

# Anti**POVERTY**MAG

Magazine of the European Anti-Poverty Network

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## **Poverty Reduction: Will Member States Break Their Promises? The contribution of Structural Funds to poverty reduction at risk**

Topic in brief: a new  
Fund for European  
Aid to the Most  
Deprived

Special issue on  
the campaign  
**EU Money for  
Poverty Reduction  
NOW!**

EAPN's toolkit on  
Structural Funds:  
helping NGOs have  
their voices heard

With contributions from 2 EAPN national networks: EAPN Spain and EAPN France  
And 2 European organisations: Eurochild and Caritas Europa



## Member States and Broken Promises?

BY FINTAN FARRELL, DIRECTOR OF EAPN

This issue of the EAPN Mag on the future of the EU Structural Funds tells the story of how the Member States are ready to break the promise they made when they agreed the EU Poverty Reduction Target. One of the key fruits of this agreed target has been the proposal from the Commission to ring-fence 25% of the next round of Structural Funds for the European Social Fund (ESF) and to ring-fence 20% of the ESF to fight poverty and social exclusion.

Given the reality shown by official figures that instead of reducing poverty and social exclusion the number has increased by almost 4 million; given that our members, from their work on the ground, know that the reality is far harsher than this figure reflects, EAPN believes that the Commission's proposal is the minimum that could be expected to address this reality. The rejection of this proposal by Member States is a clear

break with the commitment they made when they agreed the Poverty Reduction Target.

However, the failure to agree a budget at the special Council in November gives us the opportunity to hold the Member States accountable for the promises they made and to put pressure on them to back the proposal from the Commission. We also need the Commission to stand firm in defending its proposal and, as you will read in this issue of EAPN's magazine, the European Parliament has taken a strong stance to support this proposal.

I hope that you will find in this issue the information you need to take action at regional, national and EU levels, to ensure the future European Social Fund can deliver a social-inclusion agenda. I hope also that you will find the information to be an effective partner in the next round of implementation of the Funds.

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# Will Structural Funds deliver on the poverty reduction target?

BY VINCENT CARON, POLICY OFFICER, EAPN

Initially very supportive of the Commission's legislative proposals for the future Cohesion Policy 2014-2020, EAPN is now deeply concerned by the way the Council is undermining any realistic delivery on the poverty reduction target through Structural Funds (and especially the European Social Fund). EAPN has been a key player from the very beginning of the process promoting and defending "poverty reduction and social inclusion" in the new Structural Funds both by lobbying on its own with its national networks as well as in alliances.

## *The Commission's proposals: a step forward...*

On 6 October 2011, the Commission released its legislative proposals for all the different Structural Funds. EAPN welcomed these draft Regulations as a step towards a better delivery on the poverty reduction target of the Europe 2020 Strategy as well as a major improvement regarding the implementation of the partnership principle (aiming at ensuring the involvement of all relevant partners including NGOs in the whole Structural Funds' process).

In the general regulation of Structural Funds containing provisions applicable to all Structural Funds, poverty reduction and social inclusion are clearly listed as a common objective. The binding nature of the partnership principle is put forward implying NGOs' involvement in the drafting of the Partnership contracts (i.e. new strategic agreements between a Member State and the European Commission, in cooperation with partners, on the use of Structural Funds, detailing for each, what amounts of SF money will deliver on each of the Europe 2020 headline targets)<sup>1</sup> and in the whole process around Operational Programmes of an European Code. This has been confirmed by the proposal of a European Code of Conduct on Partnership which gives minimum requirements to Member States on this matter.

This progress is even more visible in the Regulation proposal on the European Social Fund (ESF), which makes this Fund the European financial instrument to deliver on the

poverty reduction target by **earmarking at least 20% of its budget to poverty reduction and social inclusion**. This would also be ensured by a **secured minimum budget for the ESF of at least 25% of the Cohesion Policy's budget. These "20-25%" are called the "minimum shares"**. Furthermore, within the thematic objective of "Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty", active inclusion is listed as an investment priority.

Almost all these aforementioned positive aspects have been backed by the European Parliament during the vote in the EMPL committee last July.

