

## A shared message from social NGOs across Europe

### 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion

2010 has been designated as the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. The Year comes during a time of severe financial, economic and social crisis. Part of the necessary response to this crisis is the renewal of a common vision for the type of society we want to create. A commitment to building a Europe for all, where all women and men of all ages can live free of poverty and social exclusion should be the legacy of the 2010 year. This would also contribute to a real recovery plan to address the current crisis.

#### Poverty is...

*... "days without bread are the longest days"*

*"having your human rights trampled or ... "constant pressure. It wears you down. Nobody prepared me for living in such harsh conditions"*

*... "what really wears homeless people out is time. Always waiting, always being on the go..."*

*... "waking up in bad housing conditions which saps the will to do anything"*

*... "every agency wanting the same papers. And more photocopies every time"*

*... "stealing our future by keeping us out of touch with the knowledge-based society"*

*... "being paid regularly, but my debts still mounting up anyway"*

*"hard to talk about, but when I did start to talk to others I felt no different from them and I wasn't embarrassed".*

*... "I live alone. I am sick. I am afraid of loneliness... I cry a lot but try to look calm and collected when"*

*... "my children will inherit my poverty"*

(Quotes from people experiencing poverty)

## Poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon

It is not simply the lack of financial resources and income, whether through employment or social benefits. It also encompasses the notion of **vulnerability, precariousness, lack of opportunities, and denial of rights**, such as access to education and health, culture, housing, employment, services and infrastructure, as well as access to information and political participation.

Poverty is a daily reality for millions of people across the European Union:

- 16% of the EU population are at risk of poverty, i.e. about 79 million people.
- There has been no significant decrease since 2000 (15% of the EU population in 2001 in 15 Member States), whilst prior to the crisis there had been increases in 5 Member States.
- Having a job does not always protect people from the risk of poverty. In 2007, 8% of EU-27 citizens in employment (aged 18 and over) lived below the poverty threshold.
- Facing a higher poverty risk are women (17%), children (19%), young people (20%) and older people (19%) while groups such as homeless, Roma, migrants and ethnic minorities are often facing extreme forms of poverty.
- In 2007 the income of the richest 20% was nearly 5 times higher than the income of the poorest 20%.
- 64% of EU citizens believe that more decision making should take place at European level to protect social rights (Eurobarometer Sept. 2009)

Against the backdrop of the worldwide financial and economic crisis, NGOs are concerned that the current **EU strategy of 'growth and jobs' and market liberalisation, without attention to fairness, inclusion and re-distribution, has failed to deliver a social Europe, where everyone has access to fundamental rights.**

2010, the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion, represents an opportunity to make policy changes that will have a real impact on fighting inequalities and create a Europe free of poverty in the long term. We therefore call for a wide mobilisation at local, national, and European level.

## Ending Poverty and Social Exclusion across Europe means

### Rights and Dignity for all

It is time once and for all to break the stereotypes in relation to people experiencing poverty: there are no 'deserving' or 'undeserving' poor. Social rights, to health, housing, education, culture and income, are fundamental rights which must be available to all, irrespective of age, gender or legal status. The cycle of intergenerational transmission of poverty must be broken. Principles of solidarity, equality between women and men, equal opportunities for all, non-discrimination and participatory democracy must shape policies aimed at ending poverty and social exclusion.

### An economy at the service of people and public interest

Europe's economic systems must be redesigned to safeguard people from poverty and social exclusion. Increased public investment and a fairer redistribution of resources and wealth must regain a central place in designing both economic and social policies. Access to other less traditional forms of economy (social economy, for example) should be fostered, not only to respond to new needs in the community but also as source of employment.

### Mobilising all policies

Poverty has both structural and personal causes, and is generated and perpetuated every day through inadequate policies and lack of political commitment. It is time to rethink the system – to put into place policies where solidarity, social rights and public good come first. Building a poverty-free Europe requires that all policies – social, economic, employment, health, education, cultural and housing - are mobilised and

co-ordinated in order to end poverty in Europe at all levels, that they are mutually reinforcing and that they are enforced.

### Guaranteeing universal services and providing necessary targeted measures

Accessible universal services for all are essential foundations for redressing the inequalities leading to poverty and social exclusion. In addition, specific measures are necessary, recognising that people facing extreme forms of poverty are particularly vulnerable and that their fundamental rights are extensively violated.

### Participation and commitment

Participation and commitment of everyone is central to building inclusive societies. Strong and well functioning representative democratic institutions are essential to ensure the defence of the public interest. More participatory forms of democracy are necessary when important decisions affecting our lives are taken, and must ensure that the voices of people experiencing the most extreme forms of poverty and social exclusion are heard and acted upon. Transparency and accountability in policy-making are essential to foster trust in our democratic processes.

### Solidarity across the globe

The European dimension of the fight against poverty and social exclusion cannot be dissociated from global challenges linked to demographic change, migration, climate change, and decent work. The structural causes generating poverty are linked, and increased solidarity between the different struggles to end poverty across the globe is needed. The EU needs to strengthen its role as a global actor for trade justice, debt cancellation, poverty eradication and the effective application of decent work standards for everyone.

## In order to Build a Social Europe and End Poverty We need Political Action now!

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

the National Networks of EAPN, AFEM (Association des Femmes de l'Europe Méridionale), AGE (European Older Persons' Platform), **FAI** (International Federation of Associations of Christian Associations of Italian workers), 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), EAPSD (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 Youth Forum**, **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

Contact: [info@endpoverty.eu](mailto:info@endpoverty.eu) (tbc!)  
[www.endpoverty.eu](http://www.endpoverty.eu)

# WE CALL FOR

**2010 BUILDING A  
EUROPE FOR ALL**  
[www.endpoverty.eu](http://www.endpoverty.eu)



## 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 crisis. 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.

## 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.

## 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, 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, should inform an EU Framework Directive on Minimum Income which would mark a historic breakthrough in EU cooperation to achieve higher level social standards.

## 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.**