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Zdanoka campaigns to protect social rights during economic crisis

Press release by PCTVL MEP Tatjana Zdanoka

Latvian MEP **Tatjana Zdanoka** is campaigning to remind the European Commission and EU Member States of their responsibilities to protect people's social rights when combating the economic crisis.

Ms Zdanoka has launched a written declaration in the European Parliament and is urging MEPs from all political groups to sign. The written declaration has already gained support from MEPs from the Greens/EFA, Socialist and Liberal Groups in the European Parliament.

The declaration reminds the Commission and the Member States of their obligations under the Charter of Fundamental Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the European Social Charter. Since more European citizens are at risk of poverty due to the crisis, it calls for adequate protection for social rights to be maintained - such as pensions and social security benefits and public sector salaries.

Latvia has been particularly badly hit by the financial crisis, with the government adopting deep cuts in public spending on social protection in order to satisfy conditions for an EU backed financial stimulus package. This has led to 10% cuts in pensions, 70% cuts in pensions for working pensioners, 50% cuts in parental allowances for working parents, and cuts in the non-taxable minimum income.

Tatjana Zdanoka said:

"An increasing number of European citizens are at risk of poverty due to the financial crisis. We would argue that deep cuts in government spending on social protection are unacceptable - and will only have the effect of further impoverishing people. We are already seeing this happen in Latvia.

"The Commission and the Members States must be aware of their obligations to protect their citizens from poverty and provide adequate social protection.

"There are alternatives to these huge cuts in pensions and social security, for example in Latvia we have proposed cuts in government spending on state bureaucracy.

"I am also calling on the Commission and the Member States to properly evaluate the social impact of their anti-crisis measures and make a full report to the European Parliament.

"Making the poorest people in society even poorer does not help us overcome the economic crisis and the European Commission must urgently wake up to this fact."

Notes - Text of Written Declaration follows.

0056/2009

Written declaration on the protection of social rights when fighting against the economic crisis

The European Parliament,

 having regard to Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union and Article 2 of the Treaty establishing the European Community,

 having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the European Social Charter,

 having regard to the ILO Global Jobs Pact,

 having regard to its resolution of 11 March 2009 on a European Economic Recovery Plan,

 having regard to Rule 123 of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas action taken by Member States when fighting against the economic crisis should aim at being socially balanced and at achieving a decisive and measurable reduction in poverty and social exclusion,

B. whereas more European citizens are at risk of poverty due to the crisis,

1. Calls on the Member States to maintain adequate protection for social rights when fighting against the economic crisis;

2. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that social conditionality becomes an integral part of any financial assistance and other stabilisation instruments;

3. Calls on the Commission and Member States to evaluate the social impact of all anti-crisis measures on a regular basis and report back to Parliament;

4. Instructs its President to forward this declaration, together with the names of the signatories, to the Council and Commission, and to the Parliaments of the Member States.

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