## *... undermined by the Council*

While discussing the Commission's proposals, Member States were pushing to get a maximum flexibility on how to use Structural Funds at national level. At the June General Affairs Council meeting, they rejected the minimum shares for the ESF. The reference to the minimum budget for the ESF was deleted. The reference to the 20% ESF earmarking remains, but Member States could use the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) money spent on social inclusion to count towards this 20%. It would also imply that Member States could prioritize ERDF money (i.e. other Structural Funds money for big infrastructures like transports, R&D, housing) to fulfil the poverty reduction target, rather than human resources/services, via the ESF.

In addition, the Council rejected the binding nature of the partnership principle and deleted the reference to the European Code of Conduct on partnership.

Unfortunately, during the November General Affairs Council, Member States rejected again the minimum shares for ESF. Now, the Parliament will vote in Plenary by the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2013 on all the Regulations. Regarding the EU Budget, Heads of State failed to agree on it during the extraordinary summit of the European Council on 22-23 November. The question is delayed till February 2013 but it is very likely that the Structural Funds' Budget will decrease, which will inevitably have a negative impact on the ESF budget.

## *Positioning EAPN as a key actor*

At EU level, EAPN started lobbying on the design of the new round of Structural Funds far ahead of the Commission's proposals. Already in 2009, EAPN delivered its first key messages, based on its survey assessing the contribution<sup>2</sup> of Structural Funds to social inclusion in the current programming period 2007-2013. A more comprehensive positioning on how to promote social inclusion and fight against poverty was made in EAPN's response to the 5<sup>th</sup> Cohesion Report<sup>3</sup> in late January 2010. In this response, EAPN clearly asked for a binding earmarking mechanism for the ESF on poverty and social inclusion which was ultimately integrated in the Commission's proposal. EAPN key messages were repeatedly voiced during formal and informal meetings organised by DG REGIO and DG EMPL.

The **Structural Funds** are financial tools set up to implement the regional policy of the European Union. They aim to reduce regional disparities in terms of income, wealth and opportunities. Europe's poorer regions receive most of the support, but all European regions are eligible for funding under the policy's various funds and programmes. The current Regional Policy framework is set for a period of seven years, from 2007 to 2013.

The Structural Funds are made up of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF). Together with the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund make up the great bulk of EU funding, and the majority of total EU spending.

- 1) Financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and/or by the Cohesion Fund, an Operational Programme (OP) sets out a region's priorities for delivering these funds. Although there is scope for regional flexibility, a region's priorities must be consistent with the Member State's National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) – which establishes the main priorities for spending the EU structural funding a Member State receives. There is an Operational Programme for each region in the EU. These OPs, just like the NSRF, have to be approved by the European Commission before any implementation. Source: Wikipedia and European Commission.
- 2) The contribution of Cohesion Policy to social inclusion - What role for social NGOs? EAPN mid-term assessment of the current programming period and perspective for post-2013 (EN/FR) [www.eapn.eu/images/stories/docs/EAPN-position-papers-and-reports/2009-social-inclusion-survey-cohesion-policy.pdf](http://www.eapn.eu/images/stories/docs/EAPN-position-papers-and-reports/2009-social-inclusion-survey-cohesion-policy.pdf)
- 3) A Response to the Fifth Report on Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion of the European Commission (EN, IT), January 2011. (<http://www.eapn.eu/en/news-and-publications/publications/eapn-position-papers-and-reports/response-to-the-fifth-report-on-economic-social-and-territorial-cohesion-of-the-european-commission>)





