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**International Council on Social Welfare**

February 2022

## **Working Together for a Better ICSW**



***Professor Antonio López Peláez,  
Executive Director of ICSW and Professor of Social Work  
and Social Services at the National Distance Education  
University (UNED) (Spain)***

Dear ICSW members, friends, and interested readers,

Welcome to the February 2022 issue of our newsletter.

The dysfunctions and inequities of our welfare systems, our social policies, and our social services have been exacerbated by the terrible effects of the pandemic on our lives. A particularly relevant problem, namely food security, is receiving special attention, both by the United Nations and by social work organisations as ICSW (we organized last year an international seminar on this topic in September 2021, coordinated by Sergei Zelenev).

Food security is clearly linked to the former's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and it has a key role in people's well-being. The most

vulnerable groups, such as children and countries with fewer resources, are particularly affected by the food crisis, in a context also influenced by climate change. The 60th session of the Commission for Social Development (CSocD60) took place largely online from 7 to 16 February 2022 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. Its priority themes were the following: Inclusive and resilient recovery from COVID-19 for sustainable livelihoods, well-being, and dignity for all: eradicating poverty and hunger in all its forms and dimensions to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

One of the United Nation's Commission for Social Development Online Side event in 2022 (February 9), titled "Reaching nutritionally vulnerable social groups: the quest for multifaceted policy response" was co-hosted by the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW), the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), Korea National Council on Social Welfare (SSN), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health of Finland, and the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW).

The Social Work Day at the United Nations in 2022 (March 15), co-hosted by ICSW, IFSW and IASSW for nearly four decades, will be focused on this topic too, under the title "Moving Toward Food Security for All: The Role of Social Work". It is a great satisfaction for the entire ICSW that our seminars and conferences are aligned with the main challenges that we address in today's society, and that we can include in the public agenda our perspective committed to social welfare.

Since our organization has been a great team for almost 100 years, I want to thank the contributions that are published in this issue, and that our colleagues from the European region have sent us. They address essential issues for the future of social welfare: migration and the need for an updated global social agenda. Thank you for your commitment and dedication to ICSW.

**Take care and stay healthy!**

### Need for an updated global social agenda



**Ronald Wiman, President of ICSW European Region**

*"There is only one world. One world for ALL."*

This self-evident statement was included in the Report of the global ICSW '94 *Social Welfare Conference*, held in Tampere, Finland in 1994. *The Tampere Declaration* was ICSW's contribution to the dialogues preceding the UN World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen, 1995.

Today, it often seems, that the basic fact that "there is no Planet B" is forgotten. The world seems to be working *for the few*. And our

consumption exceeds every year earlier the yearly servicing capacity of the globe already: In 2021, the *Earth Overshoot Day* was 29<sup>th</sup> July. <https://www.overshootday.org/> The COVID pandemic has reminded us that borders do not stop global risks. We are all on board of the Spaceship Earth.

During the second week of this February, once again, the UN Commission for Social Development (CSocD) took place. It was mainly a virtual meeting, as also in 2021. The core of the CSocD agenda is to follow up the 1995 Social Summit Plan of Action.

The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action did not provide many goals that could have been measured and followed up with statistical tools. That was one reason why the MDGs largely replaced the Copenhagen Agenda. The OECD and the World Bank led the design of the Millennium Development Goals, MDGs (2000). It was a set of measurable but isolated, goals and targets. Then came the broader set of SDGs (2015). They have revealed that progress has been made, but also that some countries and people have been left behind.

What was good in the Copenhagen agenda was that it contained also many proposals on institutional, societal arrangements on how to reach these social goals. The SDGs and especially the MDGs were not that good in this respect.

The CSocD agenda is guided by the follow-up of the Copenhagen Plan of Action: Poverty reduction, full employment, social integration – and the 'creation of enabling environment' as the overall social framework. At its core are also the UN programmes of action concerning various social groups ( the elderly, people with disabilities, youth, families etc). All these stem from the early 1990s,

a time before Internet.

