

Press summary

Losing a generation Europe must invest in youth!

INTRODUCTION

Eurostat reports that 3 out of 10 young people are poor in Europe today. Caritas organisations across Europe work on a daily basis with young people who are struggling with social exclusion and poverty.

17 national Caritas organisations have assessed the situation of young people in Europe and of the impact of social policies on the ground.¹

This work reveals that the last decade has been particularly rough for young people in Europe. It casts the spotlight on the fact that, for the first time in decades, younger generations are likely to have fewer opportunities and to be worse off than their parents as jobs are scarcer, wages are lower and working conditions are worse. In addition, poor and excluded young people are also facing difficulties to access basic rights such as social protection, employment, housing and education.

Across Europe, Caritas is witnessing the dire situation of young people: increasing homelessness in the UK, increasing number of school drop-outs in Luxembourg. In Germany, Caritas is flagging the new syndrome of disconnected young who are falling through all social safety nets. Meanwhile in Portugal, young graduates juggle one internship after the other without accessing stable employment. In Italy, they are being kept in a state of protracted adolescence without work contracts, own flats and no subsistence on which to raise a family, like the Irish and Austrians who are stuck in their childhood rooms whilst housing prices rise. In the Netherlands, Caritas reports about young Dutch men and women who are denied access to higher education due to the limited size of their wallet. The fate of young Roma continues to be an enormous source of injustice; like in Bulgaria, where Roma adolescents are being excluded and discriminated against in the schooling system. Many young single mothers in Cyprus face poverty and exclusion. For many young Romanians and Greeks, the only option for sustenance is to emigrate.

In Caritas Europa's opinion the current situation is an act of inter-generational injustice. It seems that European societies have given up on their commitment to social cohesion and are disregarding the younger generations.

Caritas Europa welcomes all progressive initiatives that aim at addressing poverty and social exclusion in Europe, notably youth poverty. Therefore, Caritas Europa strongly supports the European Pillar of Social Rights and encourages Member States to seize the opportunity that the Pillar's 20 principles bring to strengthen social cohesion and to invest in the younger generations.

We cannot afford a lost generation. It is urgent that Europe invests in its young people!

¹ All 17 reports are available on <http://www.caritas.eu/publications>

FINDINGS

1. Access to rights

Young people living in poverty and social exclusion have more difficulties to access certain rights, notably:

1. 1. The right to housing

Access to affordable quality housing forms an essential part of social protection systems as a solidarity mechanism ensuring the well-being of society as a whole.²

In the last decades, many social protection and social housing policies have suffered from the lack of political will to decisively support housing as a basic right. On the contrary, although access to housing is a basic good, it was submitted to mere market criteria. At the same time, long-term social investment in social housing and housing benefits were cut back for reasons of fiscal consolidation and austerity measures. Hence, in the last decade, housing – intimately linked to the banking crisis – has entered into the headlines with reports on forced evictions, indebtedness of families, overcrowded substandard housing and homelessness.

“I had been living with my boyfriend for one year. I got pregnant, and he told me I had three days to leave the apartment. The first few nights I slept rough on benches in parks. Then a friend helped me to find a cheap apartment. In the apartment, there was no heating. In October, my daughter was born and we spent the whole winter in the cold, damp apartment. Then, I no longer had enough money for the rent. I was evicted. I was very afraid, that my child would be taken away from me by the youth welfare office, but there was just no affordable housing to find.”

Caritas service user, Austria

Young people, aged 18 to 29, often face an individual challenge to transition from adolescence to adulthood. Moving out from their parents' home is an important step in this process, as it normally marks the transition to financial independence. Taking this step, however, has become more difficult, not least due to the economic crisis and related youth employment crisis.

