

## Fighting against the fallacy: social workers know that social development is not incompatible with economic development

### Abstract

Economic inequality is the cause of the crisis. The austerity measures adopted by Spain for European indication, as social cutbacks and regulatory modifications, have contributed to the violation of Human Rights leading to the increase in the poverty, social inequality and exclusion and worsening social situation, especially the more vulnerable. The analysis focuses particularly on social services. It is observed the tendency to a paradigm shift in the care of social needs with greater role for charities instead of social rights and it is appreciated a difference in the implementation of measures in the different territories of Spain leading to internal inequalities. The General Council, which represents the social workers in Spain, looking for an urgent change of course, has implemented a dual strategy based on the own action of conceptualization of social work with communities as a multimodal planning for *implementation and social action*. The *ISSE reports* (Spanish: *Informe Servicios Sociales en España - Social Services Report in Spain*), the campaign “*Social Rights for Dignity*” and the participation in the civil movement “Orange Tide” against cutbacks in social services, stand out among all the shares.

### Keywords

Social Services. Human Rights. Orange Tide. Social Rights. Dignity. Inequality. Social action. Social planning. General Council of Social Work. Crisis. Austerity measures.

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### Resumen

La desigualdad económica es causante de la crisis y las medidas de austeridad adoptadas por España por indicación europea, como los recortes sociales y la modificación de normativas han contribuido a la vulneración de los Derechos Humanos provocando un aumento de la pobreza, la desigualdad y la exclusión social y empeorando la situación social, sobre todo de colectivos más vulnerables. El análisis se centra especialmente en los servicios sociales, se constata la tendencia a un cambio de modelo en la atención de las necesidades sociales con mayor protagonismo de la beneficencia en vez de los derechos sociales y además se aprecia una diferencia en la aplicación de medidas en los distintos territorios de España que da lugar a desigualdades internas. El Consejo General, que representa a los trabajadores sociales en España, buscando un cambio de rumbo urgente ha puesto en marcha una doble estrategia de actuación propia de la conceptualización del trabajo social con comunidades en su aplicación multimodal de planificación y acción social, de las múltiples acciones cabe destacar los Informes ISSE, la Campaña “Derechos Sociales por la Dignidad” y la participación el movimiento ciudadano en contra de los recortes en servicios sociales “Marea Naranja”.

### Palabras clave

Servicios Sociales. Derechos Humanos. Marea Naranja. Derechos Sociales. Dignidad. Desigualdad. Acción social. Planificación social. Consejo General del Trabajo Social. Crisis. Medidas de austeridad.

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## Introduction

It's said that the greed is the largest of poverty, is bottomless sea and without shores that reduce people to the last crumb and freezes their heart. I wonder how this greed contributes to the violation of Human Rights. Is the economic development at odds with human development?

The increase in social inequality in Spain since the beginning of the crisis is a major concern in the country. Social cutbacks and policy reforms in social policies have worsened the situation, leading to increased poverty and social exclusion. These measures have been implemented as directed by the European Union. Social inequality has grown in Spain since the beginning of the crisis, but we also know that is the own inequality of income and wealth caused the crisis. Although the collective imagination aims only to incompetent bankers and neo-capitalism, there are structural causes leading up to the crisis as the unequal distribution of income among individuals and social classes.

In our society, it laments in general, which then we accept from the particular; this happens to child poverty and gender-based violence, for example. We tend to be scandalized because of the global data. But when we evaluate the particular situations, we often blame people for their own disadvantage situation. Thus we encourage acceptance of inequalities in society, which, moreover, are socially applauded that when they deal with merit. Unfortunately, this acceptance is shown in actions such as tax evasion, which harm to the others. It leads to situations of destruction of the mutual basis.

In addition to increased inequality in income and wealth, the long crisis in Spain is being accompanied by social cutbacks in rights and

opportunities; Spain is one of the countries that has increased inequality in wages. As a result, we have very high unemployment rates and foreclosures. Poverty has increased and social cohesion has been broken. Cutbacks in Protection Systems, which will be detailing in the article, are contrary to the European Social Charter.

Inequality harms many areas of economic and human development and its effects in the long run will come to future generation. Social work considers austerity measures in public spending and its effect on the population may be violating human rights. According to the United Nations

“Human rights are legally guaranteed by human rights law, protecting individuals and groups against actions that interfere with fundamental freedoms and human dignity”. (United Nations, 1948)

The General Council and the 36 Professional Associations of Social Work in Spain, which represent more than 40,000 professionals, have started up a strategy for action in order to curb the growth of inequality in Spain and promote human rights and justice social.

## 1. Theoretical Framework

This paper aims to highlight the importance of inequality as a factor causing the crisis and to identify various points where the rights of persons are violated as a result of social cutbacks and changing regulations in social policies. We count on several studies that provide us with data on the current situation, with data collection instruments of the professionals opinion and the testimony of several affected people. The objectives of the text are:

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- Analyze the social situation in the crisis in Spain, the impact of austerity measures on the population and its impact on increasing the existing inequality before the crisis.
- Enhance the value of the information that the professionals and affected people can provide.
- Identify several points where the rights of persons are been violated as a result of social cutbacks and of regulatory modifications on social policies.
- Articulate from Social Work strategies from analysis, planning, discussion, action, reporting and proposals to improve the situation, contributing to the social transformation from the elimination of the causes of inequality and social injustice.

The strategy of the General Council of Social Work, regarding the complaint and development of actions on the rights violation as a result of the Government measures, is based on the theoretical framework of community social work. This model is gaining strength in the current economic, social and political crisis to influence structural changes that give power to citizens and to ensure their social rights (Pastor, 2010).

Theoretical models on which is based are radical and critical approaches of social work, that they have contributed to the rise of social rights especially of the most disadvantaged groups in society (Porzecansky, 1983), also it has applied the model to advocate and empower people to participate in political actions (Solomom, 1976) and finally included the use of the social ecological model. Social work actions, must be implemented on social contexts of social development, but also

in virtual communities that are developed on social websites (Bronfenbrenner, 1987).

On the other hand, the General Council is a professional organization, which has models of community practice of social work. In this case we applied two of the four Rothman and Tropman's models (2001): *community development, social planning/formulation of social policy, since its multimodal construction of social action with social planning.*

Both perspectives share the objectives from an analysis of the social reality, social workers, as experts who work in various fields of social intervention, also pursue the empowerment and the participation of citizens and help to ensure social rights and dignity. Thus we observe:

- **From strategy of social planning** the analysis is remarkable because it is from the investigations leading to the first ISSE reports (2014) and the second ISSE (2015), inspired by the critical approaches of research that Jane Addams began to discuss the appalling living conditions of the districts of Chicago and to understand and make proposals for overcoming them. These investigations led to the enactment of important laws (Green, 2013). On the other hand, this strategy is also reflected in other activities from professional organizations, for instance proposals to parliamentary groups, hearings, forums, workshops, conferences, reports, etc., that they are made about current issues concerning the different areas of intervention in exercised by social workers.
- **From the perspective of Social Action** many actions are implemented from the

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Spanish General Council of Social Work, that are own to the radical and critical approaches, feminists, and Marxists, emphasize collective action against individual attention and have a special emphasis on social movements (Alinsky, 1972, p.27). We can mention some specific campaigns for demands, the most significant is “*Social Rights for Dignity*” that is currently underway (before others have made as the “*Enough!*”). On the other hand we must mention the appearance in the media that makes visible to the profession in the public agenda and the issues that matter most to us are highlighting. There are all kinds of action complaints involving participation: demonstrations, protests, go to the European Parliament on International Human Rights Day with social workers and users to report the situation of human rights violations due to the application of austerity measures. Finally we note from the Spanish General Council of Social Work that networking is important, because our professional organization acts as a network of 36 professional associations. Also we belong and drive different networks and platforms with which we share many of our demands as the Cumbre Social (Social Summit), the Alliance for the Defence of Social Services Public System, the Alliance against poverty etc., and it should be note the Orange Tide, which social workers participate actively.