During the preparations of the Summit the internet, cellphones and e-mails were just emerging but not yet widely usable. Many other developments have also happened since then. There has been progress in many respects, but it has been uneven. Now the COVID pandemic pushed 800 million people back to poverty. And the richest people have multiplied their wealth during the same time.

A very alarming development is the ongoing systematic attack on social institutions at global, regional and national levels. Social institutions are the very instruments for people, societies – and the UN to realize the goals of a desirable future. The Internet and its -still elementary- Artificial Intelligence (AI) features (algorithms) are systematically used to destroy institutions, to fake the 'facts' and attack science, to inflate common values, to break up trust to institutions and toward other people, and to dilute decent codes of conduct. Coordinated attempts to divide the world and population groups into hostile 'tribes' is going on and has been successful. Also the fragmentation of knowledge and semi-intelligent cookies in the internet promote one-sided, single issue – movements. At Copenhagen, Social integration sounded a soft and abstract goal. But when it breaks up the consequences are very hard and real.

"Emerging issues" have been added to the UN CSocD agenda to update the standard agenda. These also have been gliding to narrower issues. In 2020 the focus was on homelessness, then on ICT and now food security. The very specific topics bring concreteness to the discussions. All these are undeniably important issues but should not be dealt without a more systemic social policy context. Narrowing the social agenda is in

the interest of autocrats who do not want discussion on universality and indivisibility of human rights and the need for liberal democracy.

Effective *developmental* social policy is not a selection of instruments, programmes or targeted actions. It involves the systematic implementation of human rights and social values into all policies.

The bright glimpse at the recent CSocD was this: many speakers indeed located their messages on ending hunger into a broader systemic context. Furthermore, we heard several calls for a New Social Summit – which ICSW with likeminded organizations and governments has over the years brought repeatedly to discussion at CSocD, without a breakthrough.

Indeed, such a broad updating of the social dimension of sustainable development is now in the making: The UN Secretary General's Report *Our Common Agenda* (October 2021) is proposing a new *Social Summit* for 2025. It is part of the Action line one: *Leave no one behind*. It should create a "new social contract" nationally and internationally and cover e.g. Universal Social Protection (USP), Universal Health Coverage (UHC), adequate housing, education and decent work and universal access to internet.

#### *Our Common Agenda 2021 (pp 6-7)*

The S-G Report *Our Common Agenda* is proposing twelve action clusters, each focusing on institutional instruments how to accelerate progress towards achieving the SDGs: (1) Leave no one behind; (2) Protect our planet; (3) Promote peace and prevent conflicts; (4). Abide by international law and ensure justice; (5) Place women and girls at the centre; (6) Build trust; (7) Improve digital cooperation; (8) Upgrade the United Nations; (9) Ensure sustainable financing; (10) Boost

partnerships; (11) Listen to and work with youth; (12) Be prepared (for complex global crises).

Actually, ICSW Europe, in collaboration with UNRISD, Finland and other partners convened a side event at the CSocD : *“Why We Need a New Eco-Social Contract for Just and Green Recovery from COVID-19”*. We wanted to integrate climate and environmental justice in the dialogue: Well-being for people and the planet. (A video of the event will be available on the UNRISD website).

Our Common Agenda is anchored to Human Rights. Let's consider also this perspective: rights come with responsibilities. The President of Finland, Mr. Sauli Niinistö has recently stated that Human Rights are part of broader *Human Responsibilities* towards each other and towards the nature.

Now is the time to continue preparations for a new global and local social agenda, that takes into account the new understanding of the ecological preconditions and limits for a fairer and greener *well-being economy* globally, regionally and locally. The core issues is not new goals but rather *how to* achieve the future we want.

ICSW should again take a proactive role in the preparation of the new Global Social Summit agenda for 2025.

### References and further reading:

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*Earth Overshoot Day* in 2021 was 29<sup>th</sup> July. <https://www.overshootday.org/>

UN Secretary-General's *Our Common Agenda* (2021) [Secretary-General's report on "Our Common Agenda" \(un.org\)](https://www.un.org/en/secretary-general/our-common-agenda)

UNRISD *Why we need a new ecosocial contract and Green Recovery from COVID-19.* An Official Side Event of the 60th Commission for Social Development. 8 February 2022

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ORSI Project (Finland): *Towards Ecosocial Welfare State.* <https://www.ecowelfare.fi/en/>

Do not spoil the Globe!



