

INGO Conference on International Day for the Eradication of Poverty - European Day against Trafficking in Human Beings - Strasbourg, France, 18 October 2021

Speech of Mr. Leendert VERBEEK, President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

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3 min speech

This ceremony is organized by the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe on the occasion of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty - European Day against Trafficking in Human Beings. The emphasis of the ceremony is put on the right to decent work, and the right to a dignified life for all persons.

Dear Secretary General,

Dear Mayor,

Dear President,

Dear Ambassadors,

Every person has the right to work, including the right to work under safe and healthy conditions. This is one of the key social rights protected in the European Social Charter.

Local and regional authorities are the forefront of their protection. Their proximity to citizens and stakeholders places these authorities in the best position to identify and address social challenges impeding these rights.

That is why the Congress, in its *2020 Human Rights Handbook*, provides concrete examples of best practices for local and regional authorities to fight poverty, exploitation and trafficking, and to guarantee that all their citizens enjoy their right to work.

The right to decent work depends on access to education and is closely connected with the right to decent life, to non-discrimination, and to integration. Indeed, decent jobs are key to prevent poverty and

to promote social inclusion, especially of vulnerable persons such as women and migrants. Social rights – as fundamental human rights – shall never be seen in isolation of one another.

As a final point, I want to underline that fighting poverty and promoting access to decent work at the local level benefits not just those who have fallen, or are at risk of falling, into poverty. It improves the quality of living of our societies and makes communities more attractive and sustainable in the long run.

Dear President,

It is the role and one of the key responsibilities of local and regional authorities, but also of all other levels of government and civil society organizations, to address the entirety of the social needs of citizens.

I am grateful to the Conference of International NGOs to remind us every year with this ceremony that poverty remains a burden on our societies, and that its eradication should be our overall priority.

There is still a long way ahead towards eradication of poverty and only together, by joining our forces, can we improve the life and situation of many of our fellow citizens and ensure the sustainability and stability of our societies.