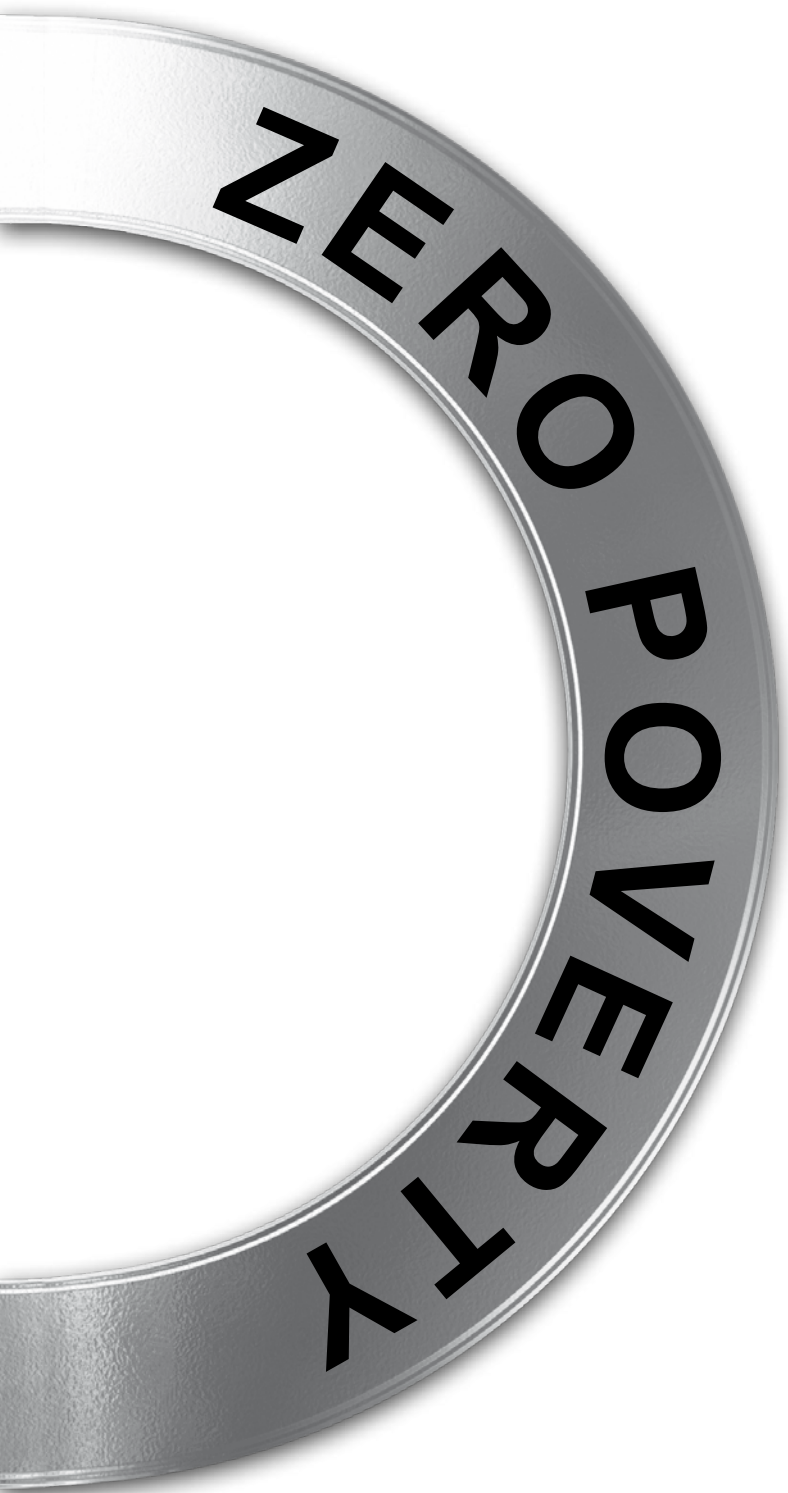


POVERTY AMONG US



Part A : An Analytical Approach

Foreword

*Open your eyes and look at poverty.
Open your ears and listen to the voices of poor people.
Open your heart and meet people.
Open your mind and understand : we all are human persons !*

The divide between the so-called poor people and those who are living in wealth is artificial and mainly man-made. The actual financial and economic crisis is deepening and sharpening that divide. This divide is harmful to the society as a whole and to each single person. Nobody should live in poverty because of unjust structures or unfair conditions. "Zero poverty" is our moral claim. Caritas therefore believes that our societies need a new framework in which human rights are fully acknowledged and protected not because of sheer legal necessity, but because of the recognised dignity of the human person who is the source and the end of all rights and obligations. We believe that every single person is an image of God.

If you are going to open this paper you will find tools (part A) and stories (part B). Both are designed to be eye-openers to poverty in its diversity and multifaceted reality. Whether you choose to access the land of poverty through some proven analytical lenses or through real life stories, you will be guided by your own perception(s) and experience(s). Be open to convert your perspective(s) and test the approach chosen by those in our Caritas network who encounter poor people every day and those who study the phenomenon of poverty. We believe that every single person is a son or a daughter of God through Christ our Savior.

Caritas in Europe wants to contribute to a new way to look at poverty. Poverty is more than a lack of wellbeing. It affects the person in its body, its soul and its life. It affects the community where he or she lives. We can't afford to lose a single person as a community of human beings.

We have to repair unfair conditions from the past, avoid new injustices for the present and for future generation(s). This is what we commonly call responsibility. This principle of responsibility gives meaning and sense to our actions and behaviours beyond their most immediate and material impact. We and our fellow citizens are directly and indirectly affected by such actions and behaviours. But there are solutions, and they lay in our hands. Changes are possible. Caritas is a witness of changes in people who live in poverty and, still, succeed in crafting their lives and destinies.

Through its work with poor people and through its advocacy efforts towards the public authorities, Caritas advocates for sustainable living conditions for all by proposing concrete actions. Living responsibility can change ours and the life within the "City", "City" here refers to the organised community we are living in and which by now is becoming more and more global and interdependent.

We believe that we are interlinked through His Holy Spirit and therefore living in a communion of human persons beyond any borders.

Caritas as a charitable organisation of the Catholic Church does not differentiate between the people it serves and works with. Proselytism is even contrary to its nature and its mission (cf *Deus Caritas Est*, 31, c). Working with poor and ill people puts Caritas at the centre of the societal struggle between exclusion and inclusion. Inclusion is more than a key concept of the European Union which hopefully puts the fight against poverty among its priorities beyond the European Year of Combating Poverty in 2010.



Inclusion is an obligation directly linked to human rights. Inclusion might be seen as another way to build communion. This means that a process of active inclusion cannot be a unilateral task assigned to those who are lacking resources or those who are providing resources. It is a task for the whole community or "City" and one could even argue that the fittest have the greater duty in this dynamic and reciprocal process. Enabling others to live to their full potential is contributing to the full and true development of all persons and to the whole person (Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 14; Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 11). Empowerment of the poor in the end means also empowerment of the whole community and the "City".

Recognising the poor as fellow citizens who contribute to building the "City" in the same way as all those who consider themselves self-supporting or independent people is to recognise that we all are in need of one another. The scientific approach chosen in this paper leads to the same conclusion. Sociologically speaking, we are not abstract monads. We are part of a society and we are building the future of that same society by our actions and omissions, by our behaviour and our silence. Mutual interdependency or solidarity should not be undermined by those who feel secure or beyond any risks. Not only can this change quickly but, above all, it is also a fundamental anthropological error.

Recognition is both given and received. Only those who are open to receive recognition can share it later. It is a source in which we are born to contribute continuously. Recognition means gratitude. Caritas is a place of gratitude. Many people in need express their gratitude to those who are able to help – albeit as professionals or as volunteers. This gratitude mirrors the real challenge of the "formation of the heart" (*Deus Caritas Est*, 31, a). Nobody is at the starting point of the source of recognition and gratitude. Everything starts with "*Deus caritas est*" as our Pope Benedict XVI summarises. God is the source and the end of all human beings and of all our undertakings.

I extend my personal gratitude to those who have worked hard in order to produce this poverty concept paper: Patrizia Cappelletti, Hubert Cornudet, Seán Healy, Carlo Knöpfel, Sébastien Mora Delgado, Adriana Opromolla, Paolo Pezzana, Miriam Pikaar, Robert Urbé, Gabriela Sonnleitner and Simone Villiger, and to the people behind the pages of wisdom and praxis, of science and reflection, who have shared their lives and experiences, especially in the empirical part. May their work be recognised in our Caritas network and beyond as an attempt to lay new foundations for the ways we look at poverty.

This concept paper is the foundation of a series of specific papers which will develop particular themes and concerns within the broad field of poverty. Together those papers want to build a resource "library" for social workers, politicians, decision-makers and researchers. Each paper was elaborated by a group of experts and approved by the Social Policy Commission of Caritas Europa. Thank you to all those who have contributed within the task forces, the commission and the secretariat general in Brussels to this result, which has received the valuable sponsorship of the European Commission under its program PROGRESS.

May the Year 2010 be a renewed commitment to combating poverty in Europe and in the world. May "zero poverty" become the claim of the whole "City" !



Erny Gillen
President of Caritas Europa

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1. How Poverty works

1.1. A Model

1.1.1. Shaping the Model

Poverty is a scandal. Every human being has the right to sufficient means for a decent life, especially food, clothing, shelter, health care, rest and necessary social services. Consequently, in circumstances of sickness, disability, old age, unemployment, widowhood and any other involuntary situation of deprivation, every person has the right to be looked after. The internationally recognised right to social security is essential to guarantee human dignity for all persons, when they are deprived of their capacity to realise their rights.

Caritas is using a model that enables the analysis of a system of social welfare in national societies. When defining poverty as a *lack of well-being*, the focus is on the question of social welfare as a part of the well-being for all citizens of any given country. In this sense well-being means more than social security and social protection and even more than social welfare. Income-oriented social insurances and need-oriented social transfers cover aspects of well-being, but well-being also originates from labour market inclusion, the family and other communities as well as from the personal capacity to benefit from social security and social protection. It also includes all the non-material aspects of life.

If poverty is a lack of well-being, and social welfare reflects the **structural conditions** for developing personal and societal well-being, poverty is also a lack of Social Welfare. The one who can not find a job or earn enough by working, the one who will not find support from family or other primary networks; and the one who does not receive the necessary help from the state or other social organisations, will have to live in poverty.

Social progress of a country can be measured by the number of people who, being forced to live in poverty,

can move out of this precarious situation and achieve more well-being in the course of time. Where increasing numbers of people are being forced to live in poverty, social inequality increases, and so do social tensions; the spotlight on the common good fades and the country is threatened with a societal step backwards. The risk of social violence, criminality and flawed governance is then higher, thus impairing democracy and human rights.

The structural conditions for developing personal and societal well-being include:

- The possibility for all people to be able to manage daily life for themselves and for their families. This includes expenditure on food, housing, health, mobility and societal participation.
- The possibility for all people to protect themselves against social risks such as unemployment, sickness, accidents and disability.
- The possibility for all people to guarantee their living conditions in case of retirement by (social) insurances and/or by putting aside some savings for old age.

Three main sources shape these conditions: i) paid productive employment in the labour market; ii) solidarity within the family and primary networks, and iii) the support provided by the welfare state. People have no other choice but to live in poverty, if they cannot earn a living from their job to guarantee existence for themselves and their dependents; if the family support is not guaranteed; and if the welfare state provides insufficient assistance. The welfare situation of people is therefore always defined by the interaction between these three sources: the labour market, the family and the welfare state.

