

Europe and Europeans 1950-2020. 70th Anniversary of the Schuman Declaration

Itinerary for Interpreting the Exhibition: “De Facto Solidarity”

Foreword

Solidarity has always been an important element in the European integration process; it is a term that has characterised it from the outset. We find it already in the first attempts at cohesion between European countries, as a guiding principle for cooperation and as part of the legal framework of European integration. In this context, Robert Schuman wrote in his declaration: "Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity". It is interesting to reflect on the concept of “de facto solidarity” because in its development, there is implicated the dynamics and the attitudes which promote a constant collaboration, which matures and grows over time.

It is possible to see how in diverse areas of European policies, regional policy, asylum, cooperation in development or in the Economic and Monetary Union itself, the principle of solidarity is constantly evoked when the existing law has to be interpreted or further elaborated. “de facto solidarity”, in the framework of the Schuman declaration – did not in itself imply a treaty but contained the significance of a common agreement, which was binding for the countries who wanted to become part (“The setting up of this powerful productive unit, open to all countries willing to take part”).

With the Treaty of Lisbon, this principle received even greater prominence. Different dimensions of solidarity in terms of common objectives can be identified [Title 1, art. 3 (3) TEU]: the solidarity between member states (“It shall promote economic, social and territorial cohesion, and solidarity among Member States”).

The solidarity between member states and individuals, and that between generations (“it shall combat social exclusion and discrimination, and shall promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of the child”).

But what does this concept of European solidarity mean? How has it been applied up until now? And how can it be implemented by citizens?

Within the exhibition, the term “de facto solidarity”, is introduced and illustrated in the concreteness of different actions, which are possible to trace thanks to some of the documents, which narrate the phases and specific moments related to it.

First approach and initial reflections

What comes to mind when you think of the term “solidarity”?
Express yourself orally by exchanging your ideas on this concept with others.

→ You can use the section “1. Oral Discussion” in the module “My notes on the exhibition” to write down some of your ideas.

Below we have given some examples of collective reflections on what “solidarity” means by some Florentine students.



Brainstorming on the key message of the Schuman Declaration: solidarity (“de facto solidarity”).
Secondary School, Florence, November 2019,
Education Programme of the HAEU

- Solidarity is “Dedicating your free time to something other than yourself”;
- “Being sustainable is a way of being in solidarity”
- Through solidarity we express a “feeling of fraternity and empathy towards others”;
- Solidarity can be perceived as “willingness”;
- Solidarity implies “Transmission to new generations”.

It is surprising to see how emotions are aroused when we talk about solidarity. This is because individually or collectively, different concepts are understood and implied by the term which are also linked to the perception of each European country. Solidarity therefore can be interpreted as speaking with one voice?

Reading of the documents and of the primary sources through the setting up of the exhibition.

Look at the clip of Robert Schuman during the sitting of the European Parliamentary Assembly, Strasbourg, (France) in 1958 (Introductory panel)

Take some time and read the text of the Schuman Declaration underlining the concepts and the sentences that strike you, apart from the passage on “de facto solidarity”. (Using the document prepared for the exhibition that can be found in the *block notes*), write down two concepts or ideas, which you would like to know more about in the exhibition, taking inspiration from your first readings of the Schuman Declaration.

→ Use section “2. Writing key concepts” in the module “My notes on the exhibition”.

Interconnections between the exhibition panels

Observe panel I dedicated to the theme of “peace” and panel II dedicated to “de facto solidarity” or the latter and panel VII, which is dedicated to “workers”. Take into account the type of materials and the link between the different source, both those that are written and those that are visual. Can you find a connection between them?

Continue the visualisation of the thematic panels and take some notes on the links you find in relation to “de facto solidarity” to see if there are any possible links to the concepts that you wrote down as being more relevant for you. You can make note of either phrases taken from the various official documents which you find in the *block notes*, or of other documents which appear to be related to this theme (photographs, audio, interviews, posters, texts, designs).

→ Use section “3. Visualising the EU through the sources” in the module “My notes on the exhibition”.

Individual and Institutional Memories

Up until now, the reading of the panels has been guided by the theme “de facto solidarity”. Now I suggest that you reflect on how this concept can find new means of expression: for example, the thoughts of those who worked on and contributed to the European integration process. Take a look at the panel: “Voices of Europe”. Reflect on the various reasons for which these individuals are in favour of the EU: do you share their beliefs?

→ Use the section “3. Visualising the EU through the sources” in the module “My notes on the exhibition”.

Re-elaboration

Try to give an actual definition to the concept “de facto solidarity” using the exhibition material that you looked at and from your own personal perspective. In this case your contribution should try to discover and define the very foundations of “de facto solidarity” by reflecting on the ties between concrete actions and how they can be applied to the everyday lives of citizens which forms an important part of European Union law.

Leave a question or comment

Have a look at the material on the final panel and try to respond to the question: What does Europe mean today? Refer if possible to the exhibition to enrich your ideas.

Note: to ensure that your visit to the exhibition is as inspiring as possible, we advise that you print out the module “My notes on the exhibition” in which you can write down your reflections.