## 2. Methods

The methods used as an instrument to achieve the objectives are based on a quantitative and qualitative methodology, as well as the application of UN indicators and criteria.

The two reports ISSE (2014, 2015 in press) collect the opinion of professionals working in the Public Social Services System throughout Spain, are based on a quantitative methodology and get the data through via an online survey that 1,400 social workers working actively in the Public System of Social Services of the 17 regions and 50 provinces of the Spanish state filled out. The first report contains information between the years 2009-2013 and the second between 2013-2014. This second report delves into the assessment of the crisis management.

Further in this article a qualitative methodology used in the analysis of speeches by social workers from different regions and of users in exposure to the European Parliament, which was held on December 10, 2014 in Brussels. An analysis of the speeches is performed with those were articulated in the session and in-depth interviews with the users, were previously performed and are part of the material of the “*Social Rights for Dignity*”. These speeches are the scenarios that allow us a direct approach to the social reality of the setting in motion of social policies and make emerge the keys of the rights infringement of rights as a result of the cutbacks (Íñiguez 2006).

On the other hand, we want to link how economic cutbacks in social policies and the change in some regulations in Spain may lead to situations of human rights violations. It has to do with a measure of *commitment / efforts / results* in human rights from the theoretical framework of the conceptualization of human rights indicators.

There are indicators developed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to measure the relationship between the political management, human rights

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and statistical systems to promote Social Welfare that is, measuring the discourse of human rights and social policies developed. Thus we observe:

- **Structural indicators** in international human rights treaties, relevant to the right to adequate housing, ratified by the Spanish State. Also we analyze the coverage of social policy on education, health, social services, dependency and minimum insertion income.
- **Process indicators** that help in assessing a state's efforts, through its implementation of policy measures and programmes of action, to transform its human rights commitments into the desired results.
- **Outcome indicators** have to do with the unemployment data and the low participation in the contributory system, increased poverty and social exclusion.

Also the implementation of the measures, which are marked in the Report on Human Rights and Extreme Poverty of the UN General Assembly in line with the promotion and protection of all human civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights including the development rights in 2011. Here the five criteria for compliance in the face of economic recovery are marked. This starts at the meeting of the Human Rights Council in 2009 on the topic *"Measures on the human rights based approach to recovery from the global economic and financial crises, with a focus on those living in poverty"* (Sepúlveda 2011).

As it explained in the Report of the Independent Expert on the question of human rights and extreme poverty, Ms. María Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona A/HRC/17/34:

"States cannot use the economic damage caused by the crises to justify actions or omissions that amount to violations of basic human rights obligations. While economic, social and cultural rights are often subject to the principle of "progressive realization" depending on the availability of resources in each State, this principle also prescribes particular modes of conduct that are compulsory for all States, regardless of their level of development. These obligations considerably limit the discretion of States with regard to the implementation of economic, social and cultural rights, and require immediate action". (Sepúlveda, 2011).

So we can expose the five measures that must be fulfilled by the governments to avoid violating human rights:

1. Using the maximum resources available
2. Ensuring minimum essential levels of economic, social and cultural rights
3. Avoiding deliberately retrogressive measures
4. Ensuring non-discrimination and equality
5. Allowing for participation, transparency and accountability

### 3. Results

According to the second ISSE (2014) among the social workers there is a degree of widespread agreement (90%) that the austerity measures are affecting primarily the most vulnerable people in society. Similarly, the high consensus (73%) also

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stresses that these measures have violated any of the human rights of users.

So some of those interviewed social workers tell, which interviews are part of the material of the campaign "Rights for Dignity":

"Because there is an intention to limit the resources allocated for social protection. It is clear that they pursue to cut down the protection instead of extend it... Social work is a profession that has been developed based on change perspectives. However, not any kind of change, not any kind of measure is valid, not any kind of statement is accepted. The Government cannot take cynical measurements under the dramatic circumstances that we are currently living". (A5)

"The middle class was, look I speak in past tense, and he is facing how the crisis is wiping his hopes, his project. He needs help to prevent being in a situation of social exclusion. However, the Government has been systematically denying the Basic Income benefit that he applies for more years. Even if someone meets the requirements, the aid is not granted, because there are huge budgetary constraints. The only help we can offer them are food boxes from the Food Bank with rice, pasta,... We, as social workers, should reveal against this situation". (A1)

In Spain the *Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived* (FEAD) 2014-2020 of the European Commission, which is part of the national operational programs, has been allocated on food aid from organizations for distribution and delivery and also in the distribution mechanisms of the third sector.

We note that some users reiterate that the situation is the rights violation:

In the Canary Islands hundreds of dependent people are dying without receiving their rights. This is an undercover genocide; it is genocide by the politicians. It is a matter of Human Rights... We need, we denounce the countless times that our rights have been violated. We claim an official body at the European Parliament where we can directly report these violations. (A6)

According to the National Institute Statistics (INE) in its Living Conditions Survey 2014 the percentage of people at risk of poverty increased to 22.2%. In this Survey which collected revenues 2013, there is a increase of 20.4% over the previous year.

And as a process indicator, the same report indicates that Spanish Social Services professionals consider that 50% of evaluated claims are not covered. We collect the following opinion:

The Government is not providing the solutions that should give. We, the professionals are both overstretched and emotionally drained. We are exhausted because we are unable to do the job we are supposed to do. We can't help all those people who have been working during their whole life but that due to life circumstances are currently unemployed. (A4)

On the other hand there has been an increase in housing evictions of Spanish families, reaching record since the beginning of the crisis more than 400,000 foreclosures. Most of them have ended up in evictions. Foreclosures have increased by 134.13% in 2012, according to the General Council of the Judiciary. In addition the Bank of Spain

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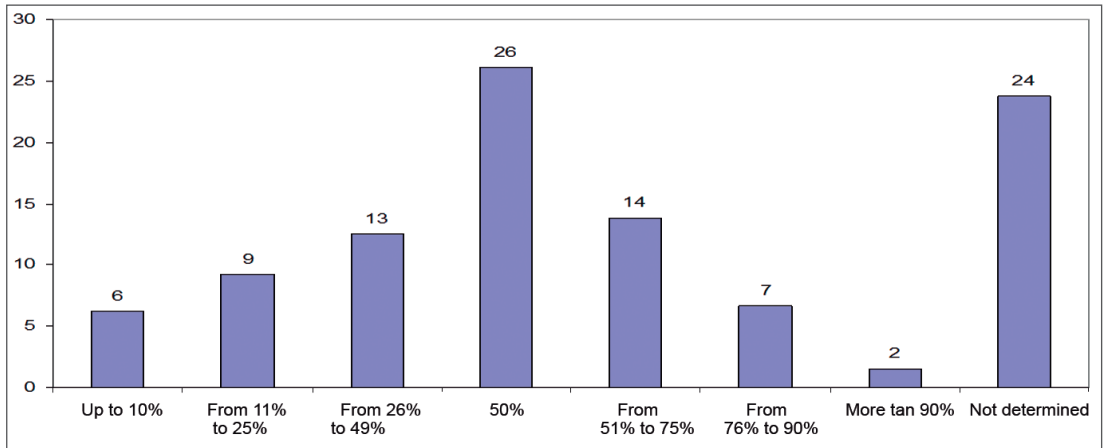


Figure 1. Percentage of evaluated claims as necessary that are not covered (2013). Source: Second ISSE according to social workers (Lima, 2015, in press CGTS, 2014). Note: Medium 47%, median 50 and mode 50.

confirms that the evictions have been increasing in the following year.

