25 June 2015

**European Anti-Poverty Network**

**Draft Final Declaration**

*General Assembly*

*Bilbao, 4th of July 2015*

More than 110 delegates of the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN), representing 31 National Networks and 18 European Organizations met in Bilbao, at their annual General Assembly. They strongly urged the European Heads of State and Government, the European Commission and the European Parliament to give priority to balancing social and economic policies with a coherent view and strategy to eradicate poverty, social exclusion, and combat increasing inequalities.

Moreover, EAPN delegates also called urgently and with equal and mounting concern on the institutions to respond to the humanitarian crisis of migration and demonstrate that the founding principles of solidarity, respect of democracy and Human Rights, are still a reality.

Finally, EAPN delegates declared their solidarity with the people in Greece who are suffering the consequences of an ill-conceived and irrational austerity programme which only benefits the richer member states of the European Union, but does not address the real problems that Greek people are experiencing.

Delegates stressed that:

The participation of the people experiencing poverty and exclusion, and their NGOs must become a new priority, if the EU is to restore democratic legitimacy and develop solutions that can deliver on these rights and promises.

* **Whereas an estimated 22,000 migrants have died in the Mediterranean between 2000 and 2014 on their fatal journey to Europe;**
* **Whereas more than 1 in 4, more than 121 million people are experiencing poverty every day in the European Union;**
* **Whereas the continuing austerity policy force more and more people into poverty**.

**Migration policy based on human rights!**

EAPN underlines that the EU must show that it is able to respond strongly to this humanitarian emergency with a decent, short-, medium- and long-term plan to save people’s lives and prevent hundreds of thousands of people who trusted Europe in their quest for a better and safer life from falling into poverty

EAPN highlights the agreement by the Heads of State and Government in April to “mobilise all efforts to prevent more people from dying at sea and to address the root causes of migration.

EAPN calls on Member States to support the Commission’s proposals in the Migration Agenda, to share equal responsibility for the settlement of asylum seeker, and provide additional funds to ensure human treatment in the immediate and longer term; and asks the EU to go further to tackle the economic as well as the political causes of immigration, arising from growing inequalities between the North and the South. In this context, EAPN is deeply disappointed that the recent European Council was unable to agree on a working quota system.

**2. Economic policies and process that deliver on poverty**

EAPN notes, in this context, European Commission President Juncker’s assessment that poverty and sustainable development are the most urgent issues of our time.[[1]](#footnote-1)

EAPN recalls Marianne Thyssen, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, saying that “for Europe tackling unemployment, inequality and poverty... it is about ensuring political, economic and social stability and progress… and that decent jobs and social protection are fundamental.[[2]](#footnote-2)

EAPN also notes the recent Five Presidents’ Report “that an adequate social protection system must be in place to protect the most vulnerable in society, including a social protection floor.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

EAPN believes that there will be serious political and economic consequences unless the EU and its Member States change course.

EAPN urges the European Union and its Member States to stop the austerity approach and replace it with a social investment and social standards approach, which invests in quality jobs, services and social protection and develops common EU standards on decent wages, adequate minimum income and access to services, putting people’s well-being and quality of life at the centre of policy-making.

EAPN underlines the importance of restoring Europe 2020 goals of inclusive and sustainable growth to the European Semester, putting poverty and other social targets at the heart, with country-specific recommendations for all countries. This must be backed by an EU integrated antipoverty strategy based on access to rights, resources and services, and supported by 20% of ESF funds.

**Give Citizens a Voice!**

EAPN believes that the current economic and political situation calls for urgent and comprehensive measures to address poverty in all its forms and ensure meaningful and comprehensive stakeholder involvement to promote participation of civil society including people experiencing poverty as well as increase the role of national and European Parliaments.

EAPN recognizes the increased support from the European Commission to encourage engagement of anti-poverty NGOs in the European Semester/Europe 2020 at national level, but highlights that it does not go far enough; EAPN calls on the Commission to agree obligatory guidelines for structured dialogue with stakeholder at EU, national level, establish indicators to strictly monitor progress, and provide financial support to ensure effective engagement of people experiencing poverty.

EAPN reiterates that the EU must develop a coherent and balanced, democratic, social and economic strategy committed to delivering smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, which can take concrete actions to reduce poverty and inequality, with people not markets at the heart.

Bilbao, 4 July 2015

1. Jean-Claude Juncker, Speech at the Opening of the European Year of Development, European Commission, January 2015 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Intervention of Commissioner Thyssen at the Integration Segment of the Economic and Social Council, Brussels, 30 March 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. “Completing Europe’s Economic and Monetary Union,” Report by Jean-Claude Juncker in cooperation with Donald Tusk, Jeroen Dijsselbloem, Mario Draghi and Martin Schulz. European Commission, June 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)