Figure 1: Social Welfare Model

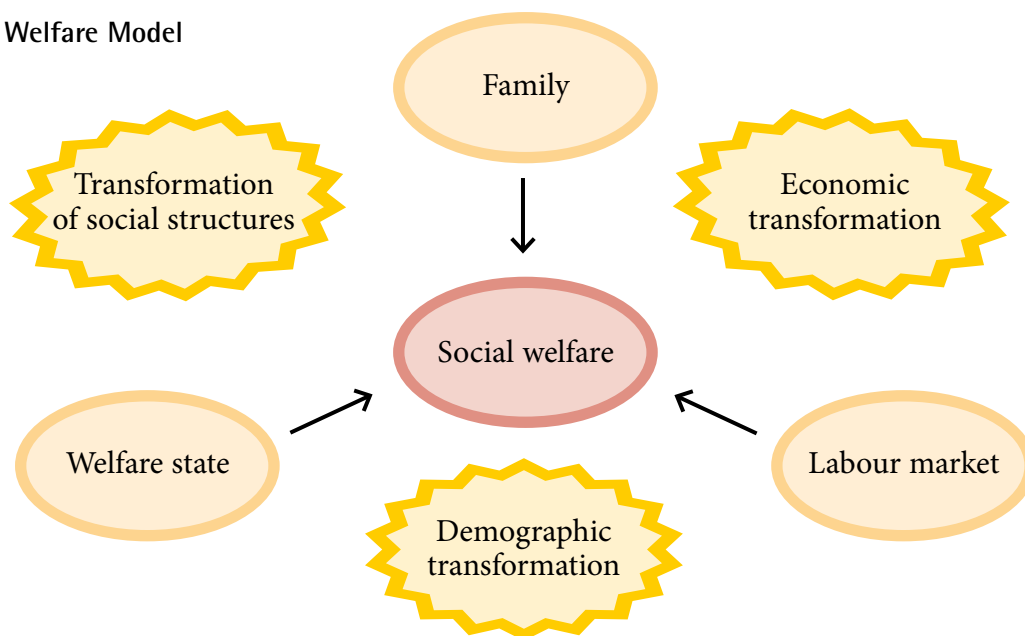


Figure 1 reflects the social welfare model. It encourages reflection on three issues :

- What is social welfare?
- How does social welfare come about?
- What influence does social transformation have on social welfare?

1.1.2. Poverty Risks and the Labour Market

Work is a source of well-being because it allows for the realisation of many other rights. It allows personal and family maintenance and, insofar as it is freely chosen or accepted, it is also a means of recognition and responsible participation in society. Moreover, the labour market is one of the three pillars of social welfare, since it is where an income can be generated to contribute to the existence and the financing of the desired living standards. These earnings differ according to occupational qualifications, sectors, regions, gender, age and nationality. However, the labour market also entails a number of poverty risks, especially unemployment. Whoever does not find a job as a young person in the labour market, whoever loses his or her job or leaves the labour market without protection is in great danger of becoming impoverished. Not all people of working age have the same access to a job. Not only is there a lack of paid work but people seeking employment do not always have the qualifications currently required on the labour market.

The international Human Rights instruments entitle all workers to just, decent, safe and healthy working conditions, including a fair remuneration that is sufficient for a decent standard of living for themselves and their families. Nevertheless, reality shows that simply having a job is not enough to avoid poverty. Where wages are lower; where atypical working conditions are widespread; where labour laws and occupational safety regulations are scarcely developed or respected, people remain in poverty despite being at work. That is why, in many countries, the State stipulates a minimum wage. This is however often not enough to guarantee the existential minimum for even one person.

Particular attention must be paid to work in the grey or black labour markets. In some countries, this segment of the labour market is the only possibility for a large number of people to earn any income at all. In many cases however, this extreme form of precarious employment is still not enough for them to escape from poverty, nor does it protect them against social risks or provide for a pension for old age.

Where work does not come to the workers, workers go to the work. Labour migration is a manifestation of the search of many people for a living wage, to escape from poverty or simply to improve their and their families' living conditions.

International migration affects the labour market in a specific way: the country of origin loses key workers while the country of destination experiences a societal sub-stratification effect. Migrants often have a weak legal status and are forced to accept low-paid jobs, because their occupational qualifications are either insufficient or not recognised. In this way they risk losing many of the skills they have acquired in their home countries. At the same time, the phenomenon of 'brain-drain' has negative consequences for the economy of the country of origin. Despite this, the remittances that migrant populations send back to their families can help to reduce poverty in their countries of origin on a micro level.

Special mention must be made of social partnership that reflects the participatory dimension of public decision making and plays an important role in the welfare system of many countries. Where workers are well organised, their representatives succeed in negotiating arrangements with employers that bring about higher wages, more holidays, better employment protection and increased job security. Today, however, this is only possible if these arrangements match the competitive needs of companies in globalised markets. Where trade union organisation is weak, where workers' organisations are discouraged because of their past history, or where social organisations can not fully play their role, workers (very often women) cannot escape from their precarious working conditions.

The labour market situation can lead people into poverty. Both the families and the welfare state are thus put under pressure. Solidarity within the family and primary networks are not always able to absorb this labour market-related poverty.

1.1.3. Poverty Risks and the Family

The family, as the first experience of community in one's personal life, is a place where capacities are nourished and where the foundations for well-being are laid. The family is entitled to receive appropriate social, legal and economic protection from society and from the State.

In this sense the family is another fundamental pillar of social welfare, resulting from its capacity to satisfy the material needs of its members and to cope with their difficulties.

In particular, in a family more than one person can obtain an income and the family may receive additional financial resources, such as child allowances, which also contribute to securing its maintenance. In many countries, impoverished families can survive and avoid hunger only thanks to the subsistence economy that they are able to develop, for example by obtaining food from their own tiny plots of land.

Nevertheless, families are increasingly facing certain poverty risks. The household income can remain below the poverty line, if the earnings on the labour market are low and the number of non-working family members is high. The extent to which both parents can get gainful employment also depends on whether childcare is needed and if so, how much. Often, other members of the family take on this task, or the children are left to look after themselves. The welfare system can promote the employment of men and women by providing suitable childcare services to complement family help.

Not all family forms are subject to the same poverty risks. Single-parent families and those with more than two children are often hit exceptionally hard by poverty. This has not only to do with low income, but also with an insufficient material relief from family costs. These are the reasons why very often children are at risk of poverty today, and indeed why child poverty is an issue in most European countries.

Solidarity within the family can also contribute to well-being, usually across three generations. Often, both material and non-material support flows back and forth between the various family members. One particularly important form of this family solidarity is the cash remittances that migrants send back to their families. Where solidarity in the family is lacking, it is mostly the children and grandparents who suffer from poverty.

The situation within households can lead people, especially children and young people, into poverty. Increased employment and social transfers do not always create an escape route from family-related poverty. Hence, the well-being potentially offered by the family will also have to be considered in terms of sociability and quality of relations.

1.1.4. Poverty Risks and the Welfare State

Well-being, from a cultural and social perspective, is well rooted in a political environment where justice, equality and solidarity are assumed as the basis of human co-habitation. The welfare state provides for, or should provide for concrete social infrastructures in which these basic principles are embedded. In this sense, the welfare state is a third important source of well-being. Indeed, the main political responsibility for every public institution is to continuously improve this well-being.

The welfare state can be organised in various forms, according to the different existing cultures, constitutional assets and levels of civility and social capital. On the benefits' side, it provides security against social risks such as unemployment, accidents, illness and disability, and supports old-age pensions. It also serves as a last social safety net before the plunge into material poverty. It is financed through tax revenues and/or deductions from wages and salaries.

In some countries the social insurance cover paid out against income losses is insufficient to live decently. Then, social risks such as unemployment, accident, sickness and old age will directly lead to poverty. Even when social assistance payments are paid out, the amounts are often

so small that they are scarcely enough to provide for a dignified survival.

This complex structure and balance can mean that a person's fate with regard to poverty also depends on the country or region he or she lives in.

One can not develop well-being when living at risk of poverty. In this sense, preventing poverty and protecting against poverty risks is the specific task of the welfare state. The welfare state has to protect those people who cannot ensure their wellbeing through either an income or family solidarity. Often the welfare state will not ensure this protection and introduces a new paradigm that mixes sanctions and incentives in programmes to bring people into work. Here one speaks of the 'activating' welfare state.

In a nutshell, in many countries the welfare state considers itself to be subsidiary to the labour market and the family. Nevertheless, self-reliance and intra-familial help rapidly reach their respective limits and can seldom really mitigate any social protection gap left open by the shrinking of the public welfare provision.



1.2. Societal Transformation and new Poverty Risks

1.2.0. Societal Transformation

Societies are in a state of constant transformation leading to changing levels of social welfare in different countries. There are some people who are "winners" in this process of societal change; they experience upward social mobility and achieve increased social welfare. There are others who are among the "losers" of societal transformation; their personal circumstances are uncertain and they are confronted with new social risks. The distance between the winners and the losers of the societal transformation of today is growing.

With regard to poverty and social exclusion, three main aspects of societal transformation are of great significance: the economic, the social and the demographic transformation.

1.2.1. Economic Transformation and New Poverty Risks

The economy of a country does not only follow a cyclical course of boom and recession, but is also subject to a continuous structural transformation. This structural change is driven by two forces in particular: the processes of globalisation and technological development that impact on both macroeconomics and the daily life of common people.

Economic and political globalisation is binding national economies together ever more strongly through trade, direct investment and financial transfers, and driving the global division of labour into the remotest corners of the world. Economic interdependence has become enormous. The global financial crisis that erupted in the summer of 2008 has made this very clear.

Due to new technical possibilities in the field of communication, companies are today less and less location-bound in the traditional way. They invest where local conditions bring them most advantages. This has long been the case in the national context, and now plays an increasingly important role in the global context too.

Economic policy is mutating into location policy. Moreover, because no location can be equally attractive for all business activities, strategic decisions must be made: for which branches of industries, companies and business functions can the respective location be particularly interesting, and for which ones less? Location policy is then reflected in the legal framework, in the quality and pay of workforces, in research and education policies, and many other aspects.

Added to this is what is commonly called technological progress. This can be seen not only in new products and services, but much more so in new procedures and processes. Today, automatisations and the use of robots can be observed not only in developed economies, but almost universally.

The changes induced by both globalisation and technological development bring along consequences for the labour market, families and the public welfare system. Many national labour markets are undergoing change and are integrated into a global labour market. Workers are competitors in a global competition for employment. The pressure on wages and working conditions is increasing.

There is talk of 'flexibilisation': flexible workforces must be prepared to accept fluctuating earnings, change their location of work repeatedly, work irregular hours and continuously undertake further training. This stress has its consequences. The number of workers who are not able to withstand this pressure any more is increasing. The cost of this development to national economies is enormous. Some countries have tried to counterbalance this tendency by adopting a strategy combining flexibility and security (i.e. the "flexicurity" approach as it is also promoted by the European Union).

Low-skilled employees, older workers and people with health problems (mental health included), are finding it increasingly difficult to earn a living wage. In almost all European countries, the number of working poor is on the rise.

The economic structural transformation is also leading to sectoral shifts: employment in agriculture is on the decrease. In the industrial sector, differing trends can be observed. Where locations attract industrial production, the number of jobs is increasing; where these industries move away, jobs are lost. The number of people employed in the services sector however is growing everywhere. This development is accompanied by a growing offer of part-time jobs. These are taken predominantly by women. The labour force participation rate of women is rising accordingly.

Family life is changing too. The required flexibility is forcing families to organise their daily lives in a completely new way. This puts a lot of stress on families and may create additional tensions that could, in the worst case degenerate. Among other threats, domestic violence for example may rise. This leads to rising costs, both in material and psychophysical terms. For many, the disburseable household income may sink towards the poverty line.

At the other end of the income chain, managers who have replaced entrepreneurs at the head of business activities are meanwhile earning more than a thousand times the salaries of their workers, whereas this ratio used to be closer to one to ten. These managers do not have the same relationship with their business and their workers, as entrepreneurs formerly did. This puts the issue of corporate social responsibility to the foreground.

The welfare state has become a decisive factor for companies deciding where to locate their business. On the one hand, the welfare state appears as a cost factor that has a negative effect on the international competitiveness of enterprises. On the other, a well-functioning welfare state is a guarantor of social and political stability, and this is an important consideration for firms when deciding where to locate their firms. In addition, social services offered to workers (or their absence) may also be of interest to employers.

In this dynamic process of competition between locations, the political use of welfare is changing. Some

countries have started to reform their welfare systems. Instead of keeping high benefits which are blamed for preventing people from getting a job, so-called activating policies have been introduced. They consist of cutting benefits down to the strict minimum (and even less) while forcing people to take up any job in order to "make work pay". As these policies are often accompanied by sanctions as well as time limits on benefits, these policies may end up creating even more poverty than they propose to combat. To invest in people's capabilities on the one hand while safeguarding their daily life through decent income on the other, could be an alternative policy.

