

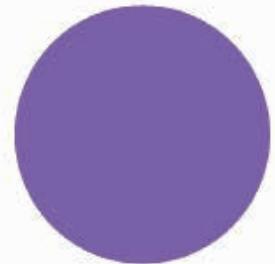


European Solidarity : Where Do We Stand? Should We Foster It and How?

Synthesis of the 2010 edition of the European Think Tank Forum
Palais Pedralbes - 30 September and 1 October 2010

Elvire FABRY

**European Forum of
Think Tanks
BARCELONA 2010**



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Notre Europe

Notre Europe is an independent think tank devoted to European integration. Under the guidance of Jacques Delors, who created Notre Europe in 1996, the association aims to “think a united Europe.”

Our ambition is to contribute to the current public debate by producing analyses and pertinent policy proposals that strive for a closer union of the peoples of Europe. We are equally devoted to promoting the active engagement of citizens and civil society in the process of community construction and the creation of a European public space.

In this vein, the staff of Notre Europe directs research projects; produces and disseminates analyses in the form of short notes, studies, and articles; and organises public debates and seminars. Its analyses and proposals are concentrated around four themes:

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The « European Forum of Think Tanks » - which is organised by *Notre Europe* – brings together, every 18 months, not only Europe’s most dynamic think tanks, but also high-calibre European and national politicians, leaders from the business sector, trade unions, and the media. Such diversity is the Forum’s “trademark”, with the overall goal being to promote group-level reflection and debate on key issues in EU affairs.

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Discussions covered the definition of solidarity; the different meanings of this notion in relationships between states and within states; the effects of the economic and monetary crisis on solidarity; its external dimension, its meaning when applied to the EU’s energy policy; and future opportunities for its consolidation and development.



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Introduction: Solidarity: a multifaceted concept

The debate revealed that the idea of “solidarity” is separate from both “charity” (considered a moral quality) and “insurance” (“probabilistic reciprocity” – seen as economic reasoning) while being related to both notions.

Solidarity could be defined as a “counterfactual reciprocity”. Unlike insurance, where the aid provided (a sort of “contribution”) represents an offer of returned assistance in a comparable situation, aid given in the name of solidarity is based on the conviction that if the provider had been in the same situation as the receiver (that of economic insecurity) then the receiver would, if able, have provided the same aid.

The debate showed that this vision of solidarity, though useful in the first stages of European integration, is not sufficiently comprehensive. A deeper analysis revealed that solidarity comes in two forms:

- ***de facto solidarity*** (see the terms of the Schuman Declaration), a product of the objective interdependence of Member States, itself resulting from increasing economic and monetary integration. Various equivalent or similar expressions were used by participants to describe this sort of

solidarity: organic solidarity, structural solidarity, mechanical solidarity, political solidarity, or (more pejoratively, referring to a certain political pragmatism) “self-interested solidarity” and “cold solidarity”.

- **affective solidarity** (or “*affectio societatis*”), one of the EU’s main *raison d’être* and methods. Both spontaneous and disinterested, many consider it to be one of the EU’s most important vocations. Along with supranationalism, solidarity is one of the fundamental characteristics of the EU and cannot be called into question without also calling into question the future of European integration.

On a similar note, solidarity was also mentioned as a major symbol of a sentiment of belonging to the Union and hence of European citizenship – notwithstanding the important difference between perceptions of the concept (seemingly self-evident) and its practical reality (still modest).

I - Solidarity: a changing concept

The two aspects of solidarity mentioned above are inseparable. They both belong to the past and future of European integration. However, certain participants wondered whether “affective” solidarity remains the essential principle it was in the original treaties, in a context of resurgent national-interest thinking and intergovernmentalism.

There was almost unanimous agreement that this unhappy observation must not throw into doubt the imperative of solidarity, but rather it must be an encouragement to complement and extend solidarity with other ideas – in particular, responsibility and reciprocity. Implemented intelligently, these should allow a continued role for solidarity with increased political legitimacy.

1.1 Solidarity for Member States and for citizens

European solidarity can be conceived as that of EU Member States and that of EU citizens.