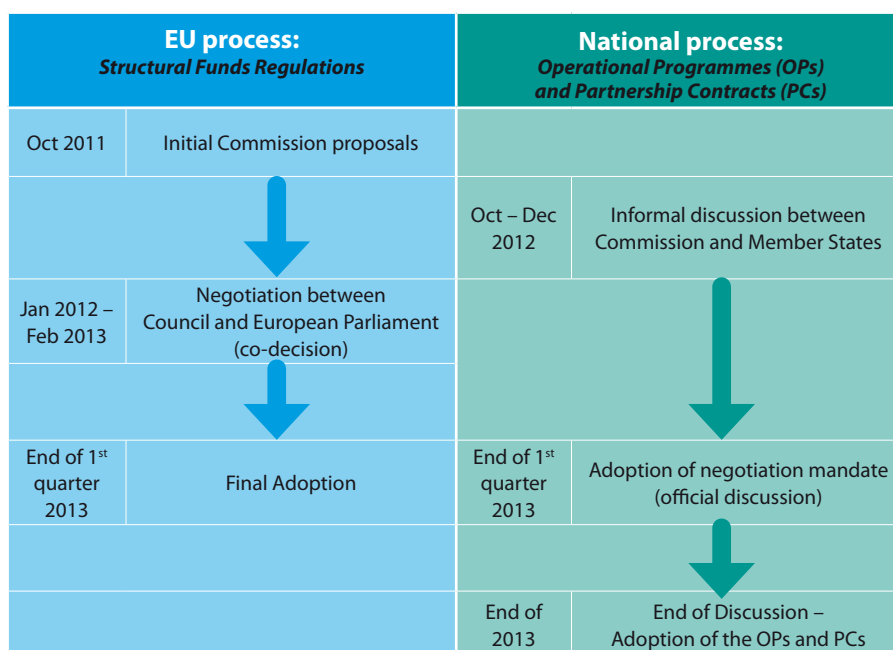
Then, once the Commission's proposals were published, EAPN drafted a detailed Response, which prepared EAPN's work towards the Parliament. Proposals of amendments to the draft General Regulations as well as the ESF and ERDF were sent to all the Rapporteurs and Shadow Rapporteurs with a success take-up in the ESF Report. EAPN was invited by the EMPL Committee to present its views during an exchange of views.

At national level, EAPN also works together with its national networks to help them get involved from the start of the design of the partnership contracts and operational programmes. A toolkit was published in October 2012 to help social NGOs make sure that the poverty reduction target is well-reflected in Structural Funds in their countries (see next article).

### EAPN fostering alliance-building

To be more visible and effective in its lobbying work, EAPN has been working over the past 12 months in partnership with other key actors in this field.

First of all, it has been heavily contributing to the Social Platform's initiatives (drafting of proposal of amendments, letters to EU-policy makers, campaign on the EU Budget).



Secondly, it joined a coalition of 42 European Organisations (representing Trade-Unions, economic actors and social and environmental NGOs) to defend the partnership principle which is being watered down by the Parliament and the Council.

EAPN has gone even further by initiating and coordinating a joint campaign involving 19 social NGOs to defend the minimum shares for ESF, *EU Money for Poverty Reduction, NOW!* A full article is dedicated to this campaign on page 11 of this magazine.



## Facing the facts: Poverty exists across Europe



in is at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU.

Out of an EU population of about **500 million** people:

- **84 million** people live **below the poverty threshold** (people earning less than 60% of the national median income)
  - **22 million** people live **materially deprived** (people who cannot afford **goods, services or activities which are seen as basic necessities in their country**)
  - **18 million** people live in **jobless households**
- = **120 million** people at risk of or experiencing poverty or social exclusion

## What can the EU do about it?

### Cohesion Policy Budget (CPB)

*European financial tool to reduce inequalities within the EU*

### European Social Fund (ESF)

*Part of the CPB and the main tool to promote employment and economic and social cohesion*

- 2010** National governments in EU countries agreed on a **poverty reduction target**: to get **at least 20 million people out of poverty by 2020**.
- 2011** To back this poverty reduction target, the **Commission proposed to allocate 25% of the Cohesion Policy Budget to the European Social Fund, and to secure 20% of this Fund to social inclusion and poverty reduction**.
- 2012** Member States did not reach any agreement on the EU's budget.
- 2013** The Commission's proposal needs to be backed – it is the minimum that can be done to respect - and hopefully reach - the poverty reduction target.



# EAPN Toolkit on Structural Funds: helping NGOs have their voices heard

BY VINCENT CARON, POLICY OFFICER, EAPN

## *The starting point: opening the doors at national level*

In parallel to the discussion between the Council and the European Parliament on the future Structural Funds' Regulation, national authorities already began before the summer 2012 to launch informal processes of drafting their Partnership contracts and Operational Programmes. Unfortunately, despite the more binding partnership principle proposed by the European Commission at all stages of the Structural Funds process, proposing the involvement of all relevant partners (including NGOs) from the very start, i.e. the design stage, this very essential stage remains, in the vast majority of EU Member States (especially in the "new" ones), a 'behind closed doors' process with little opportunities for stakeholders to have their voices heard.

## *Key milestones*

The informal discussion between the Commission and EU Members States has just 'officially' started, with the publication of the Commission's position papers for each Member State. These documents are supposed to guide Member States on the future programme's structures and priorities. They also aim at preparing the negotiation mandate, which will underpin the discussion between the Commission and each Member State on the Operational Programmes.