1.2.2. Social Transformation and New Poverty Risks

Social transformation has many aspects and poses specific poverty risks.

The dismantling and dissolution of social rules and systems, together with other structural factors, often leads to internal migration flows from rural areas to the cities where daily interaction is far more anonymous. People search for new opportunities for their occupational development but, despite all their efforts, they often find themselves in precarious circumstances once again. They form a reservoir of cheap and often low-skilled labourers who try to make ends meet in irregular working conditions. Even those family ties that once could have helped them over the worst times are now often lacking.

One quite special aspect of social transformation in many countries is middle class women's perception of their new role. Today, women attain significantly higher levels of education than their mothers did, they are more likely to have a qualified job, and even during the phase of founding a family they can keep a foot in the labour market. This female perception of the role of women is not matched by an equivalent change in attitudes among many men. This may lead to tensions in relationships and amongst other consequences to a significant increase in divorce rates. Single parents run the highest poverty risk of all family forms. In many of these cases the support

provided by the public welfare system is insufficient. All too often, it is still based on the male breadwinner model. As a consequence some women decide not to have children at all or at least to have fewer children than they might have wished, because they cannot balance work, career and family, and because they cannot find sufficient support for their desired life structure.

This process of social transformation is in various stages of advancement in European countries. This leads to specific difficulties concerning the integration of migrants, who are thus forced to find a path between very different systems of values and behaviour and who live a life in which they are rarely well-supported by the new society in which they now find themselves.

1.2.3. Demographic Transformation and New Poverty Risks

In almost every European country, a very similar pattern of demographic change is taking place. The balance between generations is shifting: the number of elderly and aging people is increasing, whereas the number of middle aged adults is on the decrease, as is also the number of children and young people.

Nevertheless, birth rates show significant variations; and this apparently has to do with how work and family life are reconciled in the respective countries, for both women and men.

The demographic developments have implications for the labour market, the family and the public welfare system. The risk of becoming unemployed can be expected to decline, because over the next two to three decades the number of people of working age in many countries will decrease. Hence new perspectives are opening up for young people. Above all, labour migration to Western Europe will continue to increase and it will have to do so.

The requirements for child care (see 1.1.3), and for the care for the elderly also have to be met. The health care systems are often inadequately prepared for these demographic changes and leave such caring up to the families. This will then lead to new poverty risks, when

this burden of care cannot be taken up within the family because of the declining family size, or when women will be forced to give up or reduce their gainful employment.

Another very important issue in the context of demographic developments is the adequacy of old age pensions. In most central and eastern European countries, these pensions are insufficient to ensure a decent standard of living and thus contribute to age related poverty. If the proportion of people of working age to people of retirement age in western European countries affects the capacity to fund adequate state pensions, these countries will also experience an increase in age related poverty. This puts the question of the increase in the retirement age firmly on the policy agenda.



1.3. Poverty Risks will remain and New Poverty Risks will arise

This brief and general description of the dynamic social development in Europe, made with the help of the model describing the social welfare system, is enough to show that the prospects of ensuring the right conditions for all European citizens to develop their own well-being are not satisfactory (the conditions being very different from country to country, and even within one country between regions). Nor does the eradication of poverty in Europe seem to be the goal of European governments anymore, as far as it ever was.

The old risks of poverty are not eradicated through economic and social transformation; indeed, new risks of poverty emerge. These risks are particularly severe in times of crisis. Thus, the key question is how the three sources of social welfare: i.e labour, family and the welfare state can be balanced in a new way, so that all three can play their proper roles again. One of the questions then also has to be how the public welfare system can respond to this development; whether - and here globalisation can not be used as an excuse - it can once again fulfil its obligations towards the public good. Here, the amount of leeway available differs from country to country. This means, therefore, that joint efforts are necessary also within the framework of the European Union and beyond.



2. What is Poverty ?

2.1. The Multidimensionality of Poverty

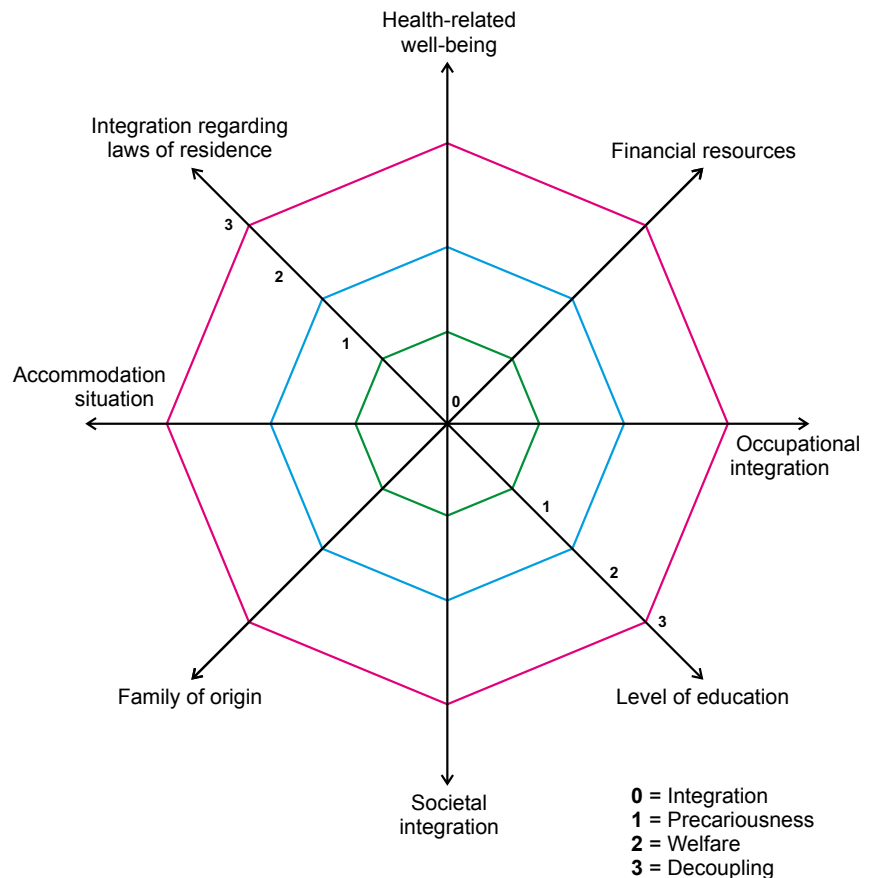
Caritas knows that poor people are not simply victims, but actors. Caritas believes in the dignity of each and every person. Both the perspective of the poor and *the preferential option for the poor* lead us to a description of the reality of poverty by means of the human sciences and to a resolute rejection of this reality.

Caritas sees poverty as a lack of well-being, including precarious circumstances typically characterized by a permanent lack of financial resources. In addition, poverty brings further severe restrictions and limitations: impoverished people often suffer from bad health; they are more frequently unemployed and for a longer time; they live mostly in cramped housing conditions; they are often characterized by poor education and occupational training; they often work in unstable jobs; and they rarely have a viable social network, often experience broken family relationships and an uncertain residence status.

Anyone who really wants to uncover the whole tragedy of poverty and social exclusion must seek a description of these precarious circumstances in all their dimensions.

Hence we consider here eight dimensions. In addition to financial resources, these are: health-related well-being; accommodation; level of education; occupational integration; societal integration; integration regarding laws of residence; and the family of origin. These eight dimensions can be visualised as in Figure 2. There are additional dimensions, i.e. psychological, cultural, ethical and spiritual ones; these are not analysed in the same frame or model. These dimensions nevertheless have their influence (and sometimes even the most influence) on the situation, which is not only the result of the material deprivation¹⁾.

Figure 2: Dimensions of Poverty



1) Caritas Switzerland has created an online tool (available only in german, <http://www.caritas-zuerich.ch/f53000342.html>): a person answers about 40 questions online, and a spider-web model (with the eight dimensions of poverty as axes) is used to show how well that person, or the household to which he/she belongs, is societally included.

The poorer someone is in one of these eight dimensions, and the more he faces limitations in these dimensions, the more precarious his circumstances are. Increasing instability is a "movement towards marginalisation" and poverty is a situation where one is living on the fringes of society. Poverty leads to social exclusion and social exclusion leads to poverty, but they are not the same. In a given society there may be poor people, who are nonetheless integrated into society. Similarly, one can easily imagine wealthy persons who are socially excluded.

Which events can trigger such a movement towards marginalisation, and thus a societal slide? Moreover, which factors contribute to a rise, that is, a movement back towards the societal centre? For each of the eight dimensions, examples of descendant and ascendant causes can be determined, but the actual life situation of persons and families are all different and individual. When analysing these situations, professionals themselves enter into human contact with the poor, and this is part of the process of care for those in need. Poverty and exclusion are not only the absence of material goods and social welfare. Linked to this is also the factor of loneliness, or of how supportive the person's network is.



1. Financial resources:

Financial risk factors that often lead to poverty are lasting unemployment, low wages, a low household income, high family expenditure and a crushing burden of debt. Moreover, specific events in the life of a person or family bring with them the danger of sliding into material poverty. In most of the countries the birth of a child can put a tremendous strain on the parental budget. A divorce leads to poverty if the joint income was scarcely sufficient even before the separation. The death of a parent, too, can destabilise a family financially.

Conversely, a new job, a change of function, an increase in the work quota, or new tasks, can lead to an increase in household income and thus to an improvement of the dimension of financial resources. In addition, clearing up of debts or a reduction of fixed costs through tax cuts or lower rents can help to ensure that the financial situation of a household improves. In addition learning to manage financial resources better can also improve the financial situation.

2. Health:

Although every human being has the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, conducive to living a life in dignity, in practice a person's health-related well-being depends significantly on his or her socio-economic status, that is to say, on his/her educational achievements, professional status and income: those with a low socio-economic status tend to live a less healthy life, are frequently ill or disabled and die younger. However, it is not just that poverty makes people ill, but that illness or an accident can also result in poverty. An addictive habit too can restrict the limits of a person's capacity and trigger a precarious situation.

In contrast, a person who conquers his or her addiction or recovers from an illness or an accident experiences a rise of health-related well-being. More importantly, an economic improvement also contributes to an improvement in health.

3. Housing:

Far from being interpreted in a narrow sense, the right to housing (understood as *adequate* housing) should be read as the right to live somewhere in security, peace and dignity. This means adequate privacy, space, security, heating, lighting and ventilation, infrastructure and an adequate location with regard to work and basic facilities, which should all be provided at a reasonable cost. Indicators of precarious circumstances with regard to housing therefore are: homelessness, size of living space, the quality of sanitary installations and residential areas. Low-income households often live in shabby accommodation with poor facilities and too little living space. These apartments are also often in neighbourhoods that are characterised not only by a high level of contamination from traffic noise and fumes, but also by a lack of recreational opportunities, immense insecurity and poorly organised public services, such as transport.

4. Education:

Education has been described in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights as being "directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity". Insufficient education has heavy material consequences. People with low educational attainment levels and low occupational qualifications run a high risk of impoverishment. This is because they are more frequently unemployed and for longer periods, or because they are among the working poor. They also find it more difficult to deal with critical events in life than higher educated people.

An improvement of the educational dimension can take place, due to a catch-up in education or training, recognition of migrants' educational or training certificates or participation in life long learning, and in many cases an educational advancement occurs by learning "on the job".

5. Occupational Integration:

Permanent unemployment results in a high risk of impoverishment, but as we have seen even working people cannot always escape the risk of poverty. This can be the case if they have to work in insecure, precarious working conditions. The latter are characterized by one or more uncertainties such as a short-term job, on-call work, lack of legal protection or irregular and insecure income.

Conversely, anyone who finds a job or finds their work situation normalised, will also experience a rise in their occupational integration.

6. Social Integration:

The full development of each person is achieved through community life, which is in its turn grounded on human dignity and human rights. Social integration thus describes how well a person is integrated into a network. A distinction is made between a primary, i.e. family network and a secondary network. The latter includes a circle of friends and acquaintances as well as involvement in voluntary work. Indicators of a precarious situation with respect to social integration can be broken family relationships, few social contacts and a withdrawal from social activities. People in a precarious situation often have no one among their family, friends or acquaintances, in which they can confide. They are very vulnerable to lose their grip when critical events occur in their lives that threaten to derail them.

