

Van: Solidar <Abigail.Gountry@solidar.org>
Aan: veerle.solia@amsab.be
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Onderwerp: SOLIDAR Weekly Round up 09-05-2008

Assistance to Burma

The United Nations (UN) estimates that over 100,000 people have been affected by the cyclone which devastated the Irrawaddy Delta region of Burma on Saturday. Despite the fact that there are a substantial number of people in desperate need of assistance, Burma's military junta is not allowing foreign aid workers to come into the country, instead preferring to distribute foreign aid donations themselves. The UN is putting increasing pressure on the Burmese military junta to speed up the issuing of visas for foreign aid workers. SOLIDAR members Volkshilfe Austria, Prosvil Italy, APHEDA Australia, NPA Norway, ASB Germany and Austria and SLA Switzerland are organising themselves to assist the people of Burma.

Shaping the future Social Agenda

Conny Reuter, Secretary General of SOLIDAR and President of the Social Platform, made an intervention at a conference organised on the 6 May by the European Commission to help develop the renewed Social Agenda. In his speech Conny asserted that *"The Social Agenda of the EU must propose concrete measures to tackle existing and prevent new poverty, exclusion and inequalities, especially affecting women and people living with disabilities."* He continued by saying that *"Should you be serious about bringing more solidarity in Europe, Mr Barroso, it is time to shift your priorities from the limited 'growth and jobs' vision to a social and sustainable development of Europe."*

The European Commission is to publish a package of documents linked to the EU Social Agenda which include a Communication on the review of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC), and directives on health services and on fighting discriminations of persons with disabilities. SOLIDAR considers this an important first step but supports the Social Platform in calling on the Presidents of the institutions "to make sure that the future social agenda includes a clear recommendation to broaden the scope of anti-discrimination legislation for all grounds and policies beyond Article 13". In particular that the Directive becomes horizontal, also covering not only discrimination in the work place but also access to goods and services.

Read the [Press Release from the Social Platform](#)

Visit the Social Agenda conference [website](#)

View the European Commission's Working Paper: [Summary of contributions received in the framework of the consultation on social reality](#)

EP Report on social inclusion

This Tuesday, the Employment Committee of the European Parliament (EP) discussed the first draft of the report "Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty, including child poverty, in the European Union", prepared by MEP Gabi Zimmer. SOLIDAR contributed to the drafting of the EP report by building on our reply to the consultation on active inclusion and meeting with the rapporteur and shadow-rapporteur of the PES.

The report underlines that the overarching aim of active inclusion policies must be to implement fundamental rights in order to enable people to live in dignity and participate in society as well as the labour market. It calls on the Commission to consider child poverty and social exclusion in a broader context of EU policy making including issues such as immigration, discrimination, gender equality and active inclusion. Labour market inclusion

for disadvantaged persons should also comprise personalised pathways to secure and stable, high-quality employment in accordance with people's needs and capacities. It finally highlights the importance of promoting integrated services that respond to the multi-dimensionality of poverty and social exclusion, e.g. the link between poverty and homelessness.

Read the [EP Report on Social Inclusion](#)

Read the [Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2008](#)

Update on Lisbon Treaty ratification

The Lisbon Treaty ratification process is on track with four more countries having approved the text in the last two weeks. Slovakia finally gave its green light to the Treaty on 10 April ending a dispute on a controversial media bill. On 23 April, Portugal, the country that hosted the signing of the Treaty of Lisbon, ratified it with an overwhelmingly parliamentary majority, while Denmark and Austria did the same the following day. This means that the Lisbon Treaty has now been adopted in 11 out of 27 countries.

Ireland is the only EU country where a referendum will be held (probably on 12 June). Recent events such as Prime Minister Bertie Ahern's resignation, the assault on Labour MEP Proinsias De Rossa and the polls showing that the majority of Irish voters seem to be still undecided on how they will vote make it hard to draft a scenario on the possible referendum outcome.

Transparency initiative

On Tuesday 8 May the European Parliament voted on the draft report on the Register for Lobbyists. This report calls for an obligatory registration system for the 10,000-15,000 lobbyists common to the European Commission, European Parliament and the Council as well as full financial disclosure.

The Civil Society Contact Group (CSCG) of which SOLIDAR is a member through the Social Platform, was disappointed as all the amendments they asked to vote for, were turned down by MEPs. This included benchmarking on financial disclosure, making public unethical lobbying practices, improving the transparency of EC advisory groups and improving the European Parliament own rules on transparency. Conny Reuter, Secretary General of SOLIDAR said that *"we are very disappointed with these results. We do not want confusion between economically interested lobby groups and civil society organisations who defend the general interest."* On a positive note, the draft report does already ask for a mandatory system, including lobbyists names, their clients and funders.