Although statistics for Europe (EU-28) show no changes in the estimated average age of young people leaving the parental household - it has remained nearly constant for the last decade at around 26.2 years – there are differences between the better-off core Member States and the crisis-stricken periphery. In that regard, the age when young people move out from their parents' home has fallen in countries like Germany and Belgium, whilst it increased in countries like Spain, Italy, Ireland and Greece.³ This is also related to affordable housing. Housing policies must take into account the needs of young people to live an independent and self-sustained life.

Overall, Caritas' experiences show an increasing gap in accessing housing between the poor youth and their better-off peers.

- In Austria, Caritas reports that young people at risk of poverty have considerable difficulties in accessing affordable housing. Young people without financial support from

² Caritas Europa 2016. http://www.caritas.eu/sites/default/files/esm_2016.pdf

³ Eurostat, data set: Estimated average age of young people leaving the parental household. http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=yth_demo_030&lang=en

family networks face serious difficulties when entering the housing market. Housing costs are a significant strain on family income, and rents have increased disproportionately over the last ten years.

- In Belgium, young people face serious challenges in emancipating themselves from their parent's households, as rents are remarkably high. Social housing has very long waiting lists.
- Caritas Greece confirms that, since the beginning of the economic crisis, a growing number of children and young people live in very poor housing conditions with no heating, no electricity and with humidity. Youth homelessness, consequently, has increased.
- In Ireland, the number of households on the social housing waiting list is high and the number of those who have been on the list for over seven years has more than doubled. With rising rent prices, both average wages and rent supplements are insufficient to ensure access to housing for young people.
- The disproportionate increase in housing prices in Luxembourg together with a shortage of social housing are having a very negative impact on the living conditions of young people who cannot afford a decent home. This, combined with a high rate of youth unemployment, is hindering the social and economic development of younger generations.
- In Portugal, Caritas describes the difficulties for many young people to access a place of their own due to their precarious employment situations and the expensive housing market. A common feeling of insecurity related to their future prevents many young people from committing to rent or purchase an apartment. The result is that they live longer with their parents or rent rooms in shared flats.
- The UK example shows in detail how poor young people are excluded from buying or renting flats, whilst municipal social housing schemes are being scaled down. The housing market in the UK has priced out many young people. Limited access to housing is currently one of the most worrisome problems for this group.
- Caritas Italy reveals how the problem of housing shortages has been aggravated by the lack of resources for public social housing and failure of various legislative measures on the rental market and social housing.

On the whole, rent expenditures are becoming an ever larger share of many young people's monthly expenses. The lack of access to affordable housing in combination with youth unemployment and increasingly poor working conditions are impeding vulnerable young Europeans from affording rents. Caritas social workers have become accustomed to intervening in situations of indebtedness, mortgage payment defaults and forced evictions, all of which are related to housing and its increasing costs.

Homelessness, although a more complex issue, is directly related to housing policies and the failure of governments to offer housing alternatives promptly in times of financial and life crises.⁴

The European Pillar of Social Rights as part of the solution

A number of policies can facilitate access for young people to affordable quality housing. Amongst these are social housing, rent subsidies, rental guarantees, minimum income schemes, tax deductions and rent price control, together with broader policies of spatial planning for urban social cohesion.⁵ The competencies for these go right through the multi-level governance of Europe from the municipal councils up to the European institutions.

The 19th principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) explicitly recognises the right to housing and commits to offering social housing or housing benefits to those in need and to ensuring shelter and services to the homeless.⁶ An indicator on housing is introduced in the recently proposed EU Social Scoreboard for the EPSR.⁷

The European Semester process might be a useful tool for monitoring of the Pillar's implementation, particularly if the dynamic initiative, spearheaded by the EPSR, is shifting attention from economic and monetary performance towards social goals.

Moreover, housing as a human right and fundamental condition for human dignity is also protected by article 31 of the Revised European Social Charter⁸, which foresees making housing accessible to those who are in need and tackling homelessness.

Furthermore, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a global framework for measuring social and environmental standards. Housing comes up strongly, implicitly in the goals of poverty reduction (1) and reducing inequalities (10). It is explicitly formulated in Target 11.3 of the Sustainable Cities Goal: "by 2030, ensure access to adequate, safe and affordable housing [...] for all".

