

## **SOCIAL AFFAIRS FORUM NEWS / SEPTEMBER 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](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. The registration is open at <http://www.solidar.org/spip.php?page=agenda&date=2014-11-04> until 10 October where you can also find a draft programme.

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

#### **SOLIDAR Social Progress Watch Initiative expert network**

The document “SPWI2015 – Toolkit for the national EU strategy groups” was sent around in September. The document will be translated in French, German and Spanish in the coming weeks and will be available as of 8 October. This document can be used during the national EU strategy groups meeting to present the Social Progress Watch initiative and plan the activities for next years.

The national EU monitoring table 2015 will be send to the national EU strategy groups by the end of November.



# **solidar**



We are now drafting a response to the Commission's consultation. The response is based on the inputs from the SPWI country desk studies and our common briefing [Europe 2020: how to spur social progress for a more inclusive Europe?](#). We will circulate a draft by mid-October asking for inputs and remarks. The deadline to submit the consultation is the 31st of October.

## **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.

SOLIDAR has submitted our contribution to the consultation by the Italian Presidency of the European Union on the Social Economy:  
[http://www.lavoro.gov.it/SemestreEuropeo/AttivitaEventi/Pages/Semestre-Europeo\\_Consultazione-pubblica-Economia-Sociale.aspx](http://www.lavoro.gov.it/SemestreEuropeo/AttivitaEventi/Pages/Semestre-Europeo_Consultazione-pubblica-Economia-Sociale.aspx)

## **Volunteering/active citizenship working group**

### **Sabir Festival of Mediterranean cultures – For more solidarity in EU migration policy**

SOLIDAR will take part of the **Sabir Festival of Mediterranean cultures on 1 until 5 October 2014** in Lampedusa to call for a solidarity-driven EU's migration policy based on the indivisibility of human rights. In our view, the Dublin Agreement stipulating that refugees and asylum seekers have to ask for asylum in the country where they arrive as well as the populist and reactionary attitude of certain EU leaders towards migration policies contribute to diffuse a sense of isolation for the institutions in the isle. Therefore, it is time to change this pattern! Thus, it is needed to promote a rights-based approach to economic and social development in the country of origins and guarantees that the Post 2015 development framework promotes human development and social justice. To put forward these messages SOLIDAR will present in Lampedusa the statement [“Wanted: Solidarity at the Heart of EU Migration and Development Policies”](#)

## **POLICY UPDATES**

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SOLIDAR is a European network of 60 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)

## **Degrowth, Décroissance, Postwachstum - (Why) Is growth needed?**

International Degrowth Conference in Leipzig shows ways toward a society beyond the imperative of growth

From 2-6 September 2014, 2,500 people are gathering in Leipzig for the Fourth International Conference on Degrowth for Ecological Sustainability and Social Equity with the focus on concrete steps towards a society beyond the imperative of growth.

The conference gives room for scientific debates, exchange between activists and economic pioneers as well as artistic approaches to the subject. The conference is part of an international cycle of events: so far, there have been conferences on degrowth in Paris 2008, in Barcelona 2010 and in Venice and Montreal 2012.

What is degrowth and (why) do we need it?

Degrowth means a downscaling of production and consumption in industrialised countries to increase human well-being and enhance ecological conditions and equity on the planet. Respecting the natural limits of the Earth and the limits of technological innovation, we need a societal and economic system that is no longer based on growth. The current economic, environmental and social crises show a clear need for a paradigm shift. We need to live within our ecological limits where resources are equally shared through new forms of democratic institutions. Instead of efficiency we need to focus on sufficiency. Degrowth does not only challenge the centrality of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as an overarching policy objective, but proposes ways for a radical change of our economic system, to create more space for human cooperation and resilient ecosystems.

SOLIDAR has been advocating for the recognition and support of the social and solidarity economy at EU level for some time now, as described in our briefing entitled 'Promoting the Social Economy as a Driver for Inclusive Growth and Social Progress'. The conference shows once more that a lot of good initiatives already exist but still a lot needs to be done to raise awareness with decision-makers to provide for a level-playing field. SOLIDAR will continue its work in this regard.

Trade Union Movements, Social, Environmental and Development NGO's, gathered during the Spring Alliance, where they have already called for a paradigm shift since 2009. This is supported by the fact that the Earth Overshoot Day has moved down to 19th August this year (source: WWF News).