- By December 2012: End of the informal discussion between the Commission and EU Member States;
- By the first quarter of 2013: Adoption of the negotiate mandate as staff working document;
- By the end of 2013: Final adoption of the agreement by the European Commission.

Therefore, it is crucial for National Networks to start getting involved in the next programming period of Structural Funds before the end of the informal discussion between the Commission and Member States, if they are to influence their National Authorities (competent ministries - Finance, Employment and Social Affairs...), as well as the European Commission (via the Desk Officers for each country) in the drafting of the Operational Programmes and the Partnership Contracts.

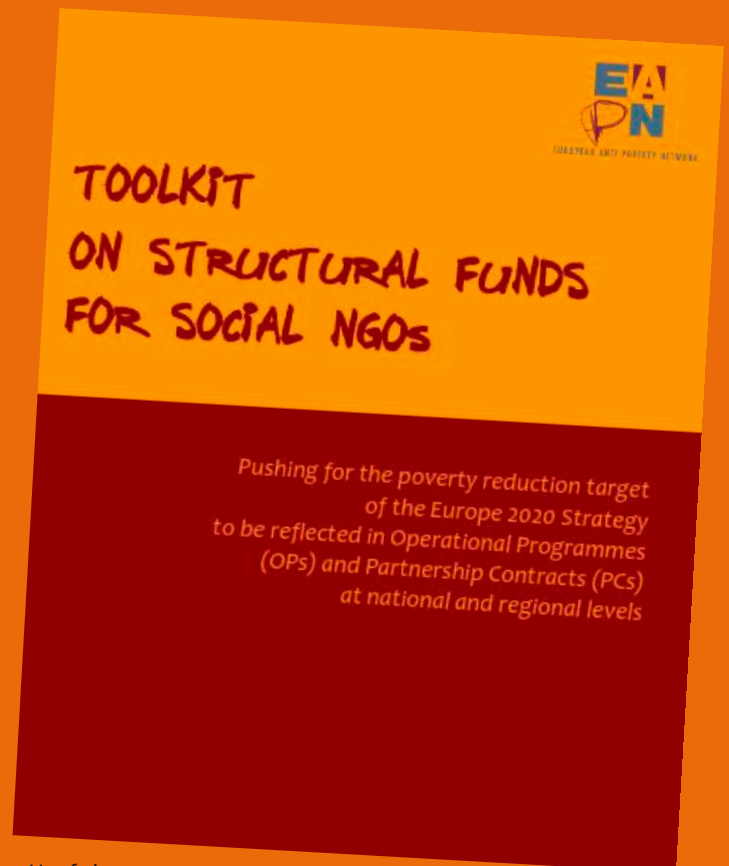
## *Making social NGOs' voices heard from the start of the process*

Drafted by a Task Force of 6 National Experts, EAPN's Toolkit aims to support the advocacy work of National Networks and social NGOs; to help them press their National Authorities to prioritize the new social targets of Europe 2020, and especially the poverty reduction target, both in the Partnership Contracts and Operational Programmes.

## *3 objectives*

1. It provides a better understanding of the main characteristics of the future Structural Funds Regulations for the programming period 2014-2020 by outlining the current state of play, starting from an analysis of the Commission's legislative proposals, to a summary of the most striking points of debate between the European Parliament and the Council.
2. It helps National Networks to get involved in the Structural Funds' process, and to make the best use of the new Europe 2020 Strategy and poverty reduction target. This is why this Toolkit provides, first, a brief overview of EAPN's work in promoting social inclusion and ensuring a full delivery on the poverty reduction target through the Cohesion Policy.

Foremost, this toolkit was perceived from the beginning as a very practical document, easy to read and use, with:



- Useful advice/tips on whom to contact in the Commission (Desk Officers) and in National Ministries; all the key EU documents with related links; explanation on the process of negotiation between the European Commission and Member States; tips on how to build an advocacy strategy. The EU jargon related to Structural Funds is also explained in a glossary of terms. In addition, a template fiche is provided to really ease social NGOs' work in developing their own proposals on how to fulfill the poverty reduction target in their own country. In that regard, EAPN key messages for 2013 onwards are also included.
  - Good practices from 3 different EU countries of successful NGO-driven initiatives in influencing the negotiation process on Structural Funds.
3. Ultimately, it helps National Networks and their members to be seen by competent public authorities, from the start, as key interlocutors on the next programming period of Structural Funds.

