

Statement on the occasion of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty 2015

Europe has the tools to ensure a poverty-free future for all its children

“The water and electricity have been cut off from my home because my parents cannot afford to pay the bills. I am very worried”, explained 9 year old Mary from Malta.

In Europe, nearly 28% of children are at risk of poverty. This means that 25.8 million children are living in families that suffer daily from the lack of income and basic services, such as food supplies, housing, education or healthcare. Children living in mono-parental families, children in working poor families, children with minority backgrounds, refugee and migrant children and children with disabilities are the most affected. Eradicating child and family poverty is a priority for Caritas, and an essential element in guaranteeing a dignified life for everyone.

Our approach to tackling family and child poverty is based on our long experience in listening and working with children and families all over Europe. It is family oriented, multi-dimensional and rights-based, and aims at ensuring that children and their families have access to adequate resources and quality services. It also strives to give children and their families the opportunity to participate in matters that affect them directly.

To prevent and combat child poverty, families must receive adequate income that is above the relative poverty threshold. Caritas Europa believes that the child’s main carer should in addition receive a universal child benefit, aligned with real needs. However, we need to go beyond obvious financial solutions and put in place concrete measures that enable all children to access education, social networks that promote inclusion and health care. Only this way can we break the vicious cycle of poverty and ensure that these children can grow up to reach their full potential.

“Children are the future of our societies. Austerity measures applied to families and children will create an irreparable damage to all of us. We request all European governments to invest more and better in children and their families. Governments and European institutions can count on civil society organisations, like Caritas, that are working daily to promote the participation of families and children in the society,” said Jorge Nuño Mayer, Secretary General of Caritas Europa.

We are convinced that it is possible to eradicate child poverty in Europe, if our political leaders truly commit to the issue. Therefore, we call on them to put into practice the European Commission’s Recommendations on Investing in Children and the European Social Charter of the Council of Europe.

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