

CHILD POVERTY

TEN PACK OF RECOMMENDATIONS





Photo: Nikos Pilos - www.nikospilos.com
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Introduction

Europe's future social, political and economic development depends on the extent to which its children grow up happy, healthy, well-educated, safe and self-confident.

International studies show that child poverty and social exclusion lead to higher social and economic costs for countries.

In contrast, investing in children who live in poverty leads to very real economic benefits and to significant savings in social costs over the long-term.

Children who grow up in poverty or social exclusion are less likely to reach their full potential. They run a higher risk of being unemployed and living in persistent poverty as adults.

Specific groups of children are at high risk of more severe or extreme poverty. For this reason they need particular attention.

In Europe alone there are more than 20 million of children at risk of poverty. This number is growing as a direct result of the economic crisis. Many of the services on which children at risk of poverty depend - including public health, education and childcare services - have experienced significant cutbacks since the crisis began.

The crisis has also resulted in a loss of employment and insecurity at work. These developments have serious consequences for the families affected and for their children.

In 2008, EU leaders were quick to react to the financial crisis. They showed unprecedented political will when they approved billions of euros of tax-payers' money being directed to banks and other institutions to save them from bankruptcy.

In contrast, there has been a failure to translate official statements on child poverty by the EU and its Member States into consistent targets, resources, action and monitoring of progress.

Caritas Europa believes that the eradication of child poverty in Europe is possible if a sufficient level of political will is mobilised.

Caritas Europa's Ten Pack

Informed by the wide experience of its member organisations working with children in poverty and their families, Caritas Europa is calling on the EU and its Member States to:

- (1) **Adopt a child-specific, multi-dimensional, rights-based approach to tackling child poverty based on the standards and principles enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.** This approach should incorporate the three pillars (i) access to adequate resources (ii) access to quality services and (iii) opportunities for children's participation in all matters that affect them.
- (2) **Ensure an adequate minimum income for families, at least above the relative poverty threshold, to prevent as well as to combat child poverty.** Provide universal child benefit paid directly to the child's main carer, and underpinned by adequate minimum income schemes related to real needs.
- (3) **Maintain a particular focus on children who are at greater risk of poverty,** including children living in or leaving institutions, children with migrant or minority backgrounds, children of asylum seekers and refugees, traveller and Roma children, children with disabilities or with parents with a disability, children living with single parents, and children growing up in low-income families and/or with parents in low-paid employment.
- (4) **Promote a greater integration of family and child-centered policies aimed at breaking the cycle of poverty and the transmission of disadvantage across generations.** Take the best interests of the child into consideration with regards to asylum legislation, especially when vulnerable unaccompanied children are involved, and provide for effective access to family reunification for children of migrants and refugees.
- (5) **Strengthen the 'inclusive growth' elements of the Europe 2020 Strategy, in particular the strategy's flagship initiative 'European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion' which identifies child poverty as an issue of concern for Member States.** As child poverty continues to increase at a greater rate than poverty amongst other groups, it is important that a sub-target for child poverty is set within the European Platform Against Poverty's overarching target of reducing poverty and social exclusion by 20 million by 2020. The targeting of poverty-related issues in the annual Country Specific Recommendations adopted by the European Council should be expanded to focus on reducing child and family poverty. Progress towards implementing these recommendations should be monitored. Key mechanisms supporting the social inclusion policies of the Europe 2020 Strategy including the Social Protection/Inclusion Open Method of Co-ordination should be renewed and significantly strengthened.

(6) **Give greater visibility to children in poverty and their families in the EU's Multi-Annual Financial Framework (2014-2020) through the inclusion of comprehensive measures which can be traced and monitored,** and by linking direct and indirect support to families facing poverty (eg multi-child families, single-parent households).

(7) **Ensure the availability of more adequate and timely child poverty and social inclusion data at EU and Member State level.** A comprehensive mix of quantitative and qualitative child poverty indicators, including at-risk-of-child-poverty measures, and measures of material deprivation, should be agreed and standardised by the EU and its Member States. The data should be collected and published on an annual basis. The availability of this data will allow for evidence-based policy development by Member States and promote the most cost-effective use of their public resources. This data should also be used to assess the impact of the economic crisis and related austerity measures on the most vulnerable children and their families.

(8) **Set annual targets for tackling child poverty as part of Member State's National Reform Programmes .** Member States should also be required to set specific sub-targets relating to child poverty in their National Reform Programmes in consultation with all of the relevant national and local authorities, as their contribution to the headline European poverty-reduction target. Progress towards achieving these child poverty reduction targets should be monitored in the evaluation of the implementation of the Member State's National Reform Programmes (NRPs).

(9) **Involve civil society in a partnership approach to tackling child poverty.** The EU and its member states should promote a genuine involvement of civil society in the preparation, planning, monitoring, implementation and evaluation of child poverty-related programmes and initiatives. Effective partnership principles should be developed between the Commission, Member States and civil society, and should become mandatory. In particular, partnership contracts between the European Commission and Member States should prescribe a clear role for civil society.

(10) **Enhance mutual exchange and learning in order to promote more effective approaches to tackling child poverty at EU and Member State level.** Caritas Europa supports the establishment of an appropriate structure at EU level to foster the scaling up, transfer and dissemination of best practices in relation to tackling child and family poverty and promoting child well-being. This would assist in capturing the richness of knowledge and practice that exists at Member State level in relation to addressing child poverty.



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