Since 2008, suicide has become the leading cause of violent death in Spain, according to data published by the INE in January 2014. Suicide figures have grown to be the highest recorded in 2012 with 11.3% of the last year.

According to the latest report about wage and inequality issued by the International Labour

Organisation (ILO-OIT), Spain, with the United States, is developed country where wage inequality has increased more.

The Data of Foundation 1 de Mayo, in its report 2014, depicts that 12% of employees are poor and the salaries are as the one paid three decades ago. The lowest salaries in the EU-15. Also there has been a fall of 5% in wages for permanent workers and 20% for seasonal workers in the last four years.



Figure 2. Wage inequality between countries. Source: Inequality in a sample of developed economies in the crisis years, 2006–10: (a) top–bottom inequality (D9/D1). ILO December 2014.

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Between 2008 and 2013, 3.5 million jobs have been destroyed; the unemployment rate has gone from 10% to 25%. Income of Spanish households is now lower than in 2007.

According to the OECD (2015) in its report *In It Together: Why Less Inequality Benefits All*:

“Lower income households lost more during the crisis, with real incomes of the poorest 10% dropping by 13% per year in the 2007-2011 period, compared to only 1.4% for the top 10%. Income poverty increased up to 2011 then declined. However, when poverty is measured relative to a pre-crisis income benchmark, poverty increased considerably in Spain between 2007 and 2012, well above the OECD average. There was also a shift in the age profile of poverty, with a notable deterioration in the situation of children and young people, who replaced the elderly as the group most at risk of poverty.

The international body says tax reforms as one of the causes of impoverishment. As it explains, ‘social benefits have reduced significantly and have increased taxes’”.

According to Amnesty International in April 2015, the application of Royal Decree-Law 16/2012 on Health made that approximately 750,000 people were forced to leave free health care. Only about 730 of them have signed a special agreement to be covered and they must pay between 60 and 157€ per month, in addition to having to meet other requirements. Furthermore it has been checked out that there is lack of information on health care reform, which has breached the rules. Many people have had to pay for emergency treatment, and this has worsened their situation.

United Nations and Council of Europe have required the Spanish Government to reverse and reform the *Royal Decree-Law 16/2012*.

According to the report of European Minimum Income Network (EMIN) of the European Commission on minimum income schemes in Spain, December 2014, the great territorial heterogeneity is an obstacle that generates large inequalities between Spanish citizens, as their coverage, requirements, economic amount and complementary programs depend on where the person resides.

According to the report on Minimum Income by the Spanish Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality, in 2013 there was an increase of 76% of applications, but only 22% of them agreed to help. There are significant differences in monthly economic amounts received by families, for example, in Murcia it is 300€ while in the Basque Country it is 662€.

According to data provided by the Basque Economic and Social Council in its 2014 report, the Basque Country, belonging to the Spanish State, has an incidence of risk of poverty and social exclusion similar to Sweden and Finland, far less than most regions of Spain. It is estimated that the Social Protection System helps reduce poverty around 39%, has a lower unemployment rate and higher economic growth than other regions.

We spent the application of the five measures of the UN report that must be fulfilled by the governments to avoid violating human rights:

### 3.1.- Using the maximum resources available

To apply this measure we should be assessed when States must devote the maximum available resources to ensure the progressive realization

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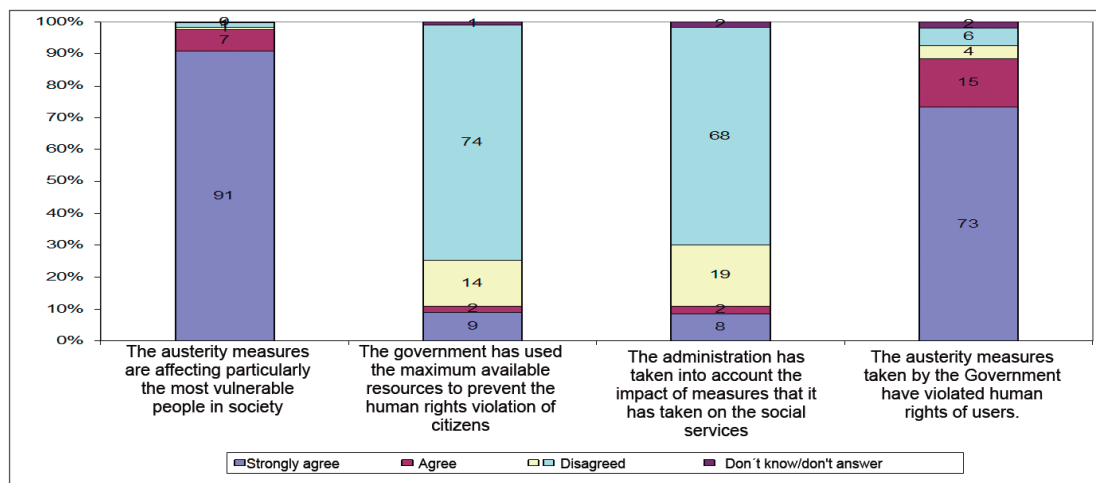


Figure 3. Social workers opinions on the management of the current economic crisis by public authorities.

of all economic, social and cultural rights as expeditiously and effectively as possible.

According to the second ISSE (2013-2014), 74% of social workers working in Spanish social services believe that the government has not used the maximum available resources to avoid the human rights violations of citizens; and, likewise, overwhelmingly, 90% believe that the Government has not considered the impact of measures taken on social services.

### 3.2.- Ensuring minimum essential levels of economic, social and cultural rights

To apply this measure in this criterion, it is essential to assess the impact of the implemented measures by the government about their impact on people. The report data explain how only 14% of workers social working in Social Services claim that some kind of studio to understand the impact of cutbacks in their work has been made in the place where they work. 4% said the cutbacks have not done so far but these are planned. More than half of the professionals indicated that evaluation mechanisms

have not been activated and are not expected to be made, and 28% ignore these procedures.

### 3.3.- Avoiding deliberately retrogressive measures

This measure refers to value when governments take retrogressive measures that affect the level of enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, for this we must consider that the State Budget have had an average reduction of 26% for social services over the past four years and the Basic Provision of Social Services Plan has been cut by almost 70%. Also, the autonomous governments have reduced by an average of 10.5% spending on social care and the municipalities, 20.8%.