## *What's next?*

This toolkit has been widely disseminated both at EU and national level.<sup>1</sup> EAPN Spain adapted this toolkit to the national and regional circumstances to make it a lobbying tool towards their Spanish regional authorities. Five very active working groups have been set up in 5 different Spanish regions. EAPN Italy has already planned to organize training sessions for the whole National Network based on this toolkit.

Furthermore, EAPN National Networks want to ensure a proper follow up of the outcomes of this toolkit at national level by sharing experiences, within EAPN, on its use and effectiveness towards National/ Regional Governments and managing authorities.

<sup>1</sup> The toolkit is already available in Spanish and will soon be in other languages (Italian, Portuguese, Hungarian, and probably other languages).



# INTERVIEW with Elisabeth Morin-Chartier

Member of the European Parliament and Rapporteur on the European Social Fund

***"We want and we'll fight for this 20%, ring-fenced for the fight against poverty!"***

In the framework of its campaign **EU Money for Poverty Reduction NOW!** urging Member States to back the European Commission's proposal, EAPN interviewed Mrs Elisabeth Morin-Chartier, member of the European Parliament in charge of employment and social affairs issues and Rapporteur on the European Social Fund for the 27 Member States. Mrs Morin-Chartier has been pushing strongly for Member States to support the European Commission's proposal, as they will have the final say on the issue.

*EAPN: What is your role as European Parliament Rapporteur on the European Social Fund?*

E. M.-C. That means I am re-doing the legislation<sup>1</sup> around the functioning of the European Social Fund for the programming period 2014-2020 – the issue is crucial! We are currently working for the European citizens until 2020.

Right now, 84 billion euro are foreseen for the 27 Member States and as our goal is to preserve social cohesion, we would need 20% of that budget ring-fenced to fight poverty.

Because the Social Fund is a labour inclusion fund, i.e. social inclusion through labour inclusion.

And, beyond this aim to help people into employment, there are still people who live in a situation of extreme poverty and need a helping hand.

That's why we want and we'll fight for this 20%, ring-fenced for the fight against poverty.

*EAPN: What are the prospects for the European Commission's proposal to be approved?*

I had a very favourable vote from the Employment and Social Affairs Committee of the European Parliament on the report I'm drafting. Where things will block, and be very difficult to get passed, will be at the European Council level, because the Governments of Member States do not want to have part of the European Social Fund, which represents an awful lot of money, ring-fenced on a specific social target.

*EAPN: Why are Member States reluctant to supporting the proposal?*

Because they see it as an infringement of their freedom to choose what they will do with the European Social Fund. And we, as parliamentarians, representing the European citizens, we want this ring-fencing. I will lead the negotiation team from the European Parliament in the Council. In that team, there are only women [from all political parties], who know the issue perfectly well, as we have been working on it for over a year and a half, almost two years and I can assure you that none of them is willing to give up. These negotiations with the Council will be tough, but we will stand firm.



## What Is a Rapporteur?

A rapporteur could perhaps be viewed as the "liaison officer" of a Parliamentary committee, and has several key functions.

a) The rapporteur "reports" the findings of the European Parliamentary committee to the plenary. In that capacity the rapporteur's opinion carries a lot of weight. If you want to influence a proposal it is important to ensure that the rapporteur is aware of your concerns.

b) The rapporteur's other key function is to follow what a proposal is doing as it goes through the legislative process, and to ensure the other institutions are doing what they have undertaken to do, in relation to the proposal. A common example of this would be, if the European Parliament had already seen the proposal and voted on it, if the Council were to significantly change the text of the proposal it should come back to the European Parliament to be re-checked and if necessary, voted on again.

The rapporteur therefore plays a very significant role, and if you are interested in influencing a proposal it is important that you know not only who the MEPs are on the committee dealing with the proposal, but also who the rapporteur is.

Quite often the rapporteur will also be the chairman of the committee.

Source: European Law Monitor, <http://www.europeanlaw-monitor.org/what-is-guide-to-key-eu-terms/eu-parliament-what-is-a-rapporteur.html>.