1.2. The right to access employment of quality

The last decade of recession has marked an entire generation of young girls and boys. As recession has swept over Europe, youth unemployment has risen to unprecedented levels, with an unequal distribution between the core and peripheral Member States of the Union. Moreover, lower wages and a weakened legal protection of the first employment have forced young people to settle in a formerly unknown universe of precariousness and greater vulnerability to poverty.

⁴ Busch-Geertsema 2016

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1024&langId=en&newsId=2338&furtherNews=yes>, EC2013b, FEANTSA 2017; Housing Europe / Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research 2015.

⁵ For a menu of policy-options, see the Report of the European Parliament EP2013.

⁶ CE2017c.

⁷ EC2017d, the indicator is "Severe housing deprivation rate (% of total population living in overcrowded dwellings and exhibiting housing deprivation, by tenure status) Eurostat".

⁸ Council of Europe, [Revised European Social Charter](#)

I am 25 years old and I've been working for 10 years in precarious jobs. I started to work with the intention to help my mother and to continue my studies for the university. Currently, I have a contract within an employment measure from a Municipality but, for me, this is almost the same as being unemployed. My wage is 419€ and I have three years of graduation studies, dozens of trainings, one year of migration in another country and 10 years of struggle.

Caritas Service User, Caritas Portugal

Caritas' findings expose a dismal picture of the suffering of young people in Europe when it comes to accessing steady, well remunerated employment.

- In Portugal, job opportunities and wage levels have dropped dramatically since the economic crisis of 2008. Youth unemployment continues to be high and many young people decide to emigrate. Higher education is not being valued in the labour market.
- According to the UK findings, the current generation of young people in the UK – nicknamed “Millennials”, aged roughly 21-30 – has not seen an increase in income over the last five years to keep up with inflation. This is the first generation to earn less than the former generation.
- Caritas Greece reports that most young people in Greece, who have completed university studies, are trapped in jobs that are irrelevant to their studies, with extremely poor working conditions, reminding of the situation right after World War II.
- In Romania, young people's wage levels frequently do not lift families above the poverty threshold. Consequently, one out of two young Romanians emigrates to search for better opportunities elsewhere.
- In Austria, one out of ten young people is considered working-poor. In contrast, the tax burden on labour is amongst the highest in Europe, while taxes on wealth are amongst the lowest in the whole of OECD⁹.
- Caritas Italy witnesses how young people are forced to postpone the stages that mark maturity. Because of widespread unemployment, together with precariousness and low pay, young women and men are unable to attain economic autonomy. In many cases, even though these people are nearly thirty years old, they define themselves neither as “young” nor as “adults”, because they are far from having financial independence.

In general, Caritas' findings display a picture of young people, who are trapped in long-term unemployment, precarious and low paid jobs or internships, often despite having attained higher degrees. Most national Caritas allude to the frustration and deception of young people, who no longer believe in the promise that one can succeed by making an effort, as this has proven inaccurate and unachievable for many.

Moreover, Caritas's findings reveal the appearance of a new social phenomenon, the SINKIES, with a devastating impact on Europe's demographics and, hence, its social and economic future.

⁹ For detailed OECD statistics, see <http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DatasetCode=IDD>

SINKIES – Single Income, No Kids refers to young couples without children, who are both working-poor and who, with their combined wages, barely earn the equivalent of a single income. As opposed to DINKIES, a term coined in the 1980s to describe couples earning a double income who choose to be childless, SINKIES might actually wish to have children, but simply cannot afford it.

