

"Wherever men and women are condemned to live in extreme poverty, human rights are violated. To come together to ensure these rights be respected is our solemn duty."

Joseph Wresinski

May 2011

EDITORIAL : 42 million people in Europe live in extreme poverty. They experience injustice and stigmatisation that goes far beyond economic difficulties and inequalities. Nowadays they tend even to be held more responsible for their situation, which is both the cause and consequence of violations of fundamental rights which are recognised within the legal structure of the European Union. There is a need for collective willpower to end social discrimination and exclusion, and to guarantee rights which too often remain theoretical and abstract. With the goal of creating proposals for improving the protection of the fundamental rights of people living in extreme poverty within the European Union, 40 national and European stakeholders met for a seminar on March 28 2011 which was organised by ATD Fourth World and the French National Consultative Commission on Human Rights (CNCDH). The honorary president of ATD Fourth World, Paul Bouchet, reminded in his speech how important it is for the spirit behind the creation of texts be carried forward into their immediate application, to prevent initial intentions from stagnating: "human rights tend to be viewed as individual rights, while every poor person must be seen as a human being and a citizen. **"If you think as though it were you who were poor, you will not have the same sense of priorities"**", was his conclusion, before calling for a mobilisation and general responsabilisation to build a Europe of citizens.

NEWS :

Seminar in Paris on March 28th 2011 Making fundamental rights respected for a Europe without poverty

Since the Treaty of Lisbon came into effect, the **Charter of fundamental rights** became a legal obligation. Now is the time for proposals for situating extreme poverty at the centre of initiatives and efforts to make the Charter effective and concrete. The spirit of human rights is to take an interest in the most unjust situations and to correct them as a matter of priority.

The speakers, Marie-Cécile Renoux, ATD Fourth World Delegate at the European Union, Emmanuel Decaux, Vice president of the CNCDH, Olivier De Schutter, United Nations Special Reporter on the right to food, Mortem Kjaerum, Director of the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency, Paul Bouchet, former President of the CNCDH, Régis Brillat, Executive Secretary of the European Social Charter, François Vandamme, Minister of Employment (Belgium) and Freek Spinnewijn, Director of FEANTSA¹, spoke about what the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Council of Europe and the Agency of Fundamental Rights could do.

Here are some of the proposals the participants put forward:

To raise awareness of the crucial importance of human rights, which are often too theoretical and abstract, and to guarantee human rights to all people, in line with the principles of the Universal Declaration. (Emmanuel Decaux).

To use the Fundamental Rights Charter to encourage the creation of strategies for furthering human rights to benefit the most disadvantaged, and to better establish the Charter of Fundamental Rights within international human rights law. (Olivier De Schutter).

To perfect indicators for fundamental rights linked to real life experiences, to encourage the participation of people living in poverty in research, and to improve access to information about accessing rights and recourse to justice. (Mortem Kjaerum)

- All of the Member States should ratify the revised Social Charter, and accept Article 30 on the right to protection from poverty and social exclusion, and Article 31 on the right to housing. Raising citizens' awareness of the European Social Charter would give it the political dimension it requires; moreover it should be used more by all agents involved. (Régis Brillat)
- Policies must be followed through, with everyone in charge of policy, administrations and services asking themselves if they have done everything possible to ensure the poorest people can access their rights. The objectives of quality for ensuring rights call for regular dialogue and partnerships with civil society and with people living in poverty. (François Vandamme)



Panel (from left to right) : Paul Bouchet, Mortem Kjaerum, Emmanuel Decaux, Marie-Cécile Renoux, Olivier De Schutter

The Fundamental Rights Agency is to create a report, "Extreme poverty and fundamental rights" at the request of the European Parliament, in association with disadvantaged individuals. The European Commission is to disseminate the best practices of national policies. NGOs are to introduce more actions for justice, to create alternative reports to those produced by member States, and to undertake rights monitoring. (Freek Spinnewijn)

A full summary is available at the following link :

http://www.atd-fourthworld.org/Upholding-Fundamental-Rights-for-a.html?var_recherche=fundamental%20rights

"Fourth World European Solidarity"

¹ FEANTSA : The European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless.

