



CONFERENCE OF INGOs
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONFERENCE DES OING DU
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

WINTER SESSION

COMMITTEE ON DEMOCRACY, SOCIAL COHESION AND GLOBAL CHALLENGES

CONF/DEM(2013)RES1

Resolution

To reduce inequalities associated with growing poverty within European democracies

Having regard to the declaration « *Acting Together against Extreme Poverty in Europe* », signed by the Presidents of the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe on 17 September 2012

Having regard to the *Strategy for Innovation and Good Governance at Local Level* adopted by the Committee of Ministers in March 2008 and the *Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority* entered into force in June 2012

Having regard to the poverty reduction target of the Europe 2020 Strategy, the United Nations Millennium Development Goals and Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights

The International NGOs gathered in the framework of the Committee on Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges

1. **welcome** the objectives of the declaration signed on 17 October 2012, inviting the Committee of Ministers to intervene with the Member States and Observers to the Council of Europe to eradicate extreme poverty ;
2. **welcome** the holding of the Conference on « *Poverty and Inequality in the Societies of Human Rights : the Paradox of Democracies. Proposals for an inclusive society* », organized jointly by the Council of Europe and the European Commission ;
3. **support** the objectives of the Guide « *Living in dignity in the XXIst century: poverty and inequality, paradoxes in societies of Rights and Democracy?* » and particularly the adoption of more responsible and participatory approaches in the production, consumption and management of both material goods and community spaces as well as the necessity of an appropriate legislative and regulatory framework
4. **recommend** the implementation (cf. Annex) of the actions proposed by ELISAN – European network of local authorities- and particularly :
 - taking account of the territorial dimension of poverty problems ;
 - conceiving new indicators, further to SPIRAL, to target and assist persons in situation of precariousness and to develop benchmarks of well-being;
 - mapping European social policies in Europe so as to improve the analysis of the situation in the Council of Europe Member States;
 - the research, assessment and evaluation of the sources and consequences of waste
 - the drafting of a European Charter of Social innovation ;
5. **ask** political authorities to develop transversal and multi-level governance, to engage all stakeholders, public and private, acting in the field along with concerned populations;
6. **wish** to establish collaboration and cooperation between the *quadrilogue* stakeholders in the Council of Europe, particularly the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities;
7. **demand** that European policies place at their heart the fight against poverty and that coordinated actions at European level lead to effective commitment by the Members States ;
8. **ask** to amend Article 19 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to include the non-exhaustive list of discriminations covered by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (Art. 21).

ANNEX

Approach and Action Plan (Proposals from ELISAN – European Local Inclusion and Social Action Network)

Contribution prepared for the conference
“Poverty and inequalities in societies of human rights: the paradox of democracies”
Organised by the Council of Europe and the European Commission – 21, 22 and 23rd February 2013

Approach endorsed by the Committee on Human Rights and the Standing Committee
of the Conference of INGOs convened on 23 January 2013

Preliminaries

- Affirm that Human rights, civil, economic, social, information and cultural rights are a commitment of the entire society and that it matters at all levels of governance to ensure access to rights and high quality services, affordable and accessible to all;
- Consider the revised Social Charter of the Council of Europe, which guarantees social and economic rights, in particular Article 30, which included "*the right to protection against poverty and social exclusion*";
- Take into consideration the many facets of poverty and social exclusion and give special consideration to issues such as financial exclusion, fuel poverty, including food consumption. In fact, the cost of basic essential needs are constantly increasing (energy, food and water, etc.), which is not the case of the purchasing power of households - this brings additional risk of creating conditions of vulnerability;
- Make sure to address all vulnerable groups and have a particular focus on those most at risk: single parents, people with disabilities, migrants, single women, young people aged 18 -25 years, seniors whose vulnerability is steadily growing;
- Consider that fights against poverty and social inclusion are vectors needed to promote social and territorial cohesion;
- Take into account the impact of the often dramatic effects of the crisis, among which small and medium-sized enterprises conducted to bankruptcy and layoffs;
- Consider that it is important to address poverty and exclusion to promote large-scale actions in an integrated and transversal way in all relevant areas : education and training, employment, housing, health, access to services and rights;
- Include in thinking all the causes and consequences of waste, in particular related to resources and critical assets such as land, food, water and energy;
- Consider the involvement of INGOs in the fight against poverty and exclusion as well as their expertise to support vulnerable people in the exercise of their rights and recognition of their word;
- With regard to the concept of poverty and identification of people in poverty it is important to take into account the income of individuals or households. Computing "is to live" is fundamental;
- Draw inspiration from the Europe 2020 strategy which has set targets for reducing poverty (remove 20 million people from poverty by 2020) in an enlarged Europe;
- Working and strengthen partnerships horizontally (local authorities/NGOs/business/social welfare organizations) and vertically (Europe / national governments / regions / local authorities / NGOs) to better address poverty and exclusion and stimulate concerted action by all involved.

