



EUROPEAN POLICYBRIEF

SOLIDUS. SOLIDARITY IN EUROPEAN SOCIETIES: EMPOWERMENT, SOCIAL JUSTICE AND CITIZENSHIP



The SOLIDUS project explores conceptually and empirically current and future expressions of **European solidarity from an inter-disciplinary approach**. As a result of these analyses, SOLIDUS has developed specific tools to deal with solidarity at policy and research levels delivering indicators, qualitative criteria and measures for integrating solidarity aspects into policy and social interventions and monitoring the impact of solidarity on European society.

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INTRODUCTION

SOLIDUS is a research project funded by the European Commission within the H2020 Programme, under the general call 'Overcoming the Crisis: New Ideas, Strategies and Governance Structures for Europe'. It falls within the broader objectives of Horizon 2020. The innovative character of this proposal is that **it explores conceptually and empirically current and future expressions of European solidarity from an inter-disciplinary approach**.

Europe is facing a deep financial, social and economic crisis, which is challenging the traditional values upon which the construction of the European Union is founded. The idea of unity is now questioned by many different agents in Europe, who consider that maybe it is better to move beyond the European boundaries which restrict their "individual" capacity to face the consequences of the crisis as apparent in the Brexit process. Nowadays, we have seen in our parliaments a rise of Eurosceptic and populist parties (including xenophobes, racists and neo-Nazis). Thousands of people voted for this type of political preference. This fact has heightened led the need to seriously address the problems raised by the crisis in Europe.

Drawing on history, it is apparent that when there has been a situation of crisis, people have tended to regroup within the borders of their nation, excluding others. In consequence, there is currently an urgent need to strengthen the ties among people in Europe. In this sense, one of the main objectives of the SOLIDUS project was connected to the idea of exploring **how solidarity may become a crucial aspect to enforce social cohesion**.

Knowing how solidarity works and what the successful actions to promote solidarity relationships among groups are may bring to citizens, social initiatives, stakeholders and policy makers arguments and evidences that demonstrate how solidarity reduces social conflict and contributes to improved opportunities for everybody. In this sense, the project has analysed in depth **the successful acts of solidarity which are being developed across Europe with Social Impact**.

That means solidarity acts which improve people's lives in several social areas (health, employment, education, housing or civic engagement) and especially for the most vulnerable groups (migrants-people without territory, with disabilities, elderly, non-academic women, LGTBIQ, poor people, among others). **SOLIDUS has identified common elements among these solidarity acts in order to examine their transferability to different contexts.**

One of the project's outcomes is a *Kit of Indicators for Social Citizenship*, which aims to contribute to the measure of social impact and the components of solidarity within social initiatives and social policies. This kit can become an opportunity for social agents to analyse their action and improve some aspects of it accordingly. They may be more able to understand what can be done to improve the social impact achieved, as well as how to promote components that favour successful acts of solidarity.

EVIDENCE AND ANALYSIS

There are many organizations, social initiatives and policies that are improving people's lives in several areas (such as employment, housing, education, health, civic engagement), however very few of them evaluate the social impact of their actions. However, the interest in measuring and evaluating the results of solidarity projects is increasing more and more, to ensure social return, visibility and possible transferability to wider society in order to achieve better lives.

The project has analysed acts of solidarity which are being developed across Europe. The concept of solidarity is complex; in consequence, the project is based on solidarity action that has social and political impact. That means social initiatives that are improving people's lives. Based on results from case studies, the project analysed commonalities on successful actions which are combating the crisis through acts of solidarity. These acts, social initiatives or policies that are supporting them, are thus contributing to construct more inclusive and prosperous societies, by influencing at the macro-level and micro-level. In this regard, the research identifies common elements to examine their transferability to different contexts and collectives.

The Kit of Indicators presented below can support evaluation, but also become an opportunity to improve the level and extent of social impact achieved. This set of indicators does not necessary be a tool for measuring impact of solidarity actions, but especially a tool for monitoring performance, analysing organisation structures, strengthening sustainability and gathering evidence of social and political impact related to these actions. These indicators and criteria derive from a review of the existing literature as well as the extensive fieldwork in SOLIDUS. Particularly, through the analysis of case studies, several categories have been identified, reflecting crosscutting elements that are evident in successful solidarity initiatives.

