

## EUROPEAN SOCIETIES TAKING RESPONSIBILITY IN ADDRESSING THE SOCIAL EFFECTS OF THE CRISIS

*The Caritas Europa Social Policy Forum of next week will deal with sustainable social strategies in a context of economic hardship*

**Pressinfo Caritas Europa. Brussels, 23 April 2009.** - The recent crisis has a great impact on European households. Rising consumer prices along with limited access to credits and employment insecurity are among the factors leading to increasing inequities. Inevitably, the most vulnerable, such as the poor and the marginalised, are the ones who suffer the most. The Caritas Europa Social Policy Forum of 27-30 April will bring together experts from over forty European countries in a joint effort to concretely apply solidarity and discuss sustainable social strategies as a responsibility of national and European authorities in addressing the social effects of the crisis.

As a response to the crises of the past decades, most governments have reacted by cutting social spending, especially in the health and education sectors. The negative consequences of those choices, in terms of greater disparities, are still visible especially in low-income countries and emerging economies. Confronted to undeniable difficulties, the national and European authorities are devising strategies to address the current situation and contain serious effects on the affected people. The Social Policy Forum is an occasion to support and inform the elaboration of those strategies making Caritas knowledge and experience flow into relevant debates and processes.

A keynote speech on “The Impact of the recent financial and economic crisis on the most vulnerable people in Europe” by Prof. dr. Anton C. Hemerijck, Director of the Scientific Council for Government Policy (The Hague, Netherlands), will open the Social Forum on 27 April afternoon. After different sessions related to the impact of financial crises on social/health services (but also to the protection of domestic workers, social inclusion of ROMA and orphans of labour migrants), Caritas Europa President Erny Gillen will deliver the main outcomes at the presence of Mr Marián Hošek, Czech Vice-minister for social policy and services, and representatives of the European Commission and the Council of Europe during a public session on 29 April afternoon. Other meaningful moments will be the launch of the Caritas Policy Papers on Home Care and HIV/AIDS.

The **press conference** will be held on 29 April 2009 - 17:30 at the Hotel Marriott Courtyard Prague Flora (Lucemburska Street 46 - 130 00 Prague). This will be moderated by Marius Wanders, Secretary General of Caritas Europa, with the participation of Oldřich Haičman, Director of Caritas Czech Republic; Erny Gillen, President of Caritas Europa; Robert Urbé, President of the Caritas Europa Social Policy Commission; Stefan Wallner, President of the Caritas Europa Task Force on the European Year 2010; and Vladimír Hamršmíd, Head of social projects at the diocesan Caritas of OCH Jihlava. Journalists are also invited to attend at the same venue the Official Opening including a visit to the ‘market place’ exhibition on Monday 27 April (14:00-18:30), as well as the Public Conference on Wednesday 29 April (14:00-17:00).

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