

Statement on the occasion of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, 17 October 2019

Caritas Europa calls on the new European Commission to help lift people out of poverty

On the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, 17 October, Caritas Europa demands the soon to be appointed European Commission to take action against poverty, inequalities and social exclusion during its mandate. The fact that fighting poverty is a priority in the Political Guidelines for the new Commission is a sign of hope for the more than 112 million people experiencing poverty or social exclusion in Europe. Now is the time to put words into action.

Nearly 25 million of the more than 112 million people living in poverty are children. Due to intergenerational transmission of poverty, children who experience poverty at an early age are at a higher risk of growing up to become adults living in poverty.

“ **When I came to the social benefits department, they told me that I was about to be eliminated from the register for not attending the scheduled meeting at the public employment service. I didn't receive the letter with the information about the date. As a sanction, I am now 6 months without income and have increased expenditures. I don't know how I will manage.**

Clara, 26 and mother of one child

To end the vicious cycle of poverty, concrete proposals, such as the European Child Guarantee which would ensure access to services to all children, sound promising. However, such proposals will only be relevant if sufficient resources are dedicated to them and if they are developed in coherence with existing frameworks, such as the European Pillar of Social Rights, the Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular by rebalancing economic, social and ecological objectives in the European Semester process.

Since the financial and economic crisis of 2008, austerity policies have put national social protection systems under pressure, further undermining the capacity of states to protect people against poverty. To respect human dignity, everybody should have the right to such protection. Effective social protection systems contribute to reducing inequalities and to improving social cohesion. The intention of the Commission to refocus the European Semester into an instrument that integrates the Sustainable Development Goals is a promising approach, as is the intention to make full use of the flexibility allowed within the Stability and Growth Pact.

However, the participation of people experiencing poverty in policy design is essential in order to develop or improve services that adequately address their needs. Caritas Europa is committed to continue facilitating this by involving people in policy processes that affect them directly.

“ **The EU can play a decisive role in ensuring that nobody is left behind in Europe. The Political Guidelines offer reason to hope that the EU will progress towards fair and sustainable social models that keep family policies at the centre, provide for inclusive labour markets and ensure access to adequate social protection systems for all. But these intentions need to be translated into concrete policy initiatives now to ensure that people no longer experience poverty, in a society based on social justice where everybody's dignity is upheld.**

Maria Nyman, Secretary General of Caritas Europa



more information

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about caritas

Caritas Europa is a network of 49 member organisations in 46 European countries and one of the 7 regions of Caritas Internationalis. Our members assist and provide services to millions of people in need.

Caritas Europa aims at lifting people out of poverty by empowering them and by influencing unjust structures and unfair policies that keep people trapped in positions of disempowerment.