

**Caritas CARES!**

# **Fostering access to services to support people to move out of poverty**

**Report on poverty and inequalities in Europe**

## Acknowledgements

### Authors:

Chiara Crepaldi (coordinator)

Francesca Pepé and Gaia Teresa Sartori Pallotta – Istituto per la Ricerca Sociale [www.irsonline.it](http://www.irsonline.it)

### Caritas Europa coordinators:

Peter Verhaeghe and Shannon Pfohman

### Contributions to this report by:

**Caritas Austria:** Alexander Machatschke

**Caritas Belgium:** Thijs Smeyers

**Caritas Cyprus:** Gosia Chrysanthou, Kim Foukaris and Elizabeth Kassinis

**Caritas Czech Republic:** Iva Kuchyňková, Martina Veverková

**Caritas Finland:** Larissa Franz-Koivisto, Aki Rogel

**Secours Catholique–Caritas France:** Daniel Verger

**Caritas Germany:** Verena Liessem

**Caritas Hellas, Greece:** Maria Koutatzi

**Social Justice Ireland:** Michelle Murphy

**Caritas Italy:** Walter Nanni

**Caritas Latvia:** Māris Brants, Anna Eižvērtiņa

**Caritas Luxembourg:** Carole Reckinger

**Caritas Malta:** André Bonello

**Caritas Portugal:** Eugénio Fonseca, Filipa Abecasis

**Caritas Slovakia:** Ján Michalský

**Caritas Slovenia:** Cveto Uršič

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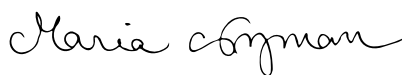
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## Foreword

Caritas organisations are essential actors in lifting people out of poverty, combating social exclusion and promoting social justice. They do so by assisting and providing services to people in need of those, as well as by addressing unfair structures, policies and measures.

The Caritas CARES<sup>1</sup> European report and country reports are important instruments in this endeavour. Caritas, present at both national and EU levels, informs local, regional, national and European authorities, and formulates recommendations based on its daily work with people experiencing poverty.

This European report focuses on the analysis of availability, accessibility, affordability and adequacy of services to people experiencing poverty and the promotion of social inclusion in European countries. Caritas member organisations in Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Cyprus, France, Finland, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Slovakia, and Slovenia have described and analysed the access to three services common to all (public employment services, housing policies and early childhood education and care services) and two services deemed particularly relevant in their countries. This report thus attempts to identify concrete causes of non-access to services by people in the most vulnerable or precarious situations in our society. Based on Caritas country reports, it has been produced with the support of the participating Caritas member organisations and staff in the European secretariat, whom I would like to thank. Together, we aim to ensure that the voices of the most excluded members of our societies are heard by policy makers at national and European levels.



**Maria Nyman**  
Secretary General



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<sup>1</sup> The CARES (Caritas Actions Reinforce the European Social Dimension) project receives funding from the European Commission. This covers, among others, the costs for producing the biennial Caritas Cares! Series poverty reports.

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## Chapter 1

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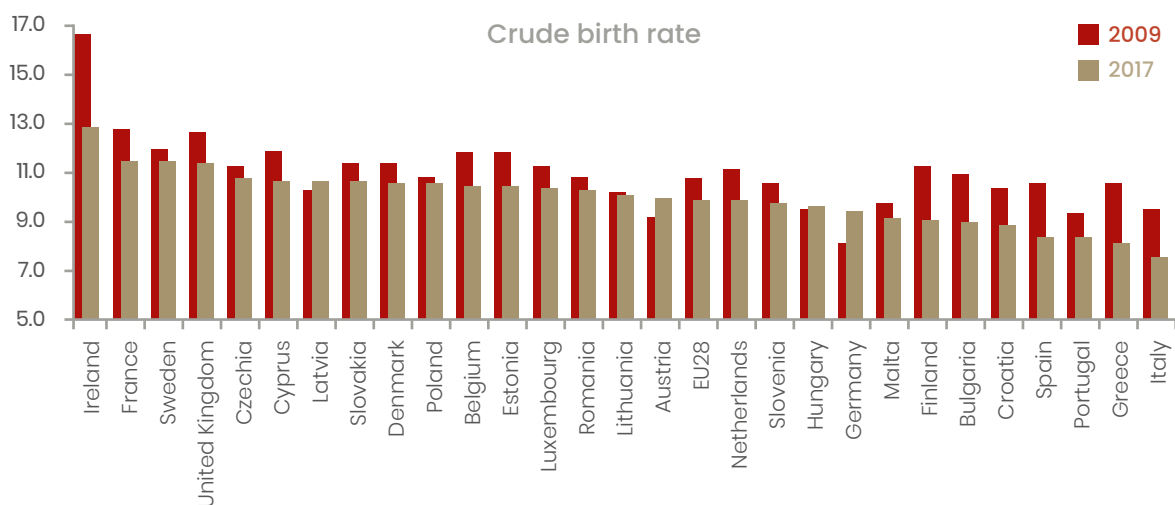
# **The promotion of social rights in the European socio-economic context**

- 1.1 The challenges posed by the evolution of the socio-economic context
- 1.2 Trends in poverty and social exclusion in Europe
- 1.3 EU policymaking

## 1.1. The challenges posed by the evolution of the socio-economic context

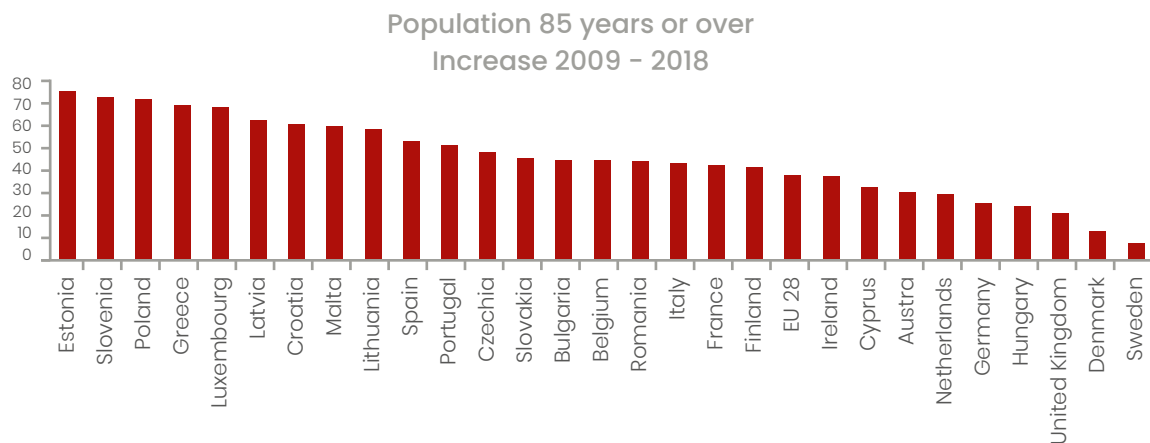
European Member States are facing huge demographic changes, which are already having an important impact on the socio-economic contexts of each country and on the access to social services. Factors common to all EU Member States are the declining fertility rates and the **ageing of the population**, while others, such as the **relevance of migration flows** and the **decline of the working age population**, differ considerably.

**Fertility rates have rapidly declined all over Europe:**



Source: Eurostat 2019

**European Member States are rapidly ageing: the population aged 85 and over** in particular has increased by 38% in the last nine years (2009–2018), from about 10 million to **13.8 million**.



Source: Eurostat 2019

Particularly in central European Member States, **a dramatic change in the composition of the population** is taking place. There is **a decreasing working age population and a parallel increase of the dependent part of the population** (children and elderly). In most of the cases, the decline of the working age population is a result of the **emigration of workers searching for better working and living conditions**. In the near future, these countries are expected to confront serious **socio-demographic imbalances** with increasing care needs. Governments and society should prepare to tackle care service needs, particularly in the areas of health care and long-term care. These central European Member States are also all characterised by **increasing labour shortages but, at the same time**, by a much lower level of **immigration**. **This could be an answer to the socio-demographic imbalance, generally being composed of young people of working age.**

In most European Member States, the **increase in the number of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees** is a relevant factor affecting the evolution of the European population. The **number of people residing in an EU Member State with citizenship of a non-EU Member State** on 1 January 2018 **was 22.3 million**. This represents 4.4% of the EU-28 population. The largest numbers (in absolute terms) of non-nationals were in Germany (9.7 million), the United Kingdom (6.3 million), Italy (5.1 million), France (4.7 million) and Spain (4.6 million). In relative terms the picture is quite different, as the EU Member State with the **highest share of non-nationals** is Luxembourg with 48%, followed by Cyprus, Austria, Estonia, Malta, Latvia, Belgium, Ireland and Germany (all with 10% or more of the resident population). In a few eastern countries non-nationals represent less than 1% of the population: this is the case in Poland and Romania (0.6% in both countries) and Lithuania (0.9%).

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## 1.2 Trends in poverty and social exclusion in Europe

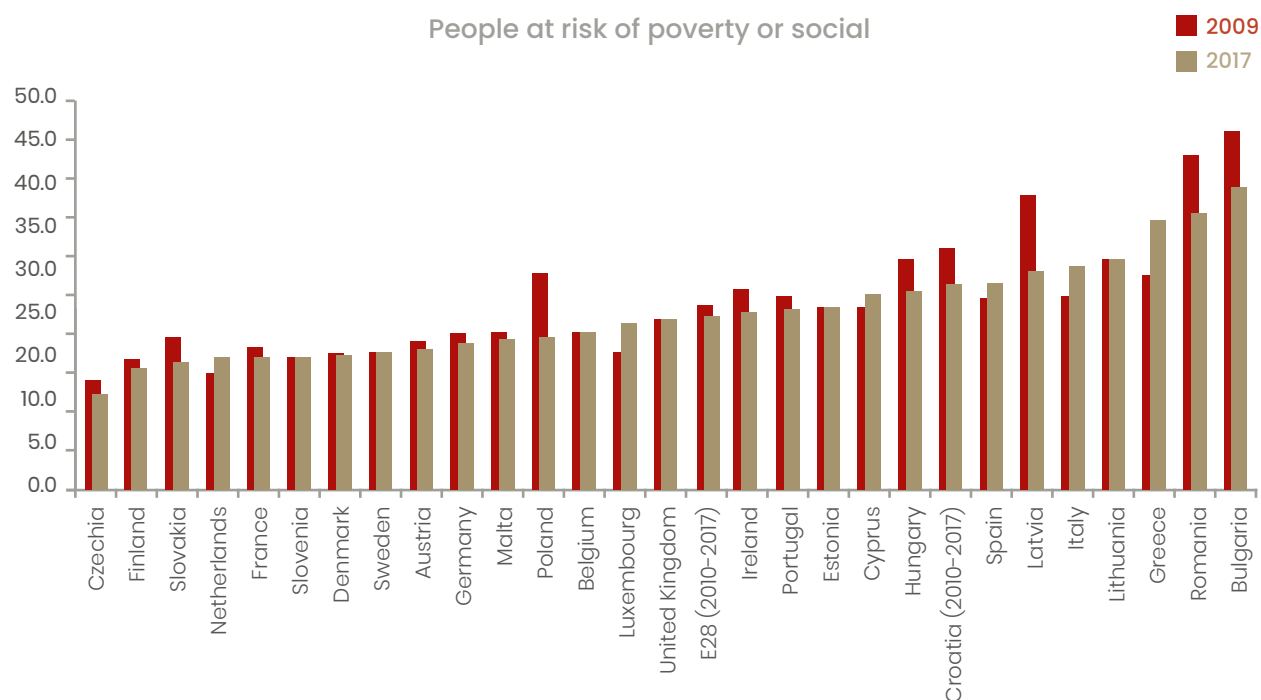
Since the 2008 economic crisis, most EU Member States are experiencing a solid economic growth, with increasing employment rates and decreasing unemployment rates. However, this is not the case for a few countries: in particular Cyprus, Greece and Italy.

Most of the Caritas CARES country reports find that even though **labour market conditions are improving continuously, inactive people, low-skilled individuals, the long-term unemployed, people with disabilities, Roma and in particular, people with a migrant background remain particularly vulnerable groups** who are still facing challenges in entering in the labour market.

Despite improvements in the labour market in all countries, **there are still disparities in employment rates across regions and skills levels.**

Another issue described is that in some countries, even if wages are increasing, income inequality remains high.

In 2017 in the EU28, there were **112,978,000 people in a condition of poverty or social exclusion**, with a decrease of only 1,412,000 in comparison to 2009, and 4,413,000 in comparison to 2007 – both very far from the reduction of 20 million expected within the EU2020 target. **The situation is quite differentiated between countries:** there are countries where poverty was already low in 2009 and has progressively decreased (as is the case in the Czech Republic, Finland, Slovakia and France, for example); others where poverty was high but decreased considerably (as in the case of Poland, Latvia, Bulgaria, Romania but also Croatia and Hungary), and a few others where poverty increased (in particular in Greece and Italy, but also in Cyprus, Luxembourg and the Netherlands).



### 1.3 EU policymaking

There have been several EU initiatives taken in recent years to tackle inequality, poverty and social exclusion, both in general terms and for specific target groups. The European Parliament, the European Council and the European Commission repeatedly expressed their commitment to strengthening the social dimension of the EU, with one of the most recent initiatives being **the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR)**. The **European Pillar of Social Rights** sets out 20 key principles and rights to support fair and well-functioning labour markets and welfare systems.

Among all the rights cited by the European Pillar of Social Rights, several are specifically related to the condition of people in poverty and social exclusion. This is particularly the case in the following principles:

#### European Pillar of Social Rights specifically related to the condition of people in poverty and social exclusion

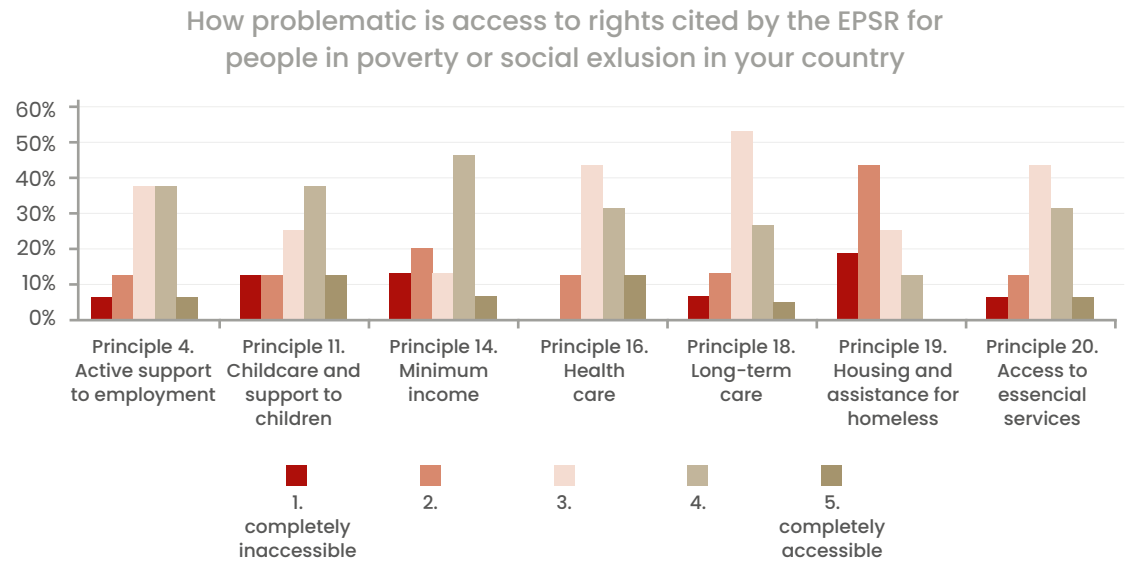
PRINCIPLE 4:	Active support to employment;
PRINCIPLE 11:	Childcare and support to children;
PRINCIPLE 14:	Minimum income;
PRINCIPLE 16:	Health care;
PRINCIPLE 19:	Housing and assistance for the homeless;
PRINCIPLE 20:	Access to essential services

Based on Caritas's experiences across Europe, member organisations assess that access to some of these rights remains difficult. This is in particular the case of Principle 19 (Housing and assistance for the homeless), as shown in the graphs<sup>2</sup> below.

