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TOWARDS 'EU 2020' AND MORE

*Our recommendations to the European Parliament in the areas of
Social Policy, Migration, Humanitarian Aid and International Development...*

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Introduction

Caritas Europa is the umbrella organisation of the European network of 48 Caritas organisations that are operating in 44 European countries. The organisation actively focuses upon policy issues related to social inequality and poverty, migration and asylum within all European countries; and matters of emergency humanitarian assistance, international development and peace throughout the world.

Caritas Europa is delighted to meet on 15 February Maciej Popowski, Head of the private office of Jerzy Buzek, President of the European Parliament. The Caritas Europa delegation attending the meeting will be composed of:

- Marius Wanders, Secretary General
- Adriana Opromolla, Social Policy Officer
- Peter Verhaeghe, Migration Officer
- Blandine Bouniol, International Cooperation Officer

In line with its mission and main focus, Caritas Europa delegation wishes to exchange with Mr Popowski on the theme of Combating poverty and empowering people in inclusive societies. This will include, among others, the Caritas Campaign for the 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion (and the Caritas Public Congress on Poverty scheduled for June 2010 in Madrid) as well as the future "EU 2020" Strategy.

More specific inputs from the Caritas representatives will deal with:

- Social Policy: Combating poverty in the EY 2010 and in the 'EU 2020' Strategy through reinforcing the Open Method of Coordination on Social Inclusion
- Migration: Social inclusion, anti-discrimination and integration of migrants
- Humanitarian Aid: The role of the European Parliament in ensuring the implementation of the Humanitarian Consensus
- International Development: The role of the European Parliament in ensuring Policy Coherence for Development

Below you will find a summary of these inputs.

Social Policy:

Combating poverty in the EY 2010 and in the 'EU 2020' Strategy through reinforcing the Open Method of Coordination on Social Inclusion

1. Current issues at stake

Until before the economic crisis hit Europe, the EU coordination on Social Inclusion had advanced slowly, but surely. The various Open Method of Coordination (OMC) cycles had

created a frame for convergence towards common social objectives, although with many limitations. In the last year, however, the economic crisis brought the social OMC process backwards. The urgency of addressing the effects of the crisis in employment and in the economy has severely delayed the implementation of the National Strategic Reports.

Due to cuts in social budgets, many policy priorities have not been pursued, with few exceptions as a result of EU orientations (2009 was a thematic “light year” on homelessness), and of the necessity to address urgent social situations (ageing population and dependency). Budget cuts have strongly hindered the fight against poverty in the Member States: many social services have been eroded, minimum income benefits have not been implemented and no advancement was made in an area already marked by insufficient policy coherence (no feeding/in-feeding/out with the “Growth& Jobs Strategy”, no strong connections between the various priorities).

Against this background, the proposed “EU 2020” Strategy presented a vision that is far from reassuring. The three priorities presented were all about the labour market. Combating poverty and social exclusion was not contemplated among the future priorities of the EU. This is even more disappointing when considering that 2010 is the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion.

2. Our expectations

We would like to see *increased legitimacy through the full involvement of the European Parliament*, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions, as well as through the effective and democratic participation of people and civil society organizations throughout the OMC process and in the “EU 2020” Strategy. The “EU 2020” Strategy should decisively reinforce the feeding/in-feeding/out mechanism, which did not work under the Lisbon Strategy. The establishment, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the National Strategic Reports should receive equal prominence as the other processes, include the same decision-makers and stakeholders, regularly involve the European and national parliaments and ensure a steady two-way communication between the different responsible departments.

In order for the social OMC process to continue in the new circumstances of the crisis, it should become the basis of a new “welfare edifice” based on efficient automatic stabilizers, activating labour market policies, equal opportunities and work-life balance, investment in children, life-long learning, flexible retirement, participation and integration of migrants, minimum income, social investment and strong social protection.

3. Looking forward - our recommendations

As said in the Commission’s Working Document on “EU 2020”, “the European Parliament should play a significantly greater role in the new EU governance structure”. The Parliament should express a strong point of view on the EU 2020, not only before its adoption but also throughout its implementation. We are in favour of a public debate to take place, also among the EU Institutions, so that the new strategy can be adopted in a fully democratic way.

In its address to the European Council, the President should call on Member States to affirm their co-responsibility to eradicate poverty by curbing the current employment-oriented and consumer-based approach with a *sustainable development* strategy for 2020. Under such a strategy, human and social development are the foundations of growth – including economic growth - not the other way round. The Member States should be called to make this commitment particularly visible in this European Year 2010.

In addition, we wish to see the European Parliament participate actively in the implementation of the next OMC cycle, in particular by ensuring monitoring and democratic

surveillance. Yearly Parliamentary reports could complement the existing (quite technocratic) “Joint Reports” with appraisals focused on governance and efficacy, giving responsibility to Member States and bringing publicity to an area which has so far remained within restricted circles.

The Guidelines of President Barroso state the role of the European Parliament will be to “define and implement the European interest” together with the Commission. Caritas Europa believes this interest needs, more than ever, to be defined around key concepts like education (aimed at integral human development), decent work, social investment, poverty prevention and democratic governance.

