

# TOWARDS A EUROPE THAT LEAVES NO ONE BEHIND!

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Recommendations of the International Movement  
ATD Fourth World



**ATD**  
FOURTH WORLD

**ATD Fourth World** is an international movement, with no political or religious affiliation, initially launched in 1957 in France by Joseph Wresinski. Today, the organization brings together women and men from all cultures and social classes in more than 30 countries (in Africa, America, Asia and Europe). The movement carries out actions which aims at ending poverty through access to fundamental rights for all. ATD Fourth World's approach is based on the idea to live with excluded people, to reflect and act with them and other actors in society. For ATD Fourth World, the fight against poverty can only succeed if it is developed, implemented and evaluated with the people concerned.

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The recommendations made in this document are mostly based on months of work done by people in poverty, members of ATD Fourth World and other actors (associative, political, social etc.). This cumulated in **the 15th European Fourth World People's University** on 6 February 2019 in the European Parliament. The event brought together delegations made up primarily of people living in poverty from 8 European countries (Germany, Belgium, France, Great Britain, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Romania), non-profit actors and representatives from different political European institutions. The participants discussed three themes: the impact of national and European policies on the family life of people in poverty; the right to Legal Status as a Person; and indicators of poverty and social exclusion in Europe. The aim was to establish a dialogue to raise the awareness of European political actors about the daily challenges faced by the poorest people, but also to see what can be done together. Multiple calls and recommendations were made to the European Union to fight against inequality and eradicate poverty.

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According to Eurostat's latest studies, 113 million people were affected by poverty and social exclusion in the European Union in 2017. The goal of reducing poverty and social exclusion as formulated in the Europe 2020 Strategy is still far from achieved. Significant efforts are necessary; a mere improvement of the economic situation is insufficient to substantially and sustainably reduce poverty. The budgetary restrictions of the past decade have led to fewer social investments and more social pressure in the Member States (budget cuts to social benefits, jobs that are increasingly insecure, the enabling of competition between different vulnerable population groups etc.).

## The Treaty on European Union

**Art. 2.** The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.

**Art. 3.1.** The Union's aim is to promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples.

**Art. 3.3.** [...] It shall combat social exclusion and discrimination, and shall promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of the child.

Today, many Europeans still live in precarious conditions and face barriers to enjoying their family life. Many citizens are deprived of resources for a livelihood, are evicted from their homes, are forced to live their life in situations that lead to criminalisation and penalisation. Many European citizens are caught in the margin of the democratic and participatory process, and are at risk of being left behind in the transi-

tion towards a more ecological and sustainable world. These realities are the exact opposite of the values of peace, equality, respect for human dignity and human rights enshrined in the DNA of the European Union.

The current national and European policies are too far removed from the realities and needs of vulnerable population groups. In order to achieve more effective policies, we believe a direct dialogue between the decision-making institutions in Europe and the people living in poverty is essential. The experiences and knowledge of those living in poverty should be taken into account and valued, especially in platforms of reflection and dialogue, to make sure the people who are responsible for policymaking and measuring results contribute as well. It is indeed essential to acknowledge these people as key political actors in a democratic Europe that leaves no one behind. *«We would like others to stop making decisions for us, to stop thinking for us and to stop doing things for us, but to do these things with us.»* Angélique Jeanne, member of ATD Fourth World in Normandy, France, at the 15th European Fourth World People's University in the European Parliament on 6 February 2019.

*«Poverty is unfortunately still very high in Europe, with 22.5% of EU population at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Poverty is not only economic but multidimensional: for this reason, thanks to the constant input of the Intergroup on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights that I had the honour to co-chair during this term, the European Parliament has put forward some concrete proposals to fight against the root causes of poverty, by directly involving the people experiencing it.»* Silvia Costa, Italian member of the European Parliament, co-chair of the Intergroup "Extreme Poverty and Human Rights" at the 15th European Fourth World People's University in the European Parliament on 6 February 2019.

In a world that is rapidly changing (information technologies, climate change, migration, demographic pressure etc.), the European Union should be more concerned with the most vulnerable people and groups who are weighed down by the full force of the consequences of these transformations, and who live in great insecurity. More than ever, the European Union must establish a more social and sustainable Europe that allows every citizen to live in dignity.

**Goals for sustainable development by 2030 (United Nations)**

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) provide us with a pathway to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. They respond to global challenges with which we are confronted, especially those related to poverty, inequalities, climate, environmental degradation, prosperity, peace and justice. The goals are interconnected and, to make sure no one is left behind, it is important to reach every one of them, and each of their targets, by 2030.

**SDG 1:** End poverty in all its forms everywhere.

**SDG 2:** End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

the European Pillar of Social Rights, and for the Parliament and Council to back them. Other actors, including social partners and NGOs, have heard the call to action and await European funding to support them as much as possible. However even the best social measures will not have the desired effect unless they are aligned with other policies: economic, financial and environmental in particular. This pursuit of coherence and synergy is also a necessary step for the implementation of the SDGs.

**The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union**

**Art. 9.** In defining and implementing its policies and activities, the Union shall take into account requirements linked to the promotion of a high level of employment, the guarantee of adequate social protection, the fight against social exclusion, and a high level of education, training and protection of human health.

With the upcoming European elections, there is a lot at stake for the establishment of a European Union that is “more inclusive and more equitable” and that meets the ambition of leaving no one behind, as set out in the preamble of the SDGs.

*«To end this suffering, we need to come together and share our ideas, success stories and questions, across borders, we need to pool our intelligence and courage, we need to unite.»* Isabelle Pypaert Perrin, director general of ATD Fourth World, at the 15th European Fourth World People’s University in the European Parliament on 6 February 2019.

The adoption of the 2030 SDGs by the United Nations in 2015 is promising, as is the European Pillar of Social Rights of the European Union, brought to life on 17 November 2017. Now it is time for the Commission to launch ambitious initiatives to implement the principles set out in

**1. We call on the European Union to implement the 20 principles set out in the European Pillar of Social Rights.**

**2. We call on the European Union to promote the participation of people in poverty in the development, implementation and evaluation of laws and policies.**

- ▶ Permanent platforms for reflection and dialogue that bring together European citizens living in poverty, political actors and civil society, should be created.
- ▶ Training programmes for European civil servants should include skills development on partnerships with vulnerable people

### 3. We call on the European Union to ensure and support the effective and coherent implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the Member States.

- ▶ The European Union should ensure coherence between its policies based on article 9 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

## TOWARDS A EUROPE THAT GUARANTEES THE RIGHT TO A LEGAL EXISTENCE

**M**any people in the European Union do not have a recognised legal existence (insecure administrative status or lack thereof, no recognised home address and/or no basic administrative documents). This prevents them from enjoying the same rights as most people who live in the same territory. In fact, often access to rights and services is dependent on an administrative status, a birth certificate, identity documents, a registered address. Persons without a legal existence do not have access, or only limited access, to the most basic rights and services: the right to housing, work, health, participation or the right to vote. This often leads to, or worsens, poverty and social exclusion. These people thus become “ghost citizens” and very often suffer the consequences of incoherent and abusive administrative practices (detering demands, discrimination, endless delays, lack of resources etc.).

*«I find it incredible that people do not consider other people important simply because they do not have identity documents. We are all people, it is not normal that this happens. Once I went to the doctor who told me he could not do anything for me because I did not have any identification. What if I suffered something more serious, would I have been left to die?»* Alin Gheorghe, Parada Foundation, member of the Romanian delegation at the 15th European Fourth World People’s University in the European Parliament on 6 February 2019.

This is a situation that people in different situations encounter: citizens from the European Union who live in their own country but do not have a registered address or do not have valid identity documents (homeless people, people living on the street, in campsites or accommo-

dated); EU citizens residing in a different EU country without means of livelihood or experiencing difficulties registering; people coming from outside of the EU (migrants, asylum seekers etc.); people in situations of statelessness. Because they do not have their administrative situation in order, all these people suffer a perpetual violation of their fundamental rights.