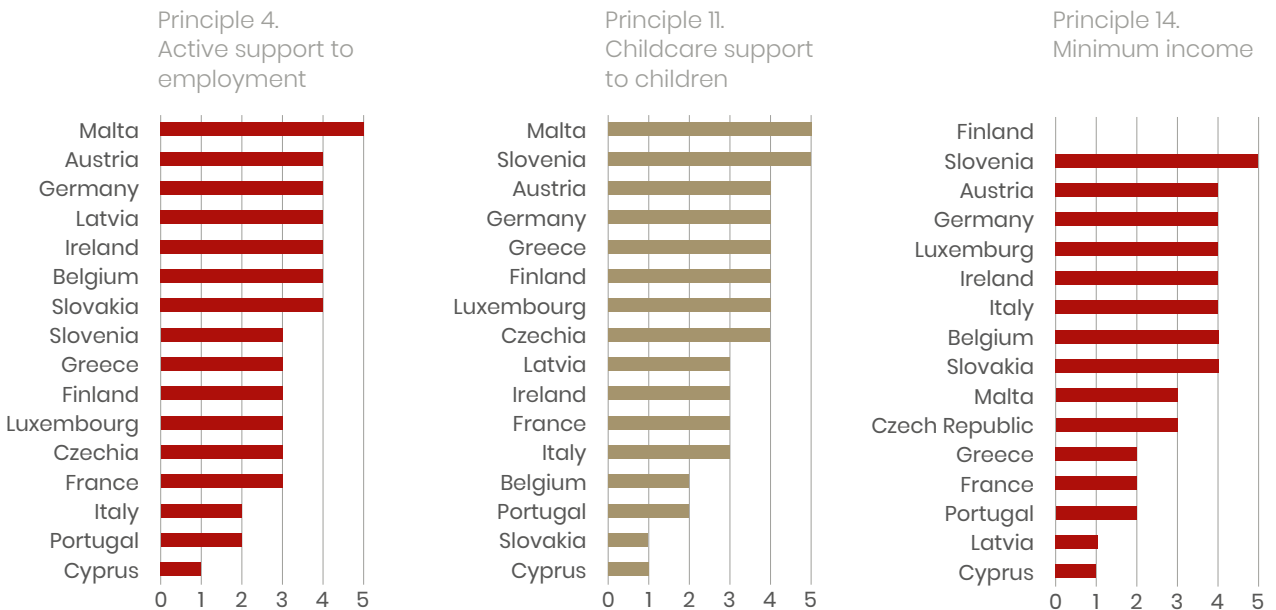
<sup>2</sup> Data collected from Caritas Europa member organisations in preparation of this report



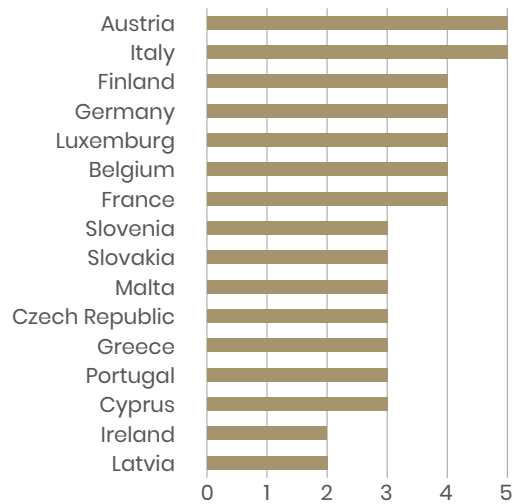
The first graph compiles the scores given by Caritas organisations regarding access to the respective services, based on the criteria of availability, affordability, accessibility and adequacy of each of the services:



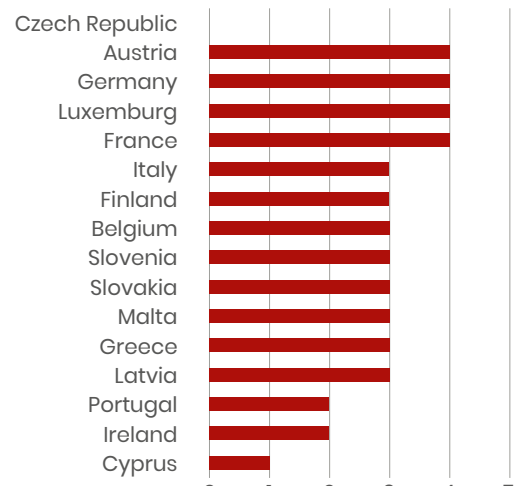
The graphs below present the scores given to each of the examined services per country, again ranging from 1 (completely inaccessible) to 5 (completely accessible).



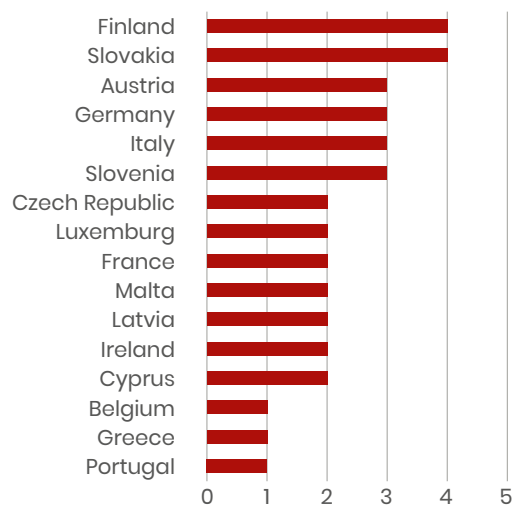
Principle 16.  
Health care



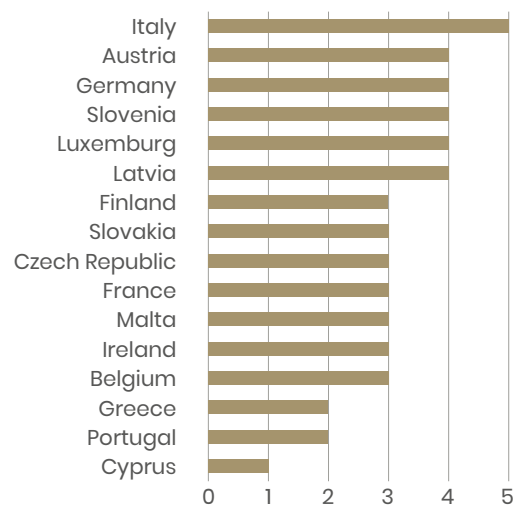
Principle 18.  
Long-term care



Principle 19.  
Housing and assistance for  
the homeless



Principle 20.  
Access to essential  
services



Caritas member organisations also identified target groups of Caritas beneficiaries with specific problems in accessing these services:

<b>Austria</b>	Undocumented people are exempt from services. Asylum seekers have restricted access to services.
<b>Cyprus</b>	Asylum seekers are the most vulnerable and are least likely to access these services. The exception is basic and emergency health care, to which they are entitled.
<b>Czech Republic</b>	Homeless people, people with physical or mental disabilities, and people with addictions face stigmatisation and instability in their living conditions (complicating their access to services).
<b>Finland</b>	Immigrants, persons with mental illness and undocumented people are facing the biggest challenges regarding access to services.
<b>France</b>	People living in slums, often of Roma origin, are highly discriminated against and are particularly affected by poverty and lack of access to work and essential services.
<b>Germany</b>	Access may differ from group to group.
<b>Greece</b>	Undocumented migrants, asylum seekers and refugees as well as long-term unskilled unemployed, mental health patients and single parents are those facing the most relevant difficulties.
<b>Italy</b>	Refugees and asylum seekers, homeless and undocumented people, elderly people living alone and families with low cultural capital are typically unable to orient themselves in the complexity of the welfare system.
<b>Latvia</b>	Health care is the most problematic service to be accessed by Caritas beneficiaries (in particular single adults as well as families with dependent people).
<b>Malta</b>	Vulnerable groups most affected among Caritas beneficiaries are those with difficulties in finding an adequate place to rent or live. This is due to the fact that their income is rather low and they cannot make ends meet.
<b>Slovakia</b>	The vulnerable groups among Caritas Slovakia beneficiaries are senior people, people suffering from non-curable illnesses, people physically or mentally disabled, children, mothers with children in a critical situation, homeless people and unemployed people.

Another relevant instrument is the (revised) **European Social Charter (ESC)** of the Council of Europe. Both the Pillar and the Charter state the right to access some specific social rights related to equal opportunities and access to the labour market, fair working conditions, and access to social protection and inclusion.

### Most relevant articles of the European Social Charter related to access to services and minimum income

The right to vocational guidance (Article 9)  
 The right to vocational training (Article 10)  
 The right to protection of health (Article 11)  
 The right to social and medical assistance (Article 13)  
 The right to benefit from social welfare services (Article 14)  
 The right of the family to social, legal and economic protection (Article 16)  
 The right of elderly persons to social protection (Article 23)  
 The right to protection against poverty and social exclusion (Article 30)  
 The right to housing (Article 31)

Some of these articles are not yet ratified by some of the Member States analysed in this report, and could have an impact on access to services and minimum income:

### Ratification and implementation of the European Social Charter related to access to services

Acceptance of provision of the (Revised) European Social Charter									
Country	Article 9	Article 10	Article 11	Article 13	Article 14	Article 16	Article 23	Article 30	Article 31
Austria	x	x	x	x	x	x			
Belgium	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	
Cyprus	x	x	x	partially	x				
Czech Republic	x		x	x	x	x			
Finland	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
France	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Germany	x	partially	x	x	x	x			
Greece	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Ireland	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Italy	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Latvia	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	partially
Luxembourg	x	x	x	x	x	x			
Malta	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
Portugal	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Slovakia	x	x	x	partially	x	x	x	x	
Slovenia	x	x	x	partially	x	x	x	x	x
Sweden	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

The **Europe 2020 strategy** set the EU's agenda for growth and jobs for the current decade, having as one of its main objectives to tackle inequalities in Europe. The strategy sets **EU targets** to give an overall view of where the EU should be by 2020, based on key socio-economic parameters. The EU targets were then translated into national targets so that each EU Member State could check its own progress towards each goal. The ones particularly relevant for this study are those referring to employment and poverty, and social exclusion.

- In relation to employment, **the target set at EU level was that by 2020 75% of people aged 20–64 are expected to be in work**. This target was translated at national level differently according to the distance of each country from it:

	Increasing the employment rate of the population aged 20–64 to at least:	Goal attainment
Austria	77%	< 5 pp from the target
Belgium	73.2%	< 5 pp from the target
Cyprus	75–77%	< 5 pp from the target
Czech Republic	75%	Target achieved
Finland	78%	< 5 pp from the target
France	75%	< 5 pp from the target
Germany	77%	Target achieved
Greece	70%	> 5 pp from the target
Ireland	69–71%	Target achieved
Italy	67–69%	< 5 pp from the target
Latvia	73%	Target achieved
Luxembourg	73%	< 5 pp from the target
Malta	70%	Target achieved
Portugal	75%	Target achieved
Slovakia	72%	Target achieved
Slovenia	75%	Target achieved
EU-28	75%	< 5 pp from the target

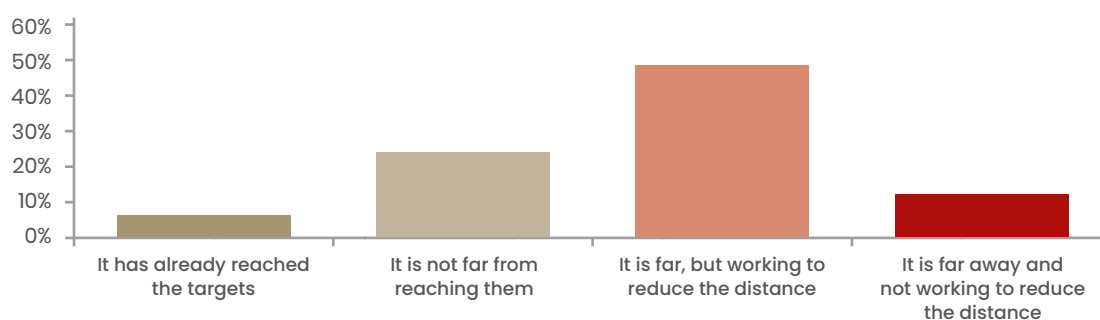
Source: Eurostat 2019, [Link](#)

- Concerning poverty and social exclusion, the EU target intended to reach a reduction of at least 20 million people in or at risk of poverty / social exclusion. This target was translated at national level using different indicators in relation to the specific policies to be implemented in order to reach it:

	Target to reduce poverty and social exclusion	Goal attainment
Austria	235,000 people lifted out of poverty	Not far from achievement
Belgium	380,000 people lifted out of poverty	Far from achievement
Cyprus	27,000 people lifted out of poverty or reduce the rate to 19.3% of the population (compared to 23.3% in 2008)	Far from achievement
Czech Republic	100,000 people lifted out of poverty	Target achieved and overtaken
Finland	Reduce to 770,000 the number of people living in poverty or social exclusion	Not far from achievement
France	1,900,000 people lifted out of poverty (compared to 2007)	Far from achievement
Germany	Reduce by 20% the number of long-term unemployed (unemployed for more than one year) compared to 2008	Target partially reached
Greece	450,000 people lifted out of poverty	Far from achievement
Ireland	Reduce by a minimum of 200,000 the population in combined poverty	Far from achievement
Italy	2,200,000 people lifted out of poverty	Far from achievement
Latvia	Reduce by 121,000 the number of people living at risk of poverty after social transfers and/or in households with very low work intensity	Target achieved and overtaken
Luxembourg	6,000 people lifted out of poverty	Far from achievement
Malta	6,560 people lifted out of poverty	Far from achievement
Portugal	200,000 people lifted out of poverty	Target achieved and overtaken
Slovakia	Reduce to a rate of 17.2% the number of people living in poverty or social exclusion	Far from achievement
Slovenia	40,000 people lifted out of poverty	Not far from achievement
EU-28	<b>Lifting at least 20 million people out of the risk of poverty and social exclusion (compared to 2008)*</b>	<b>Far from achievement</b>

In most of the EU Member States involved in this study, the poverty target has not yet been reached but in a few cases, reaching the target is not far away. According to most of the Caritas organisations contributing to this report, governments are working to reach the target set in the majority of cases.

#### According to Caritas experience and the debate is the country on its way to reach the selected EU2020 targets?



## Chapter 2

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# **Access to services by people experiencing poverty or social exclusion**

- 2.1 An assessment of availability, accessibility, affordability and adequacy of main services
- 2.2 Minimum income as a measure of inclusion and activation

Universal access to high-quality services of general interest is important in guaranteeing a good quality of life in Europe. It is an essential element in achieving inclusive growth, a main objective in the Europe 2020 strategy. **Housing, childcare, employment services, health care, home care services for elderly and disabled people, and services for migrants and asylum seekers** are all key services of general interest. The European Commission's Social Investment Package ([Link](#)) outlined that **reduced access to care services may cause certain groups to not receive care, or to receive care only with a delay and to imply higher cost in the longer term** (i.e. when untreated social and health problems become emergencies).

While EU Member States generally have universal health care systems, other social services often do not provide a universal approach.

Most social and care services are in fact targeted to specific population groups attributed to socio-economic or health conditions (as for example services for long-term unemployed, homeless people, Roma, poor families with underage children, for elderly people with caring needs). In addition, where services are potentially available for the whole population, access is sometimes difficult for vulnerable groups of the population.

For the purpose of this report, Caritas member organisations have described and analysed the access to three services common to all (**public employment service, housing policies and early childhood education services**) and two services specifically chosen by member organisations as particularly relevant in their countries. The table below indicates the two additional services selected.

### Particular services chosen for the in-depth descriptive analysis

Country	Services for migrants and asylum seekers	Home care	Health care	Counselling	Services for the elderly	Services for the homeless	Services for people with disability	Other services	Education and LLL
Belgium	x		x						
Cyprus	x					x			
Czech Rep.			x			x			
Luxembourg	x					x			
Malta						x		x	
Germany									
Austria				x		x			
Portugal	x			x					
Ireland		x	x						
France	x					x			
Finland	x			x					
Slovakia		x				x			
Greece	x			x					
Latvia			x				x		
Slovenia		x			x				
Italy		x		x					



## 2.1 An assessment of availability, accessibility, affordability and adequacy of main services

Access to the selected services has been assessed on basis of the four traditional criteria of adequacy, accessibility, availability and affordability:

**ADEQUACY:**

the service is of good quality and is satisfactory: it is able to respond to the needs of the user;

**ACCESSIBILITY:**

the service can be reached or obtained easily, and it is easy to understand and to use;

**AVAILABILITY:**

the service exists and it is available for those who need it;

**AFFORDABILITY:**

the service is cheap enough for people who need it to be able to afford it.

The assessment has been based on a scale ranging from 1 (the service is completely inadequate, inaccessible, unavailable or unaffordable) to 5 which means it is completely positive.



Archivio Romano Siciliani – Imago Mundi

## 2.2.1 Public employment services

*António, aged 54, divorced and living with his retired sister shares a flat with his retired sister. He has no access to Social Integration Income or RSI (Rendimento social de inserção) due to his sister's pension income. He is long-term unemployed, with a previous long employment history. As a result of a car accident, a lower limb was amputated, which put him in unemployment, without any kind of support. Although the services of the Job Centre have guided him to the possibility of being integrated into protected work, he has not been summoned to accept any job offer. With the intervention of Caritas Viseu, he has participated in training actions, in order to increase his chances on the labour market and to gain an income. In this region, according to the Institute for Employment and Vocational Training or IEFP (Instituto de Emprego e Formação Profissional), companies are not very aware of the offers of protected jobs, thus not offering the opportunity to people with physical limitations.*

### **Caritas Viseu, Portugal<sup>3</sup>**

In EU countries, public employment services (PES) are the authorities that connect jobseekers with employers. PES are structured differently in each country, but all of them are intended to help match supply and demand on the labour market through information, placement and active support services at local and/or national level.

Access to these services across Europe has been hindered by different obstacles and barriers, which affect in particular the most vulnerable population groups: the Caritas CARES country reports synthesise these barriers as follows:

- In Ireland, people who are **long-term unemployed**, and workers with a disability are diverted to specific programmes due to their ineligibility to access the main unemployment programme.
- In Finland, access to PES is particularly difficult for persons with **physical and intellectual disabilities** or with a **migrant background**.
- In the Czech Republic, PES do not offer an **individual approach**.
- In Slovakia, access to PES is difficult for people experiencing **poverty or social exclusion**.
- In Malta, PES are **understaffed** and face rather high demand from vulnerable people.

