
Recommendation on Access for all to social and medico-social services: a springboard to get out of poverty

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The Conference of INGOs, by proposal of the Transversal group on Poverty: Inequalities and enjoyment of Rights and the Human Rights Committee,

1. **Notes** that in each European country a growing and diversified number of persons, citizens of the country or foreigners are without legal existence, and / or live in situations of extreme poverty, without shelter, without access to education, health care, a decent job ... and some for many years.
2. **Notes** that access to adequate social and medico-social services is essential to enable every person in need of it to access all of their social rights, to escape poverty and to lead a life in dignity. The organisation and sizing of social security systems, training and support for social and medico-social workers therefore have a direct impact on the situation of beneficiaries.
3. **Notes** that the health crisis and its economic, social and cultural consequences, linked to COVID-19, are creating new weaknesses in health and social action services, and greatly accentuating pre-existing vulnerabilities. The pandemic has had a catastrophic impact on certain economic sectors and pushed populations deprived of income into poverty or greater poverty.
4. **Notes** that COVID-19 has made social and medical services even more essential, and underlined the importance of strengthening them, by increasing their funding, so as to be able to guarantee access to them for all, and particularly the most vulnerable populations in Europe.
5. **Reiterates** its concern for all people in Europe to have full access to all their social rights. Precariousness and poverty compromise the exercise of a set of social and economic rights: employment, health, education, housing, as well as civil and political rights. Being forced to live in a situation of poverty and social exclusion is a violation of human dignity.
6. **Insists** on the primary responsibility of States, in collaboration with the various actors, including local and regional authorities, to guarantee effective access for all, and in particular those in the most vulnerable situations, as for example women, young people, migrants, among others, to social and medico-social services.
7. **Reminds** States of their commitments to respect the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 and calls on them to integrate its principles into their social and environmental policy agenda, which includes the eradication of poverty in all its forms, without leaving anyone behind.

8. **Calls** on States, in their role as key players for access for all to social and medico-social services, to ratify the revised European Social Charter (ESC) with a view to placing respect for social rights at the centre of public policies. In particular, ensuring the application of Articles 11, 13, 14, 16, 17, 23 and Article 30, and reporting, including through the collective complaints procedure, helps ensure the dynamics of the fight against poverty.
9. **Calls** on States to develop a national strategic plan to coordinate the fight against poverty, implementing a paradigm shift: moving from a system that has long sought to compensate for inequalities, to a system that invests in people's capacity to act by trusting them, and valuing them.
10. **Calls** on States to take up the challenge of allowing access to rights to all by fighting against all the reasons for non-recourse: ignorance of their rights, the complex processes to access them, the digitisation of procedures, the management of requests sometimes expeditious and without explanation or, conversely, with excessive delays and no fixed term, the lack of support for people who need it.
11. **Calls** on States to remedy the inadequacy of public / parapublic, targeted / universal social services with the demand for aid. States must ensure and improve access to social services, avoid arbitrary and final refusals, engage in exchanges with users on their practices in order to understand the legal obstacles as well as the bureaucratic difficulties and digital exclusion that hinder the access to rights. They must therefore guarantee universal and free access to social services.
12. **Urges** States to reassess the human and material resources necessary for social and medical services to be able to overcome the current crisis with resilience and respond to new crises and emergencies.
13. **Urges** States to actively involve people experiencing poverty, as well as the organisations that represent them, in the process of designing, managing and evaluating social and health-social services.
14. **Calls** for the commitment of the Joint Declaration by the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and the Conference of INGOs, "Work together to eradicate extreme poverty" (2012) to be reconfirmed, and implemented, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the European Social Charter and the 25th anniversary of the revised Social Charter.