Proposed actions

1. Mobilizing INGOs engaged in the fight against poverty and exclusion

- Rely on the expertise of NGOs in the fight against poverty and social exclusion to reach active social inclusion of citizens, their recognition and exercise of their rights;
- Rely on the diversity of all INGOs with participatory status to the Council of Europe, among which many European networks of local authorities such as the European Local Inclusion and Social Action Network, ELISAN, to strengthen and revitalize partnerships between cities and NGOs;
- Take into consideration the broad field of intervention of INGOs;
- Take into account the work of INGOs which is closer to the needs of citizens and provides solutions often precursors of political actions;
- Take into consideration the expertise of these actors : federate initiatives and encourage the sharing of experiences;
- Rely on INGOs' ability to raise public awareness and mobilize society actors to formulate proposals to fight against poverty and social inclusion;
- Strengthen and support the development of cooperation between NGOs / local authorities.

2. Supporting local stakeholders

Think global, act local: Social action is effective when it occurs in the vicinity. It is an asset to meet the needs of citizens and facilitate the exchange of information.

It is therefore important to support social actors in their efforts in terms of:

2.1. Analysis, diagnosis and indicators (for better observation and better policies);

- Make more detailed analyses and more accurate determination of levels of poverty, insecurity, inequality;
- Take into account the territorial dimension of the problems of poverty (rural, urban, core, periphery, etc);
- Construct indicators to identify and support people in precarious situations and develop indicators of well-being with them;
- Strengthen the diagnosis of individual evolution of poverty and promote development cooperation platforms;
- Strengthen assessment and evaluation approaches.

2.2. Access to rights

- Maintain, develop and prevent access to rights at European, national, regional and local scale;
- Take into account the individual and in particular access to rights enshrined in the European Social Charter and the Charter of Fundamental Social Rights: social rights and services, universal rights;
- Simplify the terms of entitlement and develop automatic rights;
- Develop information closer to the populations concerned to fight against non-use;
- Develop procedures to better identify potential beneficiaries;
- Ensure the maintenance of local services in difficult areas;
- Promote a holistic approach to the needs of the individual to avoid accumulation of difficulties;
- Take into account the specificities of certain territories such as the ultra-peripheral regions.

2.3. Network coverage and coordination of actors

- Mapping social policies and promote cooperation between partners (sharing of public financing of actions);
- Take into account the diversity and specificity of the actions of territories;
- Ensure the consultation of local actors in the context of the implementation of national policies or European proposals in the fight against poverty and social inclusion;
- Strengthen networking infrastructure and services in non-covered areas, relying in particular on partnership between local authorities and NGOs;
- Develop and promote social experiments to test the devices and their transferability.

2.4. User participation

- Develop and strengthen local relationships / associations (including associations of users)
- Encourage the creation of user committees
- Giving a voice to users particularly those excluded from the normal procedures of consultation

2.5. Prevention and fight against isolation

- Inform and educate citizens about existing services and devices to indicate the procedures and institutions to contact in case of difficulties;
- Fight against isolation - to develop activities related to maintaining social ties: access to recreation and culture, volunteer network, access to transport, information etc.;
- Adopt prevention for all: budgetary management workshops, consumption, health, etc. and involve people in their daily actions

2.6. Local social innovation and experimentation

- Promote social innovation to promote creative and innovative responses;
- Have the support of the Council of Europe to ask for member states to provide financial resources to enable the development of experiments;
- Creation of a European Charter of Social Innovation.

2.7. Develop partnership approaches consistent with the principles of social sustainability (Corporate Social Responsibility);

- Share of corporate social responsibility for the development of new forms of public-private partnerships
- Develop relationships with partners so as to promote professional inclusion

3. Acting at European level

- Persuade European policy-makers to place the fight against poverty and social exclusion at the heart of their priorities and ensure coordination of actions at European level for effective implementation of the social commitments of Member States.
- Develop a legal framework for recognition of social, economic and cultural access to fundamental rights in order to respond to increased discrimination and social exclusion (social rights intertwined with economic rights), while ensuring not to create new rights without being able to guarantee their accessibility.
- Amend Article 19 of the Treaty¹ on the Functioning of the European Union to integrate non-exhaustive list of discrimination covered by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the Union (Article 21)²
- Implement the UN Convention on the rights of disabled persons
- Adopt legislation on services of general economic interest and the rights of users to quality services, affordable and accessible
- Introduce more legal clarity for social services (SGI) so that they can fulfill their role with vulnerable people and promote social and territorial cohesion

¹ Art. 19 TFEU : "Without prejudice to the other provisions of the Treaties and within the limits of the powers conferred by them upon the Union, the Council, acting unanimously in accordance with a special legislative procedure and after obtaining the consent of the European Parliament, may take appropriate action to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation"

² Art. 21 CFR : "Any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited."