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Advancing social justice in Europe and worldwide

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## **SOLIDAR Weekly Round Up 07-12-2012**

**Editorial: Cherchez l'Erreur**

by Conny Reuter, Secretary General

At the opening of the 2nd Annual Convention of the so-called European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion, both the President of the Council Herman van Rompuy and Commission President José Barroso stated that we are in the deepest crisis Europe has faced in the last 50 years, with severe social consequences. The Commission President denied that the European social model was dead. He was right - to a point. It is not dead (yet), but as a result of austerity and current economic thinking it is certainly under threat. It is being steadily weakened and undermined in numerous Member States. The Council President appealed to EU values and for solidarity in the spirit of Christmas. But he also reiterated his conviction that it is time to take action in favor of growth and jobs first by creating a banking and economic union and to consider the social union later. We share his sense of urgency, but the greatest crisis now is a social one.

In our understanding, there are also other errors in his logic. Historically the European Social Model was not the result of wealth created first and then redistributed later, it was created through a social market economy and the welfare state. This is why we now need a social union, why we are calling for a new social pact and, as a first step, a social protocol in the Treaty.

Can we seriously tell those people living in or on the verge of poverty and social exclusion that their vulnerability is the price to pay for the crisis they have not provoked? Does anybody think that a Christmas parcel can replace automatic stabilisers and a social protection scheme? Way back in the 70's Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber wrote about the risk of short-termism, but some European leaders may have forgotten these lessons. Everything which is not done today to preserve the social *acquis* will have long term consequences: the deterioration of the social consensus and, in the end, of democracy. Exaggerated? Ideological argumentation? No, just common sense and social responsibility!

#### **Former Women's Lobby President Denise Fuchs Deceased**

Former Women's Lobby President Denise Fuchs passed away on 1 December 2012. Her untimely death leaves a gap hard to be filled for many dedicated to the cause of women. Awarded with the SOLIDAR Silver Rose in 2006 for giving women a voice on the European level, she was a committed feminist whose ultimate goal was to ensure that the world would also be seen through women's eyes. SOLIDAR wants to express its heartfelt sympathy to family, friends and our colleagues at the Women's Lobby. We certainly will continue our cooperation in the spirit of Denise Fuchs' ideals and vision. Please have a look at the tribute to Denise Fuchs on [the Women's Lobby website](#).

## **Social Europe**

#### **SOLIDAR Welcomes Commission Recommendation for a Youth Guarantee**

On 5 December, the Commission proposed a [package of measures](#), which includes a guaranteed offer of a job, further education or training to unemployed under-25-year-olds. SOLIDAR supports this initiative launched by the PES and now championed by Commissioner Laszlo Andor, which will hopefully be of significant and concrete benefit to young Europeans and represents a step towards greater social justice in Europe for the young generation. The Commission seems to understand that integrating young people in the labour market and giving them a future outlook is the only appropriate response to rising unemployment.

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### **Social Innovation to Improve Quality of Service Delivery to Vulnerable Groups**

On Wednesday 5 December, SOLIDAR was invited to an [expert workshop](#) on social innovation in service delivery to vulnerable groups organised by [Eurofound](#). The aim of the meeting was to discuss the first results of a research project carried out by Eurofound and the Centre for Social Innovation (ZSI), exploring how social innovation can most effectively be supported in the design and implementation of quality services for vulnerable groups. Thanks to the knowledge acquired through participation in the [INNOSERV project](#) and to the work that our members are doing in this field, SOLIDAR contributed to the debate affirming that social innovation should be seen as a means to achieve active inclusion, combat poverty and improve people's quality of life and work. Some of the most relevant recommendations from SOLIDAR members on this topic can be found in the latest [SOLIDAR briefing](#).

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### **2nd Annual Convention of the European Platform Against Poverty and Social Exclusion**

Launched as a flagship initiative in the framework of the Europe2020 strategy, the 2nd Annual Convention was opened on Wednesday in Brussels by the high representatives of the European Council, Commission and Parliament underlining the importance finally given to the social consequences of the crisis. Commissioner Andor used the opportunity of the event to give an outline of the Social Investment Package (SIP) to be presented in the first quarter of 2013.

The SIP will include recommendations and action points around 5 pillars:

- Smart spending and social budgeting
- Active inclusion policies
- Investment in children and youth
- Evidence-based social policies
- Streamlining social investment in EU governance.

SOLIDAR welcomes the strong message of investment in social infrastructure and hopes that the proposal will not be turned into a package promoting a business environment in the social sector rather than a social policy environment.

Read also the [press release](#) of the Social Platform.

### **The Reality of Retirement Homes for Non Self-Sufficient Elderly People in Italy**

On 21 November Italian member [Auser](#) presented a [national survey](#) on retirement homes for non self-sufficient elderly people. The study examines, for the first time on a national scale, the reality of Retirement Homes. The research illustrates a very uneven and fragmented reality.

[Read the full article.](#)

## International Cooperation

### 10th High-Level Meeting Between the ILO and the European Commission

On the occasion of the 10th annual high-level meeting between the European Commission and the International Labour Office the brochure '[The ILO and the EU, partners for decent work and social justice - Impact of ten years of cooperation](#)' was released.

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### CTUWS: Kamal Abbas Sentence Overturned

On 25 November the Helwan Misdemeanor Court closed the file on case number 988 in which Kamal Abbas, General Coordinator of SOLIDAR partner CTUWS, was sentenced in absentia to six month's imprisonment. It ruled in favour of the appeal against his sentence, dismissing the charges against Abbas.

[Read the press release.](#)

### UNRWA's Commissioner-General Visits Syria

Commissioner-General Filippo Grandi visited the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) operations in Syria on 4 December, where some 3,700 staff continue to offer education, health and social safety-net services to over 500,000 Palestine refugees, while also responding to the humanitarian needs arising from the armed conflict in Syria. SOLIDAR and its members stand in solidarity with the work of UNRWA and will continue their [efforts](#) to help people in this humanitarian crisis.

[Read the press release.](#)

## Education

### European Parliament Adopts New Programme: YES Europe

Last week the European Parliament Culture and Education Committee adopted the new programme for youth, education and sports under the name YES Europe, previously known as the Erasmus for All proposal.

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## Network News

Italian member **Arci**'s latest [newsletter](#).

Italian Member **Auser**'s latest [update](#).

Our member **IFWEA** has [news](#).

## Partners News

**ETUC** [press release](#) on the Commissions youth package.

**Eurofound** has [news](#) for you.

[News](#) from the **ILO**.

[News Splash](#) from **Right to Water**.

**Social Platform** [press release](#) on 2nd Annual Convention on Platform against poverty .

SOLIDAR is a European network of 59 NGOs active in over 90 countries working to advance social justice in Europe and worldwide. SOLIDAR voices the concerns of its member organisations to the EU and international institutions across the policy sectors social affairs, international cooperation and lifelong learning. For more info [www.solidar.org](http://www.solidar.org)

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