVISE LEGISLATION AND POLICIES THAT CREATE PRECARIOUS LABOUR

Over the last decade, Europe has been witnessing an increasing number of people in precarious working conditions, growing inequalities in life chances, income and wealth, and persisting discriminations, in particular for the most vulnerable groups such as homeless persons, undocumented migrants and Roma. The reforms in labour law, adopted by several Member States, which introduced a disproportionate use of fixed-term contracts, part-time contracts, temporary agency work and posted work in many sectors, disaggregated the labour market and undermined decent working conditions which are only likely to deteriorate further due to the current crisis.

SOLIDAR can support the emerging flexicurity policies based on Common Flexicurity Principles as long as measures under the ‘security’ pillar are set up on an equal footing with the flexibility of enterprises and the workforce. What is important is therefore the final outcome of the strategy: how many people are brought back to the labour market under decent working and living conditions?

- SOLIDAR recommends that labour law should not be designed in a way to set incentives for an increase of non-voluntarily chosen atypical employment such as fixed-term contracts and temporary agency work. This

⁵ This objective should be pursued by building on the forthcoming Commission Guide on Socially-Responsible Public Procurement and the EP own-initiative report on New Developments in Public Procurement currently drafted.

objective should be explicitly spelt out in the Employment Guideline 21 "Promote flexibility combined with employment security and reduce labour market segmentation, having due regard to the role of the social partners".

- SOLIDAR recommends strengthening the role of measures to improve vocational training and lifelong learning qualifications and competences to allow for a better reconciliation of work, family and private life and to promote the creation of quality jobs and non-precarious working conditions, with the decent work concept as an important benchmark.
- SOLIDAR recommends giving a higher priority to measures and projects promoting the integration of people outside the labour market under the European Social Fund.

5. REFOCUS ON YOUTH, ELDERLY WORKERS AND MIGRANTS

Most vulnerable groups have to be protected and actively supported. Priority should be given to objectives for three target groups: Facilitating access to the labour market for young people (cf. Recommendation 12. "Reduce early school leave and low educational attainment"), protecting elderly people, and ensuring social inclusion to people with disabilities.

The EU's current migration and integration policies lack coherence: promoting a "brain-drain" by accepting highly skilled migrants; and closing the doors to the less qualified and unskilled migrants, offering double standards by allowing them entry and denying them access to a broad range of welfare and employment rights. Moreover, millions of undocumented workers live in the EU, their presence cannot be ignored. Member States must ensure that undocumented migrants have access to services that are essential to guarantee fundamental rights.

- SOLIDAR recommends introducing a directive on the conditions of admission and stay of third country workers, also including low-skilled migrants. This directive would lay down common definitions, criteria and procedures regarding the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals, common criteria for admitting third-country nationals to employed and self-employed activities, harmonise the diverging rules currently applicable in Member States and especially provide procedural and transparent safeguards and a clear set of rights to third-country national workers. The adoption of such a directive would add an important piece of European legislation to legal instruments already established for students, researchers and family members of EU citizens.
- SOLIDAR recommends renewing the EU immigration policy by following up on the Common Basic Principles on Immigration set in the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum and the so-called Stockholm Programme proposed by the Swedish EU Council Presidency, starting from human dignity and fundamental rights.
- SOLIDAR recommends that all Member States, that have not yet done so, ratify the UN Convention on the rights of migrant workers and their family members.
- SOLIDAR recommends coordinating national migration and integration policies at EU level aiming at policy convergence as they generate externalities for other Member States that might be transformed into measures creating more burdens or restrictions for migrant workers as to admission and employment conditions.
- SOLIDAR recommends developing channels for legal migration, not only for highly skilled workers (Blue Card Initiative).
- SOLIDAR recommends that national policies should support adapted working-time models for older workers (for example, comprising partial early retirement benefit and financial support for partial early retirement), the orientation and adjustment of vocational training measures to the needs of elderly workers and the concentration of financial support on the integration of elderly jobseekers (by means of training for the employed, recruitment support, non-profit agency work, etc.).

