

# ASAMBLEA PARLAMENTARIA EURO-LATINOAMERICANA

## EURO-LATIN AMERICAN PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY



### **RESOLUTION:**

#### **Poverty and social exclusion**

on the basis of the report by the Committee on Social Affairs, Human Exchanges, the Environment, Education and Culture

EP co-rapporteur: Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL)

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Thursday, 1 May 2008 – Lima (Peru)

## **EUROLAT – Resolution of 1 May 2008 – Lima (Peru)**

[on the basis of the report by the Committee on Social Affairs, Human Exchanges, the Environment, Education and Culture]

### **Poverty and social exclusion**

*The Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly,*

- having regard to the declarations adopted at the four Summits of Heads of State and Government of Latin America and the Caribbean and the European Union, held to date in Rio de Janeiro (28 and 29 June 1999), Madrid (17 and 18 May 2002), Guadalajara (28 and 29 May 2004) and Vienna (12 and 13 May 2006),
  - having regard to the joint communiqué of the 13th Ministerial Meeting of the Rio Group and the EU, held in Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic) on 20 April 2007,
  - having regard to the joint communiqué of the Ministerial Meeting of the San José Dialogue between the EU Troika and the Ministers of the Countries of Central America, held in Santo Domingo on 19 April 2007,
  - having regard to the Valparaiso Declaration drawn up at the third Ibero-American Parliamentary Forum and to the Final Declaration of the 17th Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government held in Santiago de Chile in November 2007, which focus on promoting social cohesion,
  - having regard to its Declaration of 9 November 2006, adopted at its constituent session held in Brussels on 8 and 9 November 2006,
  - having regard to the Final Act of the 17th EU-Latin America Interparliamentary Conference, held in Lima from 14 to 16 June 2005,
  - having regard to its resolutions adopted at the plenary sitting of 10 December 2007 in Brussels,
  - having regard to Article 16 of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the aim of social cohesion is to combat poverty, inequality and exclusion, and whereas this will be one of the topics at the Fifth EU-LAC Summit that will take place in Lima on 16 and 17 May 2008,
- B. whereas the first of the Millennium Development Goals is to reduce by half the number of people living below the poverty line by 2015,
- C. whereas the conclusions of the EU-LAC Forum on Social Cohesion which was held in Santiago de Chile from 23 to 25 September 2007 stated that social policies and social-

protection regimes should be underpinned by appropriate sound and fair public policies, in particular fiscal policies, allowing a better distribution of wealth and ensuring adequate and effective levels of social expenditure,

- D. whereas poverty eradication requires democratic participation and changes in economic structures in order to ensure a more equitable distribution of wealth,
- E. whereas fair and progressive fiscal policies are key to attaining a high level of social equality and to promoting social cohesion,
- F. whereas the countries that spend most on collective social protection are generally those with the lowest poverty rates and highest GDP per capita and employment rates,
- G. whereas solidarity between European regions, achieved through regional policy, has helped bridge some of the gaps in development within the European Union; whereas 16% of the population is nonetheless living in poverty after social transfers, but this figure is 43% before social transfers (including pensions),
- H. whereas poverty is a persistent, widespread problem in Latin America and the Caribbean which, only in the last two years, has been brought down to the same level as in 1980; whereas, currently, 36.5% of the region's population is poor, which means that 194 million people are living with less than the minimum amount required to satisfy their essential needs and are trapped in a vicious circle of inequality,
- I. whereas, while the region is well on the way to meeting the Millennium Development Goal relating to the reduction of poverty (MDG1), there has been no major change in terms of socio-economic inequality; whereas Latin America remains one of the world's least equal regions and the main factor systematically hampering progress towards social cohesion is the unequal distribution of income, skills and opportunities,
- J. whereas it is difficult for the poorest members of society to obtain access to natural resources such as water, land and energy, to basic services such as medical care, health care and education, and to essential products such as food and medicines,
- K. whereas 70% of the 1.3 billion people living in extreme poverty are women and poverty is not simply a bad symptom but also a consequence of the unequal distribution of income, property, resources, market power and decision-making power, as a result of which millions of women are denied the necessary opportunities to improve their economic and social situation, while at the same time they have the added responsibility of caring for children and the household,
- L. whereas the Beijing Platform for Action enshrined the principle of gender mainstreaming in all policies as an effective strategy to promote gender equality and established that governments and other players should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes so as to analyse their impact on women and men respectively before any decision is taken,

