

Statement on the occasion of the World Day of Social Justice – 20 February 2014

Social Justice is a fundamental principle to tackle child and family poverty

On the World Day of Social Justice, Caritas Finland together with Caritas Europa calls on policy and decision-makers of Finland to acknowledge social justice as a fundamental principle in tackling family poverty and social exclusion.

Most recent [statistics](#) show that in 2012, 124.5 million people in the EU-28 were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. In Finland in 2012, 17.2 percent of the population, which means 916.000 people, were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Although the European Commission and Member States of the European Union including Finland have committed themselves to take serious steps to significantly reduce these figures the reality is that there are still many people are experiencing poverty and social exclusion in our country.

The [Treaty on European Union](#) clearly states that the European Union shall promote social justice. This is a task to be fulfilled by Finland too and Caritas Finland, whose mission includes promotion of social justice, urges policy and decision-makers to give a greater importance to true social justice in today's profoundly changed environment. Social justice concerns the social, political and economic aspects and, above all, the structural dimension of problems and their respective solutions (Para 201 of the [Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church](#)).

This is to say that the government and local governments must develop policies and laws which respect the interdependentness and interrelatedness of economic and social development in a sustainable way when working on eradication of poverty and social exclusion. True social justice requires strong commitment to both of these aspects because without economic growth there are no adequate resources for social development and without investing in social protection system, social inclusion and social services there is no long-term and stable economic development.

“It’s a drag not to be able to afford any hobbies”, says 8-year-old Alekski. When it comes to economic and social development policy and decision-makers of the government and local governments are encouraged to keep in mind that the dignity of each person and the pursuit of the common good are concerns which ought to shape all policies of our society.

Inspired by the voices of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion Caritas Finland calls on policy and decision-makers at local, regional, national levels to tackle child and family poverty and social exclusion as a matter of high priority and not to hesitate giving real practical effect to the fundamental principle of social justice. The coming EP elections shall also cover this topic since the results will be of crucial importance for the future of a social Europe.