- In Germany, two groups of people are excluded from PES: **asylum seekers and migrants** who have recently migrated to Germany.
- In France, PES offer inadequate training initiatives in particular to **vulnerable groups**.
- In Luxembourg, PES do not offer adequate support to **vulnerable groups**.
- In Slovenia, PES offer inadequate support in particular to vulnerable groups such as **older workers** and **young job seekers**.
- In Austria, PES are less accessible in **rural areas**.
- In Greece, PES offer inadequate support to **vulnerable groups** in particular to homeless populations, asylum seekers, refugees, undocumented persons and Roma people.
- In Latvia, PES have been assessed positively as **they have improved** and are **accessible, affordable and available**.

According to Caritas member organisations, those facing the most relevant difficulties in accessing PES in most of the countries reviewed are: **people with a migrant background, in particular if they are asylum seekers, refugees and undocumented persons and if they are Roma**. Homeless populations are another group where there are serious concerns in accessing PES. There are countries where difficulties also affect **other groups** such as the elderly, poorly educated, young jobseekers and people with a disability.

<sup>3</sup> More testimonies can be found in the national CARES country reports.

**Territoriality** is a key issue with different perspectives: in Greece, counselling services are usually provided in cities/towns and are not available everywhere; in Austria, these services are hardly reachable in rural areas; in Finland and Luxembourg, people not residing in the municipality do not have the right to access municipality services; in Italy, PES are not widespread enough throughout the territory.

**Bureaucracy and lack of a personalised and caring approach** has been mentioned in several countries: Finland, Italy, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Malta.

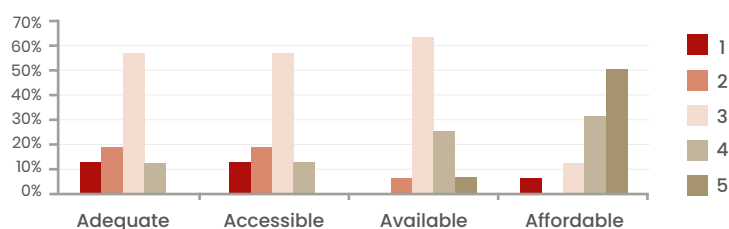
**Migrants and refugees in particular** face additional obstacles: **language barriers, lack of skills and knowledge, and more generally with regard to meeting formal requirements.** In many cases, these problems are combined.

When evaluating access to these services the main problem described is adequacy, followed by accessibility. Concerning **adequacy** in Germany and Latvia, two countries characterised by labour shortages, the **challenge is to employ long-term unemployed** who are frequently not ready for the labour market: the personalisation of the service to answer in a flexible and appropriate way to individual needs is often lacking. Caritas organisations have identified problems related to the **complexity of the system** that is hard for the clients to understand, the presence of queues and the very limited individualised, personal advice (Finland and Czech Republic). By contrast, in most of the analysed countries these services have been assessed as highly **affordable**, generally being cost-free (see table and graphs below). Nevertheless, problems can be linked to costs associated with visiting the unemployment office (i.e. transportation costs, costs for obtaining all the necessary documents).

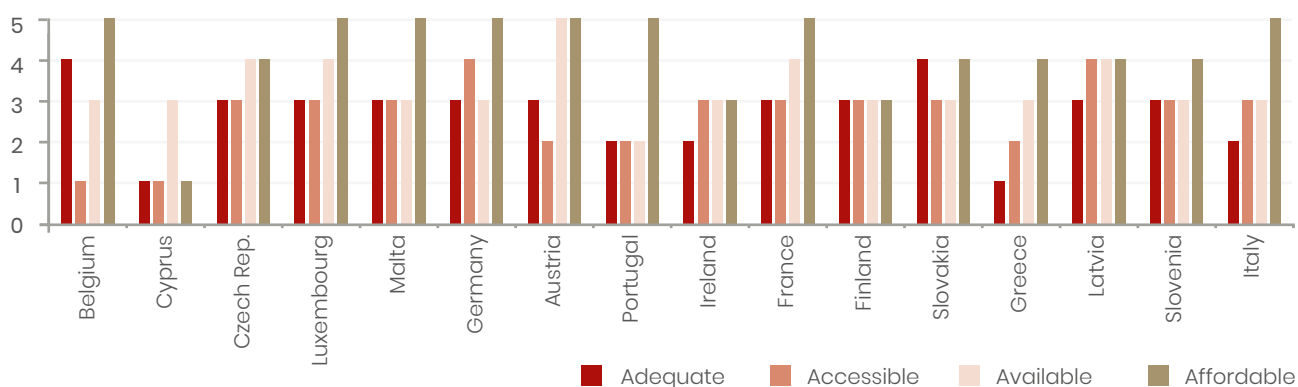
#### Public employment services are:

	MEAN
<b>Adequate</b>	2.7
<b>Accessible</b>	2.7
<b>Available</b>	3.3
<b>Affordable</b>	4.2

#### How would you evaluate access to Public Employment services?



#### How would you evaluate access to Public Employment services?



More than 67% of the respondents (10 out of 15) consider that the **accessibility** and **quality** of PES services **have improved** in the last few years. The main reasons that account for this positive evolution reflect:

- Reduced pressure on the public employment service and increased numbers of staff enable a better service offer and a reduction in clients' waiting times (i.e. for accessing training and/or other support).
- EU-funded projects enabled the targeting of different groups.
- A more customer-oriented approach has been implemented.



Caritas Luxembourg, Ivana Larusson



## 2.2.2 Housing policies

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*'Hannah (aged 8) cried and told us that the hub was 'like a children's jail'. She expressed extreme worry and fear for her younger brother Niall (aged 5) who had tried to run away from the hub on several occasions. She told us that when her mother was having a shower she would sit on a chair in front of the door so her brother could not run away. Niall had sneaked out of the hub once already and threatened to throw himself out of a bedroom window'. Testimony of a young person living in a family hub (emergency accommodation for homeless families) taken from 'No place like home. Children's views and experiences of living in family hubs'; a report by the Ombudsman for Children's report: <https://www.oco.ie/library/no-place-like-home-childrens-views-and-experiences-of-living-in-family-hubs/>.*

### **Social Justice Ireland**

*'We are now three years on a waiting list for social housing. In the meantime, we rent a small apartment that is actually too small and too expensive for us. We have two bedrooms; our three children sleep altogether in one room. We have no money left at the end of the month. Our children are suffering from this situation, but there's nothing we can do other than wait'. Testimony from Elsie, 34, married to Johan and mother of three children aged 8, 5 and 3 years.*

### **Caritas Belgium**

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Access to social housing is one of the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights. Regarding this concern, the European Commission recognises the importance of ensuring that:

- access to social housing or housing assistance of good quality is provided to those in need;
- vulnerable people have the right to appropriate assistance and protection against forced eviction;
- adequate shelter and services are provided to the homeless in order to help their social inclusion.

Despite the EC's positive assessment, these principles are not directly enforceable and still require translation into national legislation and related actions. Regarding this concern, every country in fact has organised its housing policies differently, but across Europe all countries face the common issue of affordability, which impacts the lives of millions of European citizens. In many countries, housing costs have increased significantly in comparison to 2009.

Caritas CARES country reports find that the situation is critical in most of the countries analysed:

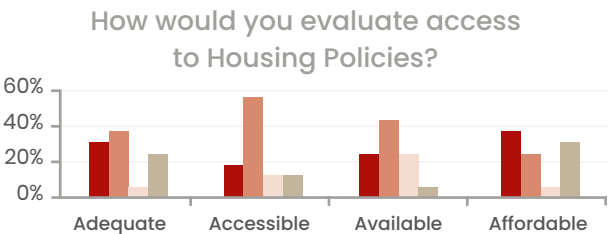
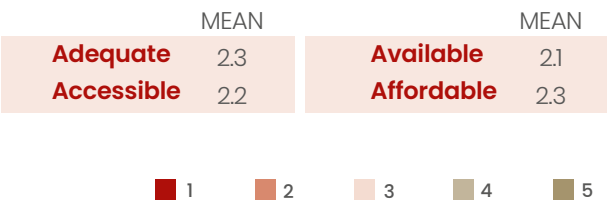
- Ireland is in the midst of a **housing crisis** but the Government decimated the housing budget. Policies have concentrated on short-term 'housing solutions' provided through the private rental sector, rather than the Government investing in long-term capital spending on social housing.
- In Finland, housing policies **have not been adapted to changing needs**.
- **Housing policy is improving** in Latvia, as there are more social housing options and more apartments have been adapted to meet special needs.
- In the Czech Republic, **private and public housing are inadequate** for vulnerable groups of people.
- In Slovakia, **social housing is underdeveloped** and conditions for access are restrictive.
- In Malta, the **increasing unaffordability of housing** is putting housing policies under pressure.
- In Germany, **housing policies are inadequate for specific vulnerable groups**: homeless people, people with addictions and refugees.
- **Housing policies are inadequate** in particular **for the poorest** in France.

- There is shortage of **affordable housing** in Luxembourg.
- In Slovenia, there is a great **demand for market rental housing** and also a high demand for non-profit rentals.
- **Housing costs are rising** in Austria, and people with low income and with a migrant background have difficulties in finding adequate accommodation.
- Housing policy in Greece is **limited to a rent benefit**, subject to many eligibility conditions.

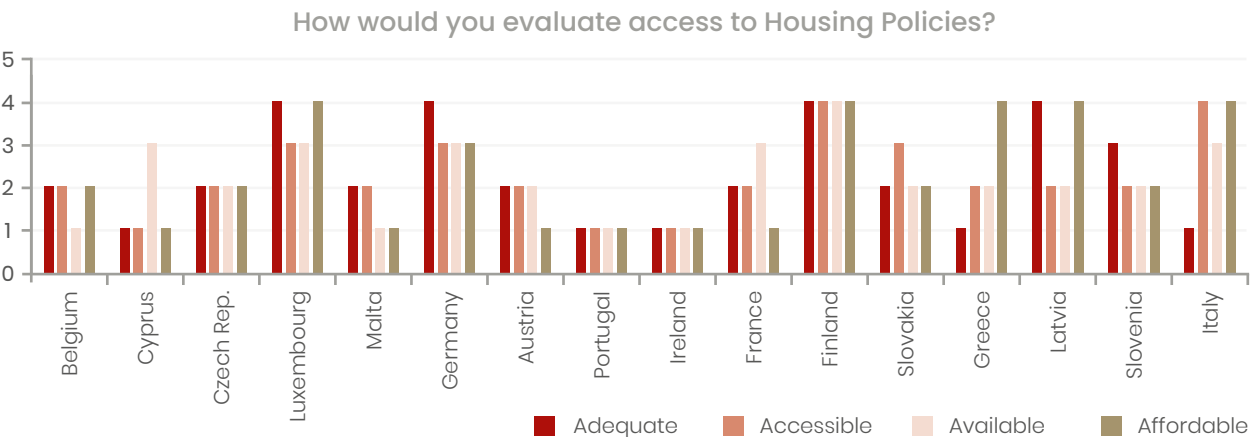
According to Caritas member organisations, **those facing the most relevant difficulties** in most of the countries analysed **in terms of accessing both private and social/public housing are people and families with a migrant background**, in particular if they are **asylum seekers, refugees and undocumented persons, in addition to Roma**. **Homeless** and young people are other groups of population facing serious challenges accessing housing and finding housing solutions.

Some member organisations identified difficulties further affecting **other groups**. **Families with children** who have **low-profile working** conditions, without financial guarantees, have additional barriers compared to other groups in society; many **low-paid workers** and **families** cannot live in the city centre because of the high cost of apartments so they are forced to live quite far away from their workplaces. In the majority of EU Member States, economic growth has meant a relevant increase in **housing prices, particularly negatively affecting** vulnerable groups. This evolution has led in several countries to an increase in number and relevance of the phenomenon of homelessness (a phenomenon particularly acute in Ireland). Despite this, there have not been adequate policy responses at Member States level.

In most of the countries analysed, Caritas member organisations have assessed housing services as not being affordable, adequate, accessible or available:



Countries differ significantly, but generally, most of the countries present a critical picture on most of the four criteria (adequate, accessible, available and affordable).



Accessibility, availability, affordability and adequacy are interlinked concepts, as public housing can be available, but not accessible for specific groups or for those who face specific socio-economic conditions. Moreover, important territorial differences have been identified.

Concerning **affordability**, the financial aspect is problematic in particular for those who cannot pay rent, especially considering that alternative housing options are increasingly more unaffordable.

- In **Ireland**, housing is increasingly unaffordable as rents in the private market continue to increase.
- In the **Czech Republic**, housing is increasingly more inaccessible financially because of high prices and required deposits. This is also true because of new restrictions for supplementing housing.
- In **France**, data shows that 42% of outstanding payments is attributed to rents.

In many countries, a common problem is the **inadequacy of public housing which presents poor quality construction and maintenance standards**.



Secours Catholique-Caritas France, Christophe Hargoues

In general, public housing policies are not able to offer a response to people seeking a stable and definitive home. In a few countries, a lack of supportive measures to sustain housing policies has also been identified as well as a lack of adequate information and too restrictive criteria to access the services.

**Access** to services is limited for certain target groups due to discrimination on the basis of personal characteristics, conditions and ethnicity (among the groups particularly discriminated against are people with addictions); housing units may be hardly accessible for people with disabilities or older people. In some countries asylum seekers are locked out of the overall housing market since even when they receive housing subsidies, they may be unable to provide deposits and the first month of rent.

According to almost 80% of the Caritas member organisations, **accessibility and quality** provided by **housing services have worsened** in the last few years. Main reasons that account for this worsening are reflected below.

- In some countries such as the **Czech Republic**, **Austria** and **Germany**, the government has not taken adequate action to contain the prices of rental housing.
- In **Luxembourg**, the construction of new subsidised social housing is stagnating.
- In **Greece**, housing services are minimal and cannot lead to significant impacts in terms of answering the housing problem. The same can be said for **Slovakia**, as the situation in accessing housing is inadequate.
- In some countries, such as **Finland**, there is not the right balance between demand and availability of houses, because there are insufficient buildings and unaffordable renting costs in big cities.

In a couple of cases, a certain improvement has been noted: this is, for example, the case of **Malta**, even if much work still remains to be done, and in **Latvia** where the availability of social housing has increased, with a provision of apartments adapted to special needs (in particular for disabled people).

## 2.2.3 Early childhood education and care (ECEC)

*Our beneficiary, Theresa, has two children aged 4. She worked until she had to join emergency housing. Before she joined the emergency house she has been having a job. Now she is dealing with a critical situation as she is not able to drive the children to kindergarten near their original home because the journey is more than an hour. Kindergartens nearby are full and unable to accept other children. This situation forced her to leave her job because she is unable to secure her children during her working hours.*

### Caritas Czech Republic

Early childhood education and care services (ECEC) refer to any regulated arrangement that provides education and care for children from birth to compulsory primary school age, which may vary across the EU. It includes centre and family day care, privately and publicly funded provision, pre-school and pre-primary provision.

Principle 11 of the **European Pillar of Social Rights (Childcare and support to children)** states that 'Children have the right to affordable early childhood education and care of good quality. Children have the right to protection from poverty. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds have the right to specific measures to enhance equal opportunities'.

The access to this service across European Member States is hindered by different obstacles and barriers, which affect in particular the most vulnerable groups of the population. The situation in each country can be synthesised in a few words as follows:

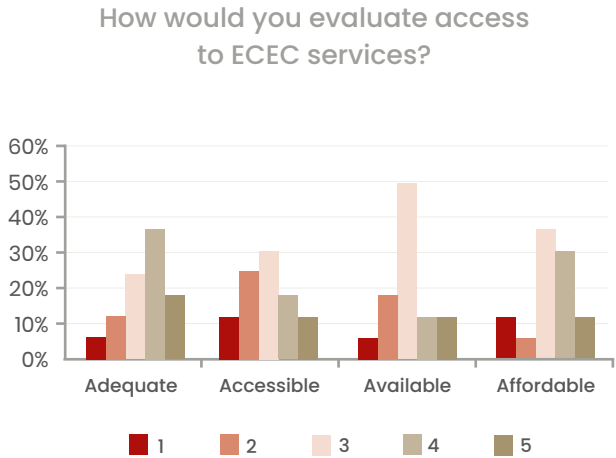
- In **Ireland**, the most striking feature of **investment in early childhood education** is its underinvestment relative to other OECD countries. Due to sustained underinvestment, the ECEC sector in Ireland is fragmented and underdeveloped.
- In **Finland**, access for the most vulnerable target groups to ECEC is not available free of cost.

- In **Latvia**, ECEC services should be adapted to respond to the needs of those who work in the evenings, at night or on holidays.
- In the **Czech Republic**, early childhood education and care is inadequate for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, in particular from Roma families.
- The number of early school leavers in **Malta** is the highest in the European Union. Children and young people especially facing social problems need a more inclusive education programme tailor-made to every student.
- In **Germany** 300,000 places in early childhood education and care services are lacking and for children from disadvantaged backgrounds the service is less accessible because they are not cost-free.
- In **France**, early childhood education and care is inadequate for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- In **Slovenia**, while the supply of kindergarten institutions is increasing, local authorities cannot always satisfy the demand for places for younger children.
- A long-term problem in **Slovakia** is a significant lack of vacancies in kindergartens.
- In **Austria**, there are regional differences in accessing early childhood education care services.
- In **Greece**, there have been **some significant improvements in the last few years** in accessing ECEC services.