A form of solidarity has been established between Member States, symbolised in particular by major cross-border budget transfers (which can exceed 4% of GDP in certain Member States). Since the 1980s this budgetary solidarity is a component of a system of “packages” and trade-offs which link redistribution to liberalisation within the framework of Jacques Delors’s triptych: “Competition that stimulates, cooperation that strengthens, solidarity that unites.” Such solidarity represents one of the legacies of European cooperation. It is uncertain whether it would be possible to invent such solidarity today, in an EU of 27 or less political cohesion and tensions running east-west (in particular on the theme of “social Europe”) and north-south (on managing monetary Europe).

Discussions on “social Europe” evoke a slide away from an approach based on Member States (via structural funds) towards one more directly centred on citizens. The proposal for a minimum wage across the EU was mentioned, as was the idea of mobilising the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund to demonstrate that the losers of European and international liberalisation are not forgotten. These two examples have shown that “the legitimacy of the EU’s founding free-trade principles must be rebuilt” via acts of concrete solidarity. The “new solution” proposed in a Report by former Commissioner Mario Monti (on the relaunching of the single market) was also mentioned and considered a good compromise (even if the report’s caution on the theme of fiscal harmonisation was regretted by one participant).

1.2 Solidarity and democracy

Given that solidarity towards other Europeans is not a subject of obvious consent, there is an ambivalent dimension to increasing popular involvement in European affairs. Growing individualism and the atomisation of societies are unhelpful, as was the recent economic crisis, which encouraged national introversion. The Greek rescue plan provoked an outpouring of negative stereotypes, in particular in Germany. Therefore, the fact that the EU is becoming more democratic does not necessarily mean citizens will show more solidarity. The latest Eurobarometer results are worrying in this regard.¹ Conversely, “the fact that EU political leaders

1. Eurobarometer 73, August 2010.

are less susceptible to democratic pressures than politicians in Member States can allow them to better defend the interests of future generations.

Paradoxically, as the EU gradually abandons its elitist design in favour of democracy, it becomes more difficult for the principle of solidarity to be accepted. In the future, it will be necessary to work on transversal pedagogy in order to explain:

- to citizens of giving countries – in particular Germany – that giving is in their interest, both in the short term (involvement of German banks in Greece) and beyond (Germany's prosperity depends paradoxically on the fact that other countries do not all behave like Germany);
- to citizens of beneficiary countries, asked to accept increasingly severe constraints, that this is not a matter of Euro-technocratic bullying but rather of discipline which is indispensable if the system is to last. It is the price of "sustainable integration".

More European solidarity requires, no matter what, strong leadership qualities on the part of politicians in Member States.

1.3 Solidarity and responsibility

European solidarity has three broad concrete manifestations:

1. transfer of financial aid justified by a particular situation;
2. the benefit of direct or indirect advantages relating to an EU policy;
3. respect of shared rules established for the higher interest of the Union, and therefore of all its Member States – as for example in the growth and stability pact, under which a failure to meet obligations could be seen as negative solidarity.

In all three cases there can be no solidarity without something back in return – whether this be proof that EU assistance has been used well, or oversight of budgetary commitments. For a long time, this relationship between solidarity and responsibility remained somewhat unclear, partly because states had trouble seeing themselves as fallible and partly because they remained fussy about sovereignty (in this regard see the "irenic" side of the Treaty of Maastricht).

The responsibility of Member States is therefore relevant to European solidarity: the use of structural funds in Ireland, Spain and Greece had more positive results in the first two of those countries. Such national responsibility concerning the proper use of funds is thus important, but strengthening Member States' administrative capacities, so that European funds are used in the best way, is the EU's responsibility.

Member States' responsibility is also an issue that relates to de facto European solidarity. The mechanism for rescuing states from financial crisis is more difficult to implement when the states concerned did not take the necessary measures to avoid the crisis, or did not respect the stability pact, or else did not correctly inform the other Member States of the real state of their public finances.

In both these cases the responsibility of the Greek authorities was mentioned. In order to be sustainable, European solidarity relies on trust in the responsibility of states which benefit from it. From this point of view, non-respect of the stability pact represents a breaking of the trust established between the states which adopted the euro. However, in certain cases it must also be accepted that states can fall victim to crises without being directly responsible for the situation. Divergences linked to structural issues and competitiveness, and the difficulty of reducing them, were also mentioned.

A growing lack of mutual trust, the rejection of "moral hazard" and new demands relating to good governance make it important that displays of solidarity be accompanied by more systematic preemptive monitoring and more severe sanctions (financial and possibly political) in cases where shared rules are not respected.

