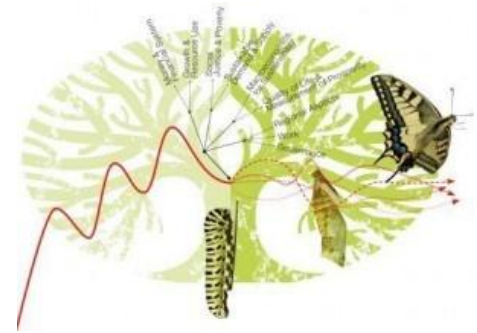


Judith Pühringer (Federal Association of Social Enterprises)

## Parallel Session III: Social Justice and Poverty

Chair: **Klemens Riegler** (Eco-social forum Vienna)

Rapporteur: **Judith Pühringer** (Federal Association of Social Enterprises)



The participants of the Workshop agreed upon in their opening remarks that the title of the WS „Social Justice and Poverty“ should be enlarged by the term „equality“ as equality is seen as a key issue in the whole debate around justice and distribution. **Martin Schürz** (Österreichische Nationalbank) provided a theoretical background on the issue of. Talking about justice of taxation for him is already one step too far away from the basic questions that have to be asked concerning justice, which are about wealth and property. We must put our focus there in order to be able to uncover the common „myths about property“: when we say „take from the rich and give it to the poor“, we first have to ask: „does it really *belong* to the rich in the first place?“ At the moment we can see, that in the discourse around justice the term is very often used to defend the status quo and is not used in an emancipatory way. Speaking about justice we shouldn't be satisfied with a superficial concept of justice, have no narrow focus on taxation justice alone, speak about wealth whenever we speak about poverty and make general principals of justice used in political debates more visible. **Michaela Moser** (European and Austrian Anti-Poverty Network) took the perspective of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion into the focus of attention. People experiencing poverty live in fear of losing their homes, of being cut off electricity and basic means to meet their livings. In the fight against poverty we have to make a strong point regarding respect and dignity for people experiencing poverty, for a minimum income that guarantees a decent life, appropriate and open access to social services, decent work and working conditions and more participation of people living in poverty when it comes to democracy. The challenges for future political decisions are in more and better social progress and just distribution of resources. There is a strong need for ending stigmatisation and stereotypisation of people living in poverty. A more equal society is necessary. She quotes „The Spirit Level“, in which the authors point out that the life-diminishing results of valuing growth above equality in rich societies can be seen all around us: inequality causes shorter, unhealthier and unhappier lives, it increases the rate of violence, obesity, imprisonment and addiction and it destroys the relationship between individuals born in the same society but different classes. The fight against poverty worldwide is the same, as the mechanisms leading into poverty are similar. Poverty is no natural catastrophe. It is produced and so there are ways to abolish it. **Margit Schratzenstaller-Altzinger** (Austrian Institute of Economic Research) talked about different concepts of justice when looking at tax-regimes. She made very clear that there is enough room for distribution within tax-systems and that taxes at the moment don't contribute to equality within the society enough. Taxes on labour and work are in comparison to other taxes very high, taxes on property could be raised and the heritage tax that was abolished in Austria in 2008 and the property tax that was abolished in 1994 should be put back into place again. Social security and VAT already signify an unproportional burden on people with lower income and should not be raised. **Hans Steiner** (Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection) rounded up the statements by pointing out the three main challenges for the welfare state in the future: the economic crisis that challenges the current model of economic growth, the ecological perspective and the decline in resources and finally the ageing society. In order to answer the future questions we have to rethink our models of working hours and to have a stronger debate regarding labour market policy and adequate labour market measures, especially looking at people who at the moment are furthest away from the labour market. There is a big danger in individualising social risks of age for example, especially when looking at the demand (and supply) side of care and health and adequate services in that sector in the future. Just distribution via a welfare system is only possible when we include these future challenges and find innovative new models of tackling social risks by adequate and poverty-proof measures of social security.