

WORKING TOGETHER TO DESIGN AND BUILD A EUROPE WITHOUT POVERTY AND EXCLUSION

PROPOSALS MADE BY ATD FOURTH WORLD (ALL TOGETHER IN DIGNITY)

AT a time when the European Parliament and Commission are just about to start a new five year term of office, what is the verdict of the people living in the most difficult situations? The opinion of Clara from Spain, whose house was demolished last year and who now lives in with her family in a lorry, is clear: "The

"Living in poverty and in extreme poverty is not only an inhuman form of treatment, but it is also degrading and, in some ways, could even be termed to be a form of torture. In these conditions, human dignity is at stake".

**Françoise Tulkens,
former judge and Vice-President
of the European
Court of Human Rights.**

European states have failed families and the poorest members of society". Her view is shared by many others experiencing similar troubles. However, the European Union has defined the objectives it hopes to achieve in its fight against

poverty in its 2020 Strategy as well as adopting a number of recommendations in this area. But, despite these initiatives, extreme poverty continues to exist. It is almost as if one part of the population is surplus to requirements and counts for absolutely nothing. This waste of human lives has an extremely violent impact on those who have to endure it, representing a gross violation of human rights. Across Europe, many families and individuals are being deprived of their means of existence, expelled from their homes and forced to live in conditions in which they are criminalised and penalised. The values of peace and respect for human dignity and human rights, which are at the very heart of the European project - as well as the constitutions of many Member States - are being blatantly disregarded. People living in conditions of extreme poverty not only suffer from a lack of income, but also encounter major difficulties in gaining access to fundamental and indivisible rights.

Emergency responses (the distribution of food parcels, temporary housing etc.) do not represent a real solution.

The prevailing economic and financial approach at world

At a time when many European citizens are asking challenging questions about Europe, a group of people living in a situation of poverty and social exclusion set out to gain a better understanding of what Europe is doing to ensure that life improves for the most vulnerable members of society. Over several months, they worked in partnership with others who were prepared to stand in solidarity with them, including people who held positions of responsibility at the European level. Centring their discussions around contributions based on the life experiences of people living in poverty, they prepared themselves in order to be able to enter into dialogue with European members of Parliament and officials. On 5 March 2014, at the European Fourth World People's University, held in the European Parliament in Brussels, they were given the opportunity to do so. This remarkable meeting, which was attended by 17 delegations from 10 different countries, was organised with the support of the Extreme Poverty and Human Rights Parliamentary Intergroup. The meeting made it possible to build bridges between people who would not normally meet one another. They were able to think and talk together and to draft proposals designed to ensure that the eradication of extreme poverty and the fight against inequality are at the heart of the European project.

level is based on a use of the planet's resources which is not viable. This approach continues to create a situations of social exclusion and poverty, situations which are growing worse in Europe. Faced with these observations, we, as a group of people engaged in the fight against extreme poverty, wish to work together to collectively design and build a different Europe, in which each and every person can live in dignity and in harmony with one another and the environment. We wish to contribute to the development of an economy which is at the service of everyone and which does not waste the intelligence or the know-how of any member of society. We want to place human beings and human rights once again at the heart of the European project.

*"Aid is just charity given out to the poor and is something which keeps them in their present situation. We are not fighting for aid; we are fighting for the right to be able to both access and to enjoy our rights".**

* The majority of the quotations in this document come from statements made by people living in poverty and are taken from the preparatory work and the discussions which took place during 2014 European Fourth World People's University.

PROPOSALS TO THE EUROPEAN UNION AND TO MEMBER STATES

We call upon the European Union to guarantee the right to legal existence to all persons living on its territory.

Many people in Europe do not enjoy legal recognition of their existence. This means that these people are not able to access any rights (participation, work, healthcare, housing, the right to vote...). This is the case for many migrants, Roma and asylum seekers, but also for those who do not have housing, who live in camps or on the streets and are effectively occupy the position of illegal immigrants in their own countries.

We call upon the European Union to ensure that it commits all of the Member States to ensure that they offer an education system which provides the same opportunities and the same quality for everyone, which prevents certain children from being pushed away from the general education system at an early stage and avoids the creation of a hierarchy between the different streams of education, since these two phenomena only serve to reinforce inequalities. The necessary changes must be defined with the participation of the parents, particularly those who are the most excluded.

We call upon the European Union to transform the Recommendation on the Youth Guarantee into a Directive so that it will become binding upon all of the Member States and to ensure that the guarantee plans are designed to give priority to young people facing the greatest difficulties.

For those who experience the most difficulties, lacking in both experience and qualifications, work has become an increasingly inaccessible dream. These young

people must be able to access training programmes and real jobs. This should go hand in hand with high quality support services and sufficient resources to enable them to live in dignity.

We call upon the European Union and the Member States to support the creation of decent jobs, particularly within local companies and initiatives, which allow people who are far removed from the labour market and have no qualifications to feel that they are playing a useful role in society by having a recognised job.

When these people are not the victims of long-term unemployment, they find themselves trapped in undeclared work or having to accept highly precarious contracts. This makes them even more vulnerable by placing them at the very margins of the various social protection systems in place in Europe.

We call upon the European Union to establish a directive on the means required to live a decent life for each individual, which includes a decent minimum income in all of the member countries and which takes housing costs into account.

Persistent lack of housing, work or income prevents people from assuming their family, social and professional responsibilities on a long term basis.

We call upon the European Union and the Member States to create permanent spaces for reflection and dialogue with people who have experience of poverty and together with other partners. This will ensure that the people able to contribute to the definition and evaluation of the policies That affect them.

"There is a need to make the best possible use of what the life, doubts and hopes of the poor teach us and use this as useful knowledge in the processes we adopt to shape our efforts to combat poverty in terms of

both policies and action.» Françoise Tulkens, former judge and Vice-President of the European Court of Human Rights.

In order to ensure that the European Union is made fully aware of the infringement of rights related to extreme poverty and in order to afford better protection to the rights of the poorest members of society:

We call for the Multi-annual Framework of the Agency for Fundamental Rights to explicitly provide for the possibility to examine cases of infringement and discrimination related to situations of extreme poverty and to ensure that the people living in these situations are involved in this process.

We call upon all of the Member States to ratify the European Social Charter and to accept article 30 (right to protection against poverty and social exclusion), article 31 (right to housing) and the collective complaints procedure in the short term and we call upon the European Union to ensure that it adheres to the this Charter in the medium-term.