New Social Balkans

From 7-9 May, SOLIDAR in cooperation with its member the Olaf Palme International Center (OPIC) welcomed over 20 representatives from civil society organisations in the Western Balkans (from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Albania, Serbia, Macedonia and Kosovo) on a Study Visit to Brussels to learn more about accession to the European Union and to promote the social dimension of this process.

In Round Tables hosted by Goran Färm MEP and Jan Andersson MEP in the European Parliament, the delegation had fruitful discussion with MEPs on the Social and Employment Perspectives of European Enlargement, touching on the need for the European institutions to hold more education sessions in the Western Balkans with workers to inform them about the EU and its policies. The delegation also met the European Commission, International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and European Policy Centre to exchange on the importance of the social side of the enlargement process.

ISCOS Final Conference

The final project conference 'Transnational learning for Civil Society Organisations in New Member States' took place on the 29 April 2008 in Brussels gathering together over 30 representatives from the European institutions, International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), project participants and coordinators. During the conference the main project results from each country were presented, possibilities for the future were looked into as well as presentations from other stakeholders for discussion. The aim of the project was to improve

the capacity of NGOs and trade unions in New Member States and increase political awareness on the labour conditions in developing countries within their own organisation as well as with other civil society organisations.

See the [Project Brochure](#)

Trade Unions, NGOs and Social movements: Together for Decent Work in Latin America

On May 15 in Lima a Work Forum will bring together Trade Unions, NGOs and Social observatories to discuss strategies to implement Decent Work for All in 3 main areas: EU-Latin American association agreements; Gender policies and Migration policies; and the Precarisation of jobs in Latin America and the role of trans-national companies in that.

The Work Forum is co-organised by a wide range of organisations including PLADES which ensures the coordination of the Global Network America. PLADES is also in charge of coordinating the Call to Action signatures collection in the region.

See the [full programme](#) in Spanish and [SIGN the Call to Action for Decent Work](#)

SOLIDAR congratulates SLA on New President

SOLIDAR would like to congratulate Hans-Jürg Fehr, former President of the Social Democratic Party of Switzerland, for his election as new President of SOLIDAR member Swiss Labour Assistance (SLA). He replaces Ruedi Winkler, who resigned after six years as president of SLA. Josef Weidenholzer, President of SOLIDAR stated that "*on behalf of SOLIDAR we would like to congratulate Hans-Jürg on his election and extend him our warm welcome to the SOLIDAR family. We are looking forward to SLA's ongoing engagement in SOLIDAR to promote the values of international solidarity.*"

Change of date 60 Years Anniversary

Please mark down in your agendas the change of date of the SOLIDAR/IWA 60 Years Anniversary. This celebration, which had originally been scheduled to take place on 2 July, will now take place on the **15 October**, coupled with the SOLIDAR Silver Rose Awards.

Intern opening at SOLIDAR

We are currently looking for an **Intern in Event Management**. Please read the [job description](#) for more information.

5	SOLIDAR International Cooperation Committee meeting, Brussels
6	SOLIDAR Balkan Network meeting, Brussels
5-6	European Commission Conference: Responding to new social realities: Developing an EU Agenda for Opportunities, Access and Solidarity, Brussels
7	European Parliament: Presentation of EUROCITIES position on SGI and SSGI, Brussels
7-9	Olof Palme Balkans Study Visit: European Enlargement - Social Perspectives in the Western Balkans, Brussels
15	SOLIDAR Board meeting, Brussels
15	European Parliament, PES Group and Social Economy Europe: Conference on Social Economy, Brussels
22-23	SOLIDAR New Orientation Framework (NOF) meeting - Helsinki, Finland
3	SOLIDAR Social Affairs Committee meeting, Brussels
3-4	SOLIDAR New Orientation Framework (NOF) meeting - Madrid, Spain
12-13	European Parliament 2 nd Citizens Agora on Climate Change, Brussels
25	SOLIDAR France & SOLIDAR network: For a Social Europe-Pour une Europe Sociale, Maison de l'Europe, Paris
2	SOLIDAR Annual General Meeting
4-6	European Civic Forum - mobility, dialogue, participation: towards an active European citizenship", La Rochelle, France
15	SOLIDAR Silver Rose Awards 2008 and 60 Years Anniversary, Brussels
28-29	2 nd Forum on Social Services of General Interest, Paris
30-2	Volonteurope 2008, Genoa, Italy

SOLIDAR is a European network of 42 members working for social and economic justice in Europe and around the world. SOLIDAR's Weekly Round Up provides you with the latest information and news from SOLIDAR and our members, as well as other issues of interest and European developments.

If you have any comments or wish to have further information on any of the articles featured in the Weekly Round Up, please do not

hesitate to contact SOLIDAR's Communications Officer [Abigail](#)

Tel +32 2 500 1020 Fax +32 2 500 1030
Rue du Commerce 22, B-1000, Brussels, Belgium
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www.solidar.org

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