Migration: Social inclusion, anti-discrimination and integration of migrants

1. Current issues at stake

Migration is politically a “hot potato”, in particular when debated in Council and at member states’ level. It is a difficult area to make progress in EU policy making, one the one hand because of the negative link to security concerns, on the other hand because of the Member States’ competence to decide on access to the territory. We have to take into account, however, the fact that the EU is a single area, where freedom of movement is a fundamental right and where mobility of EU workers is even encouraged.

“Political language” influences public perception of migrants. The public perception of migrants impacts on other population groups as well as on attitudes of particular groups of migrants in our societies. Almost weekly racist acts against EU citizens, with or without “migrant background” are reported. It is clear that more policy coherence is required.

2. Our expectations

Ethical and human rights based migration policies, embedded in unsuspected policy areas would contribute to address the biggest challenges of the next decade and of concern to most EU citizens: the demographic decline, the ageing population, need for extra workforce in all job sectors, sustainability of social protection systems. Therefore migrant oriented policy measures should be included in all relevant policy areas contributing to combating poverty, ranging from employment and social affairs over education and culture to Fundamental Rights and non-discrimination, justice and home affairs and others. Integration of migrants should be an integral part of social inclusion strategy.

The Spring Council can and hopefully will adopt anti-employment crisis measures. In our view it is too ambitious however to decide on the “EU 2020” Strategy, which should be an adequate answer to the profound crisis of solidarity and responsibility in our societies. “EU 2020” should shape the European society for the next 10 to 20 years. The strategy should be owned by all stakeholders and should give citizens confidence in the EU institutions. More debate and consultation is therefore essential to make it a real “European” project.

3. Looking forward - our recommendations

Caritas Europa suggests the European Parliament to demand more time to elaborate a balanced “EU 2020” Strategy, with equal attention to social inclusion and cohesion in our European societies, encompassing all members of society, including migrants or so-called “third country nationals”.

The European Parliament could present its concerns for a balanced “EU 2020” programme in the upcoming debate of the new budgetary framework for the EU after 2013. The draft

reviewed Framework Agreement between the European Parliament and the European Commission provides the basis for a stronger impact of the European Parliament.

Caritas Europa would strongly support a coordinated cooperation across relevant committees of the European Parliament in shaping a proactive, forward looking EU social inclusion strategy and reinforcing social cohesion, including migrants in the strategy, as part of the solution, not as the problem.

Caritas Europa also encourages the European Parliament to continue giving special attention to the Eastern neighbourhood by supporting the further development of civil society organizations, effective social protection systems, especially family-friendly policies, facilitation of workers' mobility through visa facilitation or visa free regimes and the transfer of social benefits. This would fit perfectly well in the EU's Global Approach to Migration and would provide for a better balance between the three key elements of this approach (managing legal labour migration, combating irregular migration, cooperation with third countries), in favour of legal migration.

Humanitarian Aid: The role of the European Parliament in ensuring the implementation of the Humanitarian Consensus

1. Current issues at stake

Humanitarian aid is delivered on the basis of [the](#) fundamental humanitarian principles of [humanity](#), impartiality, neutrality, non-discrimination as stated in the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief and in compliance with International Law, including International Humanitarian Law, Human Rights Law and Refugee Law. The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, which sets the norms, principles and rules for the interventions in natural and man-made disasters and applies to ECHO as well as to the EU institutions and the Member States, states that it is firmly committed to upholding these fundamental principles (para 10) and that it will strongly advocate (para 16) for the rule of International Law. The Lisbon Treaty (Art. 214 para 2) confirms that humanitarian aid is committed to the fundamental principles mentioned above.

However, over the last decades, we have witnessed increasing threats [to](#) the application of these principles that are jeopardizing the humanitarian space. The demarcation line between the military and humanitarian actors, in particular in zones of war and conflict, is an issue of ongoing concern, and sometimes also the role of civil protection agencies. There is [also a](#) continuing process of politicization of humanitarian aid, nurtured by security issues – that means that humanitarian aid is not necessarily delivered on the basis of the needs in the field. Host governments may also use humanitarian crises for other reasons and arbitrarily direct or even obstruct humanitarian responses.

In 2010, the EU will take stock of the progress of the implementation of the European Humanitarian Aid Consensus Action Plan (mid-term review process). Our assessment is that a lot has been achieved at the EU level, but we anticipate that the results at Member States level may be varying greatly.

As part of recent institutional changes, the new Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid is also in charge of Crisis response and the EU civil protection mechanism (i.e. Monitoring [and](#) Information Centre) that was managed by DG Environment is now migrating to DG ECHO. A fundamental problem with civil protection is that it operates under the responsibility of governments and therefore is inclined to be driven by a political rather than a humanitarian agenda. On one hand, the transfer of competence to DG ECHO could be seen as an opportunity for ECHO to ensure that civil protection agencies do conform with and not compromise the humanitarian principles in a given crisis response. On the other hand, this

organizational arrangement could pave the way for a more politicized EU humanitarian aid strategy in the years to come.