It is also important to consider changes in the standards:

- Royal Decree-Law 3/2012, of 10 February, of urgent measures to reform the employment market. (Spanish: Real Decreto-ley 3/2012, de 10 de febrero, de medidas urgentes para la reforma del mercado laboral).

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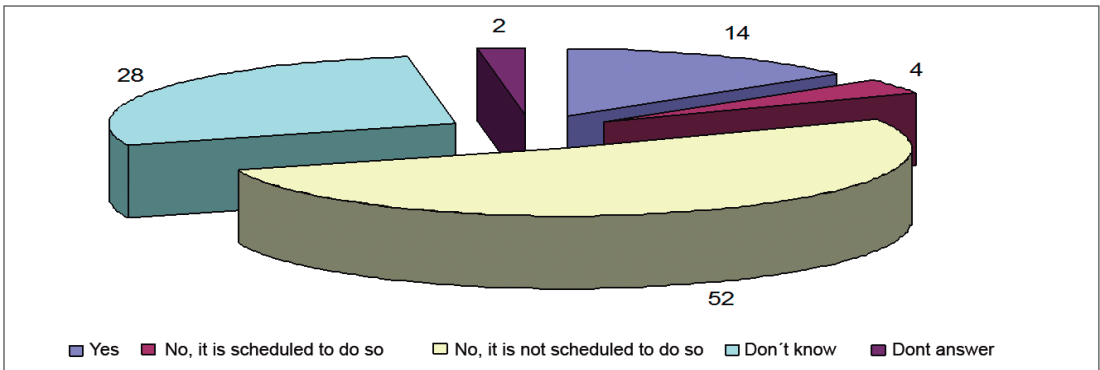


Figure 4. Opinion of the members of professional associations to whether a mechanism has been established to assess the impact of cutbacks. Source: Second ISSE according to social workers (Lima, 2015, in press)

- Royal Decree-Law 20/2012, of 13 July, on measures aimed at assuring budgetary stability and promoting competitiveness. (Spanish: Real Decreto Ley 20/2012, de 13 de julio, de medidas para garantizar la estabilidad presupuestaria y de fomento de la competitividad.
- Rationalization and Sustainability of Local Government Act 27/2013 (Spanish: Ley 27/2013, de 27 de diciembre, de Racionalización y Sostenibilidad de la Administración Local)
- Royal Decree-Law 16/2012 of 20 April 2012, on Urgent measures to ensure the sustainability of the National Health System and to improve the quality and security of its services. (Spanish: Real Decreto Ley 16/2012 de 20 de abril, de medidas urgentes para garantizar la sostenibilidad del Sistema Nacional de Salud y mejorar la calidad y seguridad de sus prestaciones)
- Hardening of the benefits and requirements in the Spanish regions.
- Others

### 3.4.- Ensuring non-discrimination and equality

To value if the implemented measures affect disproportionately the most vulnerable sectors of society, it is important to value the OEDC data which claim that Spain is the OEDC country where social inequality has increased more.

The three Spanish richest doubled in wealth the nine million people who make up 20% of the country's poorest population.

Save the Children indicates that the risk of poverty or social exclusion in under 16 years increases 4 points compared to 2013 and now affects 35.4% of children, one case out of three children are at risk of poverty and social exclusion. So the child poverty rate is the highest in the OECD after Mexico and the US.

The unemployment rate among young people under 25 years is the highest in the euro area, reaching 53.8%.

On the other hand, the second ISSE highlights that 90% of social workers consider children and adolescents as the most negatively affected group by the crisis.

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In addition 76% of social workers believe that the effects of the crisis are more negative in women.

The average profile of people who use social services more are women, with an intermediate age between 36 and 50 years, mostly in primary education, often have dependent children. From the labor point of view they represent a very heterogeneous situation, being unemployed/ s no unemployment, subsidized or being pensioners; with a significant presence of the elderly dependent and foreigners, who inhabit households with an average income of around just over 500€ per month.

Many women are in charge of several children living in poverty:

“For the last two years they have denied the school lunch grant for my kids. When the letter arrives... I think about all kind of options... but sometimes I cannot find any solution. With the benefits I receive I don't make ends meet. If my two kids could only have the school grant I would feel less anxious by knowing that at least they have one completed meal at day. Here at home they don't... there is always something missing. And above all, what I do want is to have an answer

for a question that I am fed up listening to my daughter when she says “why are we poor?”... I want to see if we can change a bit... this question of a 7 year old girl... if we can improve something, because we are people”. (A3)

71% of social workers know people who have lost access to social services due to austerity measures. If we refer to financial benefits, the figure is 88%, and 80% if we speak of people affected negatively by social services copayment.

### 4. Allowing for participation, transparency and accountability

To assess whether people affected by austerity measures were previously asked on the impact of the measures adopted, it is necessary to take into consideration that in 2010 – 2011, the socio-economic situation in Spain was critical. Many families got one or all their members unemployed, their resources run out, and felt abandoned by elected politicians. As result, people started joining different social movements, as shown one of the person affected on our documentary “Social Rights for Dignity”.

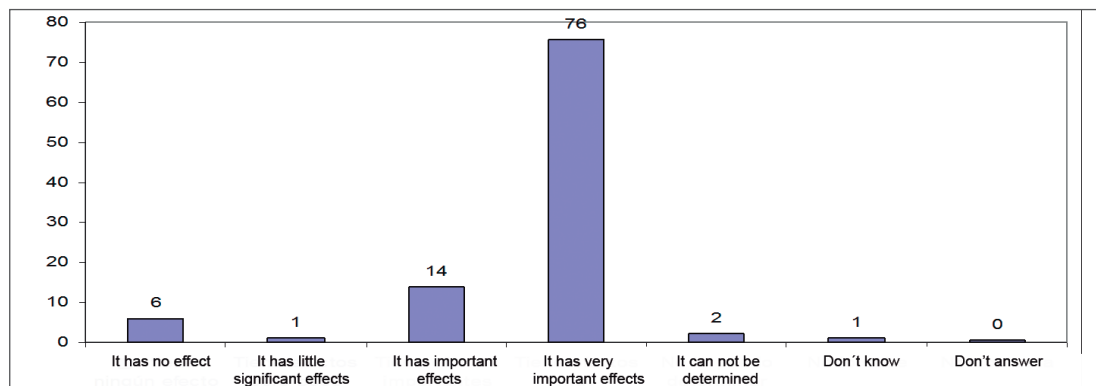


Figure 5. Assessment of social workers on the effects of the economic crisis on child poverty. Source: Second ISSE according to social workers (Lima, 2015, in press).

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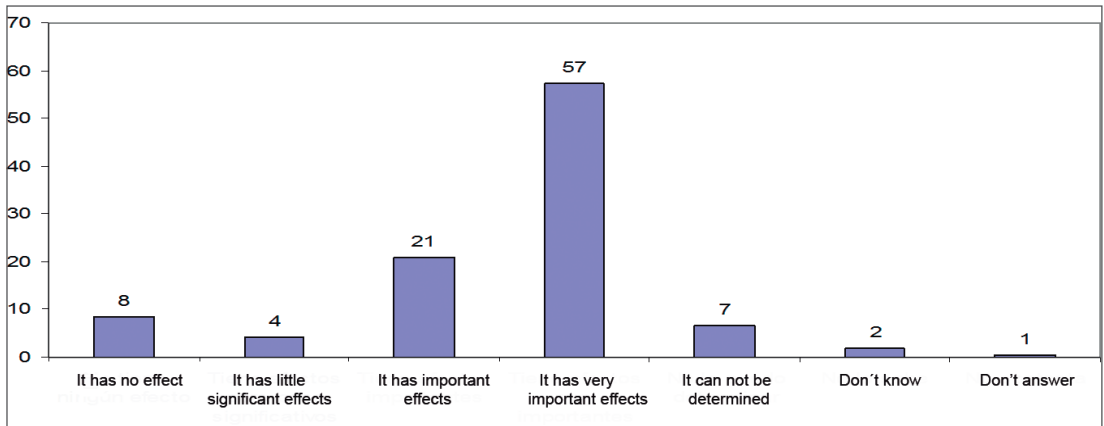


Figure 6. Assessment of social workers about the effects of the economic crisis on gender equality. Source: Second ISSE according to social workers (Lima, 2015, in press).

“While I do not find a job, what I want is to have something to live with, something to eat.

I went to Social Services to know how they could help me.

When I arrived we decided to apply for the Minimum Income. This help is no great shakes. It is a paltry help”.(A2)

All across the country, people participated in demonstrations and protest actions. One example was the protest of public employees. Every Friday, they dressed in black to go to their job to mourn the lost of their social rights. In the case of Social Services, protest actions started a bit earlier in 2008-2009. People complained against the failing to comply with the Act on the Promotion of Personal Autonomy and

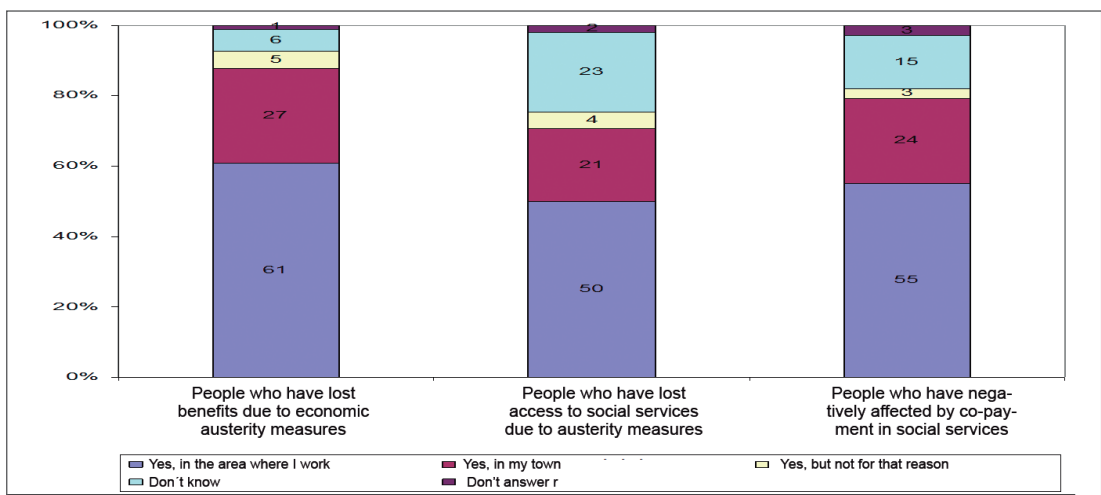


Figure 7. Affected by the economic crisis according to social workers. Source: Second ISSE according to social workers (Lima, 2015, in press).

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Care for Dependent Persons (Spanish: Ley de Promoción de la Autonomía Personal y Atención a las personas en situación de dependencia).

In this context, some social organizations promoted a civil demonstration, on March 15th, 2011. This demonstration provided individuals with a channel to express their outrage and translate their discontent. Spontaneously these feelings and these protest actions converged in a pacifist civil movement that advocates for a participatory democracy. One of the first actions of this civil movement were the local assemblies (all across the country people met at district level and talked about social problems - job market, housing, access to health system).

In parallel with these protest actions, the government kept applying cutbacks and labor reforms. All this led to a social atmosphere filled with feelings of protest consequences of the social movement 15M, the active citizen participation in local assemblies, and of the disaffected workforce.

Individuals and professionals with similar problems started, on a natural way, planning actions together and creating new social structures. These actions were the beginning of different civil movements. Among of them, we highlight the follow:

- New Social Platforms as Platform for civil society participation
- New political groups, one of the best known is "Podemos"
- The Tide Movements

The Orange Tide (Spanish: Marea Naranja) emerged during the demonstration against the breaches of

the Care for Dependent Persons Act. Individuals and families affected, together with social workers, expressed their disagreement with the delays in the award of benefits, the defaults, etc. The most active region was Valencia (South-East of Spain).

The continued administrative reforms and constant cutbacks have led to the dismantling of the social protection system. It has also caused a change on the profile of social services users. Under these circumstances people started joining citizen mobilizations.

In this context, the Professional Association of Social Work in the region of Aragon, (North of Spain) realized that social workers had to take a leader role to invigorate and mobilize professionals and social services users.

The Spanish General Council embraced these ideas and assumed the leadership to consolidate the Orange Tide as national movement. Together with the regional professional associations of social work organized a major demonstration in June 18th 2012. This national protest against social cutbacks meant the consolidation of the Orange Tide. Social workers had a sense of outrage at the socio-economic situation that people were suffering. They step up and placed themselves side by side with the users. As result, they were able to lift their voices up and speak for themselves. Users expressed messages like:

"My social worker is a really good person. When I have an appointment with him, at the Social Services agency, we start talking and he always tries to find out what happens to me.

I cry with him many times and I don't know why.

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There, with him, I also encounter another support. Sometimes I forgot the reason why I go there, you know... I start talking and know that there is a person who is with me and who can help me.

I feel strong and with more energy and I feel like talking, shouting, tell what I'm going through to see if my message reaches the people responsible for this situation. I want them to see we are human being and that we want to live like everybody.

When someone tells the truth doesn't have to be afraid or to be nervous from anything". (A3)

Why the orange colour? The same as with the Green Tide (Spanish: Marea Verde) the decision of the colour happened in a casual way. The Professional Association of Social Work of Aragón retrieved the orange colour from the first protests against the failing to comply with the Care for Dependent Persons Act that happened in the region of Valencia. Also, it coincided with the colour used by some Social Platforms.