The European Pillar of Social Rights as part of the solution

Europe has answered to the youth unemployment crisis with decisive measures, notably the Youth Guarantee and the Youth Employment Initiative. These initiatives have often promoted youth entrepreneurship, which has brought about both opportunities and risks. There are reasons for concerns that self-employment or freelance working practices camouflage highly dependent or precarious employment situations. This is the case particularly for those occupations generated by young entrepreneurs. While flexicurity seems to be a valid vision, a great number of young Europeans develop their professional careers having never signed a permanent work contract.¹⁰ This is especially true in the so-called Collaborative Economy – defined as business with transactions facilitated horizontally through online platforms.¹¹ Labour rights and social protection need to be safeguarded and require further regulatory efforts.

All 3 chapters of the European Pillar of Social Rights are about improving access to the labour market and working conditions and strengthening social protection and inclusion.

For example, in chapter 1, principle 4 stresses the importance of providing active support to employment.¹² In chapter 2, principle 6 refers to workers' right to "fair wages that provide for a decent standard of living"¹³ and in chapter 3, principle 12 states that all employed people have "the right to adequate social protection".¹⁴

The Social Model of Caritas puts inclusive labour markets at the centre stage, together with family policies and social protection systems.¹⁵ Caritas advocates for a rights-based and non-discriminatory approach to employment that is sensitive to the necessities of youth.

¹⁰ "Flexicurity" emerges as a concept in the 1990 in Denmark, combining labour market flexibility, with social protection and active labour market policies. This concept has rapidly been taken up by the EC as of the 2000s, see EC2007 <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52007DC0359&from=EN> . On the precariousness of youth employment, see EP 2016; Lörcher/Schömann 2017, ILO 2013, ILO 2016; Piasna / Myant 2017.

¹¹ EC 2016e; EC2017f.

¹² https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles_en#chapter-i-equal-opportunities-and-access-to-the-labour-market

¹³ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles_en#chapter-ii-fair-working-conditions

¹⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles_en#chapter-iii-social-protection-and-inclusion

¹⁵ Caritas 2016 – Social Justice and Equality in Europe: http://www.caritas.eu/sites/default/files/esm_2016.pdf

National and/or regional authorities play a vital role in organising employment counselling services, ensuring minimum wages and job security and devising measures to support the transition from education to the labour market. These obligations are stated in the European Social Charter and the European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights. Recently, they have been reiterated in the global framework of the SDGs. Target 8.6 states that “By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training” and Target 8.5 states that: “By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value”. They also urge governments in Target 4.4 to ensure that “by 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship”.

2. Young people most at risk of poverty and social exclusion

2.1. Young single parents

“The most I suffer from all the small things that I can't give to my children or that we can't do together. You know, like going to a film with popcorn, a trip to the zoo or spending an afternoon in a swimming pool.”

A young mother, Caritas Belgium

Young single parents are frequently mentioned by Caritas member organisations as one of the groups most vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion. The vast majority of such households are single-mother households. Having children at a young age represents a major challenge in a phase where societal demands, such as consolidating educational achievements, making career choices and settling in a profession, coincide with the ever extended transition from adolescence to adulthood.

Recent research provides abundant evidence that being a single-parent increases income insecurity and creates a higher risk of poverty. The European Commission, in its report *Employment and Social Developments in Europe 2014*, pointed out that “in more than 20 Member States, the risk of poverty or social exclusion for children has risen since 2008, along with a worsening situation for their (mostly working-age) parents, with single-parent households facing the highest risks”.¹⁶

This is particularly the case for young mothers with low educational backgrounds, as reported in Caritas’ findings, who suffer from “double disadvantage”.¹⁷

- According to Caritas Austria, single-parent families are 3.4 times more likely to need material and financial assistance as compared to the total population.
- In Belgium, young single parents have more difficulty accessing social and health services. They often have a low income and suffer from discrimination on the housing market.

¹⁶ EC2015d.

¹⁷ Ruggeri/Bird 2014, Oláh et al 2017.