*“We are men and women, yet we are treated like garbage.”* Jan Timmers, member of ATD Fourth World Netherlands at the 15th European Fourth World People’s University in the European Parliament on 6 February 2019.

*«Member States should agree to respect the dignity of every person, which is irrevocable and enshrined as such in the treaties of the European Union.»* Charles Goerens, Luxembourgish member of the European Parliament at the 15th European Fourth World People’s University in the European Parliament on 6 February 2019.

The right to a recognised legal existence<sup>1</sup> is protected in article 16 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which states the right to legal personality. Indeed, without a recognised legal personality, how can we enjoy rule of law and respect for human rights, the foundations of the European Union (article 2 of the Treaty of the European Union)?

#### International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

**Art.16.** Everyone shall have the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

<sup>1</sup> More specifically, the European Court of Human Rights judged a lack of legal status violates the respect for privacy in the Alpeyeva judgement of 12 June 2018.

#### 4. We call on the European Union and its Member States to guarantee the right to a legal existence and the “presumption of existence” for all persons living on their territories, starting from childhood.

- ▶ Members States should be encouraged to guarantee an administrative registration for all, and to simplify the process to obtain and keep safe essential administrative documents (particularly through new technologies).
- ▶ Administrations should provide clear information about the procedures to follow, and should commit to finalising them before the announced deadlines, so people can protect themselves and not get tangled up in an increasingly insecure situation.
- ▶ The right to an identity should not be dependent on an address: registration without an address should be possible and initiate the steps needed to create a stable situation.

#### 5. We call on the European Union and its Member States to take measures that guarantee respect and systematic fulfilment of certain protections (shelter, food, clothing, health care, education, legal protection), as prescribed in the European Social Charter, for all persons without conditions of lawful residence<sup>2</sup>.

#### 6. We call on the European Union to be concerned about administrative loopholes and misconduct, about discrimination and obstacles to enjoying rights, and to integrate these concerns in an implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

*«What strikes me is that, even if the legislation guarantees rights, actually obtaining them often means going through an obstacle course. Not just an administrative course, but also one of humiliation. To achieve what is a guaranteed right, one needs to expose him/herself. Not once, not twice, but maybe ten times, to get a simple recognition of one's dignity.»* Philippe Lamberts, Belgian member of the European Parliament at the 15th European Fourth World People's University in the European Parliament on 6 February 2019.

## TOWARDS A EUROPE THAT SUPPORTS THE FAMILY

**M**any families in the European Union today live in precarious situations. This has a direct impact on the lives of parents and children and puts family relationships under strain. The right to family life is often restricted and even denied for people living in poverty. Every policy should respect and promote family ties and

solidarity between family members. However, various current policies impact the poorest families in a rather negative way, and do not allow them to escape their precarious situation.

As such, current minimum welfares, the allocation of social assistance depending on the configuration of households, and the inability to save money, forces these families to live below

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Jurisprudence of the European Committee of Social Rights about the European Social Charter.

the poverty line, often preventing them from offering their children the support they need for a better future. Indeed, the young people in these families face numerous obstacles to building their own life and becoming independent. And for parents living in poverty, it is particularly difficult to not be able to offer their children what is deemed normal for other children. Ascertaining the composition of households forces social services to carry out disrespectful and intrusive investigations and controls of the poorest families' private lives, and diverts their attention away from their mission to help and support. Additionally, there is a constant fear of child protective services intervening and taking away their children.

*«In a family where parents receive social benefits and one of their children finds a job and earns money, but still lives at home, the parents lose out on social benefits. This creates discord and hinders families in poverty.»* Bruno Dabout, member of the ATD Fourth World General Delegation at the 15th European Fourth World People's University in the European Parliament on 6 February 2019.

Long-term unemployment also affects a large majority of people in poverty, who suffer from it as well as their families. The most disadvantaged families are also the first victims of the ongoing housing crisis in Europe, which forces them to either live in extremely precarious situations (substandard and unsuitable housing) or to pile

on debt and live in fear of being evicted. Finally, the stigma and discrimination of their socio-economic status are important factors for the non take-up of rights.