6. BETTER PROTECT CORE LABOUR RIGHTS IN THE INTERNAL MARKET

The European Court of Justice (ECJ) 2008 rulings (Viking, Laval, Rüffert and Luxembourg/Commission) have raised serious concerns about the unbalanced relationship between fundamental social rights and economic freedoms and the negative effects this has on individual and collective labour law. The interpretation of this directive by the ECJ as a "maximum standards" directive did not reflect the will of the European legislator. SOLIDAR supports a statement made in the PES Manifesto that "the protection of employment rights and the prevention of undercutting of established social standards should be established as a common European responsibility. Equal pay and equal working conditions for equal work in the same workplace – this principle must become binding throughout Europe"⁶.

- SOLIDAR recommends partially revising or at least "framing" the Posting of Workers (PoW) Directive. SOLIDAR believes that the recent European Court of Justice (ECJ) rulings – Viking, Laval, Rüffert, Luxembourg/Commission – have interpreted this directive supposed to protect workers, companies and labour market against unfair competition as an internal market tool. In order to remove the ambiguities in the current text we ask for a partial revision and/or for a legally-binding explanatory statement which would clarify and safeguard the original objective of the PoW Directive to establish in law the principle of "equal pay and equal working conditions for equal work in the same workplace".
- When revising the PoW Directive, SOLIDAR recommends that the European institutions take into account the debate on socially responsible public procurement (SRPP) and the Commission Guide on SRPP due out in late 2009: requesting that sub-contractors comply with exclusion and adequate selection criteria that must be demonstrated before the contract is awarded, and rewarding companies that uphold social, labour, environmental and fair trade standards.
- SOLIDAR supports the European Trade Union Confederation's (ETUC) recent proposal for a social progress protocol, which gives an important new impulse to the continuing debate that is needed over the future of Social Europe. In particular, the right of association, free collective bargaining and trade unions' right to strike must be fully recognised and the ability to exercise these rights in practice must be ensured.

⁶ PES Manifesto "For a Europe of social progress", adopted 23 April 2009 in Strasbourg, p. 3, cf. http://www.socialistgroup.eu/gpes/media3/documents/2861_EN_social_progress_en_090424.pdf

SOCIAL ECONOMY AND SOCIAL SERVICES

7. Invest in social services in times of crisis

The severe financial and economic crisis entails important risks for the economic, social and territorial cohesion and for inclusive and participatory societies. This holds true in particular for vulnerable people, such as people with physical and mental disabilities, people with chronic illnesses, and low-skilled women and men. There is an increasing number of over-indebted persons and in 2007 one out of every five children lived in a poor household. Exclusion is a daily reality for homeless persons and many migrants. Additionally, as in the coming years the pressure on public budgets will have to be tackled, and we expect that the financial basis for both social infrastructures and qualified personnel will shrink, which in turn creates new threats for the development of accessible, affordable and high quality social services.

- SOLIDAR supports the suggestion to build up a quality framework for public and social services at both European level – mentioned in the Political Guidelines for the Next Commission of President Barroso (September 2009) – and within Member States.
- When doing so, SOLIDAR calls on European and national policy makers to make full use of new or amended stipulations of the Lisbon Treaty (Art. 14 and Protocol No. 26) to organise competition on social markets – in the broader frame of the internal market – on the basis of quality, not primarily or only on the basis of price and to fully recognise the specificities of social services of general interest and their users.

8. Promote social integration of people in need

Continued investments in social infrastructures, social innovations and people working in the field of social, health and employment services are needed. These services increase social cohesion as recognised by the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the Lisbon Treaty. They improve people's quality of life and provide protection and assistance. They also help ensure the social integration of people already on the margins of society, which is even more necessary when the financial and economic systems break down.

- SOLIDAR recommends building on a broad consensus that investment in social infrastructures – education, healthcare, social services, and more generally social protection – and in people is needed to overcome the crisis. This also needs to be reflected in dedicated budgets of the European Social Fund (ESF).
- As a follow-up to the recent Commission consultation to build up national surveillance systems to monitor health inequalities, SOLIDAR recommends including quantitative indicators informing about conditions of access and affordability.

