

Statement ahead of EPSCO Council 16 June 2016

Dutch EU Presidency delivers on its promise to push poverty up on EU agenda

Caritas Europa is pleased to see that, as promised, the Dutch EU Presidency has pushed poverty onto the EU Council's agenda. We now invite the Council to take a step forward in eradicating poverty in Europe and to adopt the conclusion on "Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion: An integrated approach".

"I used to be a construction worker, but I lost my job when the company went bankrupt. My wife has a mental illness and often needs psychiatric support. Long-term unemployment and lack of support caused me distress and, unfortunately, I started having drinking problems. I have three children who attend school but I cannot give them the support they require to perform at school. I wish I had never lost my job or had more support to get back on track," said a Caritas Slovenia beneficiary.

Launched in April, Caritas Europa's report ***End Poverty in Europe – Our solutions to make it happen*** presents 18 recommendations to tackle poverty in Europe. It contributes to the debate on new European social welfare models built on social inclusion, investment and social protection as well as human and social rights. During the launch event, Mrs Jetta Klijnsma, the Netherlands' Secretary of State for Social Affairs and Employment, promised to "work even harder to push poverty up on the EU Council agenda". We are now seeing these words becoming reality.

"We are encouraged by the fact that some of our recommendations have been taken on-board in the Council conclusions, in particular those regarding the improvement of social protection systems to reduce poverty and to guarantee the well-being of children. The conclusions are also in line with our thinking regarding the monitoring of progress and the creation of an integrated approach to tackle the problem of poverty. This proves that Europe has what it takes to move the 123 million people living in poverty out of this heinous trap," said Shannon Pfohman, Caritas Europa's Head of Policy and Advocacy.

The Council conclusions are a step in the right direction. We now urge European leaders to put our main recommendations into practice to eradicate poverty in Europe by:

1. Monitoring the efficiency of current social protection systems in reducing poverty;
2. Introducing a Child Guarantee;
3. Improving working conditions in Europe;
4. Encouraging EU Member States to implement minimum income schemes;
5. Encouraging EU Member States to adjust the minimum wage amount to a level that allows an individual's household to cover basic needs and to live in dignity.

For more information, please contact:

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Notes to editor:

- The report *End Poverty in Europe – Our solutions to make it happen* is available online at caritascares.eu.
- *End Poverty in Europe – Our solutions to make it happen* covers 21 EU Member States.
- **Caritas Europa** is a network of 49 member organisations in 46 European countries and one of the 7 regions of Caritas Internationalis. Our members assist and provide services to millions of people in need. Caritas Europa aims at lifting people out of poverty by empowering them and by influencing unjust structures and unfair policies that keep people trapped in positions of disempowerment.