TOPIC	DIMENSION	INDICATOR
IMPACT	SOCIAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Raising awareness about a social debate - Improvement on citizens' living standards: education, health, housing, employment, civic engagement - Improvement on personal security, autonomy and influence
	POLITICAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creation or modification of legislation or legal frameworks - Governmental uptake of grassroots' initiatives and civil society recommendations
COMPONENTS THAT FAVOUR SOLIDARITY	SOCIAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Internal democracy - Level of Plurality - Level of Transparency - Achieving recognition - Scalability
	PERSONAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Level of awareness and preparedness for solidarity - Creation of a sense meaning

The Kit of Indicators is presented in two categories: *Impact of Solidarity Actions* and *Components that Favour Solidarity*.

The category “**Impact of Solidarity Actions**” is also split into two, social and political, as well as considering different spatial levels to collect evidences (qualitative and quantitative) about people whose life have improved as a result of the implementation of the solidarity action analysed. This improvement (social impact) can relate to different areas of society (such as better access to health, housing conditions, educational attainment, employment opportunities or civic participation) as well as to different types of organizations. Besides, the indicators address political impact, which relate to the institutional repercussions of projects or actions (through legislation or programmes), generally achieved via the redistribution of resources, or by establishing new, extended boundaries of who is included in rights.

Related to social and political impact there are five indicators. First, the action that contributes to increasing awareness about a social debate. Second, improvements on citizens' living standards. This means improvements in education, housing, health, employment and civic engagement. Third, improvements on personal security, autonomy and influence, regarding those conditions that promote more solidarity and active citizenship towards something or somebody. Fourth and fifth, political impact that turns around legal frameworks repercussion, as well as grassroots' initiatives and civil society recommendations taken by governmental policies (programs and actions).

Example:

According to the Social Network's CEO two municipalities indicated to be willing to invest more resources because they see the benefits: young people who have been in contact with Headspace have fewer bad days, continue school, and engage in meaningful activities. (Headspace, Denmark)

The second category are “**Components that Favour Solidarity**”. The analysis of the case studies across Europe has identified commonalities that contribute to improve the solidarity among people and organizations with an impact on reducing inequalities, accessing to social rights and improving living conditions as a whole. We have identified two types of components, one related to a social or collective dimension and the other related to a personal dimension.

The social components include five indicators. First, *Internal Democracy* to ensure the proper functioning of the governing body. Second is the *Level of Plurality* based on increasing diversity in several levels of the social initiative (actors involved, board or decision-making process). Third is the *Level of Transparency* regarding public accounts, evaluation, dissemination, decision-making, volunteers and clear mission of the social initiative. Fourth is *Public recognition* and Fifth is *Scalability* in terms of the evaluation of replicability of the action, creation of networks or expansion in more social areas.

Example of Internal Democracy:

RIO is a democratic organization. Everyone takes part in decisions. We have regular meetings among employees and among employees and volunteers. (RIO, Norway)

Example of Transparency:

To help in the task of transparency in action, they are supporting the initiative to create a minimum registration of NGOs and volunteers involved to avoid having people who try to profit from the refugees upon arrival to the island. This promotes the trust of people. (Proactiva Open Arms, Spain)

In relation to the personal components, we clustered them into two indicators. On the one hand we have *Personal awareness and Preparedness* for solidarity, which are related to empathy with others and personal autonomy in all activities of life, as a necessary step to take this empathy forward into action. On the other hand, *Creation of a sense of meaning*, is related to motivation as well as personal and collective coherence between values and actions.

Finally, it is important to highlight that, according to the SOLIDUS analysis, the fulfilment of all these indicators is not a requirement to achieve social or political impact. Nevertheless, our research concludes that meeting some of them is associated with improving impact on society. Therefore, including these categories and indicators in the design, planning and evaluation of organizations' work and action may help to improve performance and results. In order to support monitoring and evaluation, a questionnaire is available at the SOLIDUS website.