9. More employment opportunities for vulnerable groups

Social and health services of general interest (SHSGI) are a field of important job growth and provide employment opportunities also for vulnerable persons. They are a growth area in terms of job creation due to demographic changes, increased employment rates of women and a diversification of social risks. Employment growth should be encouraged by adapted legal frameworks (for example, the recognition of qualifications) and public policies (qualifications, labour market inclusion). With almost a quarter of the growth of the total employment rate for the EU 27 from 2000 to 2007 (3.3 million) due to more jobs in social, health and employment services, social services should be made drivers of European recovery. Additionally, over the last 15 years, jobs created in the health and social services sector primarily targeted people who are now more affected by the crisis: younger workers, older workers, migrants and women.

- SOLIDAR calls on policy makers to facilitate the cross-border recognition of qualifications, an issue becoming urgent with an increased mobility of skilled and unskilled workforce in nursing and geriatric care.
- SOLIDAR calls on defending decent working conditions and quality jobs in the field of SHSGI, for migrant workers and for the thousands of women working in care services, including undocumented migrants.

10. A stronger role for the social economy

The crisis of the dominant model of economic activity calls for a stronger role of the social economy. A different model of economic activity is possible: social economy organisations which are economic and social players set up to respond to peoples' needs and characterised by a different way of governance and operating. They associate economic performance with democratic governance and social responsibility. Possible surplus is not distributed to shareholders but reinvested to serve the purpose of their activities in the general interest. They manage to create jobs and to meet today's challenges by combining often highly labour intensive work with new technologies as well as labour market inclusion and social integration of vulnerable groups. They also play an indispensable role in view of supporting local and regional social development and territorial cohesion.

- SOLIDAR recommends fully recognising the role and specificities of social economy organisations as well as their contributions to safeguarding social cohesion and social inclusion, following up on the conclusions and recommendations of the January 2009 European Parliament report on the social economy. Additionally, their activities must not be endangered by inappropriate legal frameworks at European level.

EDUCATION & LIFELONG LEARNING

11. Invest in lifelong learning and adult education

With the current crisis, investment in education, training and lifelong learning (LLL) becomes an even higher priority to achieve the EU's objectives of quality job creation, equal opportunities and social cohesion. LLL is essential to move towards a better fit between citizens' skills and the evolving needs of the labour market. With the mid-term review of the Lisbon Strategy in 2005, LLL became a key priority. In this area, however, progress made in many Member States is still limited with both quantitative and qualitative targets not being reached. Participation rates in LLL are often still clearly below the 2010 target of 12.5%, let alone the recently agreed more ambitious target of 15%. Low skilled and older workers are still under-represented in continuous and workplace-based training. Their systematic inclusion therefore needs to be actively promoted and financially supported.

- SOLIDAR recommends setting ambitious targets for participation in LLL at both EU and national level for 2015, with specific targets to increase the participation of low skilled men and women, including defining cost-sharing mechanisms between employers and employees. Appropriate indicators for analysis and monitoring to underpin this reorientation should be included under Employment Guideline 23 "Expand and improve investment in human capital".
- SOLIDAR recommends giving high priority to the implementation of existing national strategies on vocational training and LLL as developed under the Lisbon Strategy, supported at the European level by the LLL Community Programme 2007-2013, to substantially increase the proportion of the workforce population each year.
- SOLIDAR recommends strengthening the role of the European Union in facilitating the exchange of good practices and increasing the financial and technical support to existing programmes.