When the Spanish General Council of Social Work joint the Orange Tide, it kept using the orange colour. It applied it during the campaign to disseminate the movement— on the logo, pins, t-shirts, etc. Since the movement started, the Spanish General Council has distributed thousands of T-shirts with the slogan "No more cutbacks, don't shut up". People started talking openly about their situation as it reflects on part of the material of the campaign "Rights for Dignity":

"All these things make me feel ashamed, but I am so burnt out that if I could shout it at someone there on the top, I would say it to him

We have to fight for the little we still have left... it is an outrage the lack of interest they have in all of these". (A2)

Some media have featured the impact of the Orange Tide:

**Eldiario.es / EFE Madrid 03/10/2013 The Social Summit "flooded" 64 towns to reject the policy of cutbacks and corruption:** "Thousands of citizens have participated in over 60 Spanish cities in demonstrations organized by the Social Summit— entity made up by 150 trade unions and social organizations; to comply against the policies of cutbacks, unemployment in defence of public services and the regeneration of democracy" ([http://www.eldiario.es/economia/Cumbre-Social-defiende-movilizacion-Gobierno\\_0\\_109539153.html](http://www.eldiario.es/economia/Cumbre-Social-defiende-movilizacion-Gobierno_0_109539153.html))

**Press Europe. Madrid, 02/19/2015 "The Tide Movements have marched in the center of Madrid for ending the policies of the Troika:** "*Social movements, gathered in the Tide Social Movements, will protest to end the policies enforced by the Troika, claim the repeal of the labor reform and demand stopping the undergoing privatisation processes and the violation of their rights. The march will take from Atocha to Carrera de San Jerónimo.*

(Europa Press. Madrid, 19 / 02/2015 <http://www.europapress.es/madrid/noticia-mareas-ciudadanas-manifiestan-domingo-centro-madrid-cesen-politicas-troika-20150219143007.html>)

The second ISSE depicts that almost all social workers are aware of the Orange Tide. However, if we refer to the number of social workers who have

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participated in the movement, the percentage of professionals from the private sector is lower than the number of employees from the public administration. The development of the Orange Movement is associated more to the public sector, 49% of its members are active in the movement.

### 5. Discussion

#### 5.1.- *Inequality and social rights*

As part of the fundamental rights enshrined in European constitutions, from the Weimar Constitution, social rights involved in the construction of the Social State have always been considered and occupied a special position in the legal system.

Unlike civil and political rights, social rights require positive actions from the Government. For example, whilst freedom of religion is guaranteed through no-taking actions, right to housing requires to be fulfilled that the Government takes positive actions to fulfilled the right— regulation and investment in resources.

Another issue is the mechanism that the Government must articulate to guarantee and protect people social rights; especially their access to court's guardianship. Ensuring social rights as fundamental human rights implies that individuals are able to invoke their rights in courts through judicial procedures and get a positive sentence.

The Spanish legal system clearly establishes the guardianship of social rights— Third Amendment of 1978 Constitution, Guiding principles for Social en Economic Policy. In addition, it determines

that individuals can claim their social rights in accordance with the regulations implemented. However, there is not any legal element that forces the Government to develop any regulation, it can exist or not. Furthermore, the effectiveness is precarious. For instance, if we look at the evictions in Spain, they are considered a private matter, so only private law applies— civil and commercial contracts. It is really difficult to present an eviction case as a breach of the fundamental right, as violation of the Article 47 of the Constitution “all Spaniards are entitled to enjoy decent and adequate housing”.

During the financial crisis and time of increase in social inequalities, guarantees of social rights are quickly eroded. It adds another problem for many people who find in social movements and civil participation the only way to defence their rights.

Following G. Pisarello statement (2012), the current crisis stands out for its impact on collective rights and for the threats that this involves for the society. Social rights are requisite for meeting the principle of solidarity and essential for the cohesion and integration. Paradoxically, it seems that strengthen social rights is not possible without previously restricting them. It seems a prerequisite to meet the needs of market powers that operate outside any control and legal limit.

If we consider official reports or statistic, we rarely find information on social issues. However, one exception is the reports that expose the ratio of evictions or situations of exclusion from the beginning of the crisis. In several occasions, people who face an eviction go to community social services and ask for a social work assessment report to present in courts so judges can assess the measures dictated.

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Despite the existence of regulations that guarantee individual rights, such as the Care for Dependent Persons Act, the number of cases when individuals appeal against a decision and win is scarce or rare.

The same as in Spain, social inequality begins due to a precarious labour market and women, migrants and workers in the informal economy are the most affected.

The European Parliament should monitor countries to comply with international standards, and provide the necessary processes for denouncing any conflict before the competent authorities.

### *5.2.- Regression in social protection*

Since the 1970's, the achievements in terms of the coverage of protective systems, in both health and social services, have been progressive and evident. However, in recent years there has been a regression that places back professional social interventions as humanitarian and charitable acts, as welfarism actions. Third sector organisations and private companies have taken over the Spanish Government's obligations regarding fulfilling individual rights. The loss of the universal health coverage together with the poor coverage of the minimum income guarantee have left part of the population at risk of social exclusion.

The austerity measures have had a direct and negative impact on the most disadvantaged people. Government and public administrations not only have not been able to effectively address this situation and help people alleviating this situation, but rather the contrary.

In the case of Spain, the increase in evictions directly relates to the legislation and the rising

unemployment rate and the housing bubble. This situation has led to excessive borrowing in Spanish families.

Currently, poverty affects 22.2 % of the population in Spain. This indicator should be considered together with the energy poverty index, the unemployment rate, and the lack of social benefits.

The Spanish Government has allocated the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) 2014-2020 of the European Commission on food aid. It has entrusted with the responsibility of the distribution to third sector organizations. The government has not taken into consideration the Public Social Services System that could work to strengthen social emergency benefits and ensuring professionalism and dignity to recipients. This approach of the Spanish government contrasts to the operational vision of other European countries which have attributed to social services and their professionals a key role in the program. This kind of actions shows the clear tendency of the government to leave its responsibility in the hands of private solidarity.

The case of the Basque Country (North of Spain) is a clear example about how greater investment in social protection systems reduces the risk of poverty and social exclusion. Rates of unemployment are lower than in other regions and the economic growth is higher, which brings more redistribution of resources and greater social cohesion. Investment in strong social policies contributes to better deal with the crisis and increases levels of social welfare.

Austerity measures are a fallacy that the Spanish Government has presented us as an apparently valid argument to improve the situation in Spain. It is an argument that leads us to talk in circles,

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as the snake that bites its tail. This situation has made people feel outraged.

Following the vision of the Treaty of Nice and the Treaty of Lisbon, in 2009, the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission provided a new approach to development of better metrics of well-being and progress. In addition, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) stated in 2014 that social inequality is an obstacle to the economy and distribution of resources, and invest in social policies positive contributes to the economy.

Weaken Social Protection Systems has brought vulnerability, unemployment, and violation of human rights. The economic crisis has caused a crisis in human development that has led to fewer opportunities for economic development.

To ensure minimum essential levels of economic, social and cultural rights is necessary to evaluate the measurements implemented. In accordance with Article V of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), ratified and materialised in the Spanish national legislation on 25 February 2013, the Spanish government must implement reforms in its regulations that do not allow reaching these minimum levels—Rationalization Law and Sustainability of Local Government Act, (Spanish: Ley de Racionalización y Sostenibilidad de la Administración Local), Royal Decree of Sustainability Measures of Health (Spanish: Real Decreto Legislativo de Medidas de Sostenibilidad de Sanidad).

The universality of social services right and health right as well as the guarantee of minimum income and access to dependant health care and to social protection system should be assured. We, the Spanish General Council of Social Work demand

the reform of the Constitution and that right to social services is recognized as fundamental right.

There is an evident lack of interest to assess the impact of the measures implemented. Each region has its own methodology to assess the social services system, there is not standardizing data collection for all Spanish regions. In addition, there is almost no evaluation of the actions developed (14% second ISSE).

