Austerity and Human Rights in Europe

The European financial crisis has required affected EU Member States to introduce economic austerity measures in order to combat fiscal deficits. As a result, substantial budget cuts have been designed in these countries with far-reaching social impacts.

This event is organised to shed light on three different country situations, namely Greece, Spain and Ireland. It will analyse the impact of policy changes introduced as a result of austerity measures on the realisation of economic, social and cultural rights in these countries. Part of that analysis involves seeking to understand whether austerity measures limit a state’s policy choices and ability to implement its human rights obligations in times of economic constraints. The event will also discuss the extent to which current austerity measures need to be adjusted in order for states to meet their international human rights obligations.

“There are viable alternatives to rigid austerity.”

Cephas Lumina, UN-independent Expert on foreign debt and human rights

Venue
Permanent Secretariat
European Network of National Human Rights Institutions
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Online-Registration
http://www.institut-fuer-menschenrechte.de/index.php?id=2250

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Invitation
Austerity and Human Rights in Europe
The impact of European austerity policies on the realisation of economic, social and cultural rights
The event is organised by the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), which brings together 40 NHRIs from throughout Europe. The European Network of NHRIs has recently opened a Secretariat office in Brussels. This will be the first public event of the European Network of NHRIs in Brussels.

Programme

13 June 2013
10.30 to 13.30
(followed by small lunch)

10:30 Welcome and introductory remarks
  Prof. Alan Miller, Chair of the European Network of NHRIs and the Scottish Human Rights Commission

  Why austerity policies are an issue for NHRIs in Europe?

PART 1

10:40 Impact of austerity measures on the realization of human rights
  Chair: Prof. Alan Miller

Country Example A
Greece – country mission report (April 2013)
Dr. Cephas Lumina, UN-Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of States on the full enjoyment of all human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights, South Africa
NHRI Perspective:
Konstantinos Papaioannou, Chairman, Greek National Commission for Human Rights

11:10 Country Example B
Spain – parallel reporting with respect to Spain and Discussion in the UN Committee on ESC-Rights
Ignacio Saiz, Executive Director, Center for Economic and Social Rights, USA
NHRI Perspective:
Francisco Fernández Marugán, First Deputy, Defensor del Pueblo, Spain

11:40 Country Example C
Ireland – report on Ireland
Ignacio Saiz, Executive Director, Center for Economic and Social Rights, USA
NHRI Perspective:
Des Hogan, Acting Chief Executive, Irish Human Rights Commission

12:10 Discussion

PART 2

12:40 European austerity policies in light of ESC–rights obligations – do we need a policy review?
  Chair: Michael Windfuhr, Deputy Director, German Institute for Human Rights

  Stefan Clauwaert, Senior Researcher, European Trade Union Institute
Konstantinos Papaioannou, Chairman, Greek National Commission for Human Rights
Ignacio Saiz, Executive Director, Center for Economic and Social Rights
Lauri Sivonen, Advisor to the European Commissioner for Human Rights

Conclusions

13:15 Prof. Alan Miller