

Press briefing: new Caritas publication on European social models

Social justice and equality in Europe is possible!

“Even the ambulance refuses to help the homeless. It has happened many times, to call 112 for a man on the street, lying unconscious, and they [have] refused to send an ambulance. They say, there are more important subjects, there are not enough doctors, etc. and they can’t deal with the homeless...” ~ A Caritas employee working with the homeless people in Burgas, Bulgaria.

Caritas’s newest publication “Social justice and equality in Europe – is possible! The Caritas roadmap” is published today. It provides solutions for making social models more resilient and capable of ensuring social justice throughout Europe. The publication results from a long process of observation and analysis of social realities and solidarity systems and from the testing of innovative practices in the Caritas network.

“We need to ensure basic social protection those who cannot meet their own basic needs, empowering them to participate in society. But to go further than that, we also need to alter unjust social structures that create poverty, social exclusion and indifference,” said Jorge Nuño Mayer, Secretary General of Caritas Europa. Caritas works on a daily basis with people experiencing poverty to dialogue and develop strategies for change. We analyse how solidarity can best be put into practice to effectively reduce inequalities and eradicate persistent poverty. The Caritas model is based on three pillars:

1. Family, a vital cell of society and primary safety net;
2. Inclusive labour markets, recognising the value of work and people’s contribution to society;
3. Social protection systems, sound social investment.

In our view, social models are resilient if they can cope with economic, social and demographic challenges. The impact of the financial and economic crisis of 2008 shows that European social models are not able to address adequately all the consequences of these kinds of crises. Before 2008, about 120 million people were living in or at risk of poverty in Europe. This figure increased following the crisis, peaking at 125 million in 2013. Today, though the figure has come down, it still is at the pre-crisis level.

In order to arrive at resilient social models, our publication provides for recommendations to design policies under the three pillars. We provide specific recommendations for national authorities as well as EU institutions to guide their review processes for improving the different social models to eradicate extreme poverty and social exclusion effectively. In particular, we recommend to:

- Adopt a monthly child allowance; families with a low income should receive an increased amount of such allowance;
- Ensure wage equality between women and men – equal pay for equal work;
- Guarantee a means-tested minimum income that is above the poverty line;
- Protect basic social rights by integrating them as human rights into national constitutions;
- Use the Stability and Growth Pact’s flexibility clause to allow EU Member States to exempt social investment from the calculation of national budgetary expenditure.

For more information, please contact:

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Notes to editors:

- The publication “Social justice and equality in Europe – is possible! The Caritas roadmap” is available online at www.caritascare.eu and at http://www.caritas.eu/sites/default/files/esm_2016.pdf.
- 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.