

SOLIDAR Board Meeting

On Tuesday and Wednesday the board of SOLIDAR met in Brussels. Besides dealing with reports and the preparation of the next AGA in May, the board used this opportunity to meet with the Palestinian Israeli Peace Forum. Saman Khoury and Ron Pundak presented their approach to cooperation including civil society organisations on both sides and underlined the need for support from their European partners. The SOLIDAR board expressed its readiness to support this important initiative and to look for concrete ways to make this cooperation a reality. An organisation like SOLIDAR, besides campaigning, can positively contribute in particular in these times to: support those forces on both sides who promote dialogue as an investment in a peaceful future.

The board was also delighted to welcome Poul Rasmussen, President of the PES, in the meeting. Poul underlined how important the cooperation with SOLIDAR is for the party and how necessary it is to face together not only the challenges of the crisis, but also to contribute to a successful European election. SOLIDAR President Josef Weidenholzer thanked Poul Rasmussen for the cooperation and the ongoing support. He also reminded him how people SOLIDAR members work for in particular and European citizens in general expect a more social Europe especially in times of crises.

Civil Society Day focusing on civil dialogue and European elections

On 14 April the [European Civic Forum](#) and the Various Interests Group of the European Economic and Social Committee will host a conference on "Participatory democracy and civil dialogue". Members of European Parliament will discuss in a first round table with representatives of civil society organisations on how to best make use of the instrument of civil dialogue in the framework of the Lisbon Treaty and improve exchange between organised civil society and European institutions. A second panel discussion will be devoted to civil dialogue and the European elections, with speakers from the five big political groups in the EP. European networks will be invited to sign a "Manifesto for a genuine civil dialogue" prior to the event. SOLIDAR will become a signatory and invites other European networks and platforms to also express their formal support.

The manifesto claims that "in addition to the relatively permanent and structured sectoral dialogue that the European networks have succeeded in building up over the years with the European institutions, there is now a need to devise a structured, efficient and sustainable overall framework for European civil dialogue". It summarises positions and lists specific demands addressed to European institutions around three main requests:

1. The institutions shall give citizens and representative associations the opportunity to make known and publicly exchange their views in all areas of Union action.
2. The institutions shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society.
3. The European Commission shall carry out broad consultations with parties concerned in order to ensure that the Union's actions are coherent and transparent.

Provisional programme of the Civil Society Day in English|French and the manifesto in English|French

Interested in participating? Please contact [Alexandrina Najmowicz](#), Coordinator of the European Civic Forum

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Coordinating actions for the Balkan

At a coordination meeting organised by FES (Friedrich Ebert Foundation) office in Belgrade, representatives of the Global and European Union Federations discussed about strategic partnerships for unions in the Western Balkans.

A SOLIDAR delegation, including the chair of the International Cooperation Committee, was invited to present SOLIDAR involvement, its plan of activities in the region and its action to ensure the social

dimension of the EU enlargement policy.

SOLIDAR members Progetto Sviluppo and Swiss Labour Assistance local staff also introduced their projects which focus on social policy sector and trade unions' support (Prosvil) as well as support to social dialogue in Serbia (SLA)

Social Unrest forces government to restore chief justice of Pakistan and other top judges

After days of rebellion and huge marches, with demonstrators reportedly [arrested and beaten](#), the Pakistani government has been forced to restore the chief justice of Pakistan Iftikhar Chaudhry and other top judges.

The lawyers movement called for a long march on 12 March for the re-instatement of the Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry and other judges sacked by General Musharaf after imposing a state of emergency on November 3, last year. Within a year in power, the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) government decided to use force and repeated General Musharaf's methods to try to stop the long march started from Quetta and Karachi.

Under the threat of thousands of demonstrators on their way to Islamabad to start an indefinite sit in, the PPP government was forced to restore the chief justice of Pakistan Iftikhar Chaudhry and other top judges, lift section 144 and order the release of political prisoners detained during these demonstrations.

Read a [direct testimony by Farooq Tariq](#), Director of the Pakistani Union Labour Education Foundation

SOCIAL AFFAIRS

On 21 March 2009, the **International Day Against Racism**, SOLIDAR calls on all political parties in Europe to strengthen their efforts against discrimination, racism and xenophobia. In the last years, a increase in violent attacks targeting migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers was reported by the Fundamental Rights Agency. SOLIDAR is concerned that in times of crisis, migrants, minorities and other vulnerable groups become 'scapegoats' for populist politicians inflaming ethnic, racial and religious tensions. Let this years' Day Against Racism mark the beginning of change for more social inclusion and complete eradication of discrimination, racism and xenophobia in Europe!

Please view [here](#) the activities of the European Network Against Racism.

Social Rights, Active Citizenship and Governance in the EU

SOLIDAR contributed to a conference co-organised this week in Brussels by the Network of Excellence on Civil Society and new forms of Governance in Europe (CINEFOGO) and the Czech EU Council Presidency. In a presentation co-ordinated with Eurodiaconia and EASPD, SOLIDAR intervened in a panel discussion on social services and third sector organisations. The contribution briefly introduced main features characterising general trends of structural change in the field of social services of general interest (SSGI). It elaborated on and illustrated hypotheses on the current legal and policy framework at European level.

