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The impact of increasing social exclusion on democratic institutions and participation: need for strong action

Motion for a recommendation

several Assembly members

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

Poverty and social segregation are currently increasing in Europe. In the last 15 years the inequalities in income and employment have grown significantly. They have been reinforced by the social disintegration processes fuelled by the economic crisis and the severe cuts in universal public services of the last few years.

Equal political participation is the basis of representative democracy. The equal right to vote ensures that citizens may participate in political decision-making processes and the conduct of public affairs with equal opportunities and chances, irrespective of their socio-economic status, gender, race, ethnicity or religion. However, according to recent surveys, people with higher social status and in a more favourable economic situation are more likely to practice their political rights such as voting in elections, participating in trade unions etc. whilst citizens belonging to lower social classes tend to be pushed to the periphery of social and political life, as they stay out of institutionalised political opinion- and will-forming.

In the long term, this situation may destabilise democracy and provoke a true crisis of democratic institutions, as low political engagement of the poorer citizens may lead to class-bias in public policies and thus to ever-growing inequalities. It is therefore of utmost importance that the Parliamentary Assembly examines and initiates approaches aimed at increasing citizen participation in close conjunction with social policies to combat poverty. Moreover, the involvement in the conduct of public affairs as a basic human right and freedom should be reinforced in relevant instruments.

The Assembly thus sends a strong message in this respect both to Council of Europe member states and to the Committee of Ministers, which needs to ensure further work of the Council of Europe on this issue which is placed at the very heart of its mission.

Signed (see overleaf)



*Signed*¹:

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1. ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party
SOC: Socialist Group
UEL: Group of the Unified European Left
NR: Representatives not belonging to a Political Group