1.4 Solidarity and reciprocity

Solidarity has never been a simple act and will be even less so. Each major stage of European integration has been marked by overarching "packages" (Common Agricultural Policy – CAP) and industry between France and Germany, Single market and cohesion, etc.) where contributing Member States have been able to protect their interests.

In addition, it is accepted that structural fund transfers generate indirect advantages for net payers in terms of, for example, exports or public works contracts. Solidarity is thus not an asymmetric mechanism but rather a component in a network of interlocking interests where each party gains something. For most participants this balanced approach – a superior shared interest based on reciprocal advantages – will in future be an increasingly necessary condition of European solidarity, taking the form of “package deals” either linked to common projects or linking separate sectoral or one-off “deals”.

II - Solidarity between Member States: concrete applications

Several fields were mentioned as candidates for a strengthening of solidarity between Member States.

One such was education and training, since every effort made in this area helps to eliminate one of the most obvious causes of the prosperity gap within the EU. More vigorous EU action here would also help to address another aspect of solidarity (today undermined by the persistent problem of budget deficits), that of solidarity between generations.

The discussion focused on three main areas: the economy and currency; energy, and security of supply in particular; and the common foreign and security policy.

2.1 European solidarity in the face of economic and financial crisis

Discussions on financial solidarity revealed support for the idea of extending beyond 3 years the recently implemented financial-solidarity mechanism, in return for a reduction of the risk of moral hazard by means of debt restructuring for

countries assisted by other Member States (although it was pointed out that this possibility should only be evoked in a context of greater market stability).

However, the possibility of debt restructuring would not be the only means of maintaining pressure on national authorities benefiting from European aid. European banks lending to assisted countries could reserve a different treatment for them, in order to maintain a risk premium (the “spread” differential no longer being applicable once countries stop approaching the markets for credit).

Discussions on European financial solidarity were focused on Greece, and also on Germany, which was subject to several criticisms:

- (a) it was slow to accept financial aid to Greece, even though this assistance was ultimately in its own interest, given the exposure of its banks, and notwithstanding the clear responsibilities of successive Greek governments;
- (b) relating to the responsibility of the German economic model in the creation of the euro area imbalances, an alternative model which relied on internal consumption and reasonable public deficits would be both more equitable and efficient – non-asymmetric budgetary oversight should therefore monitor not just for excessive deficits but also for excessive surpluses.

It was, however, pointed out that Germany sees the single currency as part of its national history and a culture of monetary stability – rather than as part of European geography and a culture of solidarity. Criticism of the German model is therefore counterproductive, as is that over Germany’s supposed lack of solidarity (Germany has for long been the largest net contributor to the European budget).

In addition, efforts to reduce deficits resulting from the financial crisis will probably result in sharpened tensions between Member States. In this context participants called for the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund to be easier to use by Member States, and for it to receive more resources, in order that the EU might be seen to act constructively in the interests of citizens. “The crisis of 1929 resulted in the national welfare state; what will the crisis of 2008 produce, including at the European level?”

The “European semester”, created as part of the reform of economic governance, could be a good means of encouraging more convergence between Member States’ economic policies, budgets and structural reforms.

Beyond this, the proposals made by the Herman Van Rompuy task force were welcomed, with the exception of the one envisaging automatic financial sanctions on Member States already in difficulty, which caused debate. It was pointed out that, at a fundamental level, reasonable structural divergences in competitiveness between Member States are what guarantee the viability of Economic and Monetary Union and the recently launched solidarity mechanisms.

Lastly, several innovative ideas were advanced:

- eurobonds, which would be the symbolic expression of increased budgetary solidarity between Member States;
- a preemptive and not curative use of the financial stabilisation mechanism;
- a collective analysis of the level of public debt acceptable to the EU, and a distribution of “deficit rights” between Member States after discussions during the European semester.

2.2 European energy solidarity

Article 194 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU was mentioned from the start of discussions. Concrete forms of European energy solidarity were identified, based on several examples.

Negotiations on energy and climate have allowed the EU to shape the international agenda, but also to find itself in a position of weakness (at the Copenhagen Summit). Moreover, on the issue of distributing pollution permits, Member States have hardly displayed solidarity.

The possibility of group-purchasing of Russian gas was a subject of disagreement between participants. This proposal features among others advanced by a Notre Europe study calling for a European energy community, but it raised numerous questions: what quantity of gas would be bought?, who would be the recipients?, who would pay?, etc.