- The labour market in the Czech Republic is severely limited in offering part-time jobs. Caritas social workers highlight the lack of job opportunities compatible with raising small children – especially for parents with lower education and no professional experience. Additionally, childcare services are insufficient. Kindergartens are often inaccessible - there are not enough places in public ones and private kindergartens or other forms of delegated childcare are expensive.
- Caritas Luxemburg observes that single parents face very serious problems related to limited employment opportunities - hence the higher rates of unemployment - and limited access to affordable housing.
- Caritas Social Action Network tells how single parent households have been the household type hardest hit by tax and benefit reforms since 2010 in the UK. A single parent is more likely to be in low-paid work than the average person. Being a single parent often means that the individual works a part-time job, which is more likely to be low-paid. [...] 68% of single parents are in the three lowest paid occupation groups.

Research shows that specific welfare provisions are more successful than others in cushioning the poverty risk and in ensuring social inclusion for single parents and their children. Among these provisions are accessible and affordable childcare, the promotion of work-life balance, in particular part time jobs, parental leave and paid sick days, incentives to involve fathers in childcare, the promotion of late careers and targeted income support schemes. As the number of single-parent families increases, their specific situation and needs should be considered explicitly from the start by social policies.¹⁸

Moreover, a recent analysis of Eurofound depicts a profound mismatch between childcare duties and employment. "As many as 80% of these inactive young mothers would like to work if they could freely choose their working hours, as would 85% of young fathers. This indicates that these young mothers and fathers are not outside the labour force by choice."¹⁹ Caring duties also explain some of the NEET figures (young people neither in employment nor in education and training), particularly those of inactive women, when disaggregating the numbers. "[...] one-quarter of all young women who are NEET are outside of employment, education and training because of family responsibilities."²⁰

2.2. Young migrants and refugees

Europe faces major challenges related to providing social services to all, including migrants and asylum seekers. Some European countries have only begun to be countries of destination in the last decades and are still adapting to their duties to ensure full social integration and the respect for diversity of all people.

¹⁸ EC 2013c; Ruggeri/Bird 2014; Bontout et al. 2015; Carson et al. 2017; Oláh et al 2017.

¹⁹ Eurofound 2013, 1; See also EC 2013c; Ruggeri/Bird 2014; Bontout et al. 2015; Carson et al. 2017; Oláh et al 2017.

²⁰ Eurofound 2016a, 37.

I have been living in Italy for 4 years. I came to Rome to study, sent by my family and relatives, in order to get a degree in nursing. At University, it was not so easy because my Italian was quite poor at that time. Because of the war and poverty in my country, my family could not support me anymore and they stopped sending me money. After some period, I had to choose whether to go back home or to stay in Italy. I decided to stay, but I had no money for University.

Abdulaih, 26 years, from Afghanistan, Caritas Italy

Both State and society have to provide a level playing field that allows all young people to pursue their aspirations. States also have to support the most vulnerable, including the newly arrived, in catching up with the others. In addition, asylum is a basic human right and Europe has to live up to its international obligations to be a welcoming society for refugees. Both issues – non-discrimination and asylum – are key principles in a number of human rights conventions. Through its daily work in the local communities, Caritas witnesses how successful integration can enrich communities, in all dimensions of the word. However, the findings of Caritas display a reality of social exclusion, disadvantages and discrimination of migrants and refugees.

- Caritas Finland relates the difficulties for migrants to enter the labour market with language barriers and, every so often, with issues of mental health due to the journey from war zones or regions devastated by utter poverty.
- In Cyprus, Caritas describes that refugees are excluded from the housing market.
- Caritas Greece says that the so-called refugee 'crisis' is being abused by right-wing populists to confront poverty-stricken Greeks with people fleeing from wars in the Middle East or Central Asia.
- Caritas social workers in Belgium report widespread practices of discrimination. Youth with migrant backgrounds face a number of social and cultural challenges at school, in educational and vocational training and in the housing and labour markets. For example, there is significant discrimination based on nationality in the housing market. A male with Turkish or Moroccan roots will in 14% of the cases not even get an appointment to look at a house on the private rental market.
- In the UK, the meagre weekly income support to young refugees does not allow them to participate in society and makes them fall into destitution and rely on the charitable sector to survive.
- Young immigrants in the Netherlands suffer discrimination on the labour market.