However, if a person finds the way out of his or her social isolation and begins to nurture contacts with family and neighbours, or gets involved in a club and or in voluntary work for some organisation, this leads to an improvement in the social integration dimension.

7. Residence Status:

Migrants with temporary or no residence status, and un-documented people are primarily in a precarious legal situation which negatively affects their chances on the labour market and for qualifying for social security.

In addition, a non-clarified residence status represents a psychological burden.

If the residence status is settled positively, the migrant's integration increases and the person can restart the long-term planning of his or her life.

8. Family of Origin:

The "family of origin" dimension relates to the parental home of a person. This dimension summarizes what the person took along from the parental home in the form of "social inheritance", as he or she moved along the seven afore-mentioned dimensions of inclusion. Examples of this are whether the parents have a good education of their own, whether they are societally and occupationally integrated, and whether they are of a healthy constitution. The lower the economic, social, cultural and economic legacy of the parents, the higher the risk of impoverishment for the children. Of course, the child's personal willingness to perform as well as a good psychological (cultural, cultural, ethical, spiritual) profile may help to overcome that risk.

Conversely: The better the starting position from the perspective of the family of origin, the greater the chances are for a fulfilling journey through life.

2.2. The multidimensional interaction

The individual dimensions of poverty are not independent but are interconnected and interactive. Thus, working conditions can affect someone's level of health, low financial resources can restrict the choice of accommodation, and a low level of education can increase the risk of becoming unemployed. Frequently, a critical event in someone's life triggers a movement towards the societal fringe. This event will have a negative impact on other dimensions, so that ultimately there is often a manifestation of multiple deprivations. An example is when the loss of a job leads to a loss of identity, and the victim tries to overcome this with excessive consumption of alcohol. This in turn leads to tension in the relationship with a partner, who files for divorce, and the person withdraws from societal activities. Conversely, a positive development in one dimension can lead also to an improvement in the situation in another dimension. This can happen for example when a mental illness is overcome, so that the person can work again and a new family can be started; or when further training leads to a wage increase.

The description of poverty in these eight dimensions also allows solutions for change. If local financial administrative resources show poverty high values, then measures are called for such as budget and debt counselling, information concerning possible monetary assistance, a move into cheaper accommodation, or assistance in the form of unbureaucratic financial bridging (for example, the defrayal of a big bill for dental treatment). If the main focus is to be on furthering occupational integration, then coaching and mentoring projects, as well as employment and work integration programmes are appropriate. If intervention is needed for education, then it is appropriate to, for example, provide non-specific occupational, affordable courses that have been specifically developed for people with low qualifications.



Where, however, a deficit shows up in social integration, not only should courses in family counselling and education be provided that will help to reduce stress levels for both parents and children, but also easily accessible facilities to talk. Services like those providing visits at home or offering holidays to deprived families will help people who are lonely; and reduced entry prices to cultural and sporting events will facilitate social participation. Should intervention prove to be necessary on the housing dimension, then counselling activities will focus on finding sleeping facilities or helping to find a cheap apartment. If a need for support is indicated on the dimension of integration regarding laws of residence, legal and social counselling agencies can provide the client with assistance in achieving the maximum possible legal security. For administrative processes and dealing with authorities, private social organisations can assist immigrants who are unversed in such transactions; volunteer "bureaux guides" can also be made available to assist and mediate in conflict situations and help enforce existing rights.

When health-related well-being calls for action, the main focus will be on the funding of medical treatment. Moreover, where single mothers or fathers, and their children are not in good health, parent-child recuperation periods of several weeks duration, for example, can provide an opportunity to recover, and this time can also be used for giving specialist assistance and family counselling.

Thus professional counselling, support and personal recognition, the possibility to develop one's capabilities as well as social participation and experiencing acceptance in the community can give an important impetus on the personal way out of poverty, as well as prevent from sliding into it.

Thus, much can be achieved on an individual level within the framework of personal potential and skills, provided that the necessary resources are available. The societal conditions, however, often set narrow limits for such improvements. This is the challenge for the politicians. This description of multi-dimensionality makes it clear that poverty policy issues are cross-cutting, and highlight the need to be integrated into the whole political policy agenda.



■ When does Poverty occur ?

3.1. The Life Cycle Model

The third part of this paper presents an analytical tool that helps to better understand the phases of poverty and answer the question of under what circumstances people become impoverished and, vice versa, when they can find a way out of this difficult situation.

Many people have never experienced anything other than poverty. For others, phases of poverty alternate with phases without poverty. The phases of a typical biographical development are: family, schooling, occupational training, working, founding one's own family, and retirement. All these phases are characterised by specific poverty risks.

In the family, a growing child is endowed with certain resources, such as economic, socio-cultural, psychological, and spiritual resources. The lower the socio-economic status of parents (that is to say their education, their income and their professional status) the less of the aforementioned types of resources they possess. Consequently, such parents are not in a position to endow their children with the same resources as those parents with higher socio-economic status. This has serious consequences. Children whose parents have a low socio-economic status often have greater difficulties in achieving success at school and a successful working life than children from a privileged parental home. The endowment of different levels of resources may already manifest itself in the schooling the child receives; such is the situation when, due to financial constraints, the parents decide for him/her to undergo a shorter education process - or no education at all - which means an early entry into working life. Therefore, it is often not only the resources of parents but also their educational level that their children "inherit". The social background is an early but sustained poverty risk.

Education is the key factor in the labour market. A person with a higher level of education can usually attain formal qualifications that enable him/her to acquire a higher function, generating an income that is correspondingly higher. The more important this function is, the more qualifications are required. On the other hand, a person who has received little education has greater difficulty in finding an apprenticeship, often works in low-wage industries and under atypical working conditions and is more frequently unemployed and for longer periods. He/she is thus highly vulnerable to the risk of poverty. This raises the question of whether the design of the educational system really enables everyone to compensate for differences in social origins. The level of education attained may thus bear crucial poverty risks in one's life path.

In those cases where poverty has not destroyed the very substance of family relations, it may be overcome by the parents' capabilities, and also by the children's innate potential. However, reality shows that the longer families experience poverty and exclusion, the more difficult it is to come out of poverty, notwithstanding these potentials and capabilities.

The family faces threats and opportunities and its situation may bear further specific poverty risks. Children may strain the family budget. Separation and divorce bring additional costs. Even single people, who are usually at lower poverty risk during their active life, have to face increased poverty risks when retired or ill because of lack of support from their relatives. These adaptations to new circumstances usually confront people with a lower socio-economic status to a greater extent than the privileged, who have been endowed with greater resources. This can be explained not only by the difference in financial resources, but especially by the different endowment of

social resources. Someone who is hit by a critical event in life can better deal with it if he/she has friends, relatives and acquaintances, who can stand by him/her, offering advice and support during difficult times.

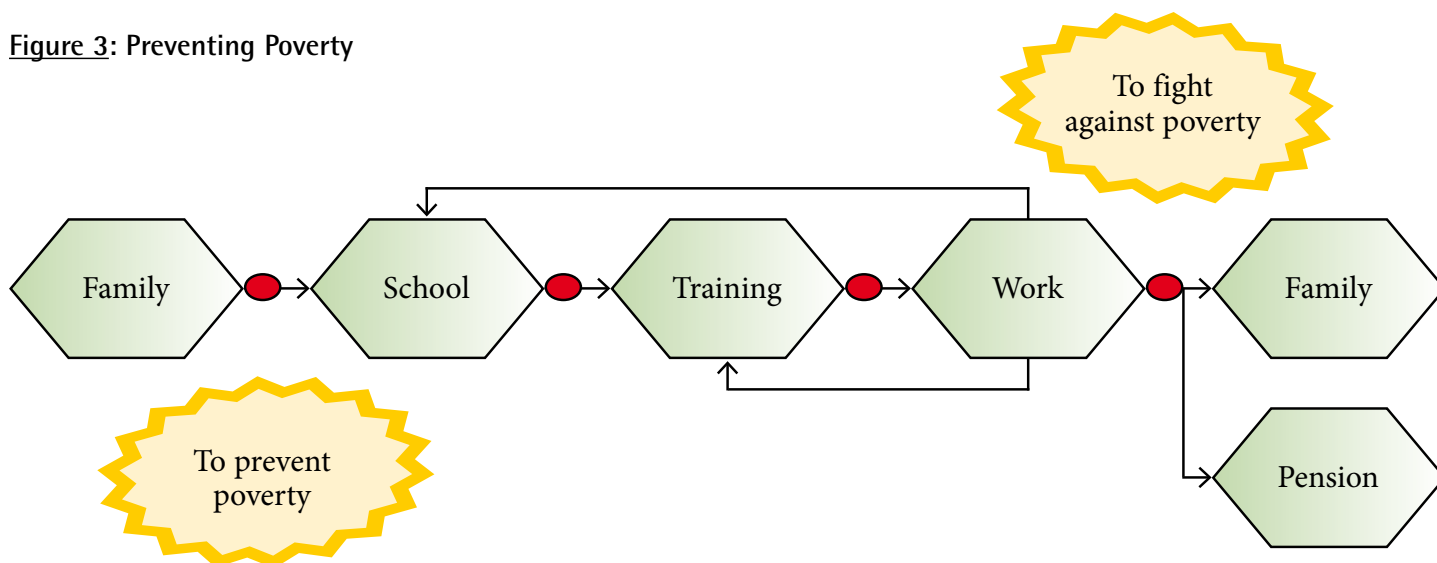
The poverty spiral continues whirling until old age. Whoever struggles all through his/her life with scarce financial resources and has an atypical social insurance background, will have a low pension without having been able to save anything for old age. Thus, the transition to retirement becomes in itself a further poverty risk. There is a high probability that people who do not receive a pension regulated by the state, or who receive one that is insufficient to live on, will be confronted with poverty also in old age.

In summary therefore, it can be said that those who are born in a family with a low socio-economic status, and thus grow up in poor conditions, will often be confronted with poverty later in life, because a child coming from a home with a low socio-economic status tends to be less successful at school than other pupils from privileged parental homes. This child will thus attain a lower level of educational achievement and thus experience more difficulties in finding an apprenticeship or a job. He/she will work more often in poorly paid or insecure jobs and be unemployed more frequently for longer periods. When he/she will later start a family, there will be a higher risk of sliding into poverty, and even in old age he/she will be more affected by poverty than a more privileged person.

3.2. Poverty Policies and the Lifecycle Model

Today, social policies are still focused on assisting poor people. As such, this is a good thing. However, if the fight against poverty and social exclusion is to be sustained and if furthermore, the ultimate aim is to promote well-being, this approach is not enough. Those involved in research on poverty and poverty policies agree that it is better to prevent poverty than to just fight it. Support must therefore, as shown in Figure 3, concentrate more on the early stages of life and on the transitions from one to another. It must be ensured that a slide into the spiral of poverty is prevented from taking place.

Figure 3: Preventing Poverty



This requires investment-oriented social policies. Such social policies take care of impoverished families at an early stage. They improve access to child-care facilities and education, and provide support in early life for subsequent transitions. To the extent that these policies can avoid the "intergenerational transfer" of poverty, there will be fewer adults affected by poverty who will need assistance.

Education policies are also vitally important. They must ensure that access to school and participation in the education system is guaranteed for all, regardless of characteristics such as societal or ethnic origin and gender, thus truly ensuring "equal opportunities for all".

Human dignity requires that all actors, both State and non-State, work towards social justice for all human beings. Not only political systems, but also social organisations like Caritas therefore play an important role in the prevention of poverty. In addition to what they already do to fight poverty, they must take a stand for investment-oriented social policies in their public

work of political advocacy. In their services they should concentrate on being the ones who "set the signals" for the early transitions along the tracks of life.

Examples include services that ease the transition from family to school by providing children of underprivileged families with additional care and targeted support. Another example is mentoring and coaching provided by experienced professionals to accompany and support young people in their search for occupational training and employment. In general, those policies should enhance the capability of people to lead a self-determined life. Empowerment of people should be a central aim of those services.