2. Our expectations

Caritas calls on the EU to ensure that all EU actors involved in any given response fully subscribe to the fundamental humanitarian principles as laid down in the European Humanitarian Consensus. Caritas advises against any policy of the EU that would make humanitarian assistance depend on political objectives, or seek to fulfill political objectives, as this clearly violates basic humanitarian principles.

EU humanitarian actors, notably Member States, should enhance their ownership of the Humanitarian Consensus; the consensus should be seen as a living document. The EU as a major donor should advocate for the upholding of the fundamental humanitarian principles, notably towards host/recipient governments on which territories humanitarian responses take place.

3. Looking forward - our recommendations

Caritas would like to call on the President of the European Parliament to

- remind, in its address to the European Council, the Member States of their ownership of the Humanitarian Consensus and their commitment to implement related policies and activities;
- fully engage the European Parliament in the mid-term review of the Consensus and to ensure full participation and consultation of civil society organizations;
- consistently publicly acknowledge the added-value of NGOs as humanitarian actors;
- continuously promote the fundamental humanitarian principles, as a vital component of humanitarian activities, on the occasion of his official visits and other external representation activities, especially in disaster-prone countries;
- task the Standing Rapporteur for EU Humanitarian Aid to closely monitor the transfer of civil protection coordination to DG ECHO, and, in this context, remind the European Commission of the imperative of being fully consistent with the Humanitarian Consensus.

International Development: The role of the European Parliament in ensuring Policy Coherence for Development

1. Current issues at stake

While the EU is the largest aid donor in the world (with nearly 60% of world's ODA), the positive impact of this aid in terms of poverty reduction is challenged by the impact of other EU external policies, such as trade, agriculture, environment, energy, migration, finance. The lack of coherence is counter-productive, costly and undermines the credibility of the EU towards our partners in developing countries.

Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) is more than a handy tool for effective policy-making: it is an obligation under the EU Treaty. Indeed, the EU and the Member States are legally obliged to take account of the objectives of development cooperation in the policies that they implement, which are likely to affect developing countries (art. 10A and 188D of the Lisbon Treaty). The EU primary objective of EU development cooperation is also clearly established in the Treaty: poverty reduction, and in the long-term, the eradication of poverty (art.208 para1).

Nevertheless, the CONCORD report "[Spotlight on Policy Coherence](#)" (to which Caritas actively contributed) contains many examples of incoherent EU texts and policies that have been jeopardizing the prospect of developing countries - amongst them the Economic

Partnership Agreements, the Fisheries Partnership Agreements, the Blue Card Directive, the EU agrofuel policy, etc.

The policy linkages that PCD aims to strengthen cannot be extended to linkages in terms of funding. Indeed, ODA must remain the main financial instrument for combating poverty. Yet, there is a dangerous tendency to use ODA for other purposes such as the management of migration flows or climate change adaptation. In a context of scarce resources, where the EU and Member States struggle to meet their 4-decade-long commitment to dedicate 0.7% of their GNI to aid, to misuse ODA is a grave mistake, which deprives poor people of precious resources to improve their lives.

2. Our expectations

Caritas believes that it is unacceptable that the EU gives with one hand, and tries to take back with the other hand, at the expense of the poor in developing countries. The PCD principle needs to be better promoted and implemented through appropriate policy-making tools and institutional mechanisms. A structured and honest dialogue with Southern partners on the impact of EU external policies should take place and accountability of EU policy-makers with regard to policy incoherence should be reinforced.

3. Looking forward - our recommendations

The European Parliament is in a catch-up mode regarding PCD. Following the publication of the second bi-annual PCD report by the Commission, MEP Franziska Keller is currently preparing an own-initiative report that includes comments on the Commission and the Council decisions as well as constructive recommendations.

Caritas would like to invite the President of the European Parliament to:

- appoint a Standing Rapporteur for PCD within the DEV committee, supported by PCD focal points in other relevant committees, namely AFET, INTA, AGRI, PECH, ENVI, INTRE, LIBE;
- task the DEV committee to coordinate a biennial report on PCD on the basis of reports given by other committee and prepared by their PCD focal points;
- set up a solid mechanism for regular and timely inter-committee exchanges on PCD issues;
- use existing inter-parliamentary platforms involving Southern partners (e.g. JPA ACP-EU, EU-Lat, EuroMed) to discuss PCD issues;
- apply his influence on the Commission, the Council as well as Member States so that they put in place appropriate and robust mechanisms for effective PCD implementation;
- advocate for the introduction of European complaints mechanism for ex-post control, so that the victims of damaging policies can be heard;
- remind, in his address to the European Council, the EU institutions and the Member States of their Treaty obligation and responsibility to implement the PCD agenda at national level, especially in the context of the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion;
- use the EP budgetary power to introduce a budget line for PCD and to ensure that the EU budget does reflect the commitment of 0.7% for ODA by 2015;
- maintain the vote on the Keller report on the April Plenary agenda and seek influence on the Commission and the Council in order for the recommendations of the European Parliament to be taken into consideration;
- actively engage in the discussion on the set up of the European External Action Service with a view to ensure that sufficient space and resources are allocated to development and humanitarian activities and to object to further politicization of aid.