In general, the findings from the Caritas member organisations show that the right to equality and non-discrimination is one of the three rights that are the most difficult to realise for young people with a migration background, together with the right to housing and the right to work.

In most European countries one out of three or one out of two young residents has a migrant background.²¹ Young migrants are more likely to be early school-leavers or not in employment, education or training (NEETs) than other youth.

Likewise, comparing figures of employment rates between young people born in an EU country and young people born outside of the EU shows a growing difference.²² In short, while equal opportunities were a challenge before the crisis, the last decade has further accentuated inequalities between migrants and non-migrants in all measurable aspects. In addition to social exclusion, the dimension of discrimination is an obstacle. Combined, they make for a dangerous mix.

With the aim of fostering independent and fulfilling lives, Caritas cooperates with young migrants and refugees, most of whom are in severe situations of social exclusion and poverty. The Caritas Social Model has as its second pillar the promotion of inclusive labour markets for work as a source of well-being. As part of this strategy, Caritas advocates that: "Antidiscrimination policies increase opportunities for labour market participation of marginalised groups, such as Roma or migrants, as well as the equal participation of women and men."²³

The European Pillar of Social Rights

People experiencing poverty have less 'mays' and more 'need tos' than other people. They need to go to meetings, they need to be on time, they need to eat healthy... On the other hand, people with money may be too late, may go where they want and may eat what they like.

Anonymous Caritas service user, Caritas Belgium

Youth poverty and exclusion have been a major European concern in the last decade. Persistent youth unemployment is a scandal that puts a whole generation at risk. In addition to the sheer numbers, the territorial impact dividing Europe into a well-off centre and a distressed periphery puts into question the promise of convergence, one of the founding principles of the European governance.

Caritas' findings reveal that the situation for young men and women in the last decade has worsened in many areas, such as when accessing employment, exposure to precariousness and previously unobserved low wage-levels, rising housing prices, welfare cuts, vanishing social service offers and family indebtedness, amongst others.

In 2008, at the outburst of the economic crisis, the European Commission called for adequate income support policies, inclusive labour markets and access to quality services. This package, dubbed "Active Inclusion", should have balanced the economic policies in the age of fiscal

²¹ Establishing accurate numbers is a difficult task due to citizenship regulation as well as the presence of undocumented migrants. On measuring indicators on immigration integration, see ESN/MPG 2014.

²² EUROSTAT Data Set Young people neither in employment nor in education and training by sex, age and country of birth (NEET rates); See Eurostat 2014: Statistics Explained [Young People - Migration and Socioeconomic Situation](#); Brussels.

²³ Caritas Europa 2016, 20 - Social Justice and Equality in Europe: http://www.caritas.eu/sites/default/files/esm_2016.pdf

consolidation with a social policy component. Again in 2013, when approving the Social Investment Package for Europe, the European Parliament called upon European Institutions to ensure that “the establishment of European economic governance is complemented by improved social governance”. Today, these social initiatives are being summarised and reshuffled in the European Pillar of Social Rights.²⁴ They are framed as:

- Equal opportunities and access to the labour market;
- Fair working conditions;
- Social protection and inclusion.

There has been intense debate on the legal nature of the European Pillar of Social Rights, whether the Pillar is actually about “rights” and if it can generate obligations on the Union and its Member States that can be measured and claimed. Experts have pointed out that it is actually not about “rights”, but about far softer “principles”. The European Pillar of Social Rights and its twenty principles are non-binding recommendations to the Member States, particularly to those within the Euro zone. However, when examined within the European Semester process and supported by peer learning within the Open Method of Coordination, over time, these principles will generate a general frame of reference for State parties and for engaging civil society.

