

Foster access to services to support people to move out of poverty

On the occasion of the World Day for Social Justice of 20 February, Caritas Europa presents today its new report on poverty and inequalities in Europe. The report highlights the legal barriers, bureaucratic hurdles and other difficulties vulnerable people face when trying to access housing, early childhood education and care, employment and other basic services.

“ We are now three years on a waiting list for social housing. In the meantime, we rent a small apartment that is actually too small and too expensive for us. We have two bedrooms; our three children sleep altogether in one room. We have no money left at the end of the month. Our children are suffering from this situation, but there’s nothing we can do other than wait.

Elsie, 34, married to Johan and mother of three children aged 8, 5 and 3 years, Belgium

Caritas beneficiaries who are trying to access basic services identify lack of understandable information, bureaucracy, strict rules and formal application requirements as the main barriers that hinder access to these services. There is lack of a personalised and caring approach, which translates into the service not responding to the beneficiaries’ needs. This is particularly the case with public employment services.

In order to address these challenges, the Caritas Europa report recommends Member States to ensure access to social rights, especially for those in situations of vulnerability. The European Commission should promote the exchange of best practices to address any legal barriers and bureaucratic hurdles that restrict access to services. A gradual move towards universal access to services and minimum income, together with a tailor-made individual approach in service provision, are vital steps for effectively lifting people out of poverty. The Council should further adopt recommendations towards this aim and monitor their follow up.

“ This report, based on findings by Caritas organisations across the EU, calls for coordinated and coherent action by the EU and its Member States to improve access to services for the most deprived people. It is crucial that people are fully aware and informed about their social rights and how to access them.

Maria Nyman, Secretary General of Caritas Europa

“ A strong Social Europe is a priority for the European Commission and the European Pillar of Social Rights is pivotal in this endeavour. Its success will depend on the commitment and contributions of all stakeholders. The new Caritas CARES! Report on poverty and inequalities, highlighting the challenges faced by the most deprived people in accessing services, is an excellent example of how civil society organisations can successfully contribute to shaping policies that reduce inequalities and fight poverty. Its recommendations are a good contribution for the preparation of the Action Plan for the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

Nicolas Schmit, EU Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights

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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.

Press release

Caritas Europa is committed to contributing to the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR), as proclaimed by the EU Institutions on 17 November 2017 in Gothenburg. Ensuring access to housing, public employment services and early childhood education and care services, along with access to minimum income, are key elements in the goal of the EPSR to reduce poverty and social exclusion in Europe.

Notes to editor

- The Caritas Europa report on poverty and inequalities in Europe "Fostering access to services to support people to move out of poverty" is launched today at the European Policy Centre.

The report presents 12 policy recommendations for the EU Institutions to address in order to facilitate access to services for the most vulnerable. They relate in particular to the:

- creation of quality jobs;
- investment in younger and older workers;
- affordability and adequacy of long-term care and the conditions allowing family members to provide support;
- access to social rights by those most in need;
- ending of discrimination;
- implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights;
- proposal on a framework directive on minimum income;
- strengthening of social and economic policy coordination;
- setting of further poverty targets and sub-targets;
- ratification of the Revised European Social Charter;
- role of EU funds;
- promotion of participation of people experiencing poverty in policy making.

Download the report on our website: <https://www.caritas.eu/cares-report-2020/>.

- The European report is based on findings by 16 Caritas Europa member organisations in Europe. These 16 country reports are available online: <https://www.caritas.eu/access-to-services-country-reports/>.