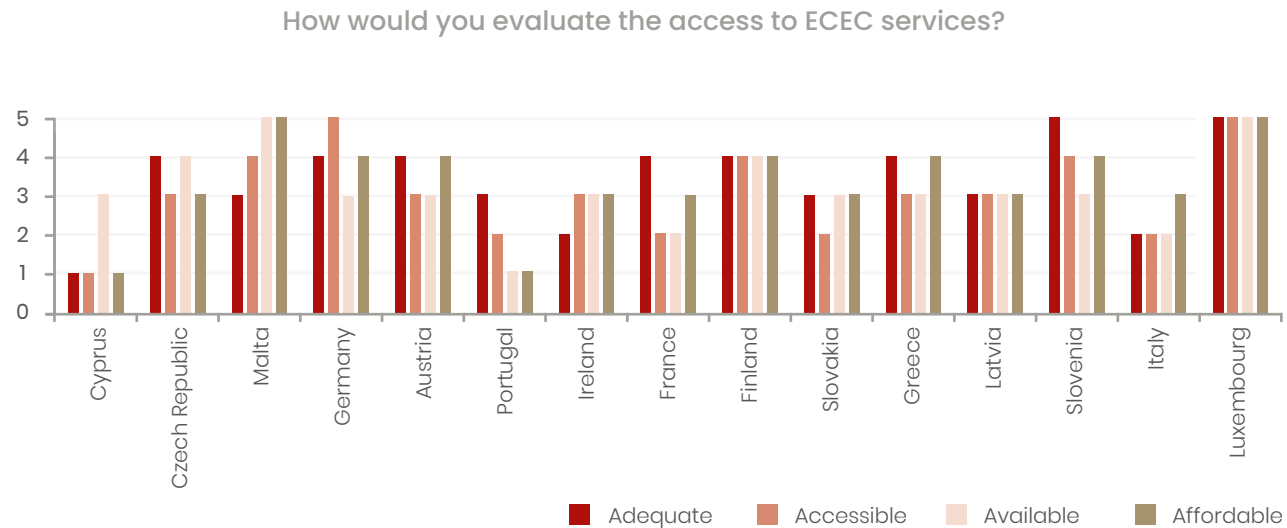


Caritas member organisations have assessed ECEC services as moderately affordable, adequate, accessible and available in most of the analysed countries:

	MEAN		MEAN
<b>Adequate</b>	3.5	<b>Available</b>	3.1
<b>Accessible</b>	2.9	<b>Affordable</b>	3.3



Countries differ significantly, as there are countries where the service is very good from all criteria perspectives (as is the case, for example, of Malta and Slovenia); for others there are many problems on all or most of the criteria analysed (as is the case of Cyprus, Italy, Belgium and Portugal):



Although access to ECEC services is generally assessed as rather positive, a number of critical issues have been identified. In **most** of the countries analysed, ECEC services have been assessed as being quite **adequate**, except for Malta where education should be more inclusive, and more tailored to every student.

This should be based on applied learning to better improve the standard of education of young people and for them to gain more knowledge, values and skills to enter the labour market.

The main aspects related to this that emerged from the analysis are:

- **Lack of places in kindergartens** and the limitation of access to services for certain target groups: frequently, ECEC are services targeted to working people. As a consequence the poorest are excluded including, for instance, children of long-term unemployed parents. Not all workers can easily access the service, as is the case of those working in the evenings, at night and during holidays. Early childhood free day care is in certain cases a right only for parents who work legally.
- Another key issue is related to the **territorial distribution** of the service:

- In **Italy**, in the southern part of the country, ECEC services are frequently absent.
- In **Finland**, access depends on the relevant municipality.
- In **Latvia** and **Austria**, the early childhood services are accessible depending on the provinces as services are not equally distributed in the local areas. In Austria, the place of residence still determines the educational path and the development perspectives of children depending on the financing provided by the single area of the state. In Latvia, access to kindergartens is problematic depending on the municipality responsible for the provision of the services.
- In **Slovakia**, kindergartens provide childcare depending on municipalities or local administrative authorities, so there is a disparity between the different areas of the country.

Accessibility is also hindered by **bureaucracy** and **strict rules** required when applying for the services, as is the case in the Czech Republic. In Greece, the paperwork needed to register children in the kindergartens hinders access to the service, especially for those who do not work legally, who are undocumented or homeless because they cannot provide certificates of address, unemployment verification or any other documents required in order to access the service.

Concerning **affordability**, in most of the countries ECEC services are not considered to be universally guaranteed rights, and as a consequence their provision is not compulsory and are not free of charge, except for families defined as 'in material need' or in specific socio-economic conditions.

According to 80% of the Caritas member organisations, accessibility and quality of ECEC **have improved in the last few years**. Main reasons that account for this positive change are reflected below:

- There have been significant improvements in **additional funds for people in a condition of poverty and social exclusion** in countries such as Germany, Greece and the Czech Republic.
- There have been improvements in terms of providing **additional places** in kindergartens and an additional, wider range of education service options, especially in the Czech Republic and Greece.
- An **obligatory pre-school education** has been introduced in the Czech Republic.
- There have been **improvements in terms of quality and quantity** of the services due to the mix of the public and private sectors (mostly social cooperatives) in managing ECEC services.

Two countries, however, experienced a worsening in the ECEC services. In Latvia, some municipalities did not take over their functions to integrate additional places in kindergartens. In Finland, the ECEC services have worsened because during the 2015-2019 period the government removed the 'subjective day care right' for children of unemployed parents and children with an immigrant-based background.

Finally, Slovakia is the only country that has neither improved nor worsened its access to services.

## 2.2.4 Services for the homeless

*Anna (not the real name), a 23-year-old homeless person of Cape Verdean nationality grew up in Luxembourg. After leaving school, she left Luxembourg for three years, thus automatically losing her residence permit for Luxembourg as well as the right to social benefits and she didn't get them back on her return. Anna is severely mentally ill and has no contacts with her family. She regards herself as a 'Luxembourg person with Cap-Verdean roots' since she had lived in Luxembourg from the age of six. However, because she lost her residence permit and suffers from severe mental illness, Anna has been unable to access the traditional homeless shelters and also had difficulty accessing psychiatric services.*

### Caritas Luxembourg

Principle 19 of the European Pillar of Social Rights refers to **housing and assistance for the homeless** and states that: a) access to social housing or housing assistance of good quality shall be provided for those in need; b) vulnerable people have the right to appropriate assistance and protection against forced eviction; and c) adequate shelter and services shall be provided to the homeless in order to promote their social inclusion.

There are no official statistics at EU level concerning the dimension of the problem as there is no data on the number of homeless people across the EU. National figures are collected, using different methods and in different years, but estimates identify a rise in street sleeping in countries like Ireland, Luxembourg, Belgium and the UK.

An analysis of accessing these services for the homeless has been produced for six countries: Cyprus, Czech Republic, Luxembourg, Malta, Austria and Slovakia. Caritas CARES country reports find that the situation is critical in most of the countries analysed.

- In the Czech Republic, services for homeless are **inadequate** in relation to the needs.
- In Luxembourg, a stable **homeless shelter requires conditions** that many homeless people do not meet.

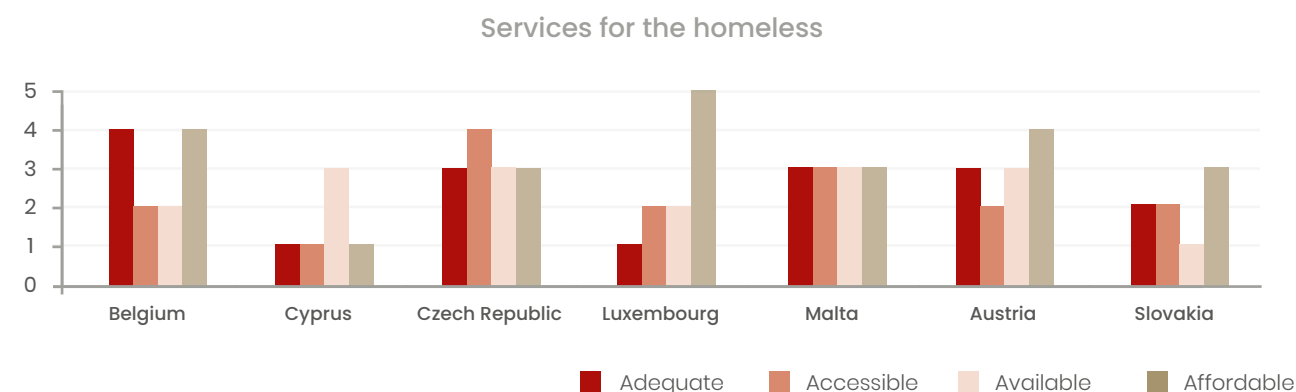
- In Malta, **homelessness is a rather new issue**, but it is growing challenge for the country and therefore the services given are not enough for people in need of support.
- In Austria, services for homeless are **affordable but not accessible**.
- In Slovakia there is a **strong and complete network of services** for the homeless but they are mainly present in larger towns; there are still a few in small cities.
- In Cyprus, services for **homeless are always at full capacity**.

According to Caritas member organisations, in most of the countries analysed the **vulnerable groups most affected by barriers in accessing the services for homeless are the elderly**, especially in the Czech Republic, Malta and Slovakia; **people with physical and intellectual disabilities and people with addictions** were identified as the most vulnerable in the Czech Republic, Luxembourg and Malta.

In most of the countries analysed, Caritas member organisations have assessed services for homeless as moderately adequate and accessible but generally quite affordable:

	MEAN		MEAN
<b>Adequate</b>	2.8	<b>Available</b>	3.0
<b>Accessible</b>	2.7	<b>Affordable</b>	3.7

In Cyprus, the service is moderately available but inadequate and insufficiently accessible and affordable. In Luxembourg, the service is affordable but inadequate and moderately accessible and available. In other countries, the service is moderately or quite adequate, accessible, affordable and available.



Concerning **availability, the lack of spaces in shelters or emergency homes** is the main problem identified.

- In **Cyprus** the government tries to deal with this issue even though the answers it gives are temporary and not able to solve the problem immediately or in the long term;
- In the **Czech Republic** the lack of places leads to inadequate solutions being offered.

Another important issue is the **territorial distribution** of the services as **these services are generally present in larger cities with still only a few in small towns and in rural areas**. People losing their housing in rural areas are therefore forced to move to cities. In some countries, a common problem concerns the **accessibility** of the services under different perspectives, mainly linked to bureaucracy with formal requirements that many homeless people do not meet, and lack of information.

Many factors can lead people to become homeless (mental health, addiction, family separations/divorce, being released from prison or other institutions) and every person should be evaluated individually

and offered the specific service needed. But this assessment is not always present. In case of **multiple difficulties**, as is, for example, the case of homeless people with problems related to addictions, services are not always ready to support them: addicted clients who cannot abstain, in some countries cannot be admitted to emergency housing or to night shelters, and 'wet' services (services where users can bring alcohol with them) do not exist in many countries.

According to Caritas member organisations, which have described services for homeless, **accessibility and quality have improved** in the last few years. Main reasons that account for this positive change are given below:

- In **Malta** things are slowly improving for service users but if no drastic action is taken there will be a great problem in the near future. Income has to be adequate for everyone, reflecting the inflation rate and the cost of living.
- In **Austria**, there has been some improvement in eviction-prevention as preventative measure. There is also an increasing awareness that services for the homeless are necessary in rural areas too, but there is still need to do more.

## 2.2.5 Services for migrants and asylum seekers

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*SIJ is a 38-year-old male, who heads an Iraqi family of six that speaks only Kurdish. They arrived in Cyprus on 16 June 2018 and applied for asylum on June 18. For the next month, Caritas Cyprus worked with SIJ to help him access emergency money for accommodation.*

*Caritas provided translation and liaised with Social Welfare, provided food packs and additional top-up money for accommodation, helped the family obtain medical cards and arranged and accompanied them to dozens of medical appointments for services ranging from immunisations for the children to help with chronic illnesses. By the middle of July, the family had exhausted every avenue for additional emergency money and took up residence in tents in the park. As their desperation increased, they began camping in front of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance and were immediately given a few more nights in a hotel. Social Welfare then put pressure on Migration and by the end of July the family was placed in a 'family room' in the Kofinou Accommodation and Reception Centre.*

*SIJ's is a success story. Most individual asylum seekers are not nearly as fortunate. Unless vulnerable (family units with children, unaccompanied minors or victims of trafficking), there is no assistance available for beneficiaries of social welfare other than meagre financial allowances. Asylum seekers arrive and must wait days or weeks (currently six weeks) to register during which time they have no access to any benefits and are homeless. When registered, they are given benefits that are slow to materialise and woefully inadequate to cover living expenses. As a result, they are homeless and hungry for months, left to fend for themselves in a society that is rife with latent xenophobia and racism fuelled by ignorance. They are often preyed upon by the unscrupulous estate agents and landlords.*

### Caritas Cyprus

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Seven Caritas member organisations (Cyprus, France, Finland, Germany, Greece, Luxembourg and Portugal) selected services for migrants and asylum seekers as the services to be analysed.

These services that have been selected as migration policies are at the core of the national political agendas and are much debated in public opinion. They have also been selected because, as migrants and asylum seekers particularly suffer from poverty and exclusion, they are the target group most present among Caritas beneficiaries in these member organisations.

These seven Caritas country reports identify the situation as critical in most of the countries analysed.

- In **Finland**, services for migrants and asylum seekers are not present outside metropolitan areas.
- In **Germany**, asylum seekers and migrants who recently migrated to the country are excluded from public employment and they are also facing inadequate housing policies.
- In **France**, the reception system does not offer adequate services for migrants and asylum seekers.
- In **Luxembourg**, there is a lack of information on services for migrants and asylum seekers.
- In **Greece**, the state has gradually taken responsibility of most of the services for migrants and asylum seekers, but many of the provisions still need to be translated into



policies and specific services.

- In **Cyprus**, weak local systems providing services for migrants and asylum seekers are proving inadequate to address their needs.
- In **Portugal**, there is a consensus that both migrants and migration have a positive impact on the development of countries

of origin and destination. Migrants' competencies and skills, savings and remittances contribute to development, and they do so in a variety of fields namely in the overall economy, labour market, demographic change or through cultural and social innovation.



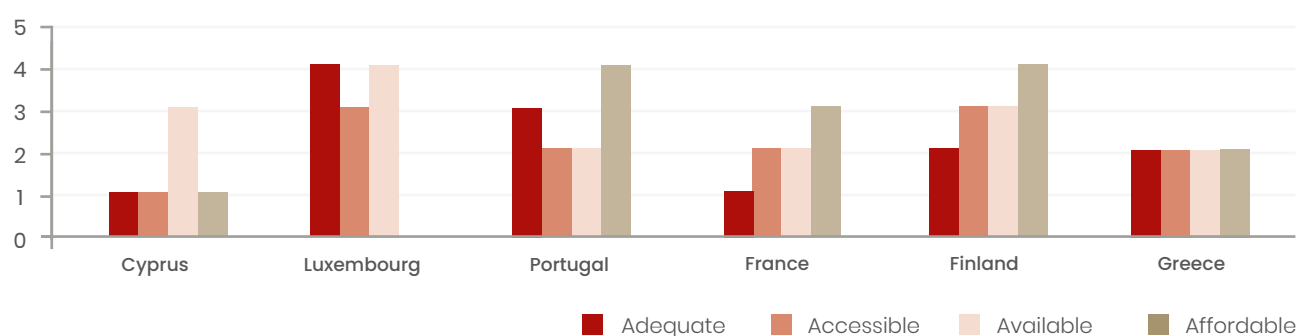
Caritas Cyprus

In most of the countries analysed, Caritas member organisations have assessed services for migrants and asylum seekers as moderately adequate, accessible, available and affordable:

	MEAN		MEAN
<b>Adequate</b>	2.2	<b>Available</b>	2.7
<b>Accessible</b>	2.2	<b>Affordable</b>	2.8

Countries differ according to the criteria selected, but generally present more or less critical aspects on one or more of the criteria, except for Luxembourg where the service was evaluated quite positively.

Services for Migrants and Asylum Seekers



Concerning **adequacy**, in countries as Cyprus, France and Greece migrants and asylum seekers have to deal with the **weakness of the reception system** interconnected with the **bureaucracy** and **inadequate integration policies**.

**The challenges are different for migrants and for asylum seekers**, as is the case in Portugal:

*To better understand the main obstacles to the inclusion of immigrants in **Portugal**, it is important to distinguish two levels of the issue: integration policies and inclusion practices, and between the policies and practices of inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers, and of immigrants. These two groups face distinct inclusion challenges although they sometimes share difficulties in inclusion and, above all, difficulties in accessing existing social inclusion systems. Barriers to inclusion are challenges that need to be overcome in Portuguese society in order to enhance the capacity of migrants to contribute to development.*

#### Caritas Portugal

In some countries a common problem is the **accessibility** of the service linked to the **lack of information** and **language and cultural barriers**.