12. Reduce early school leaving and low educational attainment

Early school dropout and non participation in higher education or vocational training⁷ are major causes behind youth unemployment and entail considerable economic and societal costs. Low educational attainment levels of young adults are widespread. Early school dropout rates in some countries reaches more than 30%, and shows an uneven gender balance, with higher rates for men as the predominant pattern across the EU. Education as a fundamental human right is crucial to empower people to exercise their economic, social, political, civil and cultural rights. As there is a close correlation between low levels of educational attainment and social exclusion, vocational training and lifelong learning are important tools to prevent material deprivation and reduce discrimination. Ensuring equal opportunities to access formal and informal education and lifelong learning programmes, as well as financial support for all members of society, is therefore crucial, to encourage those lower income families from participating.

- SOLIDAR recommends including targets for the quality of measures of both formal and informal education in a reinforced OMC on education for the field of LLL.
- SOLIDAR recommends confirming the recently set European objective of a maximum of 10% early school dropout (Employment Guideline 23); defining an early school leavers rate one third lower than in 2010 as a common objective for all countries for 2015; setting out concrete steps on how to achieve the targets and to give particular attention and targeted support to young men across the EU27; in addition to setting more ambitious country-specific targets in countries where the European objective has already been attained.

⁷ The EU defines early school leavers as people in the age between 18 and 24, not following any educational programme, without employment or degree higher than a secondary level.

13. Address specific needs of migrants as one facet of integration policies

Increased intra-EU mobility flows and migration from third countries present specific challenges for both migrants and their school-aged children as well as for education and lifelong learning policies and systems in all EU Member States. Both aspects taken together imply the need for special efforts and targeted policies for low-skilled women and men, as well as migrants.

- SOLIDAR recommends enriching the current Lisbon Strategy benchmarking indicators for education and training by disaggregated data taking due account of ethnicity or migrant status. This would strengthen coherence with the inclusion of indicators to measure the attainment levels and experiences of students from disadvantaged groups in the reporting back on the implementation of the “Education and Training 2010 Integrated Action”.

BETTER GOVERNANCE

This section contains recommendations on the European governance instruments put in place to implement the Lisbon Strategy.

On general procedural issues, SOLIDAR believes that social and civil dialogue should play an important role in the governance of Post-Lisbon-Strategy. SOLIDAR basically supports the proposals made in section 2.4 of the Non-Paper of Spain (17 April 2009). This is true particularly as to the need to additionally define specific quantitative country-specific objectives and to ensure that the general European interest forms part of the concerns and demands of citizens in each Member State by increased participation of national parliaments and all stakeholders, also through social and civil dialogue.

Additionally, SOLIDAR calls for enhanced policy coherence between a Europe 2020 Strategy and the EU Sustainable Development Strategy. This in particular needs to be ensured in view of the key priority challenges "Social inclusion, demography and migration" and "Global poverty and sustainable development".

14. Hard Law - Minimum standards are needed

- SOLIDAR calls for an agreement of a common EU definition of and common methods to establish adequacy of minimum income as well as on regular adaptations of rights-based benefits to increases in cost of living in the context of an EU Framework Directive on Minimum Income (Schemes).
- SOLIDAR recommends a partial revision of the Posted Workers Directive, as recent ECJ rulings have shown that some important achievements in national collective bargaining are at risk, putting at danger fair competition and employees' working and pay conditions (cf. Recommendation 6. "Better protect core labour rights in the internal market").

15. Soft Law - Reinforce the Social Open Method of Coordination

- SOLIDAR recommends increasing visibility and political commitment for the Social OMC: reasserting the overarching objectives of the Social OMC, ensuring an effective mainstreaming of its priorities into the National Reform Programmes and an active promotion of local and regional action plans in a process that allows for a timely and broad involvement of stakeholders regarding the setting of objectives and targets, policy design and policy evaluation.
- SOLIDAR recommends setting quantified targets moving beyond GDP as reference indicator and developing more indicators related to access to financial services, energy, health, education, transport, housing, quality employment and well being, in order to actually cope with ambitious objectives as poverty and social exclusion reduction and to monitor progress being made.
- SOLIDAR recommends embedding a regular European Parliament report, and national parliaments follow-up, in order to increase ownership of the Social OMC and the delivery of better policy making.
- SOLIDAR recommends strengthening mutual learning ensuring that it leads to an actual policy impact and is open to more actors, especially at the regional and national level, for example through multi-stakeholder forums or consensus conferences. Moreover, the strengths of the peer review process regarding the transferability of good practice and models that work for actors from the ground should be better exploited.
- SOLIDAR recommends coupling the Social OMC with EU financial instruments, most notably with the European Structural Funds (ESF) as there is a need to ensure correspondence of objectives and targets set up, to make regulation, more flexible so as to meet specific needs and to develop specific guidance on how structural funds can deliver in a more targeted way on social inclusion.

