Voices of Children in Poverty

Caritas considers the family as “the first and vital cell of society”, and the right for children to live in united family and in a moral environment conducive to their integral human development.

The economic crisis that strikes many European countries has an impact on families; 25 million children in the European Union are at risk of poverty or social exclusion, while all children should be entitled to the same fundamental human rights, regardless of their origin or country of residence.

Economic and social policies as well as the organization of the work world should be continually evaluated in light of their impact on the strength and stability of family life. The long-range future of this nation is intimately linked with the well-being of families, for the family is the most basic form of human community.

Caritas believes that family is the natural place where children should grow in confidence and self-esteem, and be able to integrate fully into the wider society in which they live.

Tackling child poverty needs to be a priority of the EU and its Member States. As a pillar of social welfare, families deserve a strong support. Investing in more inclusive societies where all children can realize their own potential is crucial.

Children grow up now; they can’t wait till the crisis is over!

This exhibition wants to draw attention to the challenge of family and child poverty. Listening to children and their parents, acting on the ground to assist them, Caritas translates their concerns into policy proposals at national and at European level. Our proposals are translated into concrete European policy proposals but they need to be turned into policy decisions in your country.

You can help to eradicate poverty by asking your country to take action in line with the presented proposals.

[Please note that in this Exhibition, the testimonies from the children do not necessarily correspond with the photos, but are given as an example of the problematic in question.]

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WHAT CHILDREN SAY

“Unfortunately my family is poor. Our family has 7 members. The decor of the apartment is bad. My parents don’t have enough money to buy bread every day. I dress in second hand clothes. At home I do not have any TV or computer; I want to live in prosperity and love.”

Simion, age 11 years – Moldova

CARITAS ACTS ON THE GROUND TO ASSIST FAMILIES FACING POVERTY AND PROPOSES POLICY CHANGES

Adopt a child-specific, rights-based approach to tackling child poverty based on the standards and principles enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This approach should incorporate the three pillars (1.) access to adequate resources, (2.) access to quality services, (3.) opportunities for children's participation in all matters that affect them.

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION RECOMMENDS

“The standards and principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child must continue to guide EU policies and actions that have an impact on the rights of the child.”
WHAT CHILDREN SAY

“I don't like going to school, because I don't have school supplies such as a school bag.”
Khoren age 13 years – Gyumri, Armenia

“Why must I go to my mother’s home when there is no electricity and water there?”
Asen, age 11 years – a street child, from Ruse, Bulgaria

CARITAS ACTS ON THE GROUND TO ASSIST FAMILIES FACING POVERTY AND PROPOSES POLICY CHANGES

Ensure an adequate minimum income for families, at least above the relative poverty threshold, to prevent and to combat child poverty. Provide universal child benefit paid directly to the child’s main carer.

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION RECOMMENDS

“Support family incomes through adequate, coherent and efficient benefits, including fiscal incentives, family and child benefits, housing benefits and minimum income schemes.”
WHAT CHILDREN SAY

“I would like my mummy and daddy to take me on holiday but it is a lot of money. If my daddy had a job he would be able to buy me a big bike.”

Jonathan, age 6 years – London, England

CARITAS ACTS ON THE GROUND TO ASSIST FAMILIES FACING POVERTY AND PROPOSES POLICY CHANGES

Give priority to children who are at greater risk of poverty.

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION RECOMMENDS

“Ensure a focus on children who face an increased risk due to multiple disadvantages.”
**WHAT CHILDREN SAY**

“I have six brothers and sisters, some of them are already working. We all sleep together in one room on mattresses. In our room we also have a writing desk.”

Manca, age 10 years – Slovenia

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**CARITAS ACTS ON THE GROUND TO ASSIST FAMILIES FACING POVERTY AND PROPOSES POLICY CHANGES**

Promote a greater integration of family and child-centered policies to break the cycle of poverty and the transmission of disadvantage across generations.

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**THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION RECOMMENDS**

“Tackling disadvantage in early years is an important means of stepping up efforts to address poverty and social exclusion in general.”
WHAT CHILDREN SAY

“Not going on holidays is not a big issue compared to having empty cupboards or no clothes.”

