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Ending child poverty in Europe

Reply to Recommendation¹: Recommendation 2044 (2014)

Committee of Ministers

1. The Committee of Ministers has carefully examined Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 2044 (2014) on “Ending child poverty in Europe” and transmitted it to the relevant bodies.²

2. Child poverty in Europe is a grave concern and the Committee of Ministers concurs fully with the general thrust of the recommendation. It considers it primordial that the rights of all children are fully guaranteed, and that particular vigilance is called for when it concerns children affected by poverty and/or in vulnerable situations. Such children are exposed to greater risks – for example the right to education can be compromised, they may become victims of exclusion; such children also run a greater risk of becoming victims of trafficking, violence and abuse.

3. Child oriented services at national and local levels are essential in ensuring the protection of such children. The Committee of Ministers considers that whilst budgetary restrictions may have an impact on the quality and delivery of public services as a whole, particular attention should be made to ensure that those which ensure the protection of fundamental human rights, and particularly children’s rights, are not diminished. In this respect, the Committee of Ministers would also draw attention to the recent activities of the Council of Europe’s Commissioner for Human Rights in this field, in particular his issue paper on “Safeguarding human rights in times of economic crisis”.³

4. The Committee of Ministers underlines the importance of the discussions and conclusions at the Council of Europe Conference in Dubrovnik (27-28 March 2014) “Growing with children’s Rights” on the implementation of the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2012-2015), which provided clear indications to the need for the Council of Europe to focus on the situation of children living in poverty. It notes, in particular, the recommendation “making policy makers aware of the long-term impact of austerity measures and cuts on child-friendly services, and ensuring that children’s rights and welfare are not compromised in times of economic crisis”.⁴

5. The Committee of Ministers would also recall the relevance of the European Social Charter, in particular Article 30 (the right to protection against poverty and social exclusion) and the close link between the effectiveness of that right and the social, legal and economic protection of the family (Article 16) as well as of children and young persons (Articles 7 and 17). States are required to ensure the economic protection of the family by appropriate means, in particular family or child benefits provided as part of social security, available either universally or subject to a means test. The European Committee on Social Rights has addressed a number of relevant issues in this area such as the situation of children living without parental care or suffering from neglect or with regard to children living in families caught in a poverty trap.

1. Adopted at the 1209th meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies (8 October 2014).

2. The European Committee for Social Cohesion, Human Dignity and Equality (CDDECS), the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR), the Governmental Committee of the European Social Charter and the European Code of Social Security.

3. [CommDH/IssuePaper\(2013\)2](#) / 4 December 2013, in particular pp.23-24.

4. These documents can be found on the Dubrovnik Conference website: http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/children/Dubrovnik/DubrovnikConference2014_fr.asp



6. Finally, in response to the specific recommendations in paragraph 4, the Committee of Ministers would inform the Parliamentary Assembly that this Recommendation 2044 (2014) will be brought to the attention of the Committee of Experts on the Strategy for the Rights of Children (2016-2019) (DECS-ENF), which will be encouraged to give more attention to the issue of child poverty when preparing the Strategy for the Rights of the Child beyond 2015 and to give due consideration as to how to promote a greater participation of children in order to better target social services.

7. As advocated by the Assembly, the Committee of Ministers would encourage the relevant intergovernmental bodies and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe to continue to pay special attention to the current economic context and the particular situation of children living in poverty when implementing the current Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child 2012-2015.

8. With a view to strengthening children's human rights and child protection, the Committee of Ministers would also urge member States to promote the dissemination and implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)2 on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18; Recommendation CM/Rec(2011)12 on children's rights and social services friendly to children and families, and the Guidelines on child-friendly health care (2011) and on child-friendly justice (2010).