

**Question for written answer E-010260/2013
to the Commission**

Rule 117

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Subject: Poverty and the shrinking welfare state in Europe

Last week, Caritas Europa published a report on the future of the welfare state in the European Union, in which it highlights the serious damage that budget cuts – particularly in the area of social policy – have caused to the welfare state in Europe. The effects of the economic crisis and tough austerity policies have led to an increase in inequality for the most vulnerable groups in society, such as children and the elderly.

In June 2013, the European Parliament rejected a Council proposal to cut EUR 1 000 million from the budget of the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived for the period between 2014 and 2020 (the current budget stands at EUR 3 500 million). The aim of the fund is to help cover the basic needs of the most vulnerable people in society.

Economic data, however, suggest that poverty will continue to rise. The European Union should therefore prevent undesirable situations by proposing more ambitious solutions to meet the needs of the most vulnerable groups.

Is the Commission considering supplementing the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived by introducing new solidarity schemes to provide the necessary resources (in addition to food) to people facing a genuine social emergency?

How can the social dimension of the Europe 2020 Strategy be improved at a time when austerity is taking precedence over the safeguarding of public policy in the areas of education, health and social education?

Does the Commission agree that Europe's welfare systems are in decline?