- M. whereas gender mainstreaming in all policies may help societies to become fairer and more democratic, with women and men being considered equal in all aspects of life, but whereas it is no substitute for specific equality policies and positive actions as part of a twin-track approach aimed at achieving the goal of gender equality,
- N. whereas early education and training for girls and women (including comprehensive sex education) are crucial in the fight to eradicate poverty and the spread of diseases, ensuring that women increase their knowledge, skills and confidence in order to fully participate in society and politics,
- O. whereas women's full enjoyment of health and of rights relating to reproduction and sexuality constitutes a prerequisite for the achievement of gender equality, since women who are able to control their own fertility are much better equipped to exert influence, given that women who can plan their families can also plan the rest of their lives; whereas healthy women may be more productive, since the protection of reproductive rights (such as family planning and the taking of reproduction-related decisions in the absence of discrimination, coercion or violence) fosters the freedom required for better and more egalitarian involvement in society,
1. Calls on the states to move forward with the gradual development of social-protection systems with universal coverage that are contribution-based, non-contribution-based and solidarity-based, depending on the situation in each country and to adopt proactive policies and adequate implementing mechanisms with a view to setting up properly financed social-security systems; stresses that guaranteed universal access to high-quality education and health in order to combat poverty and inequality is essential, and emphasises the importance of having high-quality public and universal social security in all countries;
  2. Calls on the states to support the setting-up of businesses and thereby create jobs;
  3. Calls on the states to support forms of cooperation and association for the implementation of economic interests and to promote such processes through information;
  4. Acknowledges, with due regard to the situation in each country, the importance of tax reform as one means amongst others of ensuring appropriate, balanced and efficient revenue collection enabling the state to take effective action to reduce social gaps; points out that fiscal policies based on a fair and progressive system of taxation should facilitate the appropriate redistribution of resources among citizens and the reduction of poverty;
  5. Points out that in some EU Member States the existence of a minimum income and of special temporary and employment social allowances may not have totally eradicated poverty but does help to make extreme situations less severe; considers that legal minimum wages are an essential mechanism of income-redistribution policy, guarantee a minimum level of wages and income, and contribute to the fight against wage and income inequalities, the phenomenon of the 'working poor' and poverty;
  6. Draws attention to the important role played by indigenous populations in the history and development of Latin America;

7. Calls for the enhancement and development of public services (with emphasis on inclusive policies) in order to remedy the great scourges linked to poverty, such as epidemics, illiteracy, access to drinking water and the unavailability of sewage treatment;
8. Points to the value, in terms of good practice, of conditional transfer systems as a Latin-American strategy for combating the transmission of poverty and inequality from one generation to the next, seeking to act on the causes of poverty and to build capacity among the general population with a view to the final eradication of poverty through human capital accumulation, better child nutrition and unbroken lifelong access to health programmes;
9. Stresses the need to disseminate in Latin America the expertise built up by social and economic councils, with a view to enhancing social cohesion;
10. Points out that obtaining high-quality employment combined with social rights is a necessity for working one's way out of poverty, and that employment that guarantees fair and decent salaries and working conditions should be viewed, in association with an effective system of social protection, as one - but not the only - defence against poverty;
11. Reiterates the need for better democratic governance and for institutional consolidation in the social sector;
12. Notes the need to support the negotiations on association agreements, paying particular attention to social and institutional issues and the defence of human rights;
13. Notes that agriculture remains the main source of income and jobs for most of the world's poorest people, particularly the indigenous populations of some Latin American countries, and therefore stresses the importance of appropriate policies for the reduction of rural poverty and the importance of access to land, since the main reason for rural poverty is linked to land ownership; stresses the need, as part of the current trade agreements between the EU and Latin America and at international level within the WTO, to guarantee priority for food production and food security and to uphold the right of small and medium-sized farmers to produce at fair prices;
14. Stresses the need to support and enhance the productive sectors of the economy in order to create wealth and high-quality employment combined with rights, and emphasises the need to promote the setting up of small and medium-sized businesses and to provide them with support in the interests of local and regional development, as well as the importance of trade (including fair trade) in combating poverty;
15. Points to the importance of action to reduce the digital divide in Latin America and use information technology as a means of reducing social inequality, with the aim of ensuring that the benefits of globalisation are enjoyed by the people; acknowledges, in this connection, the importance of biregional cooperation as embodied by the collaboration between the European @LIS programme and the Regional Plan of Action for the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean (both eLAC2007 and eLAC2010);

