



Message

**from the event organised by the Conference of INGOs to mark
the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty
on 17 October 2014 in Turin**

to participants in the high-level conference on the European Social Charter

At the gathering held by the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe on 17 October 2014 in Turin, participants drew on existing European legal instruments and in particular Article 30 of the European Social Charter to make the following positive observation: legal instruments for combating poverty are available at European level and in the legislation of almost every state. The UN's Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights describe in detail ways of ensuring that the legislation in question is properly implemented.

This legal framework and the strategies put forward for implementing it should have brought about visible improvements in communities across Europe and yet poverty continues to grow, an indication of the powerlessness of national and international institutions to stem the destructive effects that poverty has both on individuals and on social cohesion in the countries concerned.

For their part, NGOs in every country in Europe have drawn not only on this legal framework but also on the expertise of individuals affected by the various forms of poverty to develop effective ways of combating poverty and social exclusion. It is clear from their discussions on 17 October 2014, however, that they are constantly being hampered in their efforts by administrative barriers at local, regional, national and international level, by sometimes conflicting regulations and by a lack of financial and human resources. Added to this is the devastating impact of austerity policies.

Gathering in the same city, at the same time and for the same cause, European institutions, national governments and NGOs must firmly commit to working together to move beyond the barriers and conclusions about powerlessness to secure the implementation of policies and measures advocated by people who know from experience how the fight for human dignity and against exclusion should be conducted, for themselves and with others.

To this end, we wish to make a number of requests:

- of European lawmakers, we ask that the statutory provisions adopted in the economic sphere respect all human rights, whether civil, political, economic or social;
- of the European Committee on Social Rights, we ask that they continue developing their enlightened case-law, in particular of Articles 30 and 31 of the European Social Charter;
- of those states which have not yet done so, we ask that they ratify these articles together with the Additional Protocol on collective complaints through which INGOs can help states to maintain their efforts to combat poverty;

- of central, local and regional governments, we ask that they work together effectively to combat poverty and eliminate prejudice and discrimination, and provide the resources needed for action on the ground;
- of administrations at all levels and in all areas (justice, health, education, employment, social services, etc.), we ask that they deal with people living in poverty in a way that respects the full range of human rights and the dignity inherent to all human beings;
- of all public stakeholders, we ask that they pay attention and provide support to successful initiatives by people living in poverty in co-operation with civil society organisations.