Homelessness in Ireland

IT IS a damning indictment of society that the problem of youth homelessness worsened at a time when it could easily have been eradicated, Sr Stanislaus Kennedy told the Focus Ireland youth homelessness conference yesterday.

The conference heard the homeless charity was now dealing with people who were the fourth generation of a family to be homeless.

Sr Stanislaus said there had to be "a truly seismic shift" in society's attitude to all children if true equality was to be achieved.

The charity has questioned the State's figures on homelessness and called for updated figures to ensure there is a clear picture of the problem.

According to HSE figures, more than 1,500 people under the age of 18 are homeless each year. Almost 800 of these are unaccompanied while the remainder are within families which are homeless.

"I find it truly scandalous that one-quarter of the unaccompanied children are under the age of 12," Sr Stanislaus said. The number of young people using the out-of-hours service in Dublin rose from 492 in 2006 to 705 in 2009; the figure for the State as a whole was 800 in 2009.

She said, while there had been improvements in homeless services, "we have taken a step backwards and the problem of youth homelessness is actually worse and this is not acceptable".

She warned against sidelining the issue because of economic concerns and said dealing with the consequences of youth homelessness would cost more than preventing it.

Focus Ireland has urged the incoming government to develop a plan to deal with the issue within six months of taking office.

"I really believe that we can end youth homelessness," Sr Stanislaus said. Focus Ireland chief executive Joyce Loughnan said Ireland was a first world country yet the charity was working with fourth generation homeless people "and that's unacceptable . . . and we are going to put a stop to that".

Alison HEALY

(March 3rd 2011 The Irish Times)



"Cercle de pensée Joseph Wresinski" 6th April 2011

"What methods for evaluation do we have to assess the efficiency of anti-poverty measures?"

Everyone who had the opportunity to watch the film « Joseph l'Insoumis » understood why Joseph Wresinski was angry about certain initiatives carried out in good faith, such as soup runs. Having himself grown up in poverty, he could not accept to live in a state of humiliation and dependence. His ambitions were not confined to clothing or food, because what he most deeply wanted was for "people to be in a position to stand on their own two feet".

The film launched the "Cercle de pensée Joseph Wresinski" 2001 programme, which this year is addressing the question of knowing **to what extent anti-poverty programmes or initiatives match the aspirations of the poorest people.**

At our meeting on April 6th, we addressed the question of the **methods of evaluation available to assess the effectiveness of anti-poverty measures.**

The meeting was enriched by numerous exchanges between the scientific perspective of Professor William Parienté (Catholic University of Leuven, Jameel-Poverty Action Lab) – which applies the rigorous evaluation method created by Esther Duflo, establishing groups of beneficiaries and witnesses in order to test the efficiency of new programmes – and the interactive approach developed by ATD Fourth World where, in the context of the Merging of Knowledge, people living in poverty took part in the evaluation alongside professionals.

At the next meeting of the Wresinski Society, Professor Daniel Dumont (Free University of Brussels) will address the question of achieving the right balance between the welfare state and the contractualisation of social protection.

Increasing food aid should not allow the fundamental issues to be forgotten

"We are not just stomachs to feed"

200 million Euros from 1995 to 2005, 300 in 2008, 500 million in 2011 – European food aid assists 13 million people, and 43 million are threatened by food poverty². Does the food distribution system allow its beneficiaries to escape from poverty, or does it keep them dependent? We know that emergency humanitarian responses do not address the fundamental issues, and that they should not serve as a smokescreen to measures for fundamental rights, which give all citizens their dignity.

MEETINGS/EVENTS

Monday May 30th 2011: ATD Fourth World European Union delegation meeting with Mrs Vassilou, Commissioner for education, culture, multilingualism and youth.

Monday May 31st 2011: Meeting of the Fourth World Parliamentary intergroup committee "Extreme poverty and human rights on the theme: "European Platform Against Poverty and social exclusion "

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