*«In Ireland, there are families living in hotels, families with 3 children. The living room is the bedroom, the bedroom is the kitchen, the kitchen is the bathroom: there is only one room! This has a very heavy impact on the family, and it is a vicious circle from which it is very difficult to escape.»* Paul Uzel, member of ATD Fourth World Ireland at the 15th European Fourth World People's University in the European Parliament on 6 February 2019.

The European Union is not mandated to intervene directly in policies concerning family life, but its policies in other areas (economy, employment, social protection, housing, etc.) have a significant impact on family life. Respect for family life is also enshrined in a number of international treaties to which the Member States of the European Union are party, so every effort must be made to support these commitments.

*«We need to fundamentally reflect on what we expect from the European Union, a Union which prepares our future, a Union which also protects us and a Union which gives each European citizen a chance, irrespective of their personal situation. The challenge is enormous, but we cannot stay at the level of a Europe which is merely an economic and monetary union.»* Jean Arthuis, French Member of the European Parliament at the 15th European Fourth World People's University in the European Parliament on 6 February 2019.

## **7. Taking into account opinion SOC/584 of the European Economic and Social Committee and the 14th principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights, we call on the European Union to put in place a framework directive that establishes a decent guaranteed minimum income in all Member States, to ensure every citizen has reasonable means of existence.**

- ▶ In this context, we ask of the European Union to promote the principle of the individualisation of rights to social benefits, so solidarity between family members is not penalised and sharing resources is stimulated.
- ▶ In order to not further destabilise the situation of people in need, we also ask that they are allowed to have a secure amount of capital and savings.

**3** For the notion of «decent» (or «adequate»), we refer to the work of the EMIN network: “a level of income that is indispensable to live a life in dignity and to fully participate in society. Adequate Minimum Income Schemes are regularly updated to take account of the evolution of the cost of living” – EMIN, A renewed EU roadmap for progressive realisation of adequate, accessible and enabling Minimum Income Schemes in Europe, November 2017.

**8. Taking into account the 19th principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights, we call on the European Union to support its Member States to put access to decent housing for people and families in vulnerable situations into practice, through the proper supply of social housing and other housing support.**

**9. We call on the European Union to promote social coherence between its Member States, in particular by requesting them to ratify the revised European Social Charter, including articles 30 and 31 on the right to protection against poverty and social exclusion and on the right to housing, as well as the Collective Complaints Procedure.**

**10. We call on the European Union and its Member States to strengthen the Youth Guarantee, especially for the most disadvantaged young people.**

**11. Taking into account the 11th principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights, we call on the European Union for a child guarantee that includes the principle of support for families, investments in parents' abilities, and the safeguarding of family ties.**

**12. We call on the European Union to recognise the practice of discrimination based on socio-economic grounds, and to outlaw it.**

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## **TOWARDS A EUROPE THAT IS AWARE OF ALL POVERTY'S DIMENSIONS**

In order to measure the social reality and impact of policies, the European Union has developed a Social Scoreboard that accompanies the Pillar of Social Rights. Although the chosen indicators map more than just the monetary aspect of poverty and take into account dimensions such as health, education and employment too, other essential dimensions of poverty are lacking, such as the societal context, institutional mistreatment, discrimination, stigmatisation etc. The current indicators highlight only an aspect of the reality of poverty, a problem which is itself emphasised by the under-

representation of people living in poverty in the statistics, which in turn contributes to the current policies often falling short. That is why, ATD Fourth World carried out a participatory study on the dimensions of poverty in partnership with the University of Oxford, which includes and promotes active participation of people living in poverty. This study will present its results on 10 May 2019 at the OECD and will provide elements to define more relevant indicators and thus fight more effectively against poverty and social exclusion.



**13. We call on the European Union to define new European indicators of poverty and social exclusion, taking into account all poverty's dimensions and involving people living in poverty.**

## TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE EUROPE THAT RESPECTS SOCIAL JUSTICE

**T**he urgency of climate change is not just a far-off threat for people living in poverty. They are the first ones affected by climate change phenomena (storms, hurricanes, heavy rains, sudden cold, drought and heatwaves). But that is not all. They are also affected by the measures taken to fight climate change. Increases in taxes on fuel and energy prices often hit them harder than others (low income, poorly insulated housing, outdated heating systems etc.).

