

15 December 2009, Brussels

Re: Consultation on the Future EU2020 Strategy (COM(2009)647/3)

Dear Sir/Madam,

SOLIDAR is a European network of 53 NGOs active in over 90 countries working to advance social justice in Europe and worldwide. SOLIDAR lobbies the EU and international institutions in three primary areas: social affairs (more social Europe), international cooperation (development cooperation) and education (lifelong learning for all).

In addition to our contribution to the consultation on Europe 2020¹ and referring to the Consultation document, SOLIDAR would like to turn your attention to the following points:

- SOLIDAR welcomes the recognition that the transition to a smarter and greener economy will not automatically benefit everyone and that major efforts will be essential to ensure social cohesion and to guard against social exclusion. Such efforts must include the delivery of quality social protection systems and the EU should be willing to do this on the global as well as local front. One of the ways the EU can do this at the global level is through supporting the ILO's Social Security for All campaign, in its work through international organizations and in its Country Strategy Papers.
- SOLIDAR considers inappropriate and misleading to turn the slogan "put people and the planet first" into "put people and responsibility first" (p. 2) as such a perspective insufficiently grasps the role that collective mechanisms of solidarity and redistribution and systems of social protection play in allowing everybody to make full use of her or his potential; and that these are preconditions of all policies aimed at strengthening equal opportunity and individual responsibility. In SOLIDAR's view the Europe2020 Agenda should also not be an agenda of further deregulation.
- When explaining in greater detail priority 2 "Empowering people in inclusive societies" the Consultation Document highlights that "the acquisition of new skills, fostering creativity and innovation, the development of entrepreneurship ... will offer more jobs in exchange for greater adaptability" (p. 4). This statement whilst not incorrect in itself, in SOLIDAR's view, however, does not take into account the other side of the equation as it forgets to mention an appropriate level of job security and protection as well as active and tailor-made support for labour market inclusion, in particular for disadvantaged and vulnerable persons.
- We welcome the mention of the "need of a greater emphasis on vulnerable groups ... to ensure that no one is excluded from knowledge" (p. 5) and highlight that a European strategy for 2020 needs to better take into account and turn into reality the guarantee of access to education, training and LLL for everybody.

¹ At the end of November SOLIDAR issued [16 Recommendations for the Europe 2020 Strategy](#), our contribution to the consultation launched by the European Commission on 25 November 2009.

- SOLIDAR disagrees with the statement and assumption that “new patterns are emerging where there are several entries in and exits from the labour market during working life, ..., offering more opportunities to people.” (p. 6), as these new patterns do not automatically lead to more opportunities but first present the challenge of more instability. Active labour market policies and adapted support to facilitate labour market (re-)insertion are needed to open the door to new and equal opportunities.
- SOLIDAR agrees with the statement that the full potential of cross-border migration has not yet been tapped, but recalls that the European institutions have to make all efforts to ensure decent working and living conditions for migrants. For more details please see Recommendation 5 and the last bullet point of Recommendation 9.
- The Consultation Document claims that “Having a job is probably the best safeguard against poverty and exclusion”. SOLIDAR insist on adding “**quality**” or “**decent**” in front of “job” to turn this sentence into a statement we can support, given the rise in the number of working poor whose jobs are not guarantees against poverty. Please see Recommendations 8, 9 and 10 concerning the role the social economy can play both in view of labour market and social inclusion.
- The Consultation Document mentions self-employment as a new panacea for unemployed persons. (p. 7). Whereas self-employment is certainly **one** option amongst others, SOLIDAR recalls problematic examples linked to the promotion of or “push” into self-employment under precarious conditions, without adequate social protection, as recently introduced e.g. in Germany (so-called “€1-Jobs”)
- We welcome the mention of a “fresh approach” to industrial policy but have some concerns regarding the notion that the “EU will need to facilitate restructuring in a socially acceptable way whilst maintaining a level playing field.” (p.8) We believe that both industrial and trade policy should be driven not just by a quest for competitiveness, but should also involve an assessment of the quality of the jobs lost and created, the value-adding of the downstream industries and the capacity of the individual workers to be re-trained and re-integrated into similar or higher quality jobs.
- SOLIDAR supports the call for “efficient financial market supervision” and would like to see European institutions taking ambitious steps for their regulation, monitoring and control at European and global level, in addition to national measures, oriented to guaranteeing the general interest and social usefulness of such transactions and a fairer distribution of income and wealth.
- Whilst trade has an important role to play in creating and maintaining jobs, the emphasis on acting in the WTO and via bilateral agreements for the sole purpose of ensuring that “barriers to international flows of trade and investment are reduced” (p. 10) betrays a myopic vision of trade policy, which in the aftermath of a financial crisis caused partly by the deregulation of the financial services industry, needs to be corrected. A trade policy with the creation of decent work and environmental sustainability of our planet at its core is what the EU should be pursuing. With that in mind SOLIDAR would like to see the “Global Europe: Competing in the World” strategy revised, and in particular the pursuit of

agreements which could be harmful to the industrializing prospects and food security of developing countries abandoned.

- In times of crisis, it is becoming evident that the fiscally conservative Growth and Stability Pact is proving damaging to the capacity of many EU new member states to be able to safeguard their social protection systems and invest in fiscal stimuli designed to revive the economy. We believe that a more flexible approach, which provides countries with more policy space and relies on a range of tools including the implementation of progressive taxation systems needs to be put in place.
- SOLIDAR welcomes the role given to social partners and civil society in view of effectively implementing the Europe 2020 Strategy and monitoring its progress. Active citizenship is crucial to advance towards policies promoting the well-being of all European citizens. We recall that this would imply sufficient time for consultation and appropriate fora for deliberation. SOLIDAR strongly advocates for a Citizens' Agora to be organised by the European Parliament on the Europe 2020 Agenda in the first half of 2010 and urges the European Commission to support this initiative. SOLIDAR would like to see an agreement on the broad lines and main orientations of the Europe2020 Strategy under the Spanish EU Council Presidency.

SOLIDAR principally shares the views expressed in the letter by the Social Platform addressed to the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso entitled "Civil society active in the social field do not buy into the Europe 2020 agenda yet and make three proposals for improvement".

SOLIDAR has also been actively involved in the Spring Alliance and contributed to the [Spring Alliance Manifesto](#) which we have signed and wish to draw attention to.

We hope you will take our views into account in your deliberations for the Europe 2020 strategy.

Yours sincerely,



Conny Reuter
Secretary General