



THURSDAY, 8TH JULY 2010

POVERTY IN EUROPE

Abstract

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Every year the European Union declares a specific topic which should be followed by an increased attention and sensibility. 2010's topic is the fight against poverty and social exclusion.

17 percent of the EU population are living below the poverty line. The aim of a united Europe should not be defined only by purely materialistic goals but first of all by spiritual and social values in accordance with the strategy of Lisbon as presented in important documents and strategic visions. A too fine zone of borders is typical for both precariousness of labour and social exclusion. The majority of instruments are located at the national level but people expect also support from the European Union. Europe is able to be united in this effort. Both causes and consequences of poverty in Europe have to be discussed.

The richness of Europe is not used in favor of the poorest people. Nowadays everywhere in Europe the following phenomena can be observed: changes in the labour market deformation, increase in unemployment, low wages, decreasing living standard, insolvency, etc. It is rather difficult to harmonize personal and family life with the duties of employment. Migration problems also need to be taken into consideration.

In order to get all necessary information for a sound evaluation of these phenomena and for the fighting against them special research work is done by Eurostat and poverty indicators (barometers) are being realized. That makes it possible to decipher - in accordance with given criteria – poverty trends. In this way among other facts also the social politics of the states can be described.

Another important indicator concerns those people who are working poor. Some special segments and problems are typical for this category.

The most important is not to describe the existing situation but to have appropriate visions and to act. The needed approach to any solution is given by the social teaching of the Church. A correct remuneration and new working places have to be realized. Concrete efforts and full engagement are needed.

Specific attention will be given in this presentation to the countries of the former Eastern socialist block. Examples from the Czech Republic will serve to present projects for the European Year against poverty as well as causes leading to social exclusion and poverty, and the moderating of stereotypes and stigmatization of people living in poverty. Challenges for a social dialogue among all partners interested in positive results should be emphasized.
