

SOCIAL AFFAIRS FORUM NEWS / JULY 2014

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SECRETARIAT UPDATES

SOLIDAR Social Affairs Forum

Our next SAF meeting will take place on 1 and 2 December in Brussels, registration is open at http://www.solidar.org/spip.php?page=agenda&id_evenement=66

We will be able to cover travel and accommodation costs (according to SOLIDAR rules) for 1 person per member/partner organisation.

SOLIDAR Training Academy

The SOLIDAR Training Academy will take place on 3 and 4 November 2014 in Frankfurt, Germany. A detailed programme will follow soon.

The registration is open at <http://www.solidar.org/spip.php?page=agenda&date=2014-11-04>

We will be able to cover travel and accommodation costs (according to SOLIDAR rules) for 1 person per member/partner organisation.

SOLIDAR Social Progress Watch Initiative expert network

The call for a new policy fellow at the SOLIDAR secretariat has been launched and disseminated by email by the secretariat.

A “drafting team” was appointed during the meeting in Amsterdam with the aim of analyzing the inputs provided during the discussion and to present a proposal for a new SPWI to the working group. The drafting team is currently working on this. The “drafting” team is currently working on a proposal for the SPWI 2015 that will be shared with SAF members at the end of August.



SOLIDAR Social economy working group

The SOLIDAR Training Academy on 3 and 4 November will focus on two topics: Innovative social services - financing of and promotion for inclusive services. And: Attractive employment in social services for high quality services. The Academy will give space for discussions between members of the social economy working group and allow for peer learning and the exchange of best practices.

The next working group will take place in the framework of our Social Affairs Forum on 1 and 2 December.

Please send us your case studies in case you haven't done so far!

Volunteering/active citizenship working group

We would like to forward you an invitation from our Italian member, ARCI to the **Festival of Mediterranean Cultures** that will take place in Lampedusa on **1st- 5th October**. Please find more details in FR and in ENG on the homepage festivalsabirlampedusa.it and note that more logistic info will be sent out in the coming weeks. If you wish to register, please feel free to send an email to Elsa (elsa.laino@solidar.org) or to Raffaella Bolini (Bolini@arci.it).

POLICY UPDATES

New European Parliament constituted

After the European Elections on 22 - 25 May 2014, the new members of the European Parliament (MEPs) have taken up their offices.

Please find here a complete overview of **all MEPs**: [Link](#)

And an overview of members of the **Employment and Social Affairs Committee**: [Link](#)

Europe+ alliance: Civil Society for the regeneration of European Democracy

On 8 July, the alliance Europe+ (Civil Society for the Renewal of European Democracy) was officially launched at the European Parliament.

Europe + is a broad grass-roots alliance which brings together over 40 organisations from civil society that calls for renewed and a better functioning democracy in the EU. A transparent and inclusive space for debate that was created by, and works for civil society, Europe+ aims to design a constructive regeneration of the European project.

Consisting of 43 European civil society organisations and trade unions, Europe+ works together for positive democratic change in the EU through active and better involvement of citizens in a representative and participative democracy, policy changes and institutional reforms.

For the first time the event gives civil society the chance to engage directly with the newly elected MEPs and to gain widespread pro-European support of the aims of Europe+. Jo Leinen MEP, President of the European Movement International stated that: **'Europe+ has been founded in times where Europe has been facing stark political and economic challenges** – and arguments in favour of a renewal of European democracy, especially from civil society organisations, are needed to counter Eurosceptic arguments'.

Representing Europe+, **SOLIDAR Secretary General stressed that the choice of the name "Europe+" provocatively states that the alliance demands for more Europe, more social inclusion, more democracy, more solidarity and more citizen-oriented participation. The European project needs to be regenerated, in the light of the degeneration that the EU is undergoing today, which is clearly shown by the rise of populist and anti-democratic movements as a result of the latest European parliament elections.** In this context, CSOs have the responsibility to promote a participative and inclusive democracy by mobilising their constituencies at Member States' level.

In the long term, Europe+ will provide arguments in favor of a renewal of European democracy (to counter Eurosceptic arguments) and to communicate these indications to citizens directly or through the means of civil society organisations. Europe+ members will facilitate this by creating a space to discuss, advocate and campaign for reform.

Check EurActiv article **'EU's civil society giants push for treaty change'**

Election of new Commission President: Civil society calls for policy change

Brussels, 15th July 2014

Between 22 and 25 May this year 400 million European citizens had the opportunity to choose their 751 representatives in the European Parliament for the next five years. For the first time in the history of the European Union, they had a say, following the Lisbon Treaty provisions, on the nomination of the European Commission President.