Andrew, age 15 years – Liverpool, England

CARITAS ACTS ON THE GROUND TO ASSIST FAMILIES FACING POVERTY AND PROPOSES POLICY CHANGES

EU strategies and funding should focus on reducing child and family poverty as a core target, and a sub-target for child poverty within the Europe 2020 Strategy overarching aim of reducing poverty and social exclusion by 20 million by 2020.

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION RECOMMENDS

“Firmly place child poverty and social exclusion as key issues in the Europe 2020 Strategy and National Reform Programmes, as part of the overall effort to reduce poverty and social exclusion, taking into account relevant Country Specific Recommendations adopted by the European Council.”
WHAT CHILDREN SAY

“My mum is ill with her nerves. She cries, because she gives a bad example to us and she does not want to do that; she wants to laugh again.”

Sandra, age 9 years – Germany

CARITAS ACTS ON THE GROUND TO ASSIST FAMILIES FACING POVERTY AND PROPOSES POLICY CHANGES

EU Member States should use the available EU funding in the most efficient way to reduce child and family poverty.

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION RECOMMENDS

“Exploit opportunities provided by the Structural Funds to support children and families when drawing up the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund Operational Programmes 2014-2020, in line with Country Specific Recommendations.”
“I would like to live in a big house and have a garden so that I can play football with my friends and big brother. If I had my own bedroom I would paint it green and have all my Power Rangers and Action Men on the cupboard because now I have to put them away in a box because we have no room.”

Anton, age 6 years – London, England

CARITAS ACTS ON THE GROUND TO ASSIST FAMILIES FACING POVERTY AND PROPOSES POLICY CHANGES

Ensure that accurate statistics on child poverty are available at European Union and Member State level in a timely manner, to measure the effectiveness of policies.

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION RECOMMENDS

“Improve the timeliness of data availability to monitor the situation of children, assessment of the potential impact of policies on children.”
**WHAT CHILDREN SAY**

“I have some troubles in French with my lessons; the professor helps me to overcome the difficulties. She helps me during the courses.”

Lorenzie, age 10 years – France

**CARITAS ACTS ON THE GROUND TO ASSIST FAMILIES FACING POVERTY AND PROPOSES POLICY CHANGES**

Implement the **Recommendation on Investing in children** as a core priority of the Social Investment Package as part of a commitment to investing in integrated strategies to fight poverty and social exclusion.

**THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION RECOMMENDS**

“Tackle child poverty and social exclusion through integrated strategies that go beyond ensuring children’s material security and promote equal opportunities so that all children can realise their full potential.”
WHAT CHILDREN SAY

“My brothers and sisters are still very small and all the time we have to look after them, they are my dolls, I play with them and without this we have no toys at home.”

Elena, age 10 years – village of Banya, Bulgaria

CARITAS ACTS ON THE GROUND TO ASSIST FAMILIES FACING POVERTY AND PROPOSES POLICY CHANGES

The EU and its Member states should cooperate in a genuine partnership with civil society in the preparation, planning, monitoring, implementation and evaluation of child poverty-related programs and initiatives.

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION RECOMMENDS

“Promote close cooperation and regular dialogue between public authorities at all levels, social partners, local communities and civil society organisation.”
**WHAT CHILDREN SAY**

“I wish that we (the family) could change and not fight anymore and discuss silly things, because then sometimes I collapse.”

Kai, age 10 years – Germany

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**CARITAS ACTS ON THE GROUND TO ASSIST FAMILIES FACING POVERTY AND PROPOSES POLICY CHANGES**

Caritas Europa supports the establishment of an appropriate structure at EU level to foster the scaling up, transfer and dissemination of best practices in relation to tackling child and family poverty and promoting child well-being.

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**THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION RECOMMENDS**

“Promote the exchange of good practice and knowledge, the roll-out of tried and tested intervention models, measures to foster solidarity in the wider community and empower local communities to work together.”