Photo: Environmental exhibition at the University of Leeds, UK. Photo © R Wiman

## How the EU is leaving migrants behind

**By George Gelber and Sylvia Beales:  
BealesGelber Consult**

[george@bealesgelberconsult.com](mailto:george@bealesgelberconsult.com);  
[sylvia@bealesgelberconsult.com](mailto:sylvia@bealesgelberconsult.com)

Comprehensive studies undertaken by members and partners of Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP in six EU Member States – Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Greece, Italy, Slovakia and Slovenia, together with additional research, reveal that policies of the EU and its Member States are leaving thousands of migrants and refugees behind, in abject conditions, in direct contravention to their SDG commitments and their human rights obligations.

Migration policy is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. There are various targets within Goals 4, 5, 8, 10, 16 and 17 and a specific commitment contained in Goal 10 target 7 to 'facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people.' The explicit pledge of 'Leave No One Behind' underpins the 2030 Agenda and is further emphasised by the pledge to 'endeavour to reach the furthest behind first'.

However the countless testimonies of asylum seekers and migrants reaching Europe leave no doubt that they, persecuted, penniless and panic-stricken, are among the most left behind.

The people who arrive on the borders of Europe are described as 'irregular migrants' by the

European Commission. This is their status until they have been processed and have been divided into persons deserving of protection (refugee status or the lesser form of 'subsidiary protection') or classed as 'economic migrants' who should be returned to their countries of origin. In 2020 60% of asylum applications were rejected by Member States, in part because too few safe migration pathways are available to refugees.<sup>1</sup> Suppression of irregular migrant flows has clearly been given priority over human rights and leaving no one behind.

The migration policies of the European Union and its Member States have been in turmoil since 2015, when, with the intensification of civil war in Syria and unrest in other countries of the Middle East, more than one million asylum seekers entered and were given leave to remain, principally by Germany. The surge in arrivals in 2015 exposed the ramshackle nature of EU migration and asylum policies.

Since 2015 piecemeal and improvised policies have solidified into an overarching approach of "Fortress Europe", outsourcing migration management to third countries. Both the Commission and Member States have sought to limit by all means possible the numbers of so-called "irregular migrants" arriving in Europe in violation of their human rights obligations and 2030 Agenda commitments. Emphasis is on tougher border controls, including fences, walls and detention centres and accelerated return of rejected applicants. Multi-million Euro agreements have been negotiated with Turkey and Libya, paying them to prevent refugees leaving their shores and to intercept their boats. Summary and unreliable screening procedures have been put in place to assess asylum claims

<sup>1</sup> Eurostat. Asylum Statistics.

[https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Asylum\\_statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Asylum_statistics)

and to return rejected claimants to countries of origin or transit. Turkey has been designated a “safe third country” for asylum seekers from Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Somalia. Since 2015 refugees in Greece have been detained for months in insanitary and unsafe camps on islands in the Aegean, which are now being replaced by “Closed Controlled Structures” funded by the European Union, with better facilities but featuring barbed wire fences, surveillance systems and ID and fingerprint scanning at the gates.<sup>2</sup>

Migration and asylum are competencies of Member States which must receive, accommodate and process asylum seekers, decide whether they qualify for protection and then either offer them support to integrate or arrange for them to be returned to their countries of origin or transit. Secondary migration (onward migration to a second EU Member State) is not permitted. In 2015 Greece and Italy, the main receiving countries for refugees from the Middle East (in the case of Greece, having transited through Turkey) and Africa (having transited through Libya) were overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of arrivals. In an attempt to honour the EU’s principle of solidarity, the Commission attempted to redistribute refugees more equitably among Member States. This initiative failed when Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia

refused to take any refugees and other countries were extremely reluctant.