In addition, the private and public economy also play a role in poverty prevention, because all efforts to avoid poverty will fail if the economy does not offer enough job opportunities, as is the case, for example, in these times of economic crisis.

The best way of fighting poverty is to prevent it.



4. Conclusions

The theoretical considerations in this part, however fragmented, represent a first reflection which will be continued in future publications. It is also the first side of the coin, the other being presented in part B of this publication.

Poverty and social exclusion are a consequence of a break down in the three sources of social welfare (the labour market, the family and the welfare state) due to societal transformation. Therefore, a general conclusion should be that all efforts must be made to enable these three sources to play their role fully again. This means restoring the labour market's ability to create jobs - and good jobs - so that work may really pay, to enable families to play their role as communities of solidarity and support the capacity of the welfare state in ensuring the welfare of its citizens.

This leads us to recognise the great value of social and health services to help those in need on the one hand, but also to create jobs on the other.

In order to prevent poverty in early years, which is even more important than fighting it later, educational services are vital. Similarly, child care facilities are not only a means of reconciling work and family and providing opportunities, especially to women, to take up paid work, but they are also a place of early education. In addition, income measures and services like home care are equally crucial to avoid or to combat old age poverty.

Poverty being multidimensional, there is no one-size-fits-all solution, but indeed all dimensions have to be addressed. As for the ninth dimension (the psychological, cultural, ethical and spiritual dimension) it is clear that we can not expect the state to deliver all the right responses. **Therefore we affirm that poverty is everybody's concern.**

This does not mean that governments can leave it up to "everybody" to alleviate poverty; on the contrary they

have to take up their role: on the one hand by setting societal rules that prevent and combat poverty and on the other hand to build on the capabilities of the people. Changing situations together with the people rather than without or even against them brings society forward.

In this scenario, solidarity should support the social nature of human beings, as well as equal dignity and rights of all. Solidarity here transcends the subjective sense of compassion, or pity for the poor, rising to a commitment, shared within the community, to realise unity towards the common good. We all walk *with* and are committed to the poor and we experience an encounter *with* them. Thanks to this encounter, we acquire a wider knowledge of the social reality and we experience mutual recognition amongst people. Thanks to this relationship this act of cognition can then be turned into an act of "recognition" for that person, meaning being "grateful" to that person.

We must have a comprehensive overview of social reality stemming from human experience. This experience needs social thinking which can confront honestly and radically the grave problems which humanity suffers from. This true social thought must go beyond the social science and technology model. Such a task requires both nearness (encounter) to the poor's situation and a rigorous intellectual approach. In sum, we must not abandon scientific thought but we must go beyond it, mostly because getting to know the reality means becoming engaged with it.

This commitment leads us to a new way of thinking that perceives reality from the perspective of the poor and the excluded. In this sense, it is essential that they themselves speak up and are heard. The fact that our knowledge is limited and insufficient compels us to attentively listen to their lives. Moreover, our analysis must be completed and transcended by their words, by their experiences of struggle and liberation, of suffering

and joy. In fact, depicting this view is the main objective of the second part of this document.

In the concept of *well-being* at the foundation of our vision of Social Welfare lies the conjunction between the individual and society, the conjunction that gives them sense and makes them interdependent, since nobody can make it by him/herself nor be considered as exclusively responsible for him/herself in this globalised world. We are all responsible for one another; poverty therefore is a problem for all and a condition which, in the eyes of Caritas, becomes a particular concern for society.

We should embrace a vision of social reality which has its origin in the poor and with the poor themselves. In order to develop this assumption, we need to articulate a way of thinking that gives us an alternative vision of history, on the one hand, and of our common future on the other. The first can be named *memory* - for it presents history as interpreted through the eyes of the

common people by whom history itself is made; our memory should be also the memory of the poor and the excluded, contained in their suffering and experience. The second can be named *utopia*, understood as a new, very concrete way of looking at our common future with hope, participation and shared responsibility. As Caritas, we adopt a vision of social reality, and of poverty within it, which cannot make abstraction of social links and community. This is why, in our vision, this reconstruction of both *memory* and *utopia* can only be done within the community itself. Social participation, therefore, becomes a necessary instrument for fighting poverty. Our thinking needs to be enriched through "civic dialogue", social bonds, relationships and empowerment, especially of poor and oppressed people. Empowering the poor is the first step on the way to social inclusion. The best way to prevent poverty, and the best way to fight against it, is social participation.



Executive Summary

Poverty is a scandal. Every human being has the right to sufficient means for a decent life. Consequently, in the event of sickness, disability, old age, unemployment, widowhood and any other involuntary situation which provokes deprivation, every person has the right to be looked after.

When defining poverty as a lack of well-being, Caritas analyses social welfare as a part of the well-being of all citizens. Social welfare has three main sources: i) paid productive employment in the labour market; ii) solidarity within the family and primary networks, and iii) the support provided by the welfare state.

Societies are in a state of constant transformation leading to changing levels of social welfare in different countries. With regard to poverty and social exclusion, three main aspects of societal transformation are of great significance: the economic, the social and demographic transformation.

Poverty and social exclusion are a consequence of a breakdown in the three sources of social welfare (the labour market, the family and the welfare state) due to societal transformation. **Therefore these three sources must be strengthened so that they can play their role fully again.**

Poverty is multidimensional. Caritas knows that poor people are not simply victims, but actors. Caritas believes in the dignity of each and every person. Both the perspective of the poor and *the preferential option for the poor* lead us to a description of the reality of poverty based on human sciences and to a resolute rejection of this reality.

For Caritas, **poverty is not only a lack of financial resources.** We consider eight dimensions: financial resources, health-related well-being, housing situation, level of education, occupational integration, societal integration, integration regarding laws of residence, and

the family of origin. We also recognise the importance of other dimensions like the psychological, cultural, ethical and spiritual.

The phases of a typical biographical development are: family, schooling, occupational training, work, founding one's own family, and retiring. All these phases are characterised by specific poverty risks.

Today, social policies are still focused on assisting impoverished people. However, this approach is not enough. Support must concentrate more on the early stages of life and on the transitions from one to another. It must be ensured that a slide into a spiral of poverty is not allowed to take place.

This requires investment-oriented social policies that take care of impoverished families at an early stage. This includes improved access to child-care facilities and to schools, and support in early life for subsequent transitions. These policies can avoid the "intergenerational transfer" of poverty: **the best way of fighting poverty is to prevent it.**

We affirm that poverty is everybody's concern. Nevertheless governments have to assume their own role. Changing situations require embracing a vision of social reality which has its origin in the poor and with the poor themselves. Empowering the poor is the first step on the way to social inclusion. **The best way to prevent poverty, and the best way to fight against it, is social participation.**

*Open your eyes,
look and listen,
learn and act.*

→ **Have a look at Part B :
An Empirical Approach**

POVERTY AMONG US



Part B : An Empirical Approach

What does poverty mean ?



LISTEN !

- ⋮ It is not easy to describe something that frightens us.
- ⋮ It is like looking in to a very deep pit that no one can see
- ⋮ the bottom of. But in order to understand what poverty
- ⋮ is, think about it and take action, we need to start from
- ⋮ here: by looking around us, beyond our own lives and by
- ⋮ plunging in this bottomless pit...

How can you live with 100 euros a week ?



“I worked for a chandelier firm. My cousins called me to work there. From 8 a.m. to 7 p.m., for 90 euros a week. Of course I have no regular contract. If you want a proper job, you need to take one with the Municipality! You become an odd-jobber, and when you get married, how can you live with 100 euros a week? Of course ‘easy money’ is very tempting, you only have to deal drugs, but that is not happy money... When politicians come, they call people, make promises – if you give us 10 votes, I’ll give you a job – but they never do anything. I don’t like politics at all. I go to the ballot box, but I never write anything on the ballot. I do not trust anyone, not even my friends. My girlfriend’s sisters are attending a training course for the unemployed. If you want to live here and bake bread and sell it, they come here and do not let you do that! I have friends who to go to Rome everyday to sell lingerie. They buy it at 5 euros and sell it at 15, 20 euros. Maybe wrong-doers who are never caught by the police are more intelligent than us... My children? I’d like to teach them good manners and give them education”.

(Armando, 22 years old, Naples, CARITAS ITALY)

Drowning in a sea of debts

“People are drowning in a sea of debts. There are the vulnerable groups at risk of poverty who cannot escape the foreseeable consequences of online loans. But now there are also people who used to have a proper economic situation, who had an above-the-average standard of living and high wages but at one point incurred short-term mortgage loans. Now, with their jobs gone, they have very little chances of living up to their former standards of living, they lose their houses and some have become homeless. This very severe, descending social situation of people that were not used to this daily fight produces an even deeper suffering in individuals, a strong feeling of defenselessness, a sense of powerlessness, inferiority... if not even worse”.

(Report on Social Situation from CARITAS ESTONIA)



When poverty meets addiction



This couple lives on one of those typical streets that lead away from the city. Both are jobless and survive thanks to social workers and the help of Caritas. The apartment they live in needs urgent repair. Čurka, the father stretches out his good hand to greet us. The other is bandaged and the social worker says it will probably have to be amputated, because the man refused to see a doctor, even if he was offered the possibility to be treated. We meet Eva, the wife, inside the house. On the previous day, she received the social subsidy that was used to buy alcohol. The couple tells the social worker that they do not buy food and have received a good quantity of firewood. The house has no electricity, no gas, not even water. The toilet is a wooden hut located in the garden overrun with weeds. The room is only home to a plate and a pan. None of them can cook. When we ask them about the photo hanging above their bed, Čurka tells us that the boy it shows is Peter, their 12-year-old son, who was taken away by the Child Office. His father is very upset when he talks about him; only yesterday did he go to talk to the people who care for him, to try and take him back home. Eva tells us that she has suffered from depression since the day the boy was taken away from home and she has started to lose her hair. They are both completely bewildered at how their son was taken away.

(CARITAS SLOVAKIA)

Working abroad

Oksana B. is 18 years old. Her father left her mother with two small children. The mother has been working at a furniture plant and supported the family on her insufficient income until the plant was closed. She could not find a job and left the village for the Czech Republic, at that time the older daughter was 7 years old and the younger, Adriana, was 6. The girls were left with a grandmother. Working illegally in the Czech Republic and later in Spain the mother did not return to Ukraine for a long time and sent the money for family living. When Adriana was 15 years old, she committed suicide. Coping with the absence of the mother and the father was too hard for the girl. She had conflicts with peers, difficulties in school, lack of trust in her relationship with the grandmother. Oksana suffers terribly from the loss of the sister. Now she is involved in the Caritas project “Social work for the children of labor migrants” in order to support the girl and rehabilitate her. She is more positive about life now and managed to establish social links with the project personnel as well as with other beneficiaries in the center that partly helped her make up for the feeling of void and forsakenness caused by loss of close people. According to the Ukrainian mass media the non-official number of Ukrainians working as guest workers outside of the country was 4.5 million in 2007.



(Zoryana Lukavetska, CARITAS UKRAINE)

No money for a cup of coffee

“I don’t think that many people understand what poverty is. Let me give you a tangible example. Over the Christmas period, we go around town distributing toys, food to poor families. This year, we met a mother from the London East End who started crying when we offered her instant coffee! It wasn’t even a good brand, but a cheap, economic version from the supermarket, and she was crying because they had not had coffee for ages... because she had to buy clothes and food for her children. So I can’t imagine being so poor that I can’t go to buy coffee... I can see that they are so happy when they have the opportunity to relax, take a bath... Things that we take for granted”.

(Rosemary Keenan, Caritas Social Action,
Deputy Chief Executive Officer Catholic Children's Society (Westminster) UNITED KINGDOM)



Trafficking – Contemporary slavery



For the institutions in Bulgaria this is the story of a married young woman with a child. For me this is the story of a child without childhood, of a woman without future, a family story which repeats itself over and over again. Margarita was raised by her grandmother and grandfather. Her mother expressed her wish to leave with her daughter when she was 10 years old. She took the child to live with her and the man with whom she was already living. At that time Margarita left Bulgaria for the first time. She started wandering about with her parents in many countries where she used to beg and steal. When Margarita became 13 years old, she was raped by her step-father. From this moment on she stopped stealing but started to prostitute herself. She says that she doesn’t remember anymore the countries where she has been, they have been so many...And maybe there is another reason why she can’t remember them? When Margarita was 17 years old she was returned back to Bulgaria in line with the coordinating mechanism for referral and taking care of cases of unaccompanied Bulgarian children and children who have been victims of trafficking, who return to Bulgaria. She became pregnant. Margarita recently got married to a man who had appeared in the center where she had been accommodated and surprisingly for the social workers he had presented the documents containing the consent of her parents. She gave birth to a child.

