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Decent pensions for all

Reply to Recommendation¹: Recommendation 2000 (2012)
Committee of Ministers

1. The Committee of Ministers has taken due note of Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 2000 (2012) on “Decent pensions for all”. It has brought it to the attention of member States’ governments and has forwarded it to the relevant Council of Europe bodies for information and comments. The Committee of Ministers shares the objectives of the Assembly on the need to ensure the sustainability and adequacy of pension systems, in particular in times of ageing populations and economic and financial crisis. It also subscribes to the view expressed by the Assembly that new intra- and intergenerational inequalities can pose a threat to social cohesion.

2. As called for by the Assembly, the Committee of Ministers would invite member States to give due attention to the suggestions outlined in paragraph 2 of the recommendation. In this respect, it would draw particular attention to the European Social Charter and Revised European Social Charter and the European Code of Social Security which are the basic standard-setting instruments of the Council of Europe in the field of social security and require that pensions attain certain minimum levels. Moreover, Article 23 of the Charter specifically protects the rights of the elderly, including to adequate resources. These instruments are important in ensuring that pensions in member States remain adequate even after possible reforms of the pension systems. The Committee of Ministers would therefore invite the member States which have not done so yet to consider ratifying these instruments, as well as the Additional Protocol to the Charter on the collective complaints procedure, which can play an important role in protecting the rights of the elderly, including in relation to pensions.

3. The Committee of Ministers would also recall the Council of Europe’s New Strategy for Social Cohesion and Action Plan (2010). The Strategy encourages stakeholders and other actors to be committed to the long-term financial and qualitative sustainability of social rights, also stating that public pension schemes must be refocused to ensure their long-term sustainability. In this respect, the Committee of Ministers considers that when making potential reforms related to pension systems, as well as other social protection policies, it is important to involve, whenever possible, citizens, communities and social partners in the process, to keep confidence up and to avoid the reforms being seen as a potential threat to welfare and well-being. The Action Plan specifically invites member States to provide adequate and sustainable pension schemes, while strengthening intergenerational solidarity. It also stresses the importance of recognising the significant role that older people can play in society and in the labour market.

4. The Committee of Ministers would also highlight the importance of including a gender perspective and the fact that the effects of life courses on women’s pensions should be considered in all current and future reforms of social security systems in relation to the changing labour market.

5. With reference to paragraph 3 of the recommendation, the Committee of Ministers would inform the Assembly that at this preliminary stage, the drafting group of the CDDH on the human rights of the elderly is identifying possible issues which have an impact on the full enjoyment of human rights by older persons, including measures to promote their social inclusion, such as social protection and social security. The Assembly is invited to follow the progress of this work in the framework of the meetings of the CDDH.

1. Adopted at the 1154th meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies (14 November 2012).



6. The Committee of Ministers signals the relevance of the 2nd Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Social Cohesion (Istanbul, 11-12 October 2012) entitled “Building a secure future for all”, which addressed issues related to protecting and empowering groups of vulnerable persons, particularly in times of crises and achieving social sustainability through intergenerational solidarity.

7. Finally, the Committee of Ministers would recall that pension systems and social security policy is primarily a national responsibility and how Council of Europe member States design their systems to reach their goals should be coherent with their individual policy designs.