The conference highlights the existence of the many approaches to an alternative, aiming for a more sustainable system at local and grass-roots level: Repair cafés, Permaculture initiatives, solidarity agriculture, regional currencies and many other forms of solidarity, social and sharing economies. Many initiatives are displaying their projects at the conference venue, the University of Leipzig. Especially the social and solidarity economy plays a crucial role within this movement. By creating high-quality jobs in organisations with democratic governance structures working towards the achievement of social and sustainable goals, the social economy can be a driving force in the establishment of a new economic and societal system.

The degrowth movement searches for answers regarding the North-South aspect as well: Do people in the global south have the right to growth? How do we meet the needs of everybody within planetary boundaries? High-level experts and activists from India, South America and Africa are sharing their views with the audience.

We have to leave the current "grow or die" paradigm behind and finally act and live with respect for the limits of our planet and our future generations. Civil society plays an important role in achieving this paradigm shift and SOLIDAR will continue this discussion within its network and at European level.

If you would like to join in on the conference, please click here

## **Ongoing Tragedies in the Mediterranean Sea: human corridors urgently needed**

In September 800 people trying to reach Europe are dispersed in the Mediterranean Sea. A boat packed with up to 250 migrants trying to reach Europe has sunk off the Libyan coast. According to the latest information available, only 36 of them have been rescued. Some 500 people are missing and feared drowned after people smugglers sank a boat carrying them last week 300 miles off the coast of Malta. **For the umpteenth time, a human tragedy happened just at the borders of the European Union.** And this while the Italian government has just declared it will end its rescue operation, Mare Nostrum and leave it to a division of the border agency called Frontex Plus, although funding and missions of the new operation are still unclear.

Last week, der Spiegel published a report on the brutal methods used along the EU frontiers to keep refugees out. The report collected testimonies by UN agencies and NGOs of many cases of human rights violations towards immigrants at the borders of Greece, Hungary and Spain. It also states that "the transformation of the EU into a fortress has created the conditions that have led to deaths along its borders. Many refugees choose the extremely dangerous route across the Mediterranean because Frontex is sealing off land routes". The EU is responsible for these tragedies and should take immediate actions to avoid them and to tackle the root causes for migration.

**SOLIDAR** calls for a change in the EU's migration and development policies that seem led only by fear and populism. More solidarity is needed and this can be done by promoting a right-based migration policy based on a more efficient responsibility-sharing system and improved harmonisation of protection's standards among Member States which the Dublin system fails to ensure. The opening of humanitarian corridors with the involvement of the United Nations is urgently needed. Moreover, the EU should keep its promises in terms of supporting investments in sustainable economic and social policies at the country of origin as well as promoting human and social rights. **SOLIDAR** will put forward these recommendations at the Sabir Festival in Lampedusa on 2 – 5 October.

## **PROJECTS AND ALLIANCES**

### **PESSIS II**

The final conference of the project took place in Brussels on 23 September.

### **Negotiating Improvements for working Carers of Adults (NICA) project**

SOLIDAR will organise the final conference and dissemination event on 22 October in Brussels. The programme will be available in due time.

### **Who cares? Reconciling work and care responsibilities for dependent family members**

Together with the European Trade Union Confederation (**ETUC**) **FERPA** and **EPSU**, **SOLIDAR** is involved in the project “Who cares? - Reconciling work and care responsibilities for dependent family members” that aims at collecting experiences from real life of how to facilitate reconciliation of working and family-life obligations. It can be a concrete contribution to meet the policy aspirations of the Social Investment Package and other policy targets about promoting active ageing and having more people working longer.

During the spring meetings of the Social Protection working group and the Women’s Committee we presented the project objectives and activities. So far, a first round table was held on 3<sup>rd</sup> June in Brussels. A questionnaire was sent out to all our affiliates. The next stage will be three regional one-day workshops to be held in Stockholm, Milan and Berlin in October. The first workshop will be in Stockholm on **10 October** (languages: Swedish, English). The second will be in Milan on **17 October** (languages: Italian, English and French). The third will be in Berlin on **28 October** (languages: German, French).

Each of these workshops will deal with four main themes:

1. The situation of those being cared for and their carers and the level of awareness of the issue in public debate
2. Policy framework in different countries and helping and hindering factors in the policy framework
3. Existing practices in collective agreements or at company level to support working carers
4. What needs to be done to support carers: key issues for policy makers and social partners

Don’t hesitate to contact Elsa if you need more information or wish to register to one of the 3 workshops.

## **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**

- **1-5 October (Lampedusa):** Festival of Mediterranean Cultures (see article above)
- **22 October (Brussels):** NICA final conference
- **3-4 November:** Training Academy, Frankfurt
- **20-21 November (Brussels): European Platform Against Poverty (EPAP) Convention**
- **1-2 December: SAF + SOLIDAR conference in the European Parliament**