16. Calls for all business activity, including in agriculture, to be conducted in accordance with the International Labour Organisation's standards and with social and environmental covenants and conventions and international human-rights agreements; encourages the development of various corporate social responsibility instruments, active involvement in international CSR fora and, in particular, the signing by multinationals of global agreements on compliance with core labour standards;
17. Emphasises that poverty affects women more than men and reiterates how necessary it is to examine the impact of public policies, including income distribution policy, from a gender perspective and to accord top priority to social inclusion, women's rights and combating trafficking in human beings;
18. Calls upon the governments of the European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean to firmly condemn violence against women and femicide as an extreme expression of discrimination against women and in the context of their strategic partnership to support (with adequate financial and technical resources) preventive and protective policies relating to violence against women, such as the establishment or the enhancement of training and awareness programmes concerned with gender issues, to increase the budget of the bodies responsible for investigating the murders, to establish effective systems for protecting witnesses, victims and their families, and to make judicial bodies, security units and public prosecutors better able to pursue and punish the culprits; also calls for the promotion of greater coordination amongst institutions in these areas at all levels of government;
19. Emphasises the need to bridge the gaps in development between regions in the same country or within a regional grouping through a system of redistribution, in which the biregional solidarity fund called for by parliamentarians from both regions on various occasions (such as at the 17th European Union-Latin American Interparliamentary Conference) could play a part in accordance with its final remit; reiterates that a regional-integration policy should respect national sovereignty and equality between states and be based on an ambitious social policy promoting a path that pays heed to the development needs of each country, in particular the less-developed countries, favouring real convergence between the EU countries and the countries of Latin America;
20. Welcomes the fact that the public-service nature of water - a scarce resource - is being defended; considers that workers' rights and social security must be safeguarded and that it is for each country to decide how to optimise and efficiently perform the tasks of management and distribution and of providing universal access for the population;
21. Stresses the need to promote cross-border cooperation with a view to fostering peace and regional and local development;
22. Points out that the battle against poverty should be waged on many fronts and calls on the states to take account of the issue of household indebtedness and to devise and finance an ambitious social-housing policy; considers it essential to allow the poorest members of society access to the banking system, perhaps through the use of microcredit;

23. Stresses that the European Union's cooperation programmes should focus on combating poverty and should foster active cooperation between the EU and Latin America and calls for a detailed assessment of the impact of the Community programmes on combating poverty and reducing inequality to be made when the mid-term review of the Instrument for Development Cooperation is conducted;
24. Stresses the need to continue to foster the pooling of experience, methods and good practice between the two regions in connection with the promotion of social cohesion, particularly in the education, health, justice, taxation and employment fields;
25. Points out that a healthy environment and policies contributing thereto are important not just in terms of improved health standards and quality of life but also because they are a decisive economic and social wealth factor;
26. Calls for the implementation of public policies designed to ensure that conditions are created (relating both to infrastructure and to public facilities and services) under which universal access to sex education and family planning will be provided, under which women's sexual and reproductive rights (including control over their fertility) will be upheld and under which motherhood and fatherhood will be supported, in order to enable women to plan their families and the rest of their lives; calls for the full range of conditions to be created which will enable women to play a greater role in society on the basis of equality;
27. Considers that better and closer social integration (in particular among neighbouring countries) and the promotion of trade through a progressive reduction of tariff and non-tariff barriers are needed to encourage new investment for the reduction of poverty;
28. Points out that the goal of reducing poverty and overcoming the inequalities and social disparities affecting the populations of Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean also involves improving the social situation of Latin-American and Caribbean migrant communities in Europe; takes the view that, to this end, the human rights of migrants in each state should be fully guaranteed and their situation should be approached on the basis of the principle of shared responsibility between countries of origin, transit and destination and within the framework of international development cooperation;
29. Points to the need for unconditional respect for the human rights of migrants, which calls both for direct action against trafficking in human beings and for measures to foster the social integration of migrants through the provision of access to social protection and the safeguarding of their pensions; considers that, to this end, ways of facilitating family reunification and the sending of remittances and transfer of pensions to migrants' countries of origin should be explored;
30. Applauds the biregional progress represented, in this connection, by the adoption of the Latin American Multilateral Agreement on Social Security, and calls on the signatory states to honour, at the earliest opportunity, their commitment to prompt implementation of the agreement; urges the states, furthermore, to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families adopted by UN General Assembly Resolution 45/158 of 18 December 1990;

31. Calls for joint action by the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean to be scheduled for the European Year Against Poverty and Social Exclusion in 2010;

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32. Instructs its Co-Presidents to forward this resolution to the Presidency of the Fifth EU-LAC Summit, the Council of the European Union, the European Commission, the Parliaments of all the EU Member States and all the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, the Latin American Parliament, the Central American Parliament, the Andean Parliament and the Mercosur Parliament.