This Kit of Indicators will help organizations, social initiatives as well as policymakers at the European level to analyse the impact of their social action and develop policies and instruments to achieve societal goals. The tools presented can encourage reflection within social movements and civil society initiatives that want to improve their social and political impact.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of this Kit of Indicators is to provide social agents with parameters that can serve as means for reflection about the impact of their solidarity actions, as well as operational tools to monitor and analyse how they could improve such impact.

1. In the debate about Solidarity, a starting point is the analysis of **inclusive actions that have social impact**, that generate social improvements, in relation to the area of action or the target group addressed. This implies establishing a relation between a universal value of justice and actual social action.
2. In this sense, it is important to **establish a difference between impact, dissemination and transferability** of the solidarity.
 - a. Solidarity with social impact, implies providing evidence about improvement in peoples' lives (connected to Europe 2020 targets, UN Sustainable Goals or the like).
 - b. Transferability refers to the influence of solidarity action on the design and implementation of programs or political measures.
 - c. Dissemination refers to making performance and results visible.

3. The analysis shows that many solidarity actions are carried out by social agents who do not always **collect enough evidences about the social or political impact of their solidarity actions**. In consequence, this kit of indicators attempts to overcome this lack of data about social improvements (however, it is not necessary to accomplish all the indicators to improve social impact). The process for collecting evidences could offer the opportunity for social agents, end-users and policy makers to analyse the results achieved by the action and understand how to improve them.
4. The importance of the **evaluation of the solidarity actions and social policies** is due to its ability to increase the social impact of solidarity actions by helping to identify and draw awareness to some aspects of the organization or the action that don't work well. Delivering indicators, qualitative criteria and measures for evaluating solidarity aspects in policy and social actions could improve people lives in several areas as well as presenting the use of public resources to society in a more democratic way. In this way **accountability of social actions and social policies** could be accomplish.

RESEARCH PARAMETERS

Objectives

This kit of indicators for social citizenship presents a proposal to deal with solidarity at policy and research levels, delivering indicators, qualitative criteria and measures for integrating solidarity aspects in policy and social interventions. Additionally, it promotes tools to monitor the impact of solidarity. This has been developed utilizing a qualitative and contextual approach that has involved the following:

- a. **Cross-sectional and cross-country meta-analysis of case studies of successful solidarity initiatives from 107 case studies** analysed around Europe.
- b. **A scientific literary review and analysis of main international databases that elaborate on state of the art concepts regarding identification of patterns of solidarity**, its drivers, barriers, potential indicators and indices to measure citizens' attitudes towards solidarity and the socio-economic impact of solidarity practices. This identification allowed for the establishment of the major theoretical, methodological and practical strengths and weaknesses of existing indicators of pro-social behaviour and positive towards solidarity.
- c. **The development of a theoretical and methodological framework** for the development of new indicators.
- d. **Monitoring a set of indicators through previous case studies** carried out during wp2-5 and the preparation of a questionnaire to implement them.

Methodology

The communicative methodology played a relevant role in the overall development of the project and particularly in the conducting of the fieldwork. It is based on capitalizing the knowledge from the scientific community and that of the end-users. It promotes the creation of conditions that enable intersubjective dialogue between researchers, policy-makers, stakeholders and end-users in order to establish a clear criteria and consensus that facilitate the identification not only of the exclusionary dimensions (barriers) but also the transformative dimensions of the problem being addressed. This methodology has been highlighted for its potential for social impact from research

The Kit of Indicators, which derived from a cross-case meta-analysis process, looking for commonalities in successful solidarity actions, was first discussed with an advisory committee (Policy and Social Dialogue Committee) formed by policy-makers, stakeholders and end-users. A second draft was then tested against some of the cases of the SOLIDUS project by using a questionnaire. The final Kit is the result of a several-step communicative process contrasting evidence (or lack of evidence) within and from solidarity actions.

PROJECT IDENTITY

PROJECT NAME	SOLIDARITY IN EUROPEAN SOCIETIES: EMPOWERMENT, SOCIAL JUSTICE AND CITIZENSHIP (SOLIDUS)
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WEBSITE	https://solidush2020.eu/
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FURTHER READING	CREA-UB (2018): <i>Research report on Kit of Indicators for social citizenship. Deliverable 8.2.</i> Available in: https://solidush2020.eu/project-deliverables-2/