

Press release - 21 February 2013

High-level conference discusses EU response to economic crisis: Is the EU capable of an effective response to the growing crisis?

In Brussels today, Caritas Europa brings together a range of high-level decision makers, academics, and grass-roots organisations working on the front-line with people in poverty to debate how best to respond to the current crisis.

"Caritas Europa organised today's event because we believe as an organisation working directly with people in poverty across Europe we have a responsibility to part of the process of finding the right kind of solutions to the crisis," says Jorge Nuño-Mayer, Secretary General of Caritas Europa.

"We will use the opportunity today to present our recent report ["Missing the Train to Inclusive Growth"](#). The main findings of the study reveal that a majority of EU Member States **are not honouring the social objectives they agreed upon within the Europe 2020 Strategy**. On the contrary, these objectives have not only not been reached because of budgetary cuts but in several cases they even have completely been overlooked or replaced by short-term fiscal consolidation plans which neglect social objectives," says Artur Benedyktowicz, Social Policy officer at Caritas Europa.

The conference will also highlight Caritas Europa's newest report, ["The Impact of the European Crisis"](#) – with a focus on the 5 worst affected EU countries, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Spain. This report suggests that the **worst of the crisis is not yet over, but rather seems likely to deepen**.

The Crisis is a man-made disaster

"This report casts a spotlight on the negative social impact of austerity measures and challenges the official discourse that these measures are actually bringing Europe out of the crisis. Its findings suggest that the crisis in Europe is deepening, leading to a situation of chronic unemployment, structural poverty and social distress. This crisis is not a natural disaster, it is a man-made socio-economic disaster," says Jorge Nuño-Mayer.

Among speakers at the conference are some senior representatives of the European Commission, MEP Veronica Lope Fontagné (EPP), MEP Philippe Lamberts (Green/ALE), Rudi Delarue, Director of ILO, and academic and former Minister Frank Vandenbroucke.

Find the detailed programme, with themes, speakers' bios, etc. [here](#).

"This is a historic moment for the European decision-makers – if they do not succeed in finding an appropriate response to the crisis, they may put at risk the future legitimacy of the European Union as far as its citizens are concerned. These measures are undermining the European social model and condemning a whole generation to an uncertain future in which unemployment and social exclusion will be the norm rather than the exception," says Mr Nuño Mayer.

“Despite several years of implementing austerity programmes the Eurozone is still in recession; unemployment is at a historic high level; in-work poverty is increasing, poverty is expanding to the middle class and becoming structural in several countries; youth unemployment is reaching endemic levels in several countries; and child-poverty is several points over the average poverty level. We are calling today for leadership from European politicians and decision makers,” says Mr Nuño-Mayer.

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*** Notes to the editor**

1. The European Semester includes: National Reform Programmes, the Annual Growth Survey and the Country Specific Recommendations.
2. Europe 2020 social objectives: 75% of the 20-64 year olds to be employed; Reduce school-drop out rates below 10%; At least 40% of 30-34 year olds completing 3rd level education; and at least 20 million people lifted out of poverty and social exclusion in 2020.
3. [Caritas Europa](#) is the umbrella organisation of the European network of 49 Caritas member organisations, working in 46 European countries. Guided by a deep belief in the inviolable dignity of the human person, Caritas Europa has a heartfelt commitment to analyse and fight poverty and social exclusion.