According to the Caritas member organisations, the **accessibility and quality of services** provided to **migrants and asylum seekers have improved** in the last few years in Portugal, Finland and Greece. In **Finland**, the implementation of International House Helsinki has allowed the provision of a wide range of information services and public authorities to meet the needs of new international arrivals in the metropolitan area of Helsinki. Caritas also offers free advice and counselling services to employers on matters relating to the international workforce. This service is currently only available in the metropolitan area, so the rest of the country does not have this type of service.

In **Greece** many services were not provided by the state in the past (it all depended on private and NGO initiatives/projects) but in the last couple of years the state has been putting new services in place. So the services are improved but it is not certain if the users can be satisfied.



On the contrary, in Cyprus, Luxembourg and France the change observed is negative:

- In **Cyprus** the authorities have failed to respond to the increasing number of asylum seekers arriving on the island and seeking asylum.
- In **France** it is increasingly difficult to apply for

asylum, and immigration-restrictive policies make the lives of 'undocumented' people very precarious.

- In **Luxembourg** during 2015 the list of contacts of NGOs (including Caritas Luxembourg) was removed from the information brochure given to asylum seekers making access to the service more difficult for applicants.



Caritas Czech Republic, Jakub Žák



## 2.2.6 Home care services, services for the elderly and services for people with disabilities

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*Ivan (50 years old) from Trnava wanted to take care of his mother with limited mobility, who needed daily care. After several weeks of considering and helping the family, he eventually quit his job and began to take care of his mother. Because of the low care allowance, he had to find in short time a part-time job and look for a nurse for his mom, when he was at work.*

### **Caritas Slovakia**

*Aleksis is a person with intellectual disabilities. In the previous institution, he had communication opportunities – the institution's planning, where there was a common room, provided for it. Now he is basically imprisoned in a small double room because the whole building consists of similar rooms – there is almost no place for communication outside the room. In practice, the lack of necessary housing in the context of deinstitutionalisation can mean the transfer of people from institution A to institution B, and the conditions in institution B may be worse than in the closed institution A.*

### **Caritas Latvia**

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Caritas Slovakia

Three countries have selected homecare services as relevant services to be analysed: these countries are Slovenia, Slovakia and Ireland.

A few critical aspects in particular have been identified:

- In **Ireland**, one clear implication of the ageing population is additional demand for health care services and facilities, and formal home care funded by the State is considered low by comparison with other countries.
- In **Slovakia**, home care services are foreseen in the national strategy of deinstitutionalisation but are underfunded, understaffed and not integrated.
- In **Slovenia**, homecare services are regulated by municipalities, are not provided under the same conditions for all and are not affordable for all who need it.

The ageing of the population is a social demographic factor that is involving the majority of EU Member States and, consequently, determines the increase in the demands of services as home care, health care, counselling and services for certain specific categories of people such as services for elderly and for people with a disability.

Caritas member organisations have assessed home care service as moderately affordable, adequate, accessible and available: for all criteria the average mark is 3.

Caritas member organisations have identified different trends in **accessibility and quality of home care services**:

- In **Slovenia**, access to **this service has neither improved nor worsened** in the last few years; in **Slovakia**, the service has improved. On the contrary, in **Ireland**, the service has worsened (as there were fewer people in receipt of home help support in 2017 than there had been in 2008 and there were some 2.25 million fewer hours delivered – approximately -18%).

Other member organisations have described more generally **services for the elderly and services for people with disabilities** even where not specifically provided at home. In **Finland** and **Slovenia**, services analysed are those addressed to elderly people, while in **Latvia** they are those addressed to disabled people. In summary, services have been described as follows:

- In Finland, home care for the elderly **is not adequate to support lone people living at home**.
- In Slovenia, there is **no uniform system of long-term care**.
- In Latvia, services for people with disabilities **do not take into account that disability needs are not homogeneous and require differentiated services**. Their inclusion in a single category creates risks of generalisation, leading to inadequate solutions that may be appropriate for one but not for others.

In **Latvia**, the main difficulties affect disabled people of working age because there is no support like the one available for the elderly or children. Measures are not always aimed at promoting the inclusion, autonomy and integration of people into the labour market.

In **Slovenia**, the **lack of a uniform long-term care (LTC) system** affects the **accessibility, availability, affordability and adequacy** of the service. Different forms of LTC services and benefits are provided within different systems (health care, social, pension and disability). There is no unified entry point or a standard model of LTC needs assessment, and funding for LTC comes from several sources. The current Slovenian government has put the reform of LTC high on the agenda of the ongoing legislative period. Therefore, the Ministry of Health is piloting the concept of one-stop shops and integrated LTC delivery in a two-year pilot project (2018-2020) to support the transition into a new system of long-term care delivery.

## 2.2.7 Health care services

*In the Czech Republic's social care service, they are going to accept a new client, a woman who has been hospitalised in a psychiatric hospital for about 20 years. She will not live in her place of permanent residence. The psychiatrist here does not want to accept her because of this, as she should have a permanent residence in place. The doctor in charge of permanent residence 'threatens' the client during the communication that she will have to spend an inappropriate time in the waiting room (it seems like he wants to discourage her) and in addition, the transportation to the place of permanent residence is expensive for her.*

### Diocesan Caritas of Brno, Czech Republic

Principle 16 (Health care) of the European Pillar of Social Rights states that 'Everyone has the right to timely access to affordable, preventative and curative health care of good quality'. Health care is also present in the European Social Charter in Article 11 – The right to protection of health and in Article 13 – The right to social and medical assistance).

The access to this fundamental right has been described only in the Czech Republic, Latvia and Ireland. Caritas country reports identify barriers in accessing health care services that can be summarised as follows:

- **Ireland** is the only EU health system that does not offer universal coverage of primary care. There are barriers in access to primary care, delays in accident and emergency department admissions, and waiting times for access to hospital care in the public system.
- In **Latvia**, state-funded health care services are limited, crowded and not available outside the capital.
- In the **Czech Republic**, health care services are accessible in acute situations, but access is complicated for those in need of long-term care and treatments.

In the three analysed countries, Caritas member organisations have assessed **health care service as only moderately affordable, adequate, accessible and available**:

	MEAN		MEAN
<b>Adequate</b>	2.7	<b>Available</b>	2.3
<b>Accessible</b>	2.3	<b>Affordable</b>	2.7

In terms of **availability**:

- In the **Czech Republic**, doctors' lists are often full and they can no longer accept new patients. Going to another city to visit a doctor is expensive for many clients, as well as payment for medication.
- In **Latvia**, the availability of services outside the capital is also limited, and this applies to both the availability of specialists in general and the quality of services.

In terms of **adequacy**, in **Latvia** some organisational aspects should be improved because the services are not really patient-oriented.

In relation to **affordability** the main barriers are financial:

- In the **Czech Republic** health care is covered by health insurance but everything that has to be paid for (part of the medication, physiotherapy, etc.) is difficult to afford.
- In **Latvia** there are relatively modern medical services available in the country,



but not everybody can afford them. In addition, some people are not aware of the existence of these services or how to access them. The access to state-funded secondary medical care is often hindered by long queues: the patient-financed aid is available earlier, but **it is too expensive for the poorest people**.

- In **Ireland** the access to primary care is difficult, there are delays in emergency department admissions, and waiting times for access to hospital care in the public system. International experts note that

**Ireland is the only EU health system that does not offer universal coverage of primary care.**

According to Caritas member organisations, in the last few years in the **Czech Republic** the service **has worsened**. The experience is that now, there are fewer doctors who accept new patients so it is hard to find a GP, as well as a specialist. On the other hand, the service **has slightly improved** in **Latvia**, as politicians have paid more attention to it over last couple of years: a 'green corridor' for oncology patients has been established, and the access to services for people infected with HIV and hepatitis C has improved.



Secours Catholique-Caritas France, Christophe Hargoues

## 2.2.8 Counselling services

Martina is a young single mother, with a four year old daughter. She lives in a big town in Sicily, in a disadvantaged suburb, not well connected to the city centre by local transportation. Martina's family of origin was involved in small local criminal activities, and her mother was a single parent too, at the same age as Martina. Now Martina lives in a community, run by the local Caritas, whose expenses are also supported by the municipality. The main problem for Martina is the low level of education she attained: she stopped going to school when she was 14 years old, and she has only a "Terza Media" (lower intermediate) certificate. She has never had a permanent job and she has always lost job opportunities and assistance because of her incapacity of orientation within the welfare and employment system. Before going to the community she used to live with her former boyfriend, her daughter's dad, but they broke up and she lost her home because she could not keep up with the legal procedures for paying outstanding bills. Therefore she was welcomed by a local welfare institute. The main problem for Martina is finding an orientation for her future, and identifying sustainable targets to reach, for her and for her daughter. One opportunity is getting involved in a training course, with the aim of finding a stable job. Her current situation is characterised by a multiplicity of problems, for which an overall and global approach is needed.

### Caritas Italy

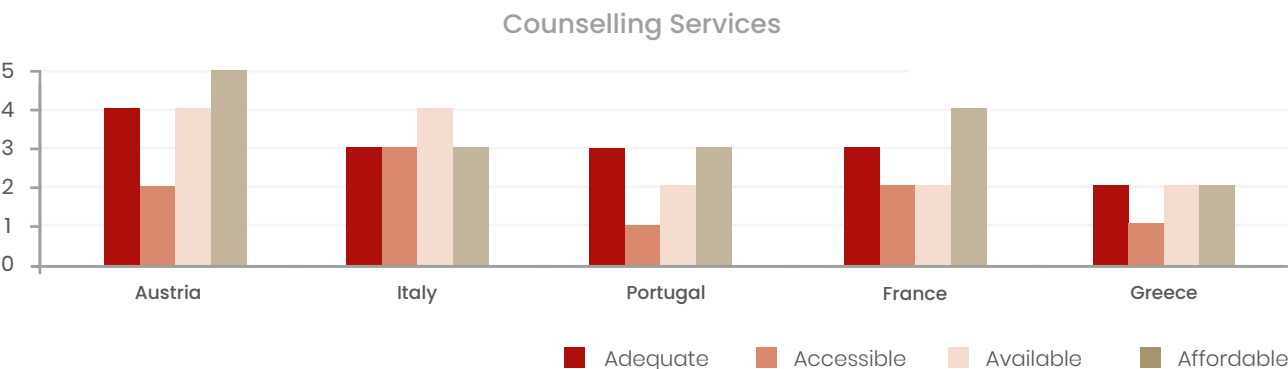
Five member organisations have described counselling services as those services providing support in accessing structured social services to those who find difficult to access them due to cultural, linguistic barriers or to stigmatisation. These countries are Austria, Italy, Portugal, France and Greece.

In **Italy**, people in poverty often have low educational and cultural capital and for them it is not easy to navigate the system of public welfare. Because of this obstacle, many social rights cannot be accessible and eligible for people in a situation of poverty and social exclusion. These families may also need psychological support, and counselling services can give them a life target to reach.

In **Portugal**, the social economy is proving to be very dynamic. In 2018, 72% of the social responses were developed by non-profit entities, but these organisations are not supported by the government.

In most of the analysed countries, Caritas member organisations have assessed counselling services **as moderately affordable, adequate and available, but not particularly accessible**: these services are far less available in remote and rural areas.

	MEAN		MEAN
<b>Adequate</b>	3.0	<b>Available</b>	2.8
<b>Accessible</b>	1.8	<b>Affordable</b>	3.4



- **Accessibility is the main obstacle:** in **Austria** a shortage of counselling offices in rural areas and lack of public transport to reach services has been identified. In addition, the fear of stigmatisation hinders people in accessing the services. In **Portugal** the territorial distribution shows a concentration of responses in the most populous districts of the coastal strip, especially in Lisbon and around the Metropolitan Area of Porto.
- **Lack of adequacy** due to the reduction in the number of services: in **Greece** one of the significant impacts of the economic crisis was the reduction in the number of civil servants, therefore a consequent reduction of availability and quality of services. In **France** the access to the system of social minima is characterised by complicated procedures and the accompanying services are too fragmented. This leads to situations of non-access to rights, so-called non-take-up situations. Many administrative procedures are only accessible via the Internet. This results in the exclusion of people who do not have access to a computer and are victims of the 'digital divide'.

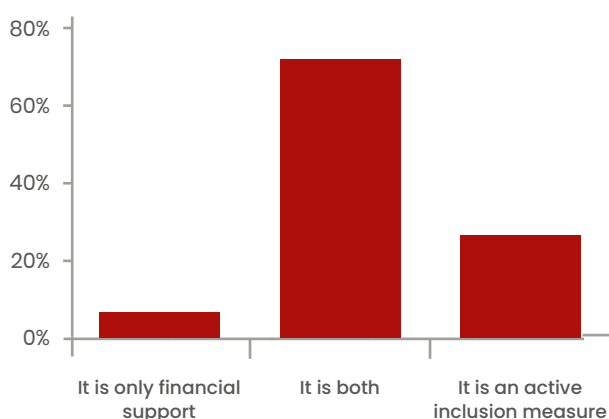
In the last few years, these services **have worsened in Portugal, France and Greece**, while **in Italy they have improved** as the number of orientation services promoted mostly by the Church and trade unions has increased, and they offer free orientation and professional counselling, especially to low-income families.



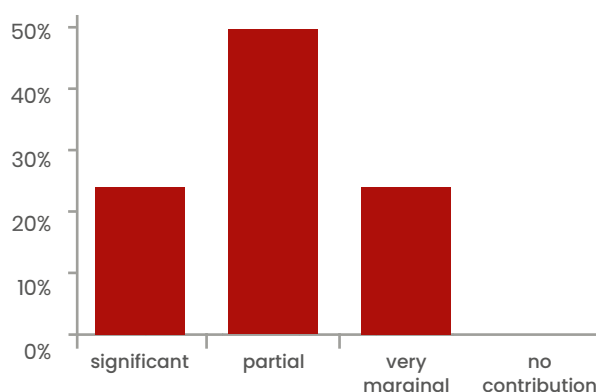
## 2.2. Minimum income as a measure of inclusion and activation

**Principle 14** of the **European Pillar of Social Rights** refers to **minimum income**. Principle 14 builds on previous EU policymaking including the **1992 Council Recommendation on common criteria on sufficient resources and social assistance in social protection systems**. This first recognised the basic right of a person to sufficient resources and social assistance to live in a manner compatible with human dignity, and provided practical guidelines on how to implement this right. Another key input is **the Recommendation on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market** endorsed by the Council and the Parliament in 2008. It stressed that the effectiveness of integrated active inclusion policies was to be ensured by designing a comprehensive policy, setting out the right balance between the three strands: adequate income support, inclusive labour markets and access to quality services.

EU Member States have implemented different forms of minimum income: in the countries analysed these are the measures described with specific reference to the active inclusion approach implemented. According to Caritas member organisations, the measures implemented in the countries analysed are in most cases both a financial support and an active inclusion measure. In Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany and Portugal they are described only as an active inclusion measure. In only one case (Latvia) on the contrary it has been described as a mere financial support (see table in Annex 1).



In all the countries minimum incomes seem able to contribute, more or less, to the social inclusion of vulnerable people: in Luxembourg, Germany and Slovenia it seems to make a significant contribution, while in Cyprus, Malta and Portugal it is assessed as making only a very marginal contribution.



According to member organisations, the main positive impacts of the activation/active inclusion approach in their countries are:

- to promote a personalised approach, not just money;
- to reduce long-term dependence on economic benefits;
- to promote active participation in the society;
- to promote active social policy.

Among the most relevant risks identified are the following:

- the risk of incentivising wages reduction and in-work poverty;
- bureaucracy and difficulties in application;
- the risk of fraud (false work opportunities or economic conditions);
- the risk of forgetting those who cannot work;
- the difficulty in implementation because institutions involved are different and do not cooperate (employment and social services);
- the risk of making people feel guilty about poverty and to make minimum income conditional on the acceptance of a job, even of poor quality.





Caritas Czech Republic, Jakub Žák



## Chapter 3

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# Main reforms implemented and needed, and the role played by EU financial instruments

- 3.1 Main policy reforms implemented in EU countries with positive or negative effects
- 3.2 Reforms still needed at national level
- 3.3 The role played by EU financial instruments

The **European Semester** plays an important role in the strengthening of the social dimension at EU level. It is an important vehicle to promote reforms in the direction suggested by its policy initiatives, by taking into account national specificities and, at the same time, monitoring developments at EU and Member State level.

Through the Country Specific Recommendations issued each year for EU Member States, countries are invited to implement reforms that in some cases refer also to social inclusion and the access to social services and services of general interest.

### 3.1 Main policy reforms implemented in EU countries with positive or negative effects

In the last two years, all countries have promoted **policy reforms addressing the social inclusion, social protection and activation** of vulnerable groups. Some of these reforms are already having a mostly positive impact on the reduction of poverty and social

exclusion, and in promoting access to social rights; others, on the contrary, are already having a mostly negative impact in this area: member organisations have described them in the following two boxes, with potentials and problems that are emerging.