SOLIDAR considers that this framework furthers ongoing developments in Member States towards systems with different levels of service quality and divergences as to access to social rights and will very likely pave the way towards one dominant model of re-regulation of social markets. This is why a comprehensive public regulation is needed to safeguard access to affordable and quality personal social services, which are available for all people, in particular vulnerable persons, and provided across all territories to achieve solidarity, equity, and non-discrimination. SOLIDAR recalled that sufficient financial resources, qualified staff, and decent working conditions are important preconditions for service quality and warned against competition predominantly built on prices instead of on service quality and users' choice. Negotiated models of delegating personal social services to private providers, as well as public procurement procedures, integrating criteria that reflect service quality and objectives of social policy, seem helpful instruments in achieving this aim. [Read more...](#)

Abstract of [SOLIDAR contribution](#) SOLIDAR contribution

Abstracts of [other panellists](#) (Prof. Adalbert Evers, University of Gießen, Germany, key-note speaker from academia; Heather Roy, Secretary General, Eurodiaconia; Luk Zelderloo, Secretary General,

EASPD)

Social Platform proposes action to contribute to success of European Employment Summit

Today the Social Platform sent a letter to José-Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, and Mirek Topolánek, Czech Prime Minister and current President of the European Council, suggesting actions to make the forthcoming Employment Summit on 7 May a success. The policy options proposed by the Social Platform put an accent on measures of specific support for vulnerable groups, inclusion into the labour market and society, flexicurity, service provision at the crossroads of employment, vocational training and social accompanying measures, as well as the job creation potential in and by social economy organisations. They also recall the need of a less bureaucratic and more targeted use of the European Social Fund in overcoming negative effects of the crises by refocusing on retraining, labour market inclusion and social inclusion measures. Besides highlighting policy options advocated for by social NGOs in view of the European Recovery Plan, the letter insists on the need of putting in place a governance structure that allows all stakeholders for sharing ideas and working towards a common approach to recover from the current economic crises. Please read the [letter co-signed by Conny Reuter](#) in his capacity as President of the Social Platform.

Final compromise on revised Working Time Directive still clearly out of sight

Beginning of this week the Conciliation Committee made up of representatives of the European Parliament and the European Council, i.e. the 27 EU Member States, started the final round of negotiations to reach agreement on a revised Working Time Directive. In the first meeting, however, it failed to resolve disagreement on three red lines (standby time; resting time; multiple contracts) drawn and the veto point (no opt-out from maximum working time per week any longer) set by the EP. MEP called upon the European Commission to "get strongly involved, take position and pull its weight". Any final agreement will need to be approved or rejected by the EP in the first week of May. [Read more...](#)

SOLIDAR supports the claims and proposals defended by the EP, in particular those concerning [on-call time, multiple contracts and opt-outs](#).

EDUCATION

EUCIS-LLL General Assembly

The European Platform for Lifelong Learning (EUCIS-LLL), of which SOLIDAR is a member, held its Annual General Assembly in Brussels on 19 March 2009. The day was organised in two different phases: In the morning stakeholders working in education and training met and exchanged about common values, priorities and main directions of their work and the platform. In the afternoon the EUCIS General Assembly was celebrated with the presentation of the 2008 activity report and approval of the budget for last year. The main activities planned for 2009 were presented. EUCIS welcomed four new members. Around some drinks and sweets, current Vice-President and likely to be next President of EUCIS-LLL, Gina Ebner, Secretary General of the European Association of Adult Education (EAAE), warmly thanked Jean-Marc Roirant, Secretary General of La Ligue de l'Enseignement, and member of SOLIDAR board who is coming to the end of his term for his commitment and decisive role in helping to constitute, build up and profile this European platform.

General Assembly Programme [EN|FR](#)

MEMBERS

Read the latest funding update... in the Members Area. Don't have a password? Contact [Abigail](#)

CARE staff member killed in the Sri Lanka conflict area

In the ongoing armed conflict in Sri Lanka during this week another tragic incident happened when one of the CARE staff members working as volunteer distributing aid and providing support to affected people was severely injured as a result of shelling within the no fire zone and succumbed to his injuries. SOLIDAR is deeply shocked and saddened by this news.

[Read more](#) about this sad incident in a document issued by the SOLIDAR INGO Consortium Sri Lanka.

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	28	Global Day of Mobilisation for G20 Summit, London
	1	Global Network Steering group meeting, Brussels
	2	G20 meeting, London
	2-3	< span style="font-size: 10pt; color: black; font-family: 'Verdana', 'sans-serif'; font-weight: bold;">Global Progressive Forum, Brussels
	14	Civil Society Day, Brussels
	14	SOLIDAR Development and International Funding Workshop, Brussels
	15	SOLIDAR West Africa Working group, Brussels
	16-18	Conference: Social Economy, Prague
	22-23	Conference: Social Services - a tool to Mobilise Workforce and Reinforce Social Cohesion, Prague
	29	SOLIDAR-FEPS conference: 'Together for a Social Europe'

SOLIDAR is a European network of 50 NGOs and labour movement organisations. Working in cooperation with progressive civil society and trade unions, SOLIDAR promotes equality, solidarity and social justice in the fields of social affairs, international cooperation and education. SOLIDAR's Weekly Round Up provides you with the latest information and news from the SOLIDAR Network.

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](#)

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