

***European Economic and Social Committee***

***Europe 2020 Steering Committee***

Brussels, 13 April 2015

**INFORMATION NOTE**

on

**Caritas Crisis Monitoring Report 2015: Poverty and Inequalities on the Rise – Just Social Models Needed as the Solution!** [[1]](#footnote-1)

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General findings[[2]](#footnote-2)

* Focus is made on the social impact that the economic crisis and the implemented austerity measures are having on EU citizens, notably in the countries, worst hit by the economic crisis: Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Romania and Spain, where disturbing levels of poverty and deprivation are noted.
* An unfair Europe is shown, where social risks are increasing, social systems are being downsized and individuals and families are falling deeper into poverty. Fading social cohesion and increasingly weakening people’s trust in political institutions is also stressed.
* The official discourse suggesting that the worst of the economic crisis is over is strongly doubted. Social rights are said to be challenged in Europe as a result of the economic crisis evolving into a social and increasingly more political crisis. It is stated that current political choices, eroding the social dimension of Europe, are having an extremely negative impact on vulnerable people. Over 6 years of economic crisis poor people are still paying for a crisis they did not cause, and the poor are getting poorer.

Main conclusions

* Poverty and inequalities are increasing in Europe. 123 million EU citizens are living in poverty, almost 1 in 4.
* More than 1/3 of the population in five EU Member States are at risk of poverty or social exclusion (i.e. Bulgaria 48%, Romania 40.4%, Greece 35.7%, Latvia 35.1%, and Hungary 33.5%).
* 1 in 3 children, or more, live in poverty in 14 of the 28 EU countries.
* There are serious gaps in the social welfare systems of many European countries.
* The policy of prioritising austerity should be replaced by an alternative solution.

Recommendations

* Ensure a guaranteed minimum income for all. Every national government should have a mechanism to ensure all people receive an income sufficient to live in dignity.
* Tackle tax evasion. Tax evasion must be tackled and fair taxation systems introduced in all sectors of society, including the corporate sector, in order to contribute a fair share. Those who can afford to contribute more should do so.
* Invest in social policies. The provision of quality services (relative to housing, affordable childcare, education, skills enhancement, health, among others) reduces inequalities and creates jobs in the long-term.
* Identify priorities, allocate adequate resources, and set targets and benchmarks to monitor their implementation. When deciding what policy approaches to use and who to target with them, authorities must base their decisions on fairness, justice, and common good of the entire population, ensuring protection of vulnerable groups.

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1. Date of issue: 16.02.2015; Institution: Caritas Europa, Social Justice Ireland; Available at: <http://www.caritas.eu/sites/default/files/caritascrisisreport_2015_en_final.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. All the findings, conclusions and recommendations may be found at the Caritas Europe website <http://www.caritas.eu/news/poverty-and-inequalities-on-the-rise-people-need-fair-solutions> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)