



2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion

OPEN LETTER to the Ministers for Social Affairs on the occasion of the start of 2010 the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion

19th, January 2010

Dear Ministers,

The European Union target of tackling poverty and social exclusion by 2010 is far from being achieved. We therefore welcome the commitment of the European Union to combat poverty and social exclusion by naming 2010 as the European year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. It is important that this Year goes beyond awareness-raising to achieve meaningful outcomes for those most directly concerned.

Social NGOs across Europe are close to persons suffering from many forms of poverty and social exclusion. In preparation for 2010 the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion a coalition of over 40 European Social NGO networks have come together to formulate shared demands for outcomes of the Year.

European social NGOs are calling for

An awareness-raising campaign on the structural causes of poverty and social exclusion

Launch a high-profile awareness-raising campaign on the structural causes and consequences of poverty and social exclusion as well as the causes and social impact of the current crisis. This campaign should highlight the growing gap between rich and poor and the role of the State in regulating the creation of wealth and redistributing its benefits towards the universal realisation of economic and social rights.

A strong political legacy from 2010

A new overarching social and sustainable EU strategy, based on fundamental rights, which puts people and planet first and makes progress on eradicating poverty and inequality a pre-requisite in the development of all EU policies.

A special European Council on Poverty and Social Exclusion, with a declaration by Heads of States and Governments which asserts the fight against poverty and social exclusion as a key priority for the EU agenda. This declaration should lead to a revitalised EU Social Inclusion Strategy (as part of the Social Open Method of Coordination) which engages all stakeholders and ensures progress on agreed national and EU poverty targets. The declaration should commit to tangible steps forward on guaranteeing access for all to decent work and affordable, quality universal services – a decent home, affordable heating, education, health and long-term care, adequate minimum income, training and employment services....

Real progress on the adequacy of Minimum Income Schemes, so as to be capable of lifting every child, adult and older person out of poverty and delivering on their right to a dignified life. The agreement of a common EU definition of adequacy and of common methods to establish adequacy as well as regular updating in line with the cost of living, should inform an EU Framework Directive on Minimum Income which would mark a historic breakthrough in EU cooperation to achieve higher level social standards.

A commitment to ending street homelessness, building on the European Parliament's written declaration and the development of a European framework definition of homelessness to enable the gathering of comparable and reliable data and to provide annual updates on action taken and progress made in EU Member States towards ending homelessness.

Enhanced dialogue with people in poverty and anti poverty NGOs

People in poverty, and the organisations that support them, are essential parts of finding long-term solutions to poverty. EU and National Guidelines must be developed and implemented to foster their participation and active involvement in governance. Financial investment at all levels, local, national and European is needed to support the implementation of the guidelines and to ensure the resourced and active participation of anti poverty NGOs as equal partners in decision-making processes at all levels.

Funding to underpin EU Commitments to fight poverty and social exclusion

An EU poverty programme: a new programme should build on the social inclusion section of the existing EU programme (PROGRESS) and provide additional support for activities within Member States to enable national level stakeholders to engage with the EU strategies and to support exchange of knowledge and learning through national and local level 'demonstration projects' in the fight against poverty and social exclusion. This programme should allocate sufficient funds to support the participation of people experiencing poverty in policy making and for the capacity building of their organisations. New commitments to ensure that EU **Structural Funds deliver on the fight against poverty and social exclusion.**

We ask you to give priority to achieving the above demands, by influencing the Presidency outcomes of the Year:

- firstly by agreeing a **political commitment** in the outcomes of the meeting of Ministers for Social Affairs which will follow the annual Round Table on Poverty and Social Exclusion in October 2010
- secondly by supporting a **high-level declaration by Heads of States** during the December Council.

Yours sincerely,

The EY 2010 Coalition of Social NGOs

Cc: Members of the Social Protection Committee

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The EY 2010 END POVERTY NGO coalition is coordinated by EAPN, the European Anti Poverty Network

It includes: the **National Networks of EAPN**, **AFEM** (Association des Femmes de l'Europe Méridionale), **AGE** (European Older People's Platform), **ATD Quart Monde**, **Autism Europe**, **Caritas Europa**, **CEBSD** (Combined European Bureau for Social Development), **CECODHAS** (European Liaison Committee for Social Housing), **CECOP** (European Federation of workers' cooperatives, social cooperatives and social enterprises), **CEV** (European Volunteer Centre), **COFACE** (Confederation of Family organisations in the EU), **Eurodiaconia**, **EAEA** (European Association for the Education of Adults), **EASPD** (European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities), **EBU** (European Blind Union), **EDF** (European Disability Forum), **EFSC** (European Foundation for Street Children), **ENAR** (European Network Against Racism), **EPHA** (European Public Health Alliance), **EPPF** (International Planned Parenthood Federation European Network), **EPR** (European Platform for Rehabilitation), **ERIO** (European Roma Information Office), **ESAN** (European Social Action Network), **EURAG** (European Federation of Older Persons), **Eurochild**, **European Social Platform**, **EWL** (European Women's Lobby), **FAI** (International Federation of Associations of Christian Associations of Italian workers), **FEANTSA** (European Federation of Organisations working with the Homeless), **FEFAF** (European Federation of Unpaid Carers at Home), **ICSW** (International Council for Social Welfare), **IJJO** (International Juvenile Justice Observatory), **ILGA Europe** (International Lesbian and Gay Association Europe), **Inclusion Europe**, **MHE** (Mental Health Europe), **Red Cross EU Office**, **SMES-Europa** (Mental Health Social Exclusion Europa), **SOLIDAR**, **Workability Europe** and **Yes Forum** (Youth and European Social Work), **YFJ** (European Youth Forum).

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