The linkage to human rights frameworks and other international obligations is not clearly established. All European Member States are parties to a number of Covenants and Treaties. Among these are, at international level, the Covenants on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (CESR 1966) and the Conventions on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW 1979), on the Rights of the Child (CRC 1989) and on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD 2006). At European level, there are the Revised European Social Charter (ESC 1996) of the Council of Europe and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (CFR 2000). Additionally, an international consensus has recently been agreed upon: the SDGs, with distinct commitments on social protection, labour standards and equality. All these instruments have their respective reporting, monitoring and complaints procedures and bodies. Accomplishing social rights is measurable in terms of policies, systems, outcomes and fiscal and budgetary allocations. This makes States accountable to their obligations towards social rights. It allows the civil society to oversee their performance. How the Pillar of Social Rights and its principles will relate to these frameworks and translate into measurable and enforceable social guarantees is still to be defined.²⁵

Caritas Europa acknowledges the potential added value of the European Pillar of Social Rights. The initiative can be a contribution to promoting a more social market economy, linking the

²⁴ On the Commission’s Active Inclusion Communication see: EC 2008; On the Social Investment Package see: EC2013a, EC2013b, EC2013c, European Parliament 2013; on the European Social Pillar see: EC2016f, EC2017a; EC2017b, European Council 2016; ILO 2016, EAPN 2016, EAPN 2017.

²⁵ On the legal debate of the EPSR, see EESC 2017, Lörcher/Schömann 2016. On the International Human Rights Conventions and its bodies, see the webpage of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/Pages/HumanRightsBodies.aspx>. On the Revised European Social Charter see CoE 1996; EU Charter of Fundamental Rights see EU 2000. On measurability of Social Rights, see OHCHR2015, CESR 2015, CESR 2016.

instruments of a market economy with the principles of solidarity and the common good. Implementation of these principles will be the key challenge. The EU should fully exercise its competencies and focus on adopting more Country Specific Recommendations in the field of social policy. Moreover, an adequate minimum income scheme directive should set minimum standards ensuring that everybody can participate in society. EU labour law needs to be updated and strengthened with regard to new forms of employment and the reconciliation of family and work life. But most of all, successful implementation of the Pillar will depend on Member States' action, which will need to be monitored at EU and national level on the basis of timely indicators and involving all stakeholders. Benchmarks and minimum standards can help attain upwards convergence. Minimum standards should allow for the monitoring of principles on fair working conditions and provisions on minimum income.

CARITAS EUROPA'S RECOMMENDATIONS

To the European Union

The EU should develop a comprehensive, coordinated strategy to prevent and fight youth poverty.

This strategy should be:

- A. Based on the principles enshrined in the European Pillar of Social Rights;
- B. Coherent with the strategy to fight child and family poverty laid out by the European Commission in its 2013 Recommendation on investing in Children;
- C. Adequately funded to foresee adequate EU funding to support national youth strategies by:
 - i. Continuing the Youth Guarantee;
 - ii. Maintaining at least the same amount of European Social Fund and earmarking 50% of it for the fight against poverty;
 - iii. Using the flexibility clause of the stability and growth pact to allow Member States to exempt prioritised social investment.

To the Member States


The Member States of the European Union should design or update their national strategy to prevent and fight youth poverty, which include actions, such as:

- A. Access to housing: Ensure access to quality, appropriate and affordable housing by, for instance, investing in social housing, rent subsidies and specific fiscal advantages;

- B. Income: Apply an integrated approach towards ensuring a minimum income level that is adequate to make ends meet and live a life in dignity, for example by applying realistic reference budgets that use national/regional basic basket benchmarks;
- C. Family support: support vulnerable young families, such as single parents, in particular by ensuring access to affordable and quality childcare and education and by reconciling career aspirations with family life. Make the time spent on care work eligible for the calculation of pension rights.
- D. Confirming their commitment to the principles enshrined in the European Pillar of Social Rights by ratifying and implementing the Revised European Social Charter as the social constitution of Europe and to accept its Collective Complaints Mechanism;

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