Anti-refugee sentiment has been growing across Europe, fanned and encouraged by populist right-wing politicians. Racism also contributes to domestic opposition to acceptance of refugees from the Middle East and Africa. Between 1998 and 2018 the number of Europeans voting for populist parties in national elections grew from 7% to 25% and populist parties more than tripled their support in Europe, securing enough votes to put their leaders into government posts in 11 countries.<sup>3</sup> Migration remains a key issue in domestic policy making; few politicians have spoken up in favour of Afghan refugees after the fall of Afghanistan to the Taliban.<sup>4</sup>

Paradoxically, with birth rates well below replacement levels (2.1 children per woman) European countries have become increasingly dependent on migrant labour for low-paid but essential employment in agriculture and the domestic, service and care sectors. In Poland alone there are said to be between one and two million Ukrainians working, legally and illegally, replacing Poles who themselves have emigrated to other European countries, mainly UK and Ireland.<sup>5</sup>

The Commission is keenly aware of both of the need to be seen to be protecting the rights of

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<sup>2</sup> Reuters. 27 11 2021. Greece opens two more holding centres for migrants on islands. <https://www.reuters.com/markets/commodities/greece-opens-two-more-holding-centres-migrants-islands-2021-11-27/>

<sup>3</sup> The Guardian. 20 11 2018. Revealed: one in four Europeans votes populist. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2018/nov/20/revealed-one-in-four-europeans-vote-populist>

<sup>4</sup> New York Times. 18 08 2021. Why Europe’s Leaders Say They Won’t Welcome More Afghan Refugees. (by Katrin Bennhold and Steven Erlanger) <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/18/world/europe/afghanistan-refugees-europe-migration-asylum.html>

<sup>5</sup> Emerging Europe. 21 10 2021. Poland needs Ukrainians. It should do all it can to help them settle. <https://emerging-europe.com/news/poland-needs-ukrainians-it-should-do-all-it-can-to-help-them-settle/>

asylum seekers and of the difficulty of taking effective action to accomplish this. Its 2020 New Pact on Migration and Asylum – not, in fact, a pact but a set of proposals – is an attempt to construct agreement between 27 Member States, including those openly hostile to accepting refugees and migrants. The Pact sits alongside important commitments on development cooperation, the European Consensus on Development (2017) and the Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI - 2021).

The Consensus on Development sets high and ambitious standards for the EU and Member States promising ‘... to play a key role in ensuring that no-one is left behind, wherever people live and regardless of ethnicity, gender, age, disability, religion or beliefs, sexual orientation and gender identity, migration status or other factors,’ and ‘... to address in a comprehensive manner the multiple aspects of migration and forced displacement ... on the basis of mutual accountability and full respect of humanitarian and human rights obligations.’ The NDICI makes commitments to address and prevent ‘irregular migration’, while ‘ensuring the protection, the respect and fulfilment of the human rights of all migrants, refugees, forcibly displaced persons and internally displaced persons, including those displaced due to climate change, paying special attention to vulnerable groups.’ The NDICI does not ignore the SDGs, but it is very vague about the ways in which it will contribute to achieving them. It has been agreed that up to 10% of the NDICI’s seven-year budget (€79.5 billion) can be used to tackle the management and governance of migration and forced displacement, including actions addressing the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement.

There is now a clear danger that these resources could be used solely for migration management and over-ride the development and poverty reduction principles that should govern development cooperation. Evidence is that migrants now attempting to reach Europe are being picked up and intercepted in large numbers and pushed back in Libya. By making Libya responsible for preventing migrants from reaching Italian waters and by instructing its own patrol boats to intercept migrants at sea and return them to Libya, Italy and the EU are in violation of the European Convention on Human Rights.

The EU has described the multi-million euro agreement made with Turkey to induce it to prevent migrants leaving their shores, to intercept their boats and to accept them when they are returned as a temporary and extraordinary measure supposedly ‘to end the human suffering and restore public order,’ and to ‘break the business model of the smugglers and to offer migrants an alternative to putting their lives at risk.’ The Memorandum of Understanding agreed between Italy and Libya in February 2017, backed with an EU promise of €285 million, stipulated that Italy would train and resource the Libyan Coast Guard to prevent the refugees leaving for Italy and intercept their boats at sea and would also provide unspecified development assistance.