Caritas Luxembourg, Farzad Hasghshenas

## Policy reforms having a mostly positive or a negative impact on the reduction of poverty and social exclusion and in promoting access to social rights

Policy reforms having a mostly positive impact		
Country	Policy addressed	
Belgium	Income support	Pulling up the lowest income schemes, such as living wage or benefits for people with a disability.
Cyprus	Access to job sectors	In 2018 the wait time for access to the labour market for asylum seekers was reduced from six months to one month. In May 2019, the sectors where work is allowed were increased, but remaining restricted to low-wage and manual labour in sectors and on shifts in which Cypriot workers are uninterested.
Czech Republic	Minimum wage policy	Increasing of minimum wage and guaranteed minimum wages.
Luxembourg	Income support	Reform of the minimum income scheme.
Austria		No policy reform deemed positive by Caritas.
Portugal	Public transport	Social transport pass.
France	Access to social services	National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Poverty.
Finland	Access to health care services	Ongoing social welfare and health care reform.
Slovakia	Income support	Changes to the Act on Social Services with an increase of the care allowance (remained unchanged for several years).
Greece	Income support	Social Solidarity Income (KIA) is one of the reforms that is addressing poverty and social exclusion as a 'safety net'.
Latvia	Access to health care services	First steps to promote more access to the health care system – expanding treatment options for HIV and hepatitis C, increased funding for psychiatry, green corridor for oncology patients to start treatment earlier.
Italy	Income support	<i>Reddito di Inclusione</i> .
Malta	Access to (public) housing	Rent as a Housing Alternative.
Ireland	Income support	Increase to the minimum social welfare payment. From March 2019 onwards it increased by €5 per week (to €203) complementing similar increases in budgets for 2017 and 2018. Benchmarking minimum rates of social welfare payments to movements in average earnings is therefore an important policy priority.
Slovenia		First measure: Reform in 2012 introduced the activity supplement as a top-up to the amount of financial social assistance (FSA) for the recipients working or participating in some employment programmes, social rehabilitation programmes or certain social protection. Second measure: Since 2016 the MLFSA has been working on the social activation project, i.e. developing an activation system and social activation programmes to address the persistent long-term unemployment and long-term dependency on social benefits. Both measures were introduced more than two years ago. They can be pointed out as very positive measures on the reduction of poverty and social exclusion.

Policy reforms having a mostly <b>negative</b> impact		
Country	Policy addressed	
Belgium	Access to (public) housing	Rental deposit from two months rent to three months rent.
Cyprus	Migration	Suspension of the Fast-Track Examination for Asylum Seekers: most of them have very limited rights to services while their applications are in process, which usually takes between two and four years.
Czech Republic	Income support	Amendments to system of assistance in material need (especially 'no-supplement-for-housing zones').
Luxembourg	Income support	Reform of child benefits.
Austria	Income support	<i>Sozialhilfe-Grundsatzgesetz</i> law on minimum income.
Portugal	Income support	Tax policies.
France	Access to employment services	Deleting jobs with subsidised contracts.
Finland	Access to employment services	Activation model for unemployment security.
Slovakia	Access to social services	Changes in the Act on Social Services: in order to receive financial means, introduction of the obligation of non-public providers, to be in accordance with the community plan of the municipality.
Greece	Social security contributions & taxation	According to Law 4472/2017, increased taxation / social security contributions for the self-employed.
Latvia	Income support	Rise of minimum wage from €380 to €430 from 2018 without changing the threshold from which a person is recognised as poor: inequality between people participating in the labour market and the poorest part of society has increased significantly.
Italy	Migration	<i>Decreto Sicurezza</i> (Security Decree) The new decree clamps down on asylum rights and hardens security measures, also compromising the level of social integration of immigrants.

## 3.2 Reforms still needed at national level

Member organisations have also been asked to describe which policies they think are still needed to address poverty and social exclusion more effectively in their country.

### Which policies do you think are needed by priority to address poverty and social exclusion more effectively?

Belgium	Belgium should invest more, and more intensely in the social housing market, and should set all the income schemes in line with the European poverty threshold.
Czech Republic	The Czech Republic should implement complex measures to make the housing market long-term sustainable and affordable for all by provision of social housing and implementation of a robust system of minimum income, that can prevent the uncontrolled indebtedness, as well as legal action against the subjects who based their business on this.
Luxembourg	Reduce poverty and inequalities by taxes and social transfers; provide social housing.
Malta	<p>Give further consideration to the situation of those who legitimately cannot work by strengthening the social security benefits for people who earn up to the minimum wage.</p> <p>Address with urgency the financial situation of low-income earners who are renting private dwellings and not benefiting from any subsidies, particularly lone parent families.</p>
Austria	<p>Ensure decent wages in Austria: for the last ten years wages in the lowest income classes have decreased. The tax burden on labour is among the highest in Europe, while taxes on wealth are among the lowest in the whole OECD. Introduce minimum wages and fiscal reform that raises minimum wage thresholds, reduces the tax burden on labour – especially low wages – and considers shifting towards other sources of taxation.</p> <p>Take strong action on access to housing, developing an integrated strategy for affordable housing considering tenancy, property and social economy.</p> <p>Establishing a 'third labour market', especially for vulnerable youth, as a specifically protected labour market to offer adapted jobs, ensure social integration and inclusion, and prevent intensification of chronic diseases and social isolation.</p>

<b>Ireland</b>	The Irish Government should carry out in-depth social impact assessments prior to introducing budgets or implementing policies in order to ensure that the position of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion is not worsened, with specific attention on children, lone parents, jobless households and social rented housing.
<b>France</b>	To finance a decent income for all (at 50% of the median income) and to put an end to the great poverty, it is necessary to make taxation fairer and to reinforce the progressivity of income tax, as well as to tackle the distribution of wealth.
<b>Finland</b>	Finland should undertake social and health reform as soon as possible and tackle income traps.
<b>Slovakia</b>	Slovakia should introduce a new system of financing social services.
<b>Greece</b>	There is need to: evaluate and improve/enlarge the Social Solidarity Income; deploy a nationally accessible job counselling service connecting it to a holistic personal development plan for the unemployed; and promote favourable conditions for investment and creation of jobs.
<b>Latvia</b>	It is necessary to re-establish the link between the threshold below which individuals are considered to be poor on the one hand, and the minimum wage or other indicator that depends on the level of welfare in the community at a given time on the other.
<b>Slovenia</b>	Increase the employability of younger and older workers, and adopt and implement health care reform and long-term care insurance.
<b>Italy</b>	Launch a major public investment programme, especially in the sectors of the green economy and social enterprises, capable of producing new jobs, especially for young people. Expand the lifelong learning activities currently offered by public administrations.

### 3.3 The role played by EU financial instruments

In 2013 another relevant EU policy document brought attention to measures to lift people out of poverty: the European Parliament and Council Regulation<sup>4</sup> (EU) No 1304/2013 stated that the **ESF** (European Social Fund) **should** (among other priorities), **strengthen social inclusion and fight poverty...** and develop active, comprehensive and sustainable inclusion policies.

According to the Regulation, the ESF should promote social inclusion and prevent and combat poverty with a view to breaking the cycle of disadvantage across generations. This is expected to be done through a minimum ring-fenced allocation of 20% of the total ESF resources of each Member State. In the following table, Caritas member organisations have described the use that has been made of ESF resources regarding this.

#### Use of ESF resources to fight to poverty and social exclusion

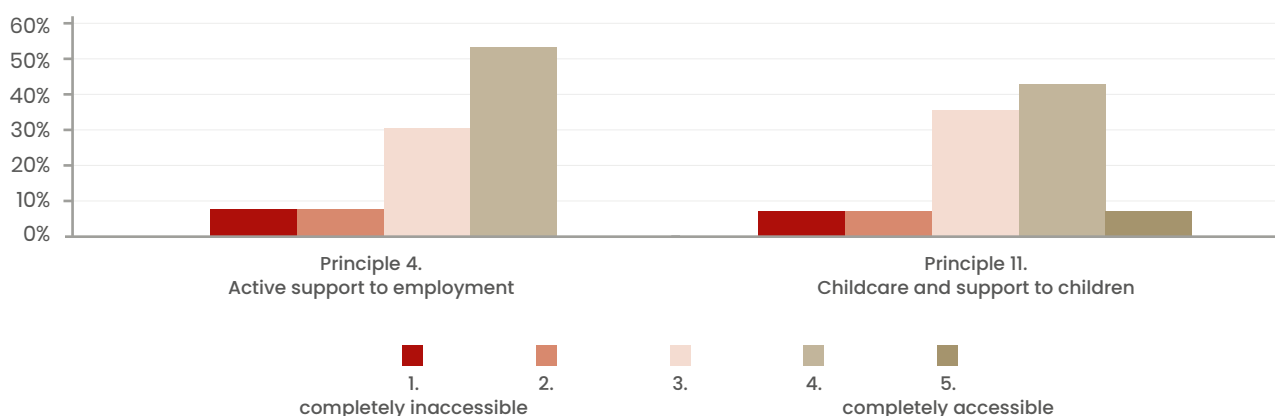
Cyprus	According to the European Commission, 'Cyprus is using ESF funding to create job opportunities and boost employment, in particular among its young people. Other priorities include measures to improve social inclusion and a better-performing education and training system. ESF projects are helping disadvantaged people, such as those with disabilities, women, welfare recipients and migrants, to join the workforce and enjoy independent lives. Cyprus is also implementing measures that support a minimum guaranteed income to provide a social safety net for those at risk of poverty.'
Luxembourg	Actions to increase skills and knowledge among jobseekers, particularly those over the age of 45, in line with the future needs of the employment market thus enhancing job market integration. Enhanced and sustainable job market integration for young people is also targeted, particularly through the development and improvement of the implementation and monitoring of the Youth Guarantee. Concrete projects are implemented to increase the integration of marginalised people (who are furthest from the labour market).
Malta	Job creation youth programmes; building of rehab centres for minors and distribution of food.
Germany	ESF is used to fight poverty and social inclusion through different approaches on the federal and regional levels. Although ESF is still mainly seen as a labour market activation tool there are many programmes to combat poverty and social inclusion. About 38% of the federal ESF is used for social inclusion and to combat poverty.

<sup>4</sup> Regulation (EU) No 1304/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on the European Social Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1081/2006.

<b>Austria</b>	ESF contributes to improving skills and employment outcomes for disadvantaged groups (migrants, women, etc.)
<b>Ireland</b>	The ESF resources fund the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020. It is focused on activation of the unemployed, social and labour market inclusion, education and youth employment.
<b>France</b>	The ESF finances projects at national and regional level: at national level, a high priority is given to the fight against poverty, social inclusion and vocational training or throughout life (especially for seniors).
<b>Finland</b>	ESF funds 711 projects on employment and labour mobility, 628 projects on education, professional skills and lifelong learning, and 337 on social inclusion and combating poverty.
<b>Slovakia</b>	ESF funds the implementation of the 'Action plan for the integration of the long-term unemployed' supporting disadvantaged groups with training and individualised services. This plan is a tool that will greatly support the integration of people in a condition of poverty and social exclusion.
<b>Greece</b>	Priority areas are the support of vulnerable and marginalised groups (Roma, handicapped, migrants), support to social enterprises and initiatives for improving access to health, and education for all.
<b>Latvia</b>	ESF funding at the moment is more successful at promoting employment. Meanwhile, the oldest members of society, as well as children, have received relatively little funding within the framework of the fund.
<b>Slovenia</b>	ESF resources have been used for developing an activation system and social activation programmes to address persistent long-term unemployment and long-term dependency on social benefits.

The Fund for European Aid to the most Deprived (FEAD) supports EU countries' actions to provide food and/or basic material assistance to the most deprived. According to Caritas member organisations, ESF and FEAD resources have generally been used quite well to fight poverty and social exclusion.

#### Have ESF and FEAD resources been adequately used to fight poverty and social exclusion?



In most cases, Caritas member organisations have been involved directly or indirectly (as part of a network) in the planning and implementation of measures and services funded by ESF and FEAD in their countries.



## Chapter 4

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# **Caritas promising practices implemented in EU Member States**

### Access to social services

The programme '**Building parish charities at the diocesan level**', run by **Caritas Slovakia**, intends to promote access to social services. It brings charity work to the grassroots level, directly into the parishes. The aim is to create volunteer facilities to help people in need in the parish, depending on their current needs. Cooperation with the priest and also with the diocesan charity, which has the function of coordinator, is essential. Parish charities help people in their living space, and are based on strong interpersonal relationships and a free desire to help and to be of service to others. The development and building of parish charities is a long-term process, but currently Caritas Slovakia has received funding for three years and the result should be the creation of 80 new parish charities by 2021. Diocesan charity Žilina currently has 18 active parish charities. Please refer to this initiative on the webpage <http://www.charitaza.sk/farske-charity/>.

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**The results show a significantly improving access to state provision.**

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**Caritas Greece** runs **Caritas social centres, offering social services** and facilitating and supporting access to public/state social programmes and benefits. Beneficiaries receive information and referrals to cover basic needs, advice and guidance on their (legal) rights in Greece. **Additional services are available** (different per social centre) **including job counselling, financial counselling, psychological support, language courses, daily cooked meals**, etc. The results show a significantly improving access to state provision. The innovative features address the lack of available public social services and friendly person-centred spaces. Please refer to the Caritas Hellas annual report 2018: [https://caritas.gr/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/AnnualReport\\_2018.pdf](https://caritas.gr/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/AnnualReport_2018.pdf).

### Access to employment/income

**Caritas Slovakia** issues the **Monthly Magazine CESTA**. CESTA is published by the Greek Catholic Charity Prešov and is distributed through street vendors. The vendors of the magazine often have a difficult life, and the magazine helps them psychologically, socially and financially. The price of the magazine is €1.40, of which €0.70 is for the street vendor. It has been published since 2002 and it is currently distributed in six diocesan charities throughout Slovakia. Please refer to this initiative via the webpage <https://www.mesacnikcesta.sk/pribeh>.

**Caritas Italiana** runs a project '**Orientation to Rel/RdC**' and refers to income support / minimum income. It is a counselling activity that provides orientation and first information, delivered by the Centri di Ascolto (Caritas counselling services), to people asking for information on how to apply for the new national minimum income. People with low cultural and social capital have problems and difficulties in accessing the Italian welfare system. Expected, and already reached, results show an increasing number of Caritas beneficiaries and people in need who are eligible for minimum income and who have had access to the measure. Innovative features and success factors are the linking of municipalities and civil society organisations in a common effort for social communication and information. The webpage to the initiative is at the following ([Link](#)).

**Caritas Greece** operates a **job counselling / employment hub**. Since the design phase of employability hub services, Caritas Hellas has aimed at a rounded approach. This takes into consideration the analysis of the labour market and legal framework, and offers a holistic model of support and accompaniment for the job seekers. To live up to this goal, Caritas Hellas conducted research with methodologies such as the value chain market analysis in Athens, developed digital tools such as the online platform and app linking refugees to employment and training opportunities, hired professional job counsellors and social entrepreneurship experts and runs pilot programmes in its shelters and social services.

Currently, Caritas Hellas offers various services to potential job seekers:

- a) Job Counselling:** This includes one-to-one and group sessions, soft-skills training (communication and problem-solving skills, decision-making and adaptability-flexibility ability), a cv drafting seminar, interview preparation, insertion of profile in the online platform and app, a weekly 'job club' group meeting where actual applications to jobs listings take place, optional psychometric tests, follow up evaluation sessions etc., referral and enrolment to training opportunities organised by other actors, job days and intermediation with selected employers.
- b) Financial Counselling:** Caritas Hellas is one of the few organisations which help beneficiaries submit their tax declarations. Additionally, the financial counsellor conducts one-to-one and group sessions, household budgeting, issuing of tax and social security numbers, basic business plans etc.
- c) Vocational Training:** Caritas Hellas was one of the first organisations to offer its beneficiaries vocational training courses in their own language, in collaboration with a certified vocational training provider. Examples of the courses include sewing and tailoring, cooking, hair stylists and baristas.
- d) Job-related Legal Counselling:** one-to-one and group sessions, job and SME-related legal advice, sessions on workers' rights in Greece, etc.
- e) Social Entrepreneurship Counselling:** Financial and legal counsellors collaborate in organising social entrepreneurship seminars where legal and accounting frameworks and basic business planning is explained.

Indicative of the investment on employability services is also the fact that **Caritas Hellas runs, in coordination with Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and Caritas Athens, internal high-level coordination meetings which provide a collaborative space for reflection, exchange of experiences, programme planning ideas and evaluation between different programmes and geographical areas of implementation.**

The innovative features are the online platform and value chain market analysis. Please refer to the Caritas Hellas annual report 2018:

[https://caritas.gr/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/AnnualReport\\_2018.pdf](https://caritas.gr/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/AnnualReport_2018.pdf).

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### **Caritas contributes to the preservation of the environment and the sustainable use of resources with its collection of used clothing.**

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**Caritas Austria's CARLA** project offers income support / minimum income. Since the beginning, Caritas has been collecting clothes and furniture donated by people to help other people who cannot afford new clothes or furniture. Clothes are collected and distributed in many institutions throughout the Federal territory, as well as in the care and counselling centres of Caritas, and also via the Caritas parish network. The professionalised section of the collection takes place via the CARLAs. CARLA is a Caritas store where used and useful goods are collected and offered free of charge to people in need or offered for sale. The minimum standards formulated here apply to these shops; the collection within the framework of the regional, small-scale Caritas work, for example at the parish level, is excluded from this. While in the past just as many clothes and shoes were collected as could be distributed directly to people experiencing poverty, the collection of clothes today has taken dimensions far beyond what could be needed for basic care or disaster relief. This has a major impact on the collection of used clothing as a whole and requires new and expanded objectives. In doing so, being aware that the field of recycling used textiles is not without controversy, in practice the standards need to be readjusted as necessary.

**Social goals:** All donated textiles benefit charitable purposes directly or indirectly. Clothes donations are issued directly and free of charge to people in need at home and abroad (basic care, but also in case of disasters).