Nobody is engaged with her case anymore because she already “has a family” and “there is no risk for her and her child”.

(Yoana Terzieva, an Expert in Caritas Ruse, BULGARIA)

Caught in limbo



“Many asylum seekers arrive in Athens from the islands every day. They escape from Afghanistan, cross Turkey and land in Greece, but their dream is to reach Austria. You can see them as they try to escape from the police to avoid their fingerprints being taken. If they have them taken, once they reach Austria, they will be sent back. Many seek asylum. If they are granted asylum, they receive a six-month document that has then to be renewed, while if they are not granted asylum, they have 30 days to leave the country. We have many people! We provide food, clothes, we meet their basic needs, but we cannot help them all. Last month, someone asked me: “Why don’t you help us?” At times they knock on my door or wait for me outside... When I first meet them, they don’t talk much, but when they understand that you want to help them, they open up. I remember one woman in particular. She cried. In her country, she lived with so many people, she had a big house. Now she was all alone and had to beg for a plate of spaghetti! Many of them think that Europe is a paradise. They spend all of their money to reach their destination, but are caught on their way. To go on is then impossible, they can’t go back either, because they could be killed! They often ask me: “Who am I? What will I do?”. I can’t answer. These people are caught in limbo...”

(Aglaiia Kostantakopoulou, Social Worker, CARITAS GREECE)

Displaced in their own country

Svetlana and her husband Zviadi have lived in Tbilisi since 1992. They are IDP (Internally Displaced Persons) from Abkhazia. They are one of the countless families scattered in Georgia that make up the flow of IDPs. No programme has been conceived for these people who are forced to leave their native countries with nothing but their own lives. So they live anywhere, in any unoccupied space that they can find in schools, in hospitals... The family has eight members: mother, father and 6 children. They have lived in the building of the General Hospital of Tbilisi, in the Dighomu district for about 11 years. The total surface that they occupy amounts to about 18 square meters. Clearly, they have not managed to accommodate enough beds for everyone, so two children share one bed. In the winter a small wood stove keeps the room warm, when there is no light. Electricity and water are rare in the building. Zviadi is unemployed and only works occasionally, when somebody “hires” him as aid for some building activity at half the regular pay. After all, he has no other choice but to accept if he wants to provide for his children.

(CARITAS GEORGIA)



When gambling becomes serious

“There is a new form of poverty, unheard of during the communist regime: it is the pressure of gambling. Gambling used to be prohibited by the law, now it is a consequence of depression. We have so many cases of people who fall victim to this and so many homicides are committed in card rooms! Four, five homicides per month in a country of a million inhabitants... It’s easy to realise how big the problem is !”

(Albert Nikolla, Director, CARITAS ALBANIA)



Mentally ill, alone and poor



“Our target group includes the beneficiaries of our mental health project. They are truly poor, in every sense, first because they are ill, then, because they have problems with their house and have lost their job. There is also the big issue of solitude, the lack of interpersonal relationships. Even within the family itself that is disassembled. These are the many facets of poverty. Statistically the poor have a higher probability to develop a mental illness than the rich. Poverty has a huge impact on these people. Moreover, they are not socially accepted. Here there are still huge psychiatric hospitals, with patients. Hospital personnel provide good care, but cannot offer appropriate services because of the few resources available. Moreover, there is no territorial network. There are no mental health centers here and there are very few non residential centers. It is the community that doesn’t offer any type of service...”

(Danijela Varsic, Social Worker, CARITAS SERBIA)

Closing schools and opening elderly homes

“In the next few years, we will have increasing numbers of pensioners. This is a problem also for the tax and the welfare systems. There are not enough young people to meet the needs of the elderly population. Moreover, we have high levels of drop-outs; many leave school after they turn 16. We are trying to set up some programmes to attract and reintegrate them into the system...We are witnessing higher rates in criminality around cities”.

(Prof. José Pires Manso, Academic and Caritas Consultant, CARITAS PORTUGAL)



When you are not in good health



Sirarpi, 46, is mother of two children, one of which, Mariam is heavily disabled. “Me and my husband, we are both hard working people, but I cannot leave the house as I take care of my kids and my husband has a tumor on his backbone, which had made him sick for weeks now.” Mariam was diagnosed CCP when she was 6 months. Sirarpi has to be beside her all the time to take care of her until 2008 when she started to attend the “Aregak” day care center for children with multiple disabilities, and Sirarpi had some free time to work. As Mariam’s schedule is 3 days a week, she was again unable to find a permanent job. Sirarpi knew how to sew a bit and decided to borrow some fabric from a shop and make bed linen. When Mariam is at home, Sirarpi can make only one piece, when she is in the center, Sirarpi will manage to sew four sets and travel to one village. “We really have hard times when one of us gets sick and we need more medicine, or, worse, we have to go to hospital.” Sirarpi got Asthma recently and has to take medicine regularly. She cannot afford that and relies on herbs she collects in the fields. Now she feels pains in her breast and refuses to go to the doctor. “We will not make it, why go if I cannot pay for the treatment ?”.

(CARITAS ARMENIA)

- Poverty does not only concern economic and financial aspects, but it affects physical and psychological wellbeing,
- the attitude to sociability, confidence in oneself and in the others, the idea of being socially recognised, asserting
- one’s rights and dignity, and last but not least, hope.

Structures of poverty



“In Albania traditional forms of poverty are still deeply rooted, but they merge with so-called “modern” forms of poverty, linked to the consumerist model. The result is a dramatic mix of poverty, because there are people – and this is the oddity of cultural poverty in my Country – who own a mobile, even if with no credit, but who do not have a bathroom at home! It is a frightening mechanism of a double, new structure of poverty. In my Country poverty has become a single, multi-faceted, even dominant body. Poverty is a powerful entity...”.

(Albert Nikolla, Director, CARITAS ALBANIA)

Not only a question of money

“Most of those who knock on our door ask for financial help, especially to pay their electricity and, or their water bills. They often have debts and have to return huge sums of money at exorbitant interest rates. Others suffer from psychic disorders, or relational problems with their families. Domestic violence is also an issue. The range of people who require help is much diversified. Many require counselling services for social or psychological problems, while drug addicts, or persons with serious problems of alcohol abuse or addiction to gambling often need rehabilitation programmes... The problem of poverty is very complex. It is not only a matter of money”.

(Leonid Mckay, Social Worker, CARITAS MALTA)



- Globalisation has a few winners and many losers... The poor are among those who cannot ride the wave of change
- and are somehow crushed by it. In addition, the recent global crisis brought about dramatic turmoil for those people
- who seemed to be more confident and protected. Today one observes more and more vulnerability and growing
- social polarisation.

Suddenly unemployed

2008/9 saw Ireland return to the phenomenon of widespread unemployment. The transition from near full-unemployment to high-unemployment has been sudden and its implications for people, families, social cohesion and the exchequer's finances have been serious. Economic forecasts for 2010 indicate that unemployment will increase further to reach an average of 16.8% of the labour force in 2010. The recent dramatic turnaround in the labour market contrasts with the fact that one of the major achievements of recent years had been the increase in employment and the reduction in unemployment, especially long-term unemployment.

(Sean Healy, Social Justice, IRELAND)



When the middle class becomes poor

“We've been under the Soviet Union for a long time and at that time there was a greater distribution among social classes: among the lower, the middle and the higher classes. When we reached independence, the middle class started to become poorer. Because of the crisis, we are observing that the distance between the middle and the lower class is reducing. Those who were rich now own big companies while working people have very low wages and the possibilities to increase their earnings are really few”.

(Jurate Matikoviene, Social Worker, CARITAS LITHUANIA)



Market economy polarizes society

Poverty changes as the society does. Market economy polarizes the society dividing it along the lines of “usefulness” to the economic system. The able, the educated, those coming from solid family backgrounds and endowed with the knowledge and culture are doing well and ever better while those who were unlucky enough to have been born in other circumstances are ever more marginalized. Both groups have a growing awareness of the multitude of goods that the market society has on offer and while the first stands a good chance to obtain them, the second is weighed down with frustration, resignation and anger. This explains the rise in youth delinquency, drug consumption etc. Groups of derelict youngsters haunt the areas with socialist blocks of flats in big cities. With little contacts with the main-stream society and with their families in shambles, they easily fall prey to delinquency, idleness and hopelessness.

(Zbigniew Zembrzuski, CARITAS POLAND)



- Being poor means lacking security and stability regarding many dimensions: work, housing and health, poor social and relational integration, poor financial resources, the inaccessibility to a good welfare system, an uncertain juridical status, limited horizons for one's family of origin. All of this generates an escalation that is impossible to stop alone and that inevitably tends to reproduce itself.

Is this social inclusion ?



“What I see today is a world that no longer talks of poverty, but of social exclusion. The latter is intended in relation to employment. If you have a job – even if you are poor – you are considered as socially included. In the UK you can today find families with both parents working hard all day long, they may have a couple of jobs each, but in reality... Because when they go home at night, they are so worn out that they can't take part in any social process, which we consider part and parcel of the idea of social inclusion! Being socially included means to take up one's share of responsibility, get involved in a democratic process, local elections, be active in non governmental organisations or some other group...”

(Rosemary Keenan, Caritas Social Action, UNITED KINGDOM)

When education is not for everyone



“Education is costly and in many cases children drop out of school right after they have learnt to read and write, despite compulsory schooling. We have many rural families who do not send their children to school, or send their eldest child, if they have many children... In most cases, boys go to school, while girls stay at home and learn how to cook and clean the house...”

(CARITAS BOSNIA HERZEGOVINA)

- ⋮ Being poor does not mean the same thing everywhere. A profound and accurate knowledge of every local context
- ⋮ and the proximity to the people who live and suffer there are the prerequisites for any programme and action
- ⋮ against poverty.

Meeting people's needs



“The 1990s war has totally changed people’s lives. Before the conflict people were insured, had free access to healthcare, and enjoyed minimum social and training services. Wages and pensions were high enough to eat meat at least twice a week, to buy books for students in their early years of school... During the war, all properties were lost, burnt down or destroyed, like the possibility to lead a normal life. Now services have changed – the system is still in transition – and have become very costly, at the same time, with no real economy to speak of, the possibilities to earn a living are rare; as a consequence, only the rich – mainly those who stole during the war, criminals and politicians – can lead a normal life. Many aids were sent to our country and many people still receive some support. In some cases, it could be said that people have lost the habit to work, but the real issue is that there is no real economy. Factories closed in 1991 and not one of them is ready to reopen. The unemployment rate is rather high (48%) and over a third of the population is poor, being below or around the poverty threshold”.

(CARITAS BOSNIA HERZEGOVINA)

Dangerous gaps

“According to statistical data, Portugal is characterised as having one of the widest gaps between the rich and the poor. Also the risk of falling victim to poverty is high. There has been huge migration from the countryside to coastal cities. It is difficult to go from a rural to a service-based world. Great changes occurred, but have not consolidated yet. Also training is not appropriate. Many things have changed, also relationships. We are moving towards a European model, but we are not there yet. Now we do not have young people. They are going away. We are closing schools and opening elderly homes !”.