16. Other Tools - Align EU budget, ESF and Community Programmes to new priorities

- SOLIDAR recommends establishing concrete action plans at EU and national levels which set out how and when the active inclusion strategy will be implemented and strengthen policy coherence between the European Employment Guidelines, the Common Flexicurity Principles and the Commission Recommendation on Active Inclusion.
- SOLIDAR recommends strengthening the social and active inclusion strand of a Post-Lisbon Strategy at EU and national levels and financially backing active inclusion measures to be integrated in the Employment Guidelines, a Community Anti-Poverty Programme to accompany the reinforced Social OMC. In SOLIDAR's view this is also needed to refocus attention to disadvantaged persons and vulnerable groups within Europe2015 or Europe2020 strategies.
- SOLIDAR recommends that the EU budget 2010-2014 and the European Social Fund (ESF) need to be aligned with the new priorities of the Post-Lisbon-Strategy. In a nutshell this means to put needs and rights of all people first.
- SOLIDAR recommends using evidence-based tools both to improve the identification of reforms and to evaluate progress being made. To clarify the purpose and objectives of impact assessment in the Commission Guidelines, that in turn have to be applied when it comes to assessing the impacts on employment, social inclusion and social cohesion of measures under a Post-Lisbon Strategy, SOLIDAR calls for an explicit reference to the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, to the transversal clauses of the Lisbon Treaty on social objectives, equality, gender equality and services of general interest as well as to the EU Sustainable Development Strategy. Social impact assessment in general needs to better address challenges disadvantaged persons and vulnerable groups face in the education system, in vocational training, in lifelong learning and on the labour market with regards to access and participation rates.

FURTHER READING

SOLIDAR

- SOLIDAR Briefing #10: 10 priorities for 2009-2014 - Deliverables for the new European Parliament and the new European Commission (June 2009)
- SOLIDAR Declaration "Together for Social Europe" (May 2009)
- FIC/SOLIDAR Seminar "Flexicurity and Labour Market Inclusion (Services)" (February 2009)
- SOLIDAR statements and positions on the OMC (February 2009)
- SOLIDAR Contribution to Consultation on Green Paper "Migration and Mobility: Challenges and Opportunities for EU Education Systems" (December 2008)
- SOLIDAR position on European Parliament Employment and Social Affairs Committee Report "Challenges to collective agreements in the EU" (2008/2085(INI)), 22 September 2008 (October 2008)
- SOLIDAR's Response to the Commission's Consultation on Active Inclusion (March 2008)

Social Platform

- 5 recommendations for an effective Open Method of Coordination on social protection and social inclusion (June 2009)
- Towards an effective civil dialogue between the EU and networks of active citizens: 7 recommendations to EU leaders – 7 recommendations to European networks of civil society organisations active in the social field (June 2009)
- Social investment: more quality jobs, more solidarity. Social Platform contribution to the Informal Employment Troika meeting, Prague, May 2009 (May 2009)
- Financial and economic crises: Social NGOs proposals for a European Recovery Plan (November 2008)
- Social Platform recommendations on the Commission's revised impact assessment guidelines (August 2008)
- Social NGOs ready for the post-Lisbon: From "Growth and Jobs" to "Sustainable and Social". Recommendations to EU decision makers on how to address social and demographic change (December 2007)

European NGO Alliance on the European Year 2010

- A shared message from social NGOs across Europe - 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion (due December 2009)

Spring Alliance

- Spring Alliance Manifesto (July 2009)