As the result of the elections the EPP group is the biggest group in the newly elected European Parliament and their "Spitzenkandidat", Jean-Claude Juncker was duly elected as the new Commission President for which we congratulate him. Mr Juncker has presented this morning the outlines of his proposed work programme for the new European Commission to the European Parliament.

1) We call for a more vivid Democracy and stronger legitimacy

As the elections have shown, too many citizens are losing confidence in the European project, but we believe that constructive dialogue between the EU institutions and civil society organisations is imperative and builds bridges. The provisions on civil dialogue of Article 11 of the Treaty of Lisbon have still not yet been implemented and EU institutions are not engaging in an open, transparent and regular dialogue with civil society organisations. We hope that this will change during the coming mandate.

2) We call for real civil dialogue

Mr Junker committed this morning in front of the European Parliament to restore European citizens' confidence and to strengthen the democratic legitimacy of the European project.

Public concerns, as brought forward by organised civil society, are largely under-represented in the legislative processes and the later evaluation phases. We believe that citizens would feel more involved in the European building process if a true dialogue between organised civil society and European institutions were to be set up under the leadership of the European Commission. It is therefore necessary to develop concrete tools to establish such dialogue and ensure participation, so that citizens feel part of and will contribute to the European Union, rather than feeling subject to it. Gathering the aspirations of millions of citizens through network organisations at national, regional and local level, we feel responsible and legitimised to request the establishment of a real civil dialogue with representative civil society organisations.

3) We call for change of political priorities and for institutional changes

In recent years the European Union has been regularly criticised for proposing and even imposing policies of budgetary rigour and austerity measures through the Troika that have deprived many EU citizens of their fundamental rights and created disastrous social effects.

A strong European Union requires a paradigm shift from a Europe that is essentially an economic project based on the four fundamental freedoms around the internal market to one that restores and promotes the values of solidarity, inclusiveness and equality among Member States and European citizens and other residents. It is time to finally progress on a Europe2020 smart, sustainable and inclusive agenda.

When a Treaty revision process is launched, it should build on such an agenda, reinforce representative democracy, put citizens back at the heart of the European project and restore the legitimacy of the European integration process via democratic methods. This process should include all the relevant stakeholders and be used as a tool to raise awareness of European integration amongst the general public. Building on the experience of the European Year of Citizens Alliance (EYCA) 2013, established by 62 European networks and gathering more than 4,500 civic actor organisations across Europe, building on the competence and quality of our networks we call for a new civil and social project of the European Union.

Oonagh Aitken Board member - Volonteuropa

Carlotta Besozzi Director – European Disability Forum

Gabriella Civico Director – European Volunteer Centre

Antonella Valmorbida Secretary General – Association for Local Democracy

Diogo Pinto Secretary General – European Movement International

Conny Reuter Secretary General - SOLIDAR

Jean-Marc Roirant President – European Civic Forum

Members of the EYCA 2013 Steering Committee

[Read EYCA recommendations here](#)

Call for experts: structured dialogue under ESI Funds (deadline 05/08)

The European Commission is looking for organisations to join the recently established structured dialogue group of experts on the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF).

The group of experts will bring together umbrella organisations representing their partners at EU level and having a specific interest in the European Structural and Investment Funds. It will:

- support the work of the Commission as regards the development of cohesion policy, the policy of rural development, the Common Fisheries Policy and the integrated maritime policy in different areas of expertise,
- assist the Commission on questions relating to the implementation of support from the [ESI Funds](#),
- monitor the evolution of policy in the field of partnership and multi-level governance,
- exchange experience and good practice in this field.

Who can apply

The [call for applications](#) is open to:

- associations representing regional, local, urban and other public authorities,
- economic and social partners,
- bodies representing civil society, such as environmental partners, non-governmental organisations, and bodies responsible for promoting social inclusion, gender equality and non-discrimination.

How to apply

[Applications](#) must be completed in English, French or German. Experts nominated by the organisations should be able to communicate in at least one of these languages.

Please send your completed applications to REGIO-ESIF-STRUCTURED-DIALOGUE@ec.europa.eu by **5 August 2014**.

Social Protection for All: No-one should be left behind

The ILO recently launched a report titled [ACCESS to and EFFECTS of social protection on workers living with HIV and their households: An analytical report](#), which shows the role that social protection plays in helping people living with HIV, to keep their jobs and to receive access to treatment. The report is based on research covering four countries (Guatemala, Indonesia, Rwanda and Ukraine), that are all on the UNAIDS list of high HIV impact countries and are currently developing or scaling up their national social security systems. The study shows that between 63 and 95 per cent of people living with HIV in the four countries, who had access to social protection were able to keep their jobs or keep up some form of a productive activity. The report also highlights that people living with HIV often face challenges in accessing essential services, either because they are not aware of existing programmes, or the process to access services is too cumbersome.