(Prof. José Pires Manso, Academic and Caritas Consultant, CARITAS PORTUGAL)



A trap named lack of qualification



“In September 2008, 14.479 young people in Germany had no apprenticeship training position. At the age of 35, 15% of the German population has not finished an apprenticeship and is not part of the educational system anymore. In May 2009, 366.655 persons under 25 years were unemployed. Unemployment hits youth and young adults very hard in a time of their life during which they should be discovering who they are and what capabilities they have. Those without apprenticeship can rarely find a job. In May 2008, 898.244 employable persons under 25 years received an unemployment benefit. The lack of qualification and lacking assistance in gaining the qualification leads to their marginalization because they are not interesting for the regular labour market. The, around 8% of pupils who drop out of school every year have hardly a chance to find a job at all. Another gap arises in reference to nationality. In September 2008, 57,6% of German men between 18 and 21 years of age finished their apprenticeship training, whereas only 23,9% of foreign nationals achieved this. Young refugees who can exceptionally stay for humanitarian reasons are almost excluded from professional training and their lack of perspective can drive them to the black labour market and even to crime. This shows that enhancing the capabilities of young persons and investing in their education must be the political priority for the year to come and Caritas’ main task”.

(Thomas Becker and Verena Liessem, Social Workers, CARITAS GERMANY)



Why is there poverty ?

THINK !

- ∴ Poverty is a challenge. Today we are asked to understand
- ∴ all its causes and all the consequences; to come up with
- ∴ solutions, without forgetting that poverty is a concern for
- ∴ all of us and that its consequences impact on the whole
- ∴ society.

Poverty as a junction



“I think that the solution to poverty cannot be individual. First of all, there is an inter-generational transmission: if you are born in a poor family, the chance that you will lead a life in poverty is much higher than that of another person. This means that my perspectives are limited due to my family background. This means that it doesn’t depend on me! It’s not my fault! Secondly, there are various structural issues: the system of social insurance, the labour market, housing that is not equally accessible to all... In the long term, a poor person will tend to remain a poor person...”

(Leonid Mckay, Social Worker, CARITAS MALTA)

Depression is contagious

“The economic crisis has forced about a million people to migrate elsewhere. Those who return cannot find a job or other opportunities for social integration. Under these circumstances, we see that many people show signs of depression and this affects the well-being of the whole family, the community, and, to a great extent, the society”

(Albert Nikolla, Director, CARITAS ALBANIA)



No man is an island



“If a person is experiencing poverty, also those who are close to him or her are affected. No man is an island. When a class organises a trip, the poor children find it hard to participate. The class will rebel against this because so that a bigger part of the class will not participate! It is a matter of solidarity! It is not easy to see solidarity... There are two reasons for this: the first is that, in Lithuania, we do not have a tradition of solidarity. Lithuania has always been a communist country: During a long period of isolation all community ties were eradicated and now it is difficult to build new ones. It takes a long time before people trust each other again. And the second reason is due to the fact that families have limited income and if you want to give something to someone, how can you, if you have no means...”

(Jurate Matikoviene, Social Worker, CARITAS LITHUANIA)

Not only an individual issue

“On the one side, poverty can be an individual issue, because everyone has to fight for his or her rights, and try to work for a normal life. But on the other hand, it also depends on the whole of society. If society does not offer anything, not even decent and respectful treatment, and even if you have the strength to fight, you will always remain poor...”

(Danijela Varsic, Social Worker, CARITAS SERBIA)

From a teacher's diary



C.M., 10 years old, comes from a broken family. The mother became unemployed and left to work in Spain. The father divorced the girl's mother and now lives in a town 35 km away from his daughter. He has the obligation to send a certain amount of money to her every month but he does not do this on a regular basis, especially when he is out of work. C.M. is looked after by the maternal grandmother, a widow. The financial situation is difficult. The mother does not have an employment contract or a permanent job. The girl's psycho-physical evolution is normal, but we could notice a gap between her intellectual possibilities and her insufficient verbalization. Moreover, she became shy, even displaying frustrations and inferiority complexes towards her school colleagues and play mates. She has difficulties opening up for communication, especially on subjects regarding the family, her role in the class-group, and the impossibility to take part in events which demand financial resources that she does not have. Every new school-year, after two months in Spain with her mother, becomes more difficult, sad and full of longing, a situation which generates internal personal and relational conflicts. Unfortunately, these cases have become frequent over the last few years. Apart from problems of an affective type within the family, social immigration creates other negative adaptation effects, attitudes and behavioral disorders, poor learning results in school and aspects of juvenile crime. Along with the children's problems we must also consider the difficulties of the parents or grandparents who are left behind.

(Angela Mosneag, Teacher, CARITAS ROMANIA)

What can we do now ?

LEARN!

- ⋮ Despite everything, poverty is not a fate. There are already
- ⋮ many good practices, good cooperation, good networks to
- ⋮ learn from.

To walk side by side, without taking people's place



“Let me tell you a good story. I met a mother of three from Iraq. She had health problems and visited our centre at least twice a week. After a long counselling period and the support with food and clothes for her children, this woman managed to send her younger child to the kindergarten. After many efforts, we managed and she finally found a job, started to support her family and to take Greek classes. Well, her diploma was recognised and this woman was given the possibility to teach. At first, we supported this woman a lot, as she didn't do much... So, after a while, I told her: “I can't go on helping you, if you don't help yourself!”. Some time later, she came to me: “You are right. Let's go on!”. She started to change and the children with her! Her oldest son went to primary school, where a math's competition was organised. You know what? He won it, and it was a nation-wide competition! I think that this is the way in which people need to be taken care of. We do not have to assist them, but support them...”.

(Aglia Konstantakopoulou, Social Worker, CARITAS GREECE)

Becoming their hands, thoughts, voices

“We go on site with home care services; enter people's homes, their private lives, habits and skills. It is the only service that approaches people in their environments. There is no falsehood. There are no deceits. You bring yourself, your life, education, and your professionalism in their homes. A service provider has to welcome and meet people's needs. This is what Caritas is all about. In other services, it is the people who have to go to service providers. What are these people's expectations? At times, it is only medical counselling, at times only friendship. You have the possibility to become their hands, thoughts and voices. In some cases, they only want you to stay there with them. You are their only contact with the outside world. Or you are someone who prays with them...”.

(CARITAS BOSNIA HERZEGOVINA)





Giving children a piece of childhood back

“We have a sector that is called “Child Protection”. We have three nurseries, 2 day centers, in very small or isolated villages. Nurseries not only work with children, but with families also. They take the children, shower them, change them and then explain to the parents the appropriate behavior they should have with their children. Alcohol abuse is very common and domestic violence is the cause of nearly half human trafficking cases... We also have a centre for street children. First we also had a canteen and children who lived in caves came there. I remember that there were four children, brothers and sisters of which the youngest was two years old. When we asked them why they didn't go home, they answered: “Life in the street is better. It is cold at home, there's no heating, no electricity, and then our parents beat us!”. But this often leads to smoking and use of drugs and alcohol! So we had to re think the centre to accommodate children for a certain period. And there are so many of them...”.

(Otilia Sirbu, Director, CARITAS MOLDOVA)

A special attention to youth

Austria's Young Caritas regularly offers activities exclusively designed for people aged mainly between 14 to 24. Barbara, 11 years old, participated in a project called “Aktion Kilo”. Pupils convinced shoppers in a supermarket to buy a product for a refugee when doing their own shopping. They collected the various products and handed them over to the Caritas refugee house “Courage” that they got to know beforehand. “Before being involved in this project I had no clue what “asylum” actually meant. Now I realise how many people are in need and get support from Caritas. I suddenly read the newspaper and the information on the internet from a new angle. When I saw the refugee house, I was deeply impressed when a young man prepared and offered a delicious fresh lime juice especially for me. It really touched me to realise that someone who des not have much himself shares the little he has...”.

(CARITAS AUSTRIA)



From research to action

“This is a project of the Ciudad Rodrigo, Guarda and Salamanca Diocesan Caritas in which three Caritas’, two Countries (Portugal and Spain) and some universities cooperate... We have observed a poor area along the border and studied 70-odd villages with their populations’ needs and their opportunities. Most of the analytical work focused specifically on opportunities. We have tried to understand the potential of this territory and its population and have transformed this study into a community development project. The cover reads: “There is no land without future, only land without projects...”

(Joao Pereira and Paulo Neves, social workers, CARITAS PORTUGAL)

Supporting new lives

“Homes for parents” accommodate young couples who are psychologically and socially vulnerable and are expecting their first child. The access to this accommodation is the beginning of a guidance path, that considers the parents’ wishes as its basis: raising the child together, creating a family and taking responsibility, avoiding the repetition of what they suffered themselves (mistreatment, abuse, neglect). This project supports maternal functions, starting from the idea that they only pertain to the mother. It is a relational reality that belongs to the couple and, in a broader context, to the whole social group.

(Report on Social Activities, Secours Catholique, FRANCE)



A therapy named teamwork



“A story with a happy ending is that of a young mother of two who started attending one of the groups for young mothers, some years ago. After a while, she considered that team work and the activities proposed were very positive for her. So she decided to start another group on her own. Now she is passing on her experience, her emotions and her energy that were stirred within the group to others...”

(CARITAS ESTONIA)

Intermediaries for rent

“It’s not easy to rent a house. Generally landlords demand many guarantees and information on, say, the number of people who will occupy the flat and how it will be kept. With this programme, Secours Catholique helps poor people find a house, granting regular payment of the rent. Moreover, volunteers periodically meet the families involved in the project, so they are helped to manage the budget and look for a job, with a view to conquer greater independence”.

(Report on Social Activities, Secours Catholique, FRANCE)

Health protection for the poor



“The Ambulance of Graz Caritas - Marienambulanz – accepts and helps people with no insurance or who do not want to be hospitalised. “I don’t want to go to hospital, as I can’t pay for it”, says Mrs. B. She had been in bed for various days with a high temperature and strong pain, until a neighbour informed Caritas. The woman finally convinced herself that she needed to see a doctor. In 2007, 8000 treatments were provided by the 37 doctors involved. The doctors with their professional skills establish a trust-based relationship with the patient. They tell us that 9 out of 10 people that they see say that they became ill as a consequence of the many problems. There are also many patients that benefit from the psychological support offered by the project. Since 2001, we have had a street unit that visits squares and dormitories and that answers the calls of those who live at the margins of society”.

(Christine Anderwald, Nurse and Project Coordinator of the Marienambulanz, CARITAS AUSTRIA)

Assisting the weakest link of society

Jihlava has a population of approximately 50.000. Official estimates say that around 2.000 of the population belong to the Roma minority. Part of the Roma families live in the city centre but the majority of Roma live on the outskirts of the city. Ambulatory or field services are provided to children aged 6 to 26 years old youths who are threatened by very negative social situations. The goal of these services is to improve quality of their life by prevention or reduction of social and health risks related to their way of life, to allow them to find their way in their social environment and to create conditions for solutions to their unfavourable social situation. Participants in the project are children and youths from the socially weakest families or the Roma minority. The services are developed to fit the different age groups and cover preschool children, school children and youth looking for work – project Small Craft.

(Petra Sustrova, Social Worker, CARITAS CZECH REPUBLIC)

Where autistic children find their place

The Autistic Children Training Centre is 40 km. away from İzmir and has characteristics such as a campus within the beauties of nature away from the noise and complexity of the city. It started as the “Autistic Children Rehabilitation Centre” according to the protocol made with Ministry of Health and continued its activities until being transferred to the Ministry of National Education in February 2001. In the centre, group-, and individualized training is provided for autistic students under the age of 15. For older students group and individualized training is ensured that directly provides for occupation in the workshops of the Vocational Training Centre. We provide services to 160 students. The centre’s aim is to academically and psychologically help all personnel and families learn about autistic children; to implement an educational identification process for students after their medical diagnosis and to prepare individualized training programmes to fit the needs of each student. The Centre also cooperates with international organizations related to autism in order to follow the foreign developments.

(Rinaldo Marmara, Director, CARITAS TURKEY)

Change things !

CHANGE YOURSELF !

- Changes are not always only negative. Change is the way
- shown by the gospel to start build the kingdom of god here
- and now. When faced with the tragedy of poverty, we are
- asked to go through a profound, total change, a conversion
- of the heart and mind, that can transform the world and
- make it more humane.

Where should we start from ?



“I believe that it is a matter of change, first of all individual change. Everyone needs to understand what they should change in themselves. We have to leave our homes to see how the others live! Last year Italian politicians visited our country to understand why so many women went to Italy to work. We took them to the homes of the people who were working in Italy. As we left those homes, they were shaking. They said: “Now we understand why they do not want to live here!”. What other choices do they have ?”.