In the CARLAs, donated clothes are given out free of charge (mainly via vouchers) and sold (second hand). These shops are open to all people. The CARLAs make a contribution to poverty prevention because people with a low income can buy at a good price.

**Performance ratio:** The donated textiles create work in the areas of collection, sorting, disposal and sale for disadvantaged people in the labour market. Given the fact that there are fewer and fewer jobs for low-skilled people, this represents a considerable added value.

The non-regionally usable textiles are sold. The proceeds will be used for social projects at home and abroad. From the donation in kind, a financial donation will be made.

**Goals in the ecological area:** The basic principle is: 'reuse before recycling': wherever Caritas processes donated clothing, the portable clothing is sorted out and reused. These activities significantly support the implementation of the EU Waste Framework Directive (Directive 2008/98/EC). A recovery that is as complete as possible should be achieved. Goods that are recyclable are sorted to be processed or sold as base material for the extractive industry (used textiles for insulating material, cloths, etc.). The recycling streams are largely reconditioned, thereby avoiding waste to a significant extent. With the collection of used clothes, there is a significant contribution to the regional value creation (e.g. if goods are sold in the region, transport routes can be kept short, sorting and selling jobs are created and people are supported on their way out of (long-term) unemployment which strengthens purchasing power).

The Caritas collection of used clothes makes it possible for all people involved (customers, employees, donors) to contribute to sustainability (ecological footprint). Non-recyclable goods are disposed of properly according to waste management law. Caritas contributes to the preservation of the environment and the sustainable use of resources with its collection of used clothing. <https://www.carla.at/>.

**Caritas Luxembourg** runs a **social grocery shop**.

This is within the framework of the common objective of combating poverty and against the background of the increasing risk of poverty in Luxembourg. The Luxembourg Red Cross and Caritas Luxembourg jointly developed a concept of 'social grocery shops' that is being implemented in different parts of the country. These social grocery shops provide food and everyday products to people affected by poverty, at a reduced cost of one-third of the normal market price. Some products are co-financed by FEAD. Through this solidarity initiative, disadvantaged people see their purchasing power increase while having access to fresh quality products. Please refer to initiative webpage <https://www.caritas.lu/service/epiceries-sociales>.

#### **Access to social services and other services**

**Caritas Czech Republic** runs a project called **Community Work in Osada Míru**. The project aims to activate the community of inhabitants in the socially excluded locality of 'Osada Míru Ostrava – Kunčičky' (approximately 750 inhabitants) where the population is mainly composed of a Roma ethnic group. The inhabitants of socially excluded communities are often in a situation that does not motivate them to actively focus on their neighbourhood and the common environment. Their life situation and life failures have a negative impact on their self-esteem and on their ability to have higher life goals. There is also a lack of interest in things beyond their closest private sphere. The project's activities include **contacting people, mapping problems, building and supporting a leadership group; activities to improve their housing; activities to improve relationships as well as contacting external subjects, in addition to evaluating the community work process and its results**. So far, the project has supported 28 active people, who are long-term participants. They prepare and organise the activities for the benefit of the community of Osada Míru or they negotiate with external partners to do so. These are mainly members of the leadership group. **In total 376 inhabitants of this socially excluded locality have been involved in individual project activities or have otherwise benefited from ongoing community work.**

By the end of the project, we plan to be supporting a total of 500 socially excluded localities. The innovative feature of the project is that community social work has become popular in recent years as one of the more effective ways of securing social inclusion. More experts are trying to describe the principles and methods of community work in the Czech Republic. Community work is not supposed to replace individual social work; rather, they work together in parallel. Community work is interested in influencing the affairs of the group, its members want to participate in solving common problems and presenting their solutions. Members of the community lose their sense of despair and gain a concrete idea of their rights and responsibilities. For more information please refer to this initiative webpage ([Link](#)).

**The Caritas Rescue Network of Diocesan Caritas Brno (Czech Republic) aims to help people who are not reached by the system of social services, either because some of the social services do not cover the area or the need itself, or because the users are unable to access social services themselves.** The Caritas Rescue Network responds to gaps in the social services system and needs that are not covered by the services of other institutions. From Caritas's experience, there is a relatively large number of people who cannot find a solution due to their difficult life situations, or there is no suitable service that could help them in their situation. In general, the Caritas Rescue Network is there for people in the most difficult of situations. **In 2018, the Caritas Rescue Network helped and supported 873 people in acute need.** However, the actual number is higher because this statistic does not include the families of the users and others who have been impacted directly or indirectly by the service. Food and material aid to people in need has been repeatedly given to several thousand people. The main innovation of the service is the concept of integrated service provision. A network of collaborating institutions and organisations has been created and they provide help to people in difficult situations in a coordinated way. The service is based on individual assistance to each beneficiary (there is not a specific target group or specific core activities), and responds to very individual needs.

For more information please refer to the following webpages:

- <https://jihlava.charita.cz/zachranna-sit/>
- <https://zdar.charita.cz/vyhledavani-v-adresari/?s=charitni-zachrannasitl#directory-detail>
- <https://tisnov.charita.cz/sluzby-och-tisnov/pomoclidem-v-nouzi/>
- <https://trebic.charita.cz/charitnizachranna-sit/>

### Access to early childhood education and care

The programme **Social services for children with disabilities**, run by **Caritas Latvia**, intends to better promote the inclusion of children with disabilities and their families. The actions are: the promotion of a day care centre and the provision of social rehabilitation of disabled children, and social care at home. The aim is to involve 50 of Riga's resident children. It is not possible to estimate any result yet because the project started in March 2019. More information on the project can be found here: <http://www.caritas.lv/2019/03/14/4753/>.

### Promoting participation of people experiencing poverty

The **Social Justice Ireland (SJI) Budget Project** consists of annual publications, including policy briefings Budget Choices, Fairness in Changing Income Taxes and Budget Analysis and Critique. Social Justice Ireland engages with Oireachtas Committees during the annual budget process and contributes to discussions in the National Economic Dialogue, and the Department of Employment and Social Affairs Pre-Budget Forum.

The focus of this project is **to present fully costed alternative policy proposals to government in advance of the budgetary process focused on addressing the policy challenges Ireland faces.** Addressing poverty and social exclusion is one such challenge.

**The outcomes of this project are manifest in decisions made by the Government during the annual budgetary process.** In 2018, Social Justice Ireland recommended that all social welfare payments be increased by €6.50 per week. Calculations were made by comparing social welfare payments to movements in average earnings and applying the benchmark agreed in Budget 2007. This implied a shortfall of €6.50 per week between current social welfare rates and the benchmark. **In Budget 2019 the Government increased social welfare rates by €5 per week.**

As part of the Budget Project, Social Justice Ireland has consistently advocated that social welfare payments be benchmarked in parallel with rises in average incomes. While this was not done to the extent that SJI proposed in budgets 2017, 2018 and 2019, **welfare increases are coming closer to that target, which is to be welcomed.** The focus is specifically on the working poor, older people, people living below the poverty line, children and people living in rural areas. More information about the project: <https://www.socialjustice.ie/content/publications/budget-2019-analysis-response>.

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**The innovative aspect of this project is that it is not targeted at single people / families, but rather intervention in situations of impoverishment in the region.**

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Another programme run by **Social Justice Ireland** is the **Public Participation Network (PPN)**. This programme is designed to ensure groups participate fully in local decision-making processes and the local policymaking process. PPNs are networks of volunteer-led, community-based organisations, which were set up by the government in each local authority in Ireland. **Social Justice Ireland has been deeply involved in supporting these networks as key to local democracy and bringing decision-making closer to the people who are affected by those decisions.**

SJI has held ten regional networking meetings with PPNs and delivered 15 training sessions involving over 350 attendees. This programme is designed to increase the capacity of local organisations in the community and voluntary (NGO), and civil society sectors to engage in policymaking and decision-making at the local level. The government has committed to increasing representation from civil society on decision-making at local level and this programme aims to ensure those organisations and individuals have the skills, information and support needed to fully engage in this process. The webpage to the initiative is at the link below:

<https://www.socialjustice.ie/content/civil-society-policy-home>.

**Caritas Italiana** runs a project called **Azioni di Sistema** (System Actions) and refers to integral community development. The problem that it intends to address is social hardship in poor regions. Through concrete **collaboration between employers, universities, schools, social workers and local institutions, new job and employment opportunities are created** targeting the whole local community, not only people in need. The project is aimed at improving the living conditions of people in need, while also rebuilding a network of social relations, fostering citizenship and social participation. The project is based in three dioceses (Turin, Modica and Messina). The innovative aspect of this project is that **it is not targeted at single people / families, but rather intervention in situations of impoverishment in the region, allowing the best skills of people and places to emerge.** Expected results are: social participation, creation of community-based spaces, citizenship awareness, recovery of crafts or related activities with an environmental dimension, labour market inclusion for marginalised people, etc.

The target is an entire region, not a single beneficiary; human and social promotion is the key, rather than basic help. Read more about the service at the following link: <https://azionidisistema.it/#home>.

## Access to housing and other services

**Caritas Germany** runs the project **Bella – Support Women in Poverty Prostitution**. In Stuttgart, about 1,400 women are involved in prostitution, 89% of whom are female migrants, mainly from Eastern Europe. The women mainly want to secure the existence of their own families in their country of origin. However, poverty prostitution usually entails very difficult living and housing conditions and is often associated with psychological and physical problems. The female immigrants often do not understand German, are often not registered, usually have no health insurance and live in anonymity. 'Bella' supports women who work in the sector of poverty prostitution in Stuttgart by talking to them, and explaining and leading them to the mainstream support system. Street work, (visiting) counselling, face-to-face contact, offers of mediation and (long-term) accompaniment are the essential measures provided. Safeguarding housing, the psychological stabilisation of women and improving their health situation are key. The long-term goal for many of the women is the establishment of an independent life outside prostitution. The project is aimed at homeless prostitutes or those at risk of losing their homes, as well as newly arrived prostitutes from the EU. 'Bella' is funded by FEAD. Regarding the results, 80% of the women reached have accepted further support / counselling services. Many of the women could be transferred to emergency housing assistance, among others in assisted living, as well as to a network partner who supports their professional (new) (re)orientation process. This gives women a realistic chance of escaping from poverty prostitution. The success factors of the project show that holistic and long-term support for the women is often necessary as financial security, housing, living and working must all go hand in hand.

**Caritas Luxembourg** also created an **intergenerational residence**. It addresses difficulties in accessing affordable (public) housing and aims to address social isolation. Although the poverty rate among the elderly is very low in Luxembourg, some elderly people have very modest incomes, especially the most vulnerable who have lived in supported housing structures as a result of multiple problems.

These people are vulnerable not only because of their material circumstances, but also because of isolation. Furthermore, numerous students may struggle to pay rent. Many might be from abroad and may also be dealing with feelings of isolation. The Caritas Luxembourg project brings elderly people and students together to live under one roof, so they can support each other. The innovative aspect is that the communal life of elderly people and students is organised in such a way that everyone can appreciate the advantages and can experience communal living in a positive light. In return for a very modest rent, students carry out small tasks for people with diminished independence, such as providing assistance with mobility, support with shopping, administrative support, minor repairs, etc. Please refer to the initiative webpage: <https://www.caritas.lu/projet/residence-intergenerationnelle-de-beggen>.

## Access to health care services

The **HELP mobile** project, operated by **Caritas Austria** improves access to health care services. The problem that it is trying to address is related to health issues of homeless people. Homeless people have limited access to medical help. Yet basic medical care is urgently needed, as the homeless in particular can easily become ill or hurt themselves. In Linz, since 2014 medical help has come to those who need it, on four wheels. A remodelled ambulance, the HELP Mobile, brings a doctor to homeless people twice a week directly to where they are living on the street. 'We want to create a place where the people concerned are not too shy to go, where they feel comfortable and where we can improve their health and stabilise it', says Michaela Haunold, Head of the HELP Mobile Project. Volunteer doctors treat wounds, change bandages and distribute medicines. In addition, the HELP Mobile team also offer sleeping bags and warm clothing. There is warming tea and filling snacks. Each time the HELP Mobile is underway it includes social workers who provide counselling or simply talk with the people. 'Each year more people visit the HELP Mobile', says Haunold: in 2017 as many as 450 people were treated.





Caritas Cyprus



# Conclusions

## 1. Impact of the evolution of the socio-economic context on access to services

European Union Member States are facing **huge demographic changes** which have an important impact on the socio-economic contexts of each country and on access to social services. Factors common to all EU Member States are the declining fertility rates and the **ageing population**. Others, such as the **relevance of migration flows and the decline of the working age population**, differ considerably.

The decline of the working age population is, in a number of cases, a result of **emigration of workers** who search for better working and living conditions, not compensated by immigration of foreign workers. In the near future, these countries are expected to face considerable **socio-demographic imbalances**. Labour shortages are already affecting the social and health care sector in many EU countries.

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### Universal access to high-quality services is important in the fight against poverty and social exclusion in Europe

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After the economic crisis, most EU Member States are experiencing solid economic growth, but most of the Caritas CARES country reports find that even though labour market conditions are improving continuously, **inactive people, low-skilled individuals, long-term unemployed people, people with disabilities, and in particular people with a migrant background, remain particularly vulnerable groups** that are still facing challenges in entering in the labour market.

There have been several EU initiatives taken in recent years to tackle inequality, poverty and social exclusion, both in general terms and for specific target groups. One of the most recent initiatives is **the European Pillar of Social Rights**: based on Caritas's experiences across Europe, member organisations assess that access to some of these rights remains difficult.

## 2. Access to social and care services is hindered to vulnerable groups in the population

Both the Pillar and the **Revised European Social Charter**, referred to in the preamble of the pillar, state the right to access specific social rights related to equal opportunities and access to the labour market, fair working conditions, and access to social protection and inclusion. Some of the articles of the Charter are not yet ratified by some of the Member States analysed in this report and could have an impact on access to services and minimum income.

Universal access to high-quality services is important in the fight against poverty and social exclusion in Europe. Assessed by Caritas member organisations, **access to services in Member States has improved over the last couple of years, but remains problematic in many ways**: availability, accessibility, affordability or adequacy are not always guaranteed or sufficient, be it in general or for specific groups of the population.

- **Access to services is limited or excluded for groups of people in certain conditions such as homeless people, asylum seekers** in particular stages of the asylum procedure **and undocumented migrants**. Other social services are not provided with a universal approach. Also where services are potentially available for the whole population, access is sometimes difficult for vulnerable population groups.
- **Most social and care services are targeted at specific population groups**. In many cases, however, Caritas member organisations found that even targeted services are not sufficiently adapted to the needs of the individual service user, and thus are unable to give an adequate response to specific needs.
- Access to **public employment services (PES)** is difficult for various target groups: people with a migrant background, in particular if they are asylum seekers, refugees, and undocumented persons or if they are Roma. Homeless people are another group facing considerable challenges in accessing PES.

The **geographical spread** is a key issue under different perspectives: main services are provided usually in cities/towns, and are not available in rural areas; in some countries the residency in a municipality is required to access PES. Weak points described in many cases are **bureaucracy and lack of a personalised and caring approach**. Access of migrants and refugees is hindered by **language barriers, lack of (recognition of) skills and knowledge, and more generally of formal requirements**.

- **Access to (social) housing is critical** in most of the analysed countries: social housing is underdeveloped and conditions for access are restrictive; at the same time, private housing costs are rising, which makes private housing unaffordable for many people. **Young people, people and families with a migrant background** – in particular **asylum seekers, refugees or undocumented people** – or **Roma, are experiencing most difficulties in accessing both private and social/public housing**. Caritas member organisations **describe a decrease of public expenditure** for housing and a shift of resources in the direction of measures to increase the supply in the private sector or access to homeownership. Four in five Caritas member organisations assess that **accessibility and quality of housing services have worsened** in the last few years.

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**Weak points described in many cases are bureaucracy and lack of a personalised and caring approach.**

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- **Assistance for the homeless** is critical in most of the analysed countries, where, according to Caritas member organisations the vulnerable groups most affected by barriers in accessing these services are **elderly, people with physical and intellectual disabilities, and people with addictions, asylum seekers and refugees**. **The lack of spaces in shelters or in emergency homes** is the main problem described.

Another important issue is the **territorial distribution** of the services. In some countries a common problem concerns the **accessibility** of the service, mainly related to bureaucracy and lack of information.

- **Access to early childhood education and care (ECEC) services is inadequate for children from disadvantaged backgrounds**, and the availability of services is hindered by relevant territorial differences. Countries differ significantly, as there are countries where the service is very good from all perspectives, while in others there are many problems on all or most of the analysed criteria. Concerning **affordability, in most of the countries ECEC services are not considered as universally guaranteed rights, and as a consequence, they are not free of charge** for families in specific socio-economic conditions. Concerning accessibility, children with long-term unemployed parents, children with single parents who work, are homeless or children with a migrant background experience most difficulties. Four in five Caritas member organisations assess that accessibility and quality of ECEC **have improved in the last few years**.
- Services for **migrants and asylum seekers** are moderately adequate, accessible, available and affordable but the **weakness of reception systems** is related to **bureaucracy and inadequate integration policies**. **Accessibility** of the service, linked to **lack of information**, and **language and cultural barriers** is a common problem in several countries.