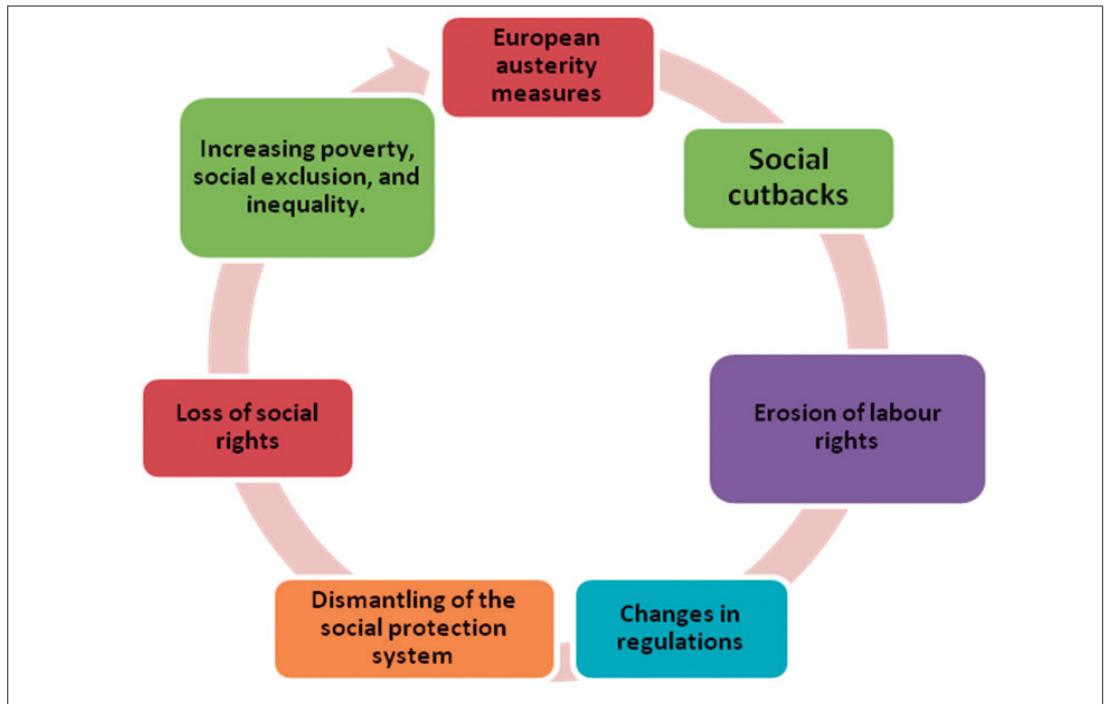
The social policies and in particular the social services system have to break the dialelo, the vicious circle of austerity in order to generate wealth being and employment, guarantee social rights to be fulfilled, strengthen social protection and reverses the trend of rising social inequality.

The Spanish government has **deliberately** implemented retrogressive **measures** to mitigate the impact of the the crisis. It has made swingeing cuts in their social budgets and made changes in relevant regulations. Changes in the national health care system regulations have caused the copayment medicines for all population groups and the loss of universality with the exclusion of some social groups as immigrants.

The undertaken labour market reforms have been unfair, slow, and inefficient. Wages have decreased, layoffs have increased, eligibility conditions for scholarships are more stringent, and the increase in the Spanish university taxes has left many young people with no access to university education. In addition, quality of primary and secondary public education has fallen due to budget cutbacks.

There has been a tightening in the criteria for granting minimum insertion and funding

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*Vicious Circle of Austerity in Social Services in Spain. Source: Own elaboration.*

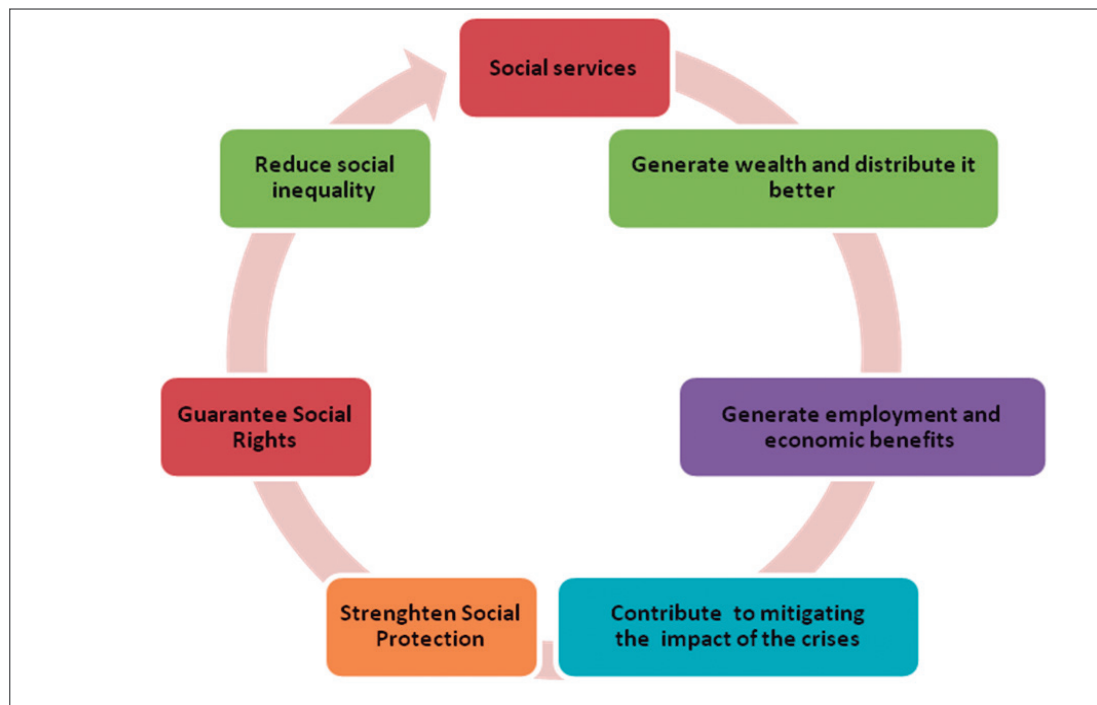
for social inclusion programs have been cut. Consequently, many families have been left without any minimum financial coverage and in a vulnerable situation. In addition, ratio of social inequality among regions has also increased, because recognition of social rights is different in each region.

In 2012, the Government adopted ACT 39/2006, of 14th December, on the Promotion of Personal Autonomy and Care for Dependent Persons (Spanish: Ley 39/2006, de 14 de diciembre, de Promoción de la Autonomía Personal y Atención a las personas en situación de dependencia). The process to implement the measures has been sluggish, has neglected recipients and there has been a lack of interest in the resources management.

In December 2015, it will entry into force Rationalization Law and Sustainability of Local Government Act (Spanish: Ley de Racionalización y Sostenibilidad de la Administración Local) and will weaken more the social services system. Currently, the quality in social services has failed due to the increase in the number of demands (74%) and to human resources cutbacks (33%). After the entry into force of this Act, social services interventions are limited to emergency social situations. Activities in prevention, promotion, and social inclusion are put aside, and resources for training and quality will be limited. Community social work needs to be activated.