The issue of renovating nuclear power plants was also mentioned, with reference to Lithuania. This country was required to commit itself to closing its power plants on joining the EU, but the closure left it totally dependent on Russian gas, and no Member State supports its plan to build a new power plant.

Lastly, energy projects relating to the Union for the Mediterranean were also cited. The original conception of this project, outside the EU framework, was unfortunate and characteristic of a deficit of European solidarity. Planned solar-power projects are making little progress and only strong political leadership is capable of ensuring their success.

2.3 European solidarity in foreign policy

Regarding European solidarity in external matters, it was pointed out that external pressure was at the origins of the European project. In its newer forms (the challenge of emerging countries, climate change, etc.) this factor could encourage further cooperation, based on new “*de facto* solidarities”.

Member States could thus be incited to cooperate more in strategic and security matters in the eventuality that the USA stops playing its role as “guarantor of last resort”, as was the case during the Cold War.

The budget difficulties of Member States would also seem to call for increasing mutualisation of defence resources, something to which public opinion also seems favourable – even if the existence of formerly “neutral” countries could be an obstacle to the emergence of such “solidarity by necessity”.

Furthermore, although the EU has a common strategy against nuclear proliferation, this is not the case with “counter-terrorism”, an area which can be seen as a matter of both priority and consensus.

Opposition to the policies of George Bush could have allowed Europe to appear as an autonomous and respected actor, but that this was not possible due to the deep divisions among its members on the subject. It was pointed out that any stronger

mobilisation of the EU in strategic matters supposes an increased involvement by Germany, a country which for now “disposes of a hegemonic position but acts like an accountant”.

Finally, participants pointed to the fact that the main challenge facing EU Member States is to find a better response to globalisation – deciding whether they want only to adapt to it (following their national strengths and weaknesses, and in their own way) or to help shape it, which would mean placing more emphasis on a common approach and common policies.

But the difficulty of producing shared short-term strategies and visions was underscored. The mechanism used in trade policy (the Commission negotiating on the mandate of Member States and under their oversight) was cited as an example to reproduce in other sectors.

III - Solidarity within Member States

Solidarity within Member States (especially seen in terms of distributive justice) is not, in the first place, a competence of the EU. This different treatment of economic and monetary issues (in large part communitarised, even internationalised) and issues of social protection and promotion (falling to Member States) can be a source of tension.

Supranational (that is, EU) decisions are often perceived as causing internal social problems (associated with free trade, economic restructuring, budget discipline, etc.) that national or regional tiers of government need to mitigate via social policy. This division of roles – sometimes exploited by governments – could in the long term damage the public’s image of the EU.

The EU is currently somewhat powerless to intervene directly in favour of solidarity between individuals – for legal reasons relating to the treaties but also because certain governments are opposed on principle. However, several participants believed that the Union could help fight the increasing inequalities seen in Europe since the crisis, using various means:

- by giving stronger political emphasis to the fact that collective and individual solidarity is a value in itself consecrated by the treaties, and that Member States are obliged to take inspiration from it in the conduct of their national policies;
- by closely monitoring respect for the European economic and social model, based largely on the principle of solidarity; it was because of this original model, and its shock-absorbing function, that Europe was able to resist the recent crisis better than other countries in similar situations – another reason, also, not to end economic stimulation policies too soon in favour of austerity cures which risk breaking the upturn;
- by rebalancing the dialogue between finance ministers and social affairs ministers to the advantage of the latter, who now have practically no voice in the affairs of the EU; in this regard the composition of Herman Van Rompuy's task force is significant and anomalous; more generally a better balance between the real economy and the financial economy is necessary;
- by eurobonds (details to be defined) as new resources to support a fairer and more balanced growth – the eurobond formula being in itself a well-understood display of necessary solidarity between countries with excessive budget surpluses and others;
- by increasing the Union's own resources as part of the new financial framework – resources of which a part could be directed towards new active solidarity policies at the European level;
- by taking concrete measures to fight poverty, for instance by setting a minimum wage at European level.

Moreover, some participants observed that even if some of these possibilities deserve study, the objective of greater social solidarity and equality cannot obscure the overriding necessity of deep structural reforms in several Member States in order to reduce differentials of competitiveness. Closing competitiveness gaps (upwards) remains the best long-term way to close the gaps in national economic performance, and from this to create the conditions of and the means for lasting solidarity, both between states and within them. If this reality is ignored for too long, the markets will be there to remind us of it, with the familiar consequences.

