



06.06.2016 – “The economy should serve the people, and not vice versa” – says UN expert after assessing EU adjustment policies.

A press conference was held at the UNRIC headquarters on by [Independent Expert Juan Pablo Bohoslavsky](#) to share the preliminary findings of his week-long visit to Brussels, during which he met representatives from the European Commission, European Parliament, National Human Rights Institutions and civil society.

The purpose of his trip was to assess the impact of austerity policies and economic adjustment programmes on the enjoyment of economic and social rights in the European Union.

Having spent the week gathering information on recent EU policies to fight unemployment, poverty and social exclusion and EU initiatives to promote social rights, Mr. Bohoslavsky voiced his final findings and key recommendations.

“I am concerned about a policy shift undermining the previously balanced approach of ensuring economic stability, equality and social cohesion, in favour of a disproportionate focus on budgetary stability,” warned the international expert charged by the UN Human Rights Council to analyse and report on the effects of debt crises on human rights.

“Poverty has been on the rise in one of the most affluent regions of the world”, Mr. Bohoslavsky stressed. About 121 million people in the EU are at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Their number has particularly increased in countries that underwent a financial crisis and structural adjustment, such as Greece and Spain.

“It is unlikely that the European Union will reach in 2020 its official target to reduce the number of people at-risk-of poverty and social exclusion by 20 million people,” he said while noting that there are around 21.4 million unemployed persons in the EU, 4.7 million more than in 2008, before the financial crisis spread.

The human rights expert noted that the EU has developed tools to assess the impact of austerity measures and international trade agreements on social and human rights. *“However,”* he said,

“when it comes to internal macroeconomic policies human rights standards are not explicitly used as benchmarks against which structural program reforms should be assessed.”



[Austria's Chancellor Werner Faymann and Czech Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka visit in December, 2014. Photo by AFP](#)