### **3. The opportunities offered by EU financial instruments**

European funds play an important role in the fight against poverty and social exclusion: the European Social Fund (ESF) is expected to support the development of active, comprehensive and sustainable inclusion policies. The European Fund for the most deprived (FEAD) supports EU countries' actions to provide **food and/or basic material assistance to the most deprived**. According to Caritas member organisations, ESF and FEAD resources have generally been used quite adequately to fight poverty and social exclusion.



#### **4. Caritas practices offer a crucial support in particular to the most vulnerable, not reached by social services**

In some policy areas the role played by Caritas initiatives to support specific target groups is crucial as formal services are lacking, do not target or do not adequately respond to those most in need. The Caritas practices described in the report are particularly interesting as they offer support in an innovative way:

- Caritas initiatives support people to access social services as they help people in their neighbourhood and are generally person-centred.
- Caritas organisations' work is key in providing information and counselling activities to provide orientation through services available in particular

to those with low cultural and social capital.

- These initiatives are frequently characterised by important community work that is undertaken in deprived areas. They promote concrete collaboration between relevant stakeholders such as employers, schools, social workers and local institutions with the aim to create new opportunities. They also offer programmes designed to ensure vulnerable groups can fully participate in local decision-making processes.
- These Caritas practices offer support to people who are not reached by the social services, either because some of the social services do not cover the area or the need itself, or because the users are unable to access social services themselves.



*Secours Catholique-Caritas France, Christophe Hargoues*

# Recommendations

This section presents the recommendations addressed to the EU Institutions, to respond to the main issues that have emerged in the study. The national recommendations can be found in the Caritas CARES country reports.

**A) It is key to implement policies intended to reverse the demographic trend, in order to reduce socio-demographic imbalances.**

**Recommendation 1:  
Ensure the creation of quality jobs**

The European Commission (EC) should develop a minimum standards legal framework on wages and support the creation of job opportunities with decent minimum wages, i.e. by making full use of the job creation potential of social economy enterprises. EU Member States should take advantage of and promote this potential.

**Recommendation 2:  
Invest in younger and older workers**

The EC and Member States should promote employability of young and elderly people, and more in general should tackle unemployment and improve access to job opportunities through the proposed EUInvest programme. Particular focus should be directed especially towards the sectors of the green economy and social enterprises, capable of producing new jobs, especially for young people, and by expanding lifelong learning opportunities currently offered by public administrations.

These efforts should be combined with the Youth Employment Initiative, which needs the financial backing and support by the EC, Council and European Parliament in the next 7-year funding period.

The EC should also support Member States to strengthen and modernise public employment services through the continuous training of operators, the inclusion of highly specialised counsellors and tutors, and the implementation of targeted policies for each category of the labour market.

The Council should adopt such an approach, incorporating these points, in the functioning of public employment services.

**Recommendation 3:  
Ensure affordability and adequacy of long-term care as well as conditions allowing family members to provide support**

The EC should carefully monitor the correct transposition and implementation of the Work-Life Balance Directive and enhance universal access to affordable services for facilitating independent living and healthy ageing and support Member States' implementation of a long-term care insurance.

**B) Vulnerable groups are those most excluded from accessing social rights: it is key to introduce policies to reduce discrimination and to support access to services by those most in need.**

**Recommendation 4:  
Safeguard access to social rights and services**

Member States should ensure access to social rights, especially by those in particular need or in situations of vulnerability. The European Commission should promote the exchange of best practices addressing legal barriers, bureaucratic hurdles and other difficulties faced by people in need when trying to access services. Gradually moving towards **universal access to services and minimum income**, while **improving a tailor-made individual approach in service provision** are vital steps toward this aim. The Council should further adopt a Council Recommendation towards this aim, and monitor its follow up.

**Recommendation 5:  
Put an end to discrimination**

The EC and Member States should ensure equity and non-discrimination for all.

Discrimination should be eradicated also in relation to access to services. Entry points where people in a condition of extreme vulnerability can easily access the services they need is extremely important to safeguard their access to social rights.



This can include measures such as lowering the access threshold, cutting red tape and the setup of outreach teams designed to connect persons in vulnerable situations with social services.

The Council should prioritise and promote rights to equal opportunities and non-discrimination, notably by adhering to existing equality frameworks and by finalising the EU negotiation to adopt the anti-discrimination directive to ban discrimination in all areas of EU competence.

**C) European actions and funding are key to support a real change.**

All the above-mentioned suggestions and recommendations call for a factual implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and of the other key EU initiatives.

**Recommendation 6:  
Implement the European Pillar of Social Rights**

The EC should take legislative initiatives to make the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) enforceable and turn it into a strategic tool to influence EU macroeconomic governance. A Europe 2030 strategy for economic, social and ecological sustainability for the next decade should be developed, taking into account the UN 2030 Agenda as well as the principles of the EPSR, in order to ensure availability, affordability, accessibility and adequacy of health care, early childhood education and care, housing, home care, social counselling and employment services.

The EC should propose and the EP and Council should adopt legislation for the implementation of a European Child Guarantee. The EC should promote a rights-based anti-poverty strategy based on integrated active inclusion, combining the implementation of fundamental social rights, high-quality services and decent jobs.

References to the principles of the EPSR should refer explicitly to the provisions of the European Social Charter, to which these principles correspond.

In order to promote convergence on a single interpretation of the provisions of the EPSR, the references should be accompanied by a recommendation to take into account their interpretation by the European Committee of Social Rights.

**Recommendation 7:  
Guarantee a decent life for all citizens with a framework directive on minimum income**

The EC should oblige Member States to design basic social protection systems in such a way that they guarantee a decent life for all citizens. The EPSR enables an opportunity to strengthen the social rights component of impact assessments in the preparation of legislative proposals by the EC, such as a framework directive on minimum income. Taking into account the current national minimum income policies and their specific outcomes in alleviating poverty and ensuring a dignified life, the EC should design practical guidelines and tools for Member States based on a comparative, evidence-based analysis, drawing out the common characteristics and setting common standards for eligibility criteria, access to services, and a transparent mechanism for setting up and indexing benefits. Hence the EC should propose and the EP and Council should adopt a legal framework on minimum standards on minimum income.

**Recommendation 8:  
Strengthen social and economic policy coordination**

The EC and the Council should ensure coherence of European social and economic policy in the European Semester, by integrating the social objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy and the European Pillar of Social Rights in the European Semester monitoring process. The EC should make full use of the flexibility allowed within the Stability and Growth Pact by labelling as 'exceptional circumstances' measures proposed within the frame of fiscal consolidation that would lead to a situation that does not conform with the principles of the EPSR, thus allowing deviation from the budgetary commitments of affected Member States.

Social services are essential for fostering inclusive growth because they play a key role in the prevention and reduction of social vulnerabilities. Expenditure on these services should be considered as an **investment**, a social investment able to deliver a mid- to long-term return to individuals, society and the economy as a whole.

The EC should improve monitoring of the implementation of country specific recommendations (CSRs) related to improving adequacy, accessibility, affordability and availability of services in order to prompt Member States to step up their efforts to ensure the accessibility, availability, affordability, and adequacy of their services.

**Recommendation 9:  
Set further targets and add sub-targets**

The EC should support EU Member States to improve the scope and effectiveness of social services through a benchmarking exercise between countries. Better and additional targets of poverty reduction should be implemented.

- **Improve targeting:** Incorporate sub-targets for specific groups. For example, sub-targets may be agreed relating to groups at high risk of poverty or social exclusion (such as Roma people or children) and care targets for elderly and dependent people. The EC should work with Member States to ensure that their targets are adequate and to establish national sub-targets for poverty reduction among groups most at risk (based on the identification of the most affected groups in each country).
- **Further targets:** Consideration should also be given to agreeing further targets related to unemployment, especially long-term unemployment and youth unemployment, and to address serious problems in some countries in respect to young people neither in employment nor education.

**Recommendation 10:  
Ratify the Revised European Social Charter**

The EU should ratify the Revised European Social Charter, encourage Member States to ratify the Charter and support Member States in the process of accepting and respecting all its provisions. The EU Court of Justice should align the status of the European Social Charter with that of other international human rights instruments ratified by all EU Member States.

**Recommendation 11:  
The role of EU funds should be enhanced**

The EC should propose to earmark in the future ESF+ Fund specific funding to support the active and effective training of a specialised workforce, able to work for the inclusion of the most deprived, and to develop more effective social services provision, allowing for a wider share of the population to access social rights and services. The EC should assess how existing EU funding instruments (such as ESF+ or FEAD) could contribute to the design and implementation of a common minimum income framework.

**Recommendation 12:  
Participation, participation, participation**

The EU and the Member States should heed the principles of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and promote the participation of people experiencing poverty, also in the development, monitoring and evaluation of services and minimum income measures.

The EC should set up a transparent evaluation of the Europe 2020 strategy, particularly in the field of poverty reduction, and it should develop a social and sustainable post-2020 strategy which prioritises the eradication of poverty and supports the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and the Sustainable Development Goals. This should be achieved through meaningful dialogue processes with civil society and people experiencing poverty at EU and national levels.

## Annex 1 – Minimum income provisions

Country	Name of the measure and translation	The active inclusion approach
Belgium	Leefloon – living wage	The living wage comes with conditions that beneficiaries have to fulfil. In most cases, the conditions are established in a partnership between the beneficiary and the social worker. The conditions can aim at integration on the labour market, but also on searching for a home, doing voluntary work or looking for help in financial management or debts. On the other side, the living wage is still under the poverty line, so in most cases it is not sufficient.
Cyprus	Law 109(I)/2014 – guaranteed minimum income (GMI)	<p>According to Eurofound, the law covers all EU citizens as well as Cypriots if, for five years before making an application for support, they have resided and still reside legally and continuously in the free areas of the Republic of Cyprus. For third-country nationals, the legislation covers long-term residents and people whose legal status is based on the provision 'On Refugees', with the exception of asylum seekers; GMI explicitly excludes asylum seekers.</p> <p>The legislation also covers the victims of trafficking and exploitation of human beings. Included in the categories exempt from the law are the voluntarily unemployed and full-time students, with the exceptions of students who are orphans, who have disabilities or who, upon reaching the age of 18, were under the care of the director of social welfare services.</p> <p>Active inclusion aspects include subsidised work programmes, mainly for youth and those seeking their first job.</p>
Czech Republic	Systém pomoci v hmotné nouzi – System of assistance in material need	The system includes activation measures, but these are based mainly on so-called negative activation (pressure), rather than on positive motivation. These measures include obligatory individual plans, public service, coupons received instead of money, rigid scheduling of meetings at the employment office and sanction eliminations from the register.
Luxembourg	Revenu d'inclusion sociale (REVIS) – social inclusion income	Both inclusion and activation measures are taken into account. Activation measures include job placements in public institutions or non-governmental organisations, which give access to a wage and the labour market as well as some form of social recognition. This is a first step to social integration.
Malta	Non-contributory benefits	The non-contributory scheme was set up to act as a safety net by catering for those below the poverty line. Unlike the contributory scheme, the benefits within the non-contributory scheme are not based on the contributions, but on a financial means-test of the person claiming the benefit. The Disability Benefit, Drug Allowance, the Single Unmarried Parent Allowance, are some of the benefits which are provided to help individuals to be active in society. This is done through financial and supportive assistance.

Country	Name of the measure and translation	The active inclusion approach
Germany	Arbeitslosengeld II (or Hartz IV)	There are public employment measures that focus mainly on basic competences which are needed to participate in the labour market but also in society as a whole. For example, they focus on structuring the day, being punctual and coping with emotions. These are measures for people who are not able to work directly in the first labour market. Public employment programmes provide specific measures to the people who are at risk of social exclusion.
Austria	Bedarfsorientierte Mindestsicherung/Sozialhilfe – minimum income benefits / social benefits	Beneficiaries are obliged to be under the supervision of the employment office (with exceptions) and to take up suggested work or courses provided by the office.
Portugal	Rendimento Social de Inserção – Minimum Income Schemes	<p>This is a support designed to protect people living in extreme poverty, consisting of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a cash benefit to ensure the satisfaction of their minimum needs;</li> <li>• an insertion programme that includes a contract (a set of actions established according to the characteristics and conditions of the household of the applicant for the benefit, aiming at a progressive social, labour and community integration of its members).</li> </ul> <p>Access to the provision depends on the value of the movable assets (bank deposits, shares, bonds, savings certificates, participation certificates and units in collective investment institutions or other financial assets) not to exceed €25,734 (60 times the value of the index of social support).</p>
Ireland	<p>The social welfare system in Ireland is divided into three main types of payments. These are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social insurance payments</li> <li>• Means-tested payments</li> <li>• Universal payments</li> </ul> <p>Examples of payments include Child Benefit, State Pension, Jobseekers Benefit, Carer's Benefit, Disability Allowance, One-Parent Family Payment and Illness Benefit.</p>	<p>With all social welfare payments, applicants must satisfy specific personal circumstances that are set out in the rules for each scheme. There is also a range of employment schemes and other supports, which encourage long-term unemployed people to return to work. Applicants must be habitually resident to qualify for social assistance payments in Ireland.</p> <p>Although Ireland's social protection system and National Anti-Poverty Strategy are underpinned by an active inclusion approach and a life cycle approach, an integrated and person-centred approach to employment supports and activation is still lacking.</p>

Country	Name of the measure and translation	The active inclusion approach
France	Revenu de Solidarité Active (RSA) – solidarity labour income	There are programmes that promote social and professional support, but only a few.
Finland	Last resort assistance	<p>It is a last resort assistance with the aim to ensure at least the minimum subsistence for the person and the family. The assistance is given when a person (family) is temporarily, for a shorter or longer period, without sufficient means to meet the necessary costs of living.</p> <p>The municipalities also grant Supplementary Income Support (Täydentävä toimeentulotuki) and Preventive Income Support (Ehkäisevä toimeentulotuki): the purpose of preventive social assistance is to promote a person's or family's independent living as well as social exclusion. Supplementary and Preventive Social Assistance are strongly linked with welfare services of the municipalities</p>
Slovakia	Pomoc v hmotnej núdzi – minimum income protection provided within the scheme called assistance in material need	<p>Benefits are paid by the state administration and social departments of the local offices decide on the provision of assistance in material need, check the conditions of claimants of the benefit in material need, provide counselling, run the register of claimants and members of their households, and take part in small community work arrangements. At a municipal level, specific temporary benefit and counselling are provided.</p> <p>The benefit in material need is intended to secure basic living conditions: one warm meal per day, clothing and housing.</p> <p>Since 2009 a strong workfare approach has been introduced with requirements to undertake work in return for benefit payments received, while the amounts have not increased substantially, and remain at a very low level.</p>
Greece	Kinoniko Isodima Allileggiis (KIA) – social solidarity income	KIA is supposed to have active inclusion components, but according to Caritas it seems only to provide the cash benefit. The active component depends on another state organisation. The only example found is the compulsory (in the case of unemployed) registration to the National Agency for Employment (OAED).
Latvia	Garantētais minimālais ienākumu līmenis – guaranteed minimum income level	It is completely accessible.

Country	Name of the measure and translation	The active inclusion approach
Slovenia	Denarna socialna pomoč – financial social assistance	<p>The new Slovenian social legislation came into force in 2012: the reform brought great changes in the field of social benefits concerning means-tested social benefits (not insurance based), financed from the state budget (and in a small part financed from the municipalities' budgets). It was connected to the flexicurity concept, the activation principle as well as to the prevention of fraud and unjustified accumulation of benefits (linking social protection to activation) and to increased flexibility of employment relations and jobs.</p> <p>Active job search (registration at the employment service) was formally obligatory for claimants of the basic means-tested social benefit – FSA – even before the reform, but the tightening of activation conditions was envisaged to prevent benefit dependency.</p> <p>To those with complex social problems and who are temporarily unemployable, the social work centres (SWC) can give financial social assistance on the basis of agreement between the claimant and the SWC on active resolution of their social situation.</p> <p>Regarding the activation, the reform introduced the activity supplement as a top-up to the amount of FSA for the recipients working or participating in some employment programmes, social rehabilitation programmes or certain social protection programmes (with the aim to increase their employability). The activity supplement to FSA is intended as a positive stimulation for activation of FSA beneficiaries.</p>
Italy	Reddito di cittadinanza – citizenship income	<p>The measure adopts a cash conditional transfer approach. It involves two different pacts, run either from public job centres or municipalities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A 'service pact', between beneficiaries and local employers, to be signed by applicants that only have unemployment problems;</li> <li>• An 'inclusion pact', between beneficiaries and municipalities' social assistance services, targeted to families in which unemployment conditions are mixed with hardship and social exclusion.</li> </ul> <p>Both pacts include compulsory activities to be undertaken by beneficiaries, otherwise they lose the economic benefit. Inclusion activities include active job search, training courses, activities useful to the public, fulfilment of parents' duties, and participation in rehabilitation and de-addiction programmes.</p>





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**For once, let us set statistics aside:  
the poor are not statistics to cite when  
boasting of our works and projects. The  
poor are persons to be encountered;  
they are lonely, young and old, to be  
invited to our homes to share a meal;  
men women and children who look  
for a friendly word.**

Pope Francis, 2019

Message for the World Day of the Poor





Rue de la Charité 43  
1210 Brussels, Belgium  
Tel: +32 (0)2 280 02 80  
[info@caritas.eu](mailto:info@caritas.eu)  
[www.caritas.eu](http://www.caritas.eu)