Conclusion

Solidarity between Member States is and will remain one of the essential foundations of European integration. But the concept will need to change to the extent that its two components *ad liminem* – *de facto* solidarity and affective solidarity – have become inseparable.

Spontaneous solidarity must remain one of the distinctive characteristics of the Union. It is important not to neglect its symbolic value in the permanent effort to create a shared public space and destiny. This solidarity manifests itself, in ways more or less convincing, during the difficult periods that countries must on occasion traverse. Its reach and its effectiveness should benefit from an ambitious implementation of the specific clause introduced for this purpose in the Lisbon Treaty (article 222).

Alongside spontaneous solidarity, *reasoned solidarity* – combining the provision of financial advantages with the parallel search for a superior collective interest – is already at work in various EU policies, in particular the Structural Funds and the CAP. In each of these policies based on direct transfers, a new approach – more *utilitarian* and *conditional* while retaining an altruistic dimension – must be pri-

vileged during the next stages of the Union's development. The era of unthinking transfers of funds (sometimes into black holes) is over. Solidarity, like all the other instruments of the EU (in effect, solidarity is both a value and an instrument) needs to be subject to the same principles of economic and political good governance. This is the price of its future existence and flourishing.

Programme

Thursday 30 September 2010

2.45pm	Welcome speech	Elvire Fabry , Senior Research Fellow, <i>Notre Europe</i> Albert Moreno Humet , Secretary for the EU, Government of Catalonia Jordi Vaquer i Fanés , Director, CIDOB
3pm – 5.30pm	First round table	<i>What does European solidarity mean?</i>
	Chair	Jérôme Vignon , former DG for Social Protection and Integration, European Commission
	Introduction	Prof. Philippe Van Parijs , Catholic University of Louvain
	Contradiction	Loukas Tsoukalis , President, ELIAMEP
5.30pm – 6.30pm	Second round table	<i>European solidarity: jeopardised or on the move?</i>
	Keynote speaker	Anna Diamantopoulou , Greek Minister of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs; former EU Commissioner for Employment and Social Affairs
	Introduced by	Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa , President, <i>Notre Europe</i>

Friday 1 October 2010

9am – 11am
Third round table

Where do we stand in the EU? Should we keep fostering European solidarity?

Chair	Pawel Swieboda , Director, DemosEUROPA
Introduction	Ana Palacio , former Foreign Affairs Minister for Spain; former Senior Vice President and General Counsel of the World Bank
Contradiction	Pervenche Berès , Chair of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, European Parliament John Evans , Secretary-General, Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD Kalypso Nicolaïdis , St Antony's College, University of Oxford; member of the Reflection Group on the Future of Europe chaired by Felipe González

11.15am – 1.30pm
Fourth round table

What are the next steps? (Economic and financial issues)

Chair	Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa , President, <i>Notre Europe</i>
Introduction	Prof. Peter Bofinger , Economist, German Council of Economic Experts
Contradiction	José Leandro , Member of President Van Rompuy's Cabinet, Economic Advisor Daniela Schwarzer , Head of the EU Integration Research Division, SWP

1.30pm – 3pm
Lunch break

3pm – 5.30pm
Fifth round table

What are the next steps? (New initiatives: external relations, energy)

Chair **Fabrizio Tassinari**, Head of Research Unit, Foreign Policy and EU Studies, DIIS

Introduction **Edward Bannerman**, Member of Lady Ashton's Cabinet

Contradiction **Dimitar Bechev**, Head of office, ECFR Sofia
Giovanni Grevi, Senior Researcher, FRIDE
Denis Simonneau, Diplomatic Advisor and Director of International Relations, GDF Suez

Conclusion

Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul, Secretary-General, *Notre Europe*
Narcís Serra, President, CIDOB

Legal Mentions

With the support of the European Commission : support to active entities at European level in the field of active European citizenship.



Education and Culture DG

'Europe for Citizens' Programme

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dépôt légal

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Elvire Fabry

Senior Research Fellow at *Notre Europe*, in charge of the European Forum of Think Tanks and the « Think Global Act European » report.

Cooperation, Competition, Solidarity

European Solidarity : Where Do We Stand? Should We Foster It and How?

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