



PLATFORM FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ON UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANTS

Press Release

***Book of Solidarity* Reveals Need for Inclusive and Effective Social Policies for Undocumented Migrants in the European Union**

**Brussels, Belgium (August 4, 2003)** – Where public social services for undocumented migrants are non-existent or ineffective, civil society intervenes by providing assistance. Citizens throughout Europe extend their solidarity to undocumented migrants and are not deterred by laws that they deem unjust and unethical. The effectiveness and credibility of a one-sided repressive discourse on illegal migration can be seriously questioned. These are the key findings of Volumes II and III of the *Book of Solidarity: Providing Assistance to Undocumented Migrants*, released today by PICUM, the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants.

Research for the *Book of Solidarity* was carried out in ten European Union Member States. The project received financial support from the European Commission, DG Employment and Social Affairs. Volume I was released in March 2003 and concentrates on Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany and the United Kingdom. Volume II focuses on France, Spain and Italy; Volume III discusses the situation in Sweden, Denmark, and Austria.

Volumes II and III of the *Book of Solidarity* highlight how EU Member States deal with the basic social rights of undocumented migrants residing in their territories. In France, Spain and Italy, legislation stipulates that undocumented migrants can have access to some forms of health care, and undocumented minors under the age of 18 can enroll in the educational system. In practice, however, many obstacles prevent undocumented migrants from accessing such services in these countries. While Sweden, Denmark and Austria have not developed social policies that provide protection to undocumented migrants, the latter may obtain emergency public health care in Sweden (if the health care practitioner deems it necessary) and undocumented minors may enroll in the educational system in Austria (since all children – even undocumented minors – are required to attend school).

The lack of social policies for undocumented migrants in some EU Member States and the obstacles to accessing existing social services in others create a situation of marginalization and exploitation of a part of the population. Undocumented migrants are not able to properly enjoy basic social rights such as health care, education, housing and work due to their precarious residence status. Organizations in these countries try to redress this situation in diverse and innovative ways, by facilitating access to public or private services or offering their own social services. They also do a wide variety of work to raise awareness and advocate on behalf of undocumented migrants towards the general public and policymakers. All of this work is carried out even in countries where providing assistance to undocumented

migrants is discouraged and even penalized. One of the main points underlined in the *Book of Solidarity* is that inhumane and unjust laws will not stop citizens from helping undocumented migrants.

Thousands of citizens throughout Europe extend their solidarity to undocumented migrants on a daily basis, thus putting into practice the values of solidarity and social security on which the European Union is based. The sheer amount of assistance that they provide to undocumented migrants is a clear indicator to policy makers on the national and European levels that social policies for undocumented migrants are necessary and urgent.