As the ILO study highlights, Social Protection supports basic livelihood, education and health needs of the poor and vulnerable populations. Social protection is also one of the ten goals of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) Strategy, which recognises that

investments in social protection are necessary to achieve the vision of zero new infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths. In that sense, the [ILO National Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 \(No.202\)](#), guides member States on how to update their national social security programmes in order to prevent poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion through essential health care and income security for the population. This recommendation calls for progressive realisation of social protection coverage, following the principles of universality of coverage, non-discrimination and gender equality.

SOLIDAR believes that social protection is a key tool to fight inequalities, poverty and to promote economic development. Social protection is an investment and not a cost.

For this reason, SOLIDAR will continue its work to advocate and campaign for the full implementation of the [ILO recommendation 202 on National Social Protection Floors](#) to which governments from all around the world have committed themselves to and for Social Protection Floors to have a central place within the post-2015 international cooperation framework.

Pre-distributive Social Policy: Future challenges in welfare societies

SOLIDAR participated in a two-day high-level conference at St. Catherine's college at the University of Oxford on 30 June-1 July. The event was organised by the Policy Network together with the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) and the Renner Institute (Austria) which provided a space for discussions about "[Pre-distributive Social Policy: Future challenges in welfare societies](#)". Discussants were mainly academics as well as some political and civil society representatives from across Europe and the US.

In times of stagnating growth, fiscal constraints, an ageing population and raising inequalities, new ways of designing and financing our welfare states are necessary. Participants discussed possible solutions based on a shift from redistribution towards pre-distribution policies which entail social investment in human capital during an individuals' life-span which would allow for more sustainable economic development and fairer social outcomes.

To set the scene, participants engaged in discussions about the implications of the current crisis on the welfare state in Europe and the question on what kind of growth our society should be striving for. With a constant rise of life expectancy the issue of intergenerational justice becomes more and more important especially as current policies tend to favour the older generation over the youth ("pensioner democracy").

In a panel on Labour market policy, that was chaired by SOLIDAR, discussants stressed the positive effects of labour market institutions on reducing inequality, suggested new forms of employment contracts (e.g. indefinite working contracts with increasing protection related to affiliation of worker) and outlined chances and risks of the technology-based economy that we are living in.

The importance of the quality of education throughout one's life-span for individual life chances and social class reproduction in societies was highlighted in the following panel. An emphasis

was put on the need for good VET models/dual systems and higher permeability between VET and tertiary education as well as providing a smooth transition from education to work.

In a third session, called 'A new social model', the main fields of action for progressive policies were identified. The need for real social investment throughout the course of life, especially in education, was highlighted as well as the need for a more family friendly welfare state with real gender equality, which would pave the way for the reconciliation of private and work life.

Furthermore, a universal minimum income and the reform of tax policies (broad tax base, tax the rich) as well as the regulation of the financial sector and of executive pay were stressed as necessary measures to address current inequalities.

And how can all these aims be financed? Social expenditures are investments, from which returns can be derived. In the end, the social investment approach concerns the long term reproduction of the future tax base, so that we can avoid severe austerity deriving from the ageing of our population.

PROJECTS AND ALLIANCES

PESSIS

After the mid-term seminar that took place in Brussels on 5 June, the final conference of the project will be organised on 23 September in Brussels followed by the final project partners' coordination meeting. More information and the agenda will be sent around soon.

Negotiating Improvements for working Carers of Adults (NICA) project

After the second steering group meeting at the end of May, the next meeting will take place on 3 and 4 September in Bulgaria. Currently, a tool kit for employees is being developed and the final report is being drafted.

SOLIDAR will organise the final conference and dissemination event on 22 and 23 October in Brussels.

NEXT MEETINGS OF THE SOCIAL AFFAIRS FORUM IN 2014

- **Training Academy: 3 and 4 November 2014, Frankfurt**
- **Social Affairs Forum: 1 and 2 December 2014, Brussels**

OTHER EVENTS

- **23 September (Brussels):** PESSIS 2 Final Conference
- **1-5 October (Lampedusa):** Festival of Mediterranean Cultures (see article above)
- **22 October (Brussels):** NICA final conference
- **20-21 November (Brussels): European Platform Against Poverty (EPAP) Convention**