Social movements and social platforms have submitted different proposals to the Spanish government. However, neither they have never

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*The needed of Vicious Circle of Austerity in Social Services in Spain. Source: Own elaboration*

received any answer nor have been consulted on any measure adopted. The rationalization and streamlining of new regulations at national level have reduced spaces for citizen participation and have led many social organizations to disappear because they depended on public funding.

### 5.3.- Attitude of workers and social workers and citizens

Social workers are very sensitive to the violation of human rights as result of the austerity measures. They have developed strategies to promote participatory action research. One of the most remarkable experiences on this regard is the participation of the Spanish General Council of Social Work. This social movement aims to raise public awareness and put pressure on the politicians

to preserve the public social services system. It pursues to make political stakeholders understand that cutbacks place back the social service system as humanitarian and welfare system.

#### Strategies of the Spanish General Council

##### Social planning:

- ISSE report
- Appearances and proposals
- Meetings
- Seminars
- Conferences

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- Social Actions
- Alliance in social services defence
- Social Summit
- Orange Tide
- Social platforms
- Marches
- Alliances
- Campaign social rights for dignity

The Spanish General Council of Social Work is driving the movement to achieve its national consolidation and link other professionals, other organizations as well as social services users to the movement.

The Orange Tide pursues develop capacity building and empower citizens and professionals. These two components are presented in the strategy developed by the General Council as part of its social action as well as its social planning.

The functions developed by the General Council as social action strategy includes, among others, elaborating statements, organizing demonstrations, designing and distributing merchandising of the Orange Tide, recording videos, etc.

Social workers aim to help people having a life worth living. It is necessary to reformulate our democracy. We should pursue equality and its recognition in social, legal and economic systems. We must deeply reflect on our democratic ideal, as we expressed in the European parliament in December 2014.

## 6. Conclusions

- After having analyzed the Spanish social policies through the UN measures to avoid human rights violation and the actions taken by the Spanish government, it can be said that in Spain human rights are been violated. This breach is result of social cutbacks and other regressive measures that have aggravated the existing social inequality.
- Consequences of these measures, the crisis in Spain has disproportionately affected the most vulnerable sectors of society. It means that the principle of equality and non-discrimination are not guarantee. Many people, especially women and children and adolescents have been left without basic social services. During the crisis, affected groups have not been consulted in advance on the impact of the measures adopted
- Measures based on incentives and awareness actions implemented to guarantee human rights fulfilment are insufficient.
- The Spanish government has not used enough resources to provide assistance for disadvantaged citizens; in fact it has done the opposite. During the last years, it has reduced the budget for social services even the demand has increased.
- The measures implemented by the Spanish government are directly related to social cutbacks and new policy reforms. Consequently, there has been retrogression in protecting and guaranteeing our citizens' individual social rights. In Spain, social expenditure is below European countries average

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- The inequality generated by the crisis and the measures taken to alleviate it have generated more inequality producing a *dialelo* or vicious circle that we have to break out.
- Inequality affects all spheres of life. The lack of wealth distribution generates less economic growth. It is necessary to implement measures that address inequality to avoid the current problems, ensure further development, raise birth rates and reach democratic cohesion in future generations.
- The researches undertaken by the Spanish General Council of Social Work on social services are based on the opinion of social workers. These investigations have taken shape as *First ISSE* and *Second ISSE*. These reports provide rigorous and valuable information to analyze the impact of the measures taken by the government and linked the consequences to human rights.
- Most professionals have pointed out that human rights are being violated due to the measures adopted to stop the crises. Also, the few specific technical measures have been implemented ineffectively.
- Social workers are engaging with the social reality and with people. They work in different social protection systems: health care, education, social services, housing, justice ... Therefore, they have direct knowledge about social interventions, situations of dependence, access to health care, minimum revenue insertion, situations of social exclusion and poverty.
- There is an evident lack of interest to assess the impact of the measures implemented as well as to establish standardizing data collection for all Spanish regions. Consequently, it is necessary to undertake studies to measure the impact of cutbacks in social actions and greatly improve reporting mechanisms. Many times stakeholders talk about evaluating the impact of measures adopted, however these perceptions are not based on strong indicators. In addition, social expenditures must not only recover but also increase. We must strive for Public Social Protection Systems.
- Although the crisis has affected all regions of Spain, have impacted differently in the different regions. The measures implemented in Basque Country show how "collective effort" to build "structures of social protection and redistribution mechanisms allow reaching high levels of social cohesion" and can reduce poverty (39% . CES Vasco, 2014). Basque Country has a leading role among strategies on social protection. All this shows that investing in social welfare and social services increase employment and wealth.
- Legislative reforms need to be reviewed to establish a legal framework that shields social services in the Spanish Constitution and other state regulations to ensure minimum frameworks for all Spaniards and thus alleviates the inequalities in guaranteeing social rights.
- Investment in social policies is a means to face up the crisis and increase levels of social welfare. We proved that the depreciation of the Social Protection Systems has produced negative effects that lead to human rights violations, generate exclusion and unemployment, putting us in a vicious circle of devaluation of economic and human development.

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- Social services are a social investment, generate social justice, employment and wealth and are also a measure of redistribution in these two aspects.
- Spanish General Council of Social Work has articulated a strategy for action from the social work with communities to denounce human rights violations as a result of the austerity measures that have caused a reduction in social protection in times of severe crisis for population, thus showing the intention to help bring about necessary social changes to eliminate the causes of inequality and social injustice.
- Social workers have initiated several investigations to gather hard data on the situation, but not only aim to provide data or tell stories so that nothing changes, but also aim reawakening of social paralysis in which many sectors the population are anchored. Since social work we aspire to equality and dignity and not just to reduce manifest poverty. It aims to achieve a true European Social Pact for social protection and social services supported by all political forces; a clear example is the campaign "*Social rights for dignity*".
- From the social work the European Parliament has been invoked for claiming the mentioned international standards in the field, which have already entered into force in Spain supported by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and its ratified Optional Protocol, that was finally published by Spain on February 25, 2013, and for promoting its compliance in the countries to channel properly the denouncements.
- Inequality poses a political challenge that can be solved with measures that affect the integral democracy and redistribution. This requires implementing a wage distribution (higher wages) and fiscal policies that redistribute income through taxation and transfers. Strengthening social protection is part of the solution, with minimum wage policies and minimum insertion income, progressive tax policies, collective negotiations, citizen participation, and with the elimination of discrimination of the most vulnerable groups of the population. It's necessary to put economic activation measures, which are accompanied by active inclusion measures to tackle unemployment and job insecurity.
- Social infrastructure should be increased, because social expenditure per inhabitant is very low. Social services should be seen as generators of employment and wealth. The credit, the percentage of people working in the public sector such as health, education and social services, and public financial sector should be increased.
- The reformulation of the social question is necessary. Redistribution mechanisms need to be modernized and activated today again, in this time of extreme individualism. Therefore we must speak of equality in relation to respect for diversity, independence and citizen participation.
- There have been many public protests, which the Spanish government has not wanted to hear. The profession has been involved in civil tides for the defence of social welfare, White Tide for Health, the Green Tide for Education, the Red Tide for Science and the Orange Tide in defence of social services, among others.

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- The social workers have linked us all, but our heart is dyed of orange defending social rights of the most vulnerable (structurally) and the most affected (circumstantially from the beginning of the crisis). Thus the social workers have been particularly identified with the Orange Tide against cutbacks in social services.

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