The reality is return with detention in shocking conditions. According to Amnesty International, ‘In the first half of 2021, more than 7,000 people intercepted at sea were forcibly returned to Al-Mabani (Tripoli Gathering and Return Centre). Detainees held there said they faced torture and other ill-treatment, cruel and inhuman detention conditions, extortion and forced labour.’

Since the crisis of 2015 the numbers of irregular migrants arriving in the EU have reduced considerably, as a result largely of the efforts of the European Union and Member States to externalise the management of refugee flows to Turkey and Libya. In Greece in 2021, there were 9,157 arrivals (4,331 by sea; 4,826 by land) compared with a total of 861,630 in 2015;<sup>6</sup> in Italy in 2021 there were 67,477 arrivals (all by sea) compared with 181,436 in 2016, Italy's peak year.<sup>7</sup> Spain, a growing migrant destination, recorded 43,197 migrant arrivals in 2021,<sup>8</sup> over half of whom made their way to the Canary Islands. But significant numbers of migrants lose their lives in perilous sea crossings, 53 in Greek waters in 2021 and 1,496 in attempts to reach Italy.<sup>9</sup> According to Caminando Fronteras, in 2021 4,044 migrants were drowned attempting to reach Spanish territories, 4,016 of them in the treacherous waters between west Africa and the Canary islands.<sup>10</sup>

Currently, pressure on the eastern frontiers of Poland and Lithuania with Belarus is prompting Member States to ask the European Commission to agree to tougher measures, to approve additional funding for the construction border fences and walls and to use development cooperation to provide livelihood opportunities in migrants' countries of origin.<sup>11</sup> Attempts to distribute refugees more fairly among Member States have been abandoned.

In sum, EU Member States are failing in their duty to uphold the human rights of migrants and

refugees. They do not accept them as a valuable resource, as people who, with better investment and the right integration measures, would be able to contribute to their host countries as well as to their countries of origin. It is time to challenge and change this failure and foster public attitudes that welcome rather than reject refugees. Political will, independent human rights monitoring and SDG compliance are needed now.

### More Activity at ICSW - Save the Date!

#### Social Work Day at the UN 2022

**Title : *Moving Toward Food Security for All: The Role of Social Work***

**Date : Tuesday, March 15, Noon – 2 p.m. EST**

This event will be held virtually on Zoom.

For nearly four decades, ICSW, IFSW and IASSW have co-hosted Social Work Day at the United Nations. The purpose is twofold, to increase social worker knowledge of global social issues, and to increase the visibility of social work at the United Nations. This will be a virtual event.

<sup>6</sup> UNHCR Operational Data Portal.

<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5179>

<sup>7</sup> UNHCR Operational Data Portal.

<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5205>

<sup>8</sup> UNHCR Operational Data Portal.

<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/esp>

<sup>9</sup> UNHCR Operational Data Portal. Greece and Italy. Op.cit

<sup>10</sup> Caminando Fronteras. Monitoring the Right to Life on Euro-African Western Border - Year 2021. [https://caminandofronteras.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/MONITORE-DALVEN\\_v01.pdf](https://caminandofronteras.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/MONITORE-DALVEN_v01.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Independent. EU nations urge stronger borders to ease migration pressure. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/lithuania-vilnius-greece-poland-italy-b1997900.html>



This year's theme will be **Moving Toward Food Security for All: The Role of Social Work**. This theme was chosen because we felt it was important for attendees to learn about how food insecurity during COVID-19 has affected lives worldwide. We would also like for our attendees to learn more about coping strategies being used and for ways that social work could be part of a solution. One of the lessons from the pandemic we have all learned is that the coronavirus has magnified inequities in our worlds and ushered in a reckoning of our past decisions, practices and existing structures. As we look to our future, we want to know more so we can get it right.

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News Editor: **Antonio López Peláez,**  
**Executive Director, ICSW**  
**[alopez@icsw.org](mailto:alopez@icsw.org)**

ICSW - International Council on  
Social Welfare. Office number 34.  
Department of Social Work, Faculty of Law,  
National Distance Education University  
(UNED).  
C/ Obispo Trejo 2, 28040  
Madrid (Spain).

**Contributions to the newsletter are  
welcome!**