(Otilia Sirbu, Director, CARITAS MOLDOVA)

- The **first** level of change should be **cultural**: starting to recognise the poverty around us and, as a consequence,
- to fight against it.
- Poverty cannot be observed in an oversimplified way, nor as the sum of wrong individual choices. If, clearly, each is
- free to choose one's destiny, some are less free than others.

The other side of poverty

“I work with the homeless in Moscow. Some time ago, we organised a finger painting laboratory with some of them, then we took their paintings and organised an exhibition. Many journalists visited the exhibition and newspapers reported on it in depth, encouraging a lot of public to visit it. The paintings were really beautiful and people – who generally are not interested in poverty – started to ask who the painters were, how they came to live these lives... I was surprised at so much interest and asked a journalist who was there: “Why is this exhibition so important for you?” He answered: “People love terrible and beautiful things”. People want to know, because they see something beautiful and unusual. These paintings are the other side of poverty”.

(Marina Perminova, Volunteer, CARITAS RUSSIA)



Lack of opportunities



“Poverty is also a lack of hope, because there are no opportunities. There are many talented people I know who would like to start their own business, a small one that could support their family. But the law doesn’t work and you can’t do anything to achieve a certain financial solidity. What can then people do? They have to leave the country! If you cannot grow despite your good will, if you have no possibility to freely develop, what can you do ?”

(Otilia Sirbu, Director, CARITAS MOLDOVA)

- A **second** level of change relates to the **political and economic** sphere. Poverty can be fought especially thanks
- to sound, effective political and economic choices that do not neglect the central nature of the person, and his/her
- dignity and that are oriented towards social justice and solidarity.
- As changes are global, it is fundamental that each action is the result of a shared vision and that all the activities
- are coordinated transnationally.
- Moreover, only the policies that will favour and support all the generous forces of the civil society, ecclesial
- communities and private social sector will prove effective.

If there is political will...

“There should be political will. If Governments have the political will, then I believe that the situation of poverty may start to change. I do not believe that NGOs can bring about radical changes... The poor themselves cannot solve their problems alone. It is not a matter of service. It is a political matter to invest more at the educational level, in the access to housing, to the labour market, in the participation of the poor...”

(Leonid Mckay, Social Worker, CARITAS MALTA)



Let us be consistent

“Many people who need long-term services in their natural home environment, live in poverty. There are some gaps in the legislative system which do not permit the services for these people to be taken over by the state. These people however do not have the possibility to pay on their own for the services they need. For 7 years already we have been supporting those people, raising the public awareness about the problems which they face, and we’ve been trying to show possibilities for regulating the home care services which are of such a great importance for the sick and elderly people. We receive support from the institutions but each change within the government leads to new social policies and a legislative solution to this problem can not be achieved”

(Svetlana Gyoreva, Social Policy Officer, CARITAS BULGARIA)



Changing the rules of the game

“You may invest a lot of your time to forge a relationship, but all of this is prejudiced by the possibility of losing the contract that binds you to your employers. This is the case of families that need long-term counselling. Your job is compromised if your contract is not renewed. Everything is changing in this sense in Europe. In our work, we tell these people: “Trust us! We will help you!” But then the contract expires- We make an investment, they invest in us from a human point of view! We talk about empowering persons but that is the vision, this is reality”.

(Rosemary Keenan, Caritas Social Action, UNITED KINGDOM)



Hope in change

“The political situation of this country is really complex. In the past 15 to 20 years, there haven't been huge political changes. The administrative body is inefficient and spends 75% of the State expenses. Some laws should be redefined in line with EU recommendations. The economy has to re-launch itself and offer new job opportunities. Also the people should change their attitude and stop thinking that someone else will change their lives! But many, in fact, are hopeless...”.

(CARITAS BOSNIA HERZEGOVINA)

- ⋮ A **third** level of change is **social** change. Strong ties represent an actual social insurance against poverty and
- ⋮ exclusion. Investing in integration and solidarity is a positive evolution of our living together and the best
- ⋮ prevention against poverty.

The strength of ties



“It is true, ties are a defense against poverty. We see it very well with the elderly people we care for. Those who are alone can be divided in two groups. There are people with no social relationships, no friends, no relatives, and then there are those who live alone, who have no close relations, but who have a strong social network that can do something and somehow helps them to survive. And it is really easier to help this second group of people! Because they know how to relate to others, they know how to ask for help and how to receive it; they know where to look for support. But those with no such network, they cannot ask for help, they do not know how to manage, or how to change...”.

(Jurate Matikoviene, Social Worker, CARITAS LITHUANIA)

Poverty as indifference



“It is also the society that offers new challenges and we all become poorer in another sense. I am referring to relational aspects. Let me give you an example. We organise activities on tolerance with school children. We have worked in the schools of Belgrade and also in the smallest cities of Serbia and we have observed a huge difference! A big city can change children! Belgrade’s children are not open at all. They behave differently; we couldn’t get close to them. While the others all have examples to give us, about their friends with special needs. They pay more attention, are more sensitive. This clearly shows the influence a big city has...”

(Danijela Varsic, Social Worker, CARITAS SERBIA)



You are not alone !

LET'S MOVE TOGETHER!

- When faced with these complex issues, we run the risk of perceiving ourselves as ineffective, if not totally powerless as individuals. The easiest option is then, renunciation. But in the fight against poverty we are not alone. Many are by our side so that every person can write the new script of his/her life.

So that people can tell a new story



“What we are trying to do is make people tell a different story, so that they can imagine a different script for their existence. When you tell people about your expectations, your hopes for the future and they tell you they have none, it is tragic. We should promote a vision. We should give them the possibility to tell a different story. Let me give you an example. An acquaintance of mine is a school inspector. One day, he was in a class where a gipsy girl was learning to read with an assistant teacher. All of a sudden, the girl screamed “I can read! I can read!”. At that point, she had understood that her life had changed and her possibilities of choice had changed too. That she had a different future, and that she could start to tell a different story. The script of her life had changed. This was like a resurrection...”.

(Rosemary Keenan, Caritas Social Action, UNITED KINGDOM)

I have finally found my place

“Three years ago, I found myself jobless, but it was very hard for me to find a new job, as I didn't have much experience, moreover I had only finished primary school. I had to tackle very serious economic problems. I had heard that Caritas managed a sort of vocational training service funded by the European Social Fund. I went there and spoke to Concha, a social worker. After some interviews I understood that my professional goal was to work in the administrative field. It was a far-away dream! However, I was determined to fight, for my son and myself. I received a huge support from Caritas. I increased my self esteem, and I rediscovered my capacity to do things and meet people. The first jobs I obtained were as a house help and dish-washer in a restaurant far from home. It was hard. But Concha was always there to urge me not to give up. Every night after work I attended a course: marketing, accounting, IT! Last October I found a job as administrative employee in an agency offering services to firms. I started with a six-month contract, and then I was hired indefinitely. I am so happy! I have a job! I feel useful; I have found my place in society !”.

(Maria, 30 years old, CARITAS SPAIN)



A gift for a solidarity-based world



Around 10.000 volunteers of all ages are the main pillar of Caritas work, being the leading force of all activities on parish and deanery level: from planning, managing and providing all assistance programmes. They explore and discover the problems and the distress; they decide on the sort of assistance and aid that the people need; they give concrete forms of material and non- material help such as counselling and accompaniment. The average age of our volunteers is around 50 years. Women represent the biggest part of them. Young volunteers, involved in smaller but increasing numbers, work especially in programmes and projects for

vulnerable groups. They like to work with and for children and they are very innovative. On the local level there are a number of groups of very young volunteers (pupils) who do different activities for elderly and ill people at their homes or in care institutions. They also offer a kind of assistance and accompany handicapped children and youngsters. Students like to be involved in more specific and demanding projects for e.g. drug addicts. These programmes usually request some more knowledge and skills from volunteers and stronger leadership. Voluntary work is more and more recognised as a common value in the society even if there are some problems in promoting and organising it. There are some important steps made in the legislation which is in its final stage of approval. Also, the Theological Faculty University of Ljubljana has been given the mandate to be both a promoter and the education and training focal point for the whole Country.

(Alojzij Stefan, Social Worker, CARITAS SLOVENJA)

Empowering citizenship

A successful practice that we developed and ‘piloted’ for the first time in 2008 was the concept of a “Trans-regional seminar on poverty and social exclusion”, bringing together regional and local Caritas program and project managers, people experiencing poverty and social exclusion, accompanied by the Caritas programmes and projects) and representatives of the local and regional authorities that they are acting in partnership with, from one and the same Euro-region across national borders. This format of encounter combines some of the strong points of the annual European meeting of people experiencing poverty (also known as the annual ‘PEP’ meeting) and the annual EU Round Table on Poverty and Social Exclusion. Rather than meeting at a high (and therefore sometimes ‘abstract’) European level though, it is done at a much more local (and therefore more ‘concrete’) level. We found that there was a lot of practical benefit in organising such an encounter of dialogue across national borders in ‘neighbouring regions where people experiencing poverty live in more or less comparable social circumstances which allows for meaningful exchanges. Similarly, it was a big success to bring Caritas managers who provide services that cater to the needs of the poor and excluded together with representatives of local and regional authorities that are responsible for the local and regional policies addressing poverty and social exclusion. Framing this encounter and dialogue in the context of the EU’s social strategies has in our view contributed to a better understanding by these different local and regional ‘stakeholders’ of how EU policies do have an effect on local and regional poverty situations.

(Interregional Caritas Society E.E.I.G., consisting of the Diocesan Caritas's of Metz (FR) and Trier (DE) as well as Caritas in French and German speaking Belgium and Caritas Luxembourg)

Educate to peace and justice

On May 28 this year 21.600 pupils ran around the world three times gathering donations for children and youngsters in need in Austria as well as abroad. 140 schools participated. The pupils ran more than an incredible 130.000 km and collected 372.500 Euro. Pupils and teachers decided jointly which Caritas project to support. A young girl who took part to the run said: "I joined the LaufWunder because I can support children in need with simple means. It is no big deal, you just have to run, to run further and further. Almost everyone can make a contribution, even if it is only a small one". M., 17.

(Report on Social Activities from CARITAS AUSTRIA)



: So, let us act together! Let us stop poverty! Starting from now, starting from you.

ZERO POVERTY

→ Have a look at Part A : An Analytical Approach

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Full member organisations of Caritas Europa

Country Code*	Original organisation's name
ALB	Caritas Shqiptar
AND	Càritas Andorrana
ARM	Հայկական Կարիտաս
AUT	Caritas Österreich
BLR	Рэлігійная місія “ДКТ Карытас” Канферэнцыі Каталіцкіх Біскупаў у Беларусі
BEL	Caritas Catholica Belgica
BIH	Caritas Biskupske konferencije Bosne i Hercegovine
BGR	Каритас България
HRV	Hrvatski Caritas
CZE	Charita Česká republika
DNK	Caritas Danmark
GBR	CAFOD CSAN
EST	Caritas Eesti
FIN	Suomen Caritas
FRA	Secours Catholique
GEO	საქართველოს კარიტასი
DEU	Deutscher Caritasverband e.V
GRC	Κάριτας Ελλάς
HUN	Katolikus Karitász - Caritas Hungarica
ISL	Caritas Ísland
IRL	Trócaire
ITA	Caritas Italiana

Country Code*	Original organisation's name
LVA	Nodibinājums Caritas Latvija
LTU	Lietuvos Caritas
LUX	Confédération Caritas Luxembourg
MKD	Каритас Македонија
MLT	Caritas Malta
MDA	Caritas Moldova
MCO	Caritas Monaco
NLD	Cordaid
NOR	Caritas Norge
POL	Caritas Polska
PRT	Cáritas Portuguesa
ROU	Confederația Caritas România
RUS	Каритас России
GBR	SCIAF
SRB	Caritas Srbije i Crne Gore
SVK	Slovenská katolícka Charita
SVN	Slovenska Karitas
ESP	Caritas Española
SWE	Caritas Sverige
CHE	Caritas Schweiz - Caritas Suisse Caritas Svizzera - Caritas Svizra
TUR	Caritas Türkiye
UKR	Каритас України Каритас-Спец Україна

* United Nations Statistics Division - Standard Country and Area Codes Classification