

On Wednesday the Universal Declaration of Human Rights celebrated its 60th anniversary. Yet another opportunity for many wonderful speeches; but we need more than speeches, it is time to act in order to improve human rights throughout the world!

The daily violations of human rights which many people undergo, especially women and migrants, and the current situations in Zimbabwe, Darfur, Palestine and other parts of the world, pushes SOLIDAR to pursue our engagement in development cooperation, humanitarian aid and for a more Social Europe; as we believe that it is the rights-based approach which makes a difference. We cannot forget why and for whom we are doing our work. This commitment, along with that of other organisations, is needed to bring about the realisation of this Declaration, and make it a reality for all the human beings on this planet.

Conny Reuter, Secretary General

SOCIAL AFFAIRS

SOLIDAR at Social Platform's Annual Conference on Civil Dialogue

The Social Platform's 2008 Annual Theme focused on models and strategies needed at European level and across Europe to promote and implement effective civil dialogue. In this vein, this week's Annual Conference aimed to assess current structures and processes of civil dialogue to identify what works and what the reasons are for deficits and difficulties.

SOLIDAR co-organised one workshop on civil dialogue in Central and Eastern Europe and was actively involved in the working group dealing with the Open Method of Coordination (see the two articles below). In early 2009, concrete recommendations on how to improve civil dialogue at EU level will be developed building on principles of an effective civil dialogue. The Lisbon Treaty, explicitly mentioning civil dialogue, would strengthen the role and relevance of this instrument of governance. [Read more...](#)

[Read the Conference programme](#) | [Reference document on Annual Theme of Social Platform](#) | [CSCG Study "Civil Dialogue: Making It Work Better" \(2006\)](#)

How to best reinforce and to tap the potential of the OMC on social inclusion?

Eurochild and FEANTSA co-organised a workshop at the Social Platform's Annual Conference on what has worked and not worked so far in the social Open Method of Coordination (OMC), to explore how this governance tool could deliver better results, and what role European NGOs could have in this process.

There was general agreement, shared by SOLIDAR, that the OMC has great potential, but its full development is being hindered by some important weakness: a rather absent European Parliament in the process, the underuse of agreed indicators and quantitative targets, and a weak engagement by some Member States. [Read more about the Working Group.](#)

Spotlight on civil dialogue in Central and Eastern Europe

At the Annual Conference of the Social Platform, SOLIDAR co-organised, together with Mental Health Europe, a workshop to discuss the role of European networks as a capacity-builder, mediator and facilitator of information flow between national and European level. Mental Health Europe presented the 'National Focus Points' which they recently set up as one model to improve information flow and increase capacity building of national members to get more involved in European level policy processes. A second presentation under the auspices of SOLIDAR highlighted structures and processes of civil dialogue in the Czech Republic. [Read about civil dialogue in the Czech Republic.](#)

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

NPA announces withdrawal from SOLIDAR consortium in Sri Lanka

Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) has announced their withdrawal from Sri Lanka in mid 2009. Read the [Press release](#) from NPA.

Linking Migration and Development

SOLIDAR was invited by the Center for European Policy Studies to present a paper on the link between migration and development at their Shaping European Policies on Immigration, Borders and Asylum: Giving voice to Civil Society conference. SOLIDAR outlined a series of concerns with the role that the EU's external policies play in creating the so-called push factors of migration. Amongst these are the EU's trade policies which through agricultural subsidies depress local production capacity and their aggressive trade liberalisation policies in industrial and service sectors which mean that developing countries are unable to develop their own industries which can provide decent jobs and economic prosperity for their citizens.

Other external EU policies contributing to migration are those pursued by the World Bank and the IMF, where European countries are the largest shareholders, which have forced countries to pay back astronomical loans whilst European countries such as the UK, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Lichtenstein continue to protect

tax havens which have robbed developing countries of some \$607US billion in taxes over the last three decades. The impact of climate change is also leading to many people being forced to move. Putting aside the challenge that the recently passed Returns Directive poses to human rights, the response of EU policy makers which is to focus on co-development strategies such as the use of remittances, temporary and circular migration simply do not rise to the challenge posed by the factors which drive migration.

EDUCATION

EUCIS-LLL -PUBLIC HEARING & OPEN STEERING COMMITTEE, 18 DECEMBER 2008

A public hearing, chaired by Conny Reuter, SOLIDAR secretary General, entitled «Access, equity and diversity in lifelong learning: how to successfully integrate populations of migration background in Europe?» will be organised by EUCIS-LLL on 18 December in Brussels from 9.30-12.30.

You are also invited to participate in the open steering committee meeting organised in the afternoon (14.30-17.30) to discuss important issues for the future development of the platform. [Read the programme](#) and [register](#)

MEMBERS NEWS

On 4 December 2008 in Oslo, governments from around the world celebrated the signature of an historic treaty banning the use, production, transfer and stockpiling of cluster munitions. SOLIDAR member, **Norwegian Peoples Aid**, has been working for many years towards a ban of cluster munitions and was closely involved in the event. [Read more about this event by NPA](#).

Pour la Solidarité invites us to [join](#) them on 14 January 2009 from 13 to 15 to discover the website www.jaccroche.be in order to prevent early school leaving in the Brussels region.

Funding update: [link to a list of the latest call for proposals](#)

PARTNERS NEWS

Read the [interview](#) that SOLIDAR carried out with Kamal Abbas, the Director of our Egyptian partner in the Global network, **CTUWS**. To keep up to date with CTUWS activities, read their [blog](#).

RESF (Réseau Education Sans Frontières) in Belgium is calling on you to participate in a demonstration on Sunday 21 December calling for the abolition of detention centres. More information in [French](#) and [Flemish](#).

[Report](#) on a conference on the upcoming EP elections organised by **TEPSA** which may be of interest.

Read the highlights of the week from [Eldis](#) one of a family of knowledge services from the Institute of Development Studies, Sussex, UK.

The **Centre for Humanitarian Psychology** is offering a two day [workshop](#) on Conflict Resolution in Humanitarian Environments in Geneva on 15-16 January 2009.

8	SOLIDAR ECHO Partners Meeting, Brussels
9-10	ECHO Annual Conference
9-10	Social Platform Annual Conference "Civil Dialogue - How can we shape the Europe we want?", Brussels
15-17	Balkan Network Seminar: Enhancing the European Perspective, Montenegro
27-1 Feb	World Social Forum, Belem, Brazil
5	SOLIDAR Social Affairs Committee, Brussels
2-3	Global Progressive Forum event, Brussels