Efforts are continuously asked of citizens, and put more pressure on those who cannot afford them on a daily basis. This is an unacceptable inequality. Those people living in the poorest situations already behave the proper way to fight climate change: they travel by foot and use public transport, do not take airplanes, consume very little, etc. Yet their opinions, experiences, initiatives go unheard. This is how a big part of the population, just as worried as others about the threat climate change poses for us, is cast

aside in this fight, which is sometimes even fought against them.

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- **European Commission, reflection paper** •
- **towards a sustainable Europe by 2030** •
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- «We should therefore continue on the path •
- that we set ourselves: a transition to a low- •
- carbon, climate-neutral, resource-efficient and •
- biodiverse economy in full compliance with the •
- United Nations 2030 Agenda and the 17 SDGs. •
- This transition needs to be for the benefit of all, •
- leaving no one behind, ensuring equality and •
- inclusiveness.» •
- •

Just as the European Commission has written in its reflection paper towards a sustainable Europe by 2030, it is important that the ecological transition “needs to be for the benefit of all, leaving no one behind, ensuring equality and inclusiveness.” Indeed, the ecological transition will never be efficient if a portion of the population is not considered an actor in that transition.

**14. We call on the European Union and the Member States to recognise the poorest people as actors in the fight against climate change.**

**15. We call on the European Union and the Member States to evaluate the impact of every new law and public policy on the poorest 10% of the population and with regards to the Sustainable Development Goals.**

# RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE MEMBER STATES

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- 1** We call on the European Union to implement the 20 principles set out in the European Pillar of Social Rights.
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## TOWARDS A EUROPE THAT GUARANTEES THE RIGHT TO A LEGAL EXISTENCE

- 4** We call on the European Union and the Member States to guarantee the right to a legal existence and the “presumption of existence” for all persons living on its territory, starting from childhood.
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## THE PARLIAMENTARY INTERGROUP «EXTREME POVERTY AND HUMAN RIGHTS»

Transcending political divisions, the intergroup “Extreme Poverty and Human Rights” of the European Parliament, currently co-chaired by Silvia Costa (Italy, S&D) and Veronica Lope Fontagné (Spain, EPP), aims to draw the attention of European politicians to the importance and urgency to fight against poverty. The Intergroup considers poverty a gross violation of human dignity and fundamental rights, and believes a comprehensive approach to poverty, that takes into account the experiences of people living in poverty, is essential. Indeed, taking on board the concerns, ideas and suggestions of the most disadvantaged people is indispensable in a democratic Europe that leaves no one behind.

The Intergroup aims: to represent people living in poverty, to put their concerns on the European political agenda, to analyse the different works and proposals in the light of the experience of the poorest, and to mobilise various forces to make the fight against poverty a priority.

To this end, the Intergroup actively contributes to legislative proposals aimed at safeguarding the dignity of the most disadvantaged. Amendments to texts and reports are regularly proposed. As they are backed by members of different political parties, they have more weight when discussed in the relevant committees. Every year an event is also organised on 17 October, the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

## Endorsement of the recommendations of the International Movement ATD Fourth World

To be sent by email to [bert.luyts@atd-quartmonde.org](mailto:bert.luyts@atd-quartmonde.org)

or to the Representation of ATD Fourth World to the European Union, 12 avenue Victor Jacobs, 1040 Brussels

**SURNAME:**

**FIRST NAME:**

**FUNCTION/ORGANISATION :**

**EMAIL :**

- I underline the call of the International Movement ATD Fourth World for a Europe that leaves no one behind.
- I pledge to support the renewal of the parliamentary Intergroup “Extreme Poverty and Human Rights” in the next legislature of the European Parliament and to take part in their efforts.

Signed on ....., in .....

Signature :



**ATD**  
**FOURTH WORLD**