<sup>1</sup> The interview with Mrs. E. Morin-Chartier was carried out on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2012. Since then, the report was finalized and the European Parliament still needs to vote on it in a plenary session. As the Rapporteur on the issue, Mrs. Morin-Chartier had indeed a leading role in steering the Parliament's negotiation on this co-decision's procedure (i.e. an agreement needs to be reached between the European Parliament and the European Council).



# The new Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived *in a nutshell*

BY VINCENT CARON, POLICY OFFICER, EAPN

**On 24 October 2012, the European Commission published its legislative proposals on the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived<sup>1</sup>. This Fund is the successor of the EU's food distribution programme, known as the 'Food Aid Programme'. In 2010, over 18 million people benefitted from this programme.**

Historically included in the Common Agriculture Policy's budget, the Food Aid Programme operated on the basis of the CAP's surpluses. However, market purchases gradually increased as the level of these surpluses was diminishing. For that reason, and as the EU had no competence in that regard, 6 Member States attacked the legal basis of the Food Aid Programme in the Court of European Justice in 2011. A political agreement was reached in December 2011, and the Programme could continue in 2012-2013. Thus, the need for a solution for the new programming period of EU funds (2014-2020) became more and more pressing.

## **Key features of the European Commission's proposal on the Fund to the Most Deprived**

Following a consultation process involving different stakeholders including social NGOs and Food Banks, the European Commission released its proposal on the *Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived* in October 2012. To find the most adequate legal basis, the Commission proposed to make this new Fund a specific instrument within the Cohesion Policy so as to complement the existing financial instruments addressing social cohesion (including the European Social Fund) as well as to solve the aforementioned issue of the legal basis. Benefitting from the new legal basis of the Cohesion Policy, the Fund would cover a wider scope of intervention and Member States would also have greater flexibility on the way to use it.

This Fund, says the Commission's proposal, should also contribute to the delivery on the poverty reduction target by dealing with the most severe aspects of poverty.

The overall aim of this Fund would be to provide support to the most deprived people, who are too excluded to benefit from the activation measures of the European Social Fund, through accompanying measures. Member States would be able to choose either to keep the food-aid distribution component which remains from the previous Food Aid Programme or to deal with several aspects of severe deprivation: homelessness or children's severe deprivation of basic consumer goods.

Member States could also take accompanying measures, complementing material support, to contribute to the social reintegration of the most deprived persons.

Member States would select the partner organisations to distribute this new programme<sup>2</sup>.

As far as the partnership principle is concerned, this should be applied both at national and EU levels. At national level, relevant partners (including NGOs) should be involved in the drafting of the Operational Programmes. At EU level, an EU platform would be set up to facilitate the exchange of experience, capacity building and networking, as well as dissemination of relevant outcomes in the area of non-financial assistance to the most deprived persons.

## **A limited budget under threat**

The proposed budget for the 7-year period (2014-2020) is € 2,5 Billion. This amount is very limited, all the more so when correlated to the growing number of people who cannot face their basic needs as a result of the economic crisis and the austerity measures. Another aggravating factor is that all the 28 Member States<sup>3</sup> will have to use this Fund - or the money will be lost. Only 20 Member States make use of the current Food Aid Programme with a bigger yearly amount of money than foreseen in the new Fund.

Moreover, there is still no certainty as to where the money will be taken from within Structural Funds and, in particular, within the European Social Fund.

The discussion on this new Fund is taking place in the more global framework of the ongoing negotiation on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) (2014-2020). The Cypriot Presidency released on 29 October a revised proposal for the negotiating box<sup>4</sup> (i.e. all the different elements related to the EU budget under discussion) including a 20% cut in its budget (i.e. € 2 billion).

The European Council did not reach an agreement during the Extraordinary Summit on the EU budget that took place on 22-23 November 2012. The question of the survival and of the amount of this Fund is therefore still pending, till the Council takes a final decision on it, hopefully at the next extraordinary EU summit in February 2013. Only then will the discussion on the Fund be able to start between the Council and the European Parliament and the final adoption would then be expected mid-2013. This delay however gives EAPN an opportunity

to improve the content of the Commission's proposal, especially towards the European Parliament, which seems to be keen to support it.

## **EAPN's involvement**

EAPN together with some of its European Organisations (Eurodiaconia, FEANTSA, Caritas Europa, FEBA) lobbied strongly to make sure that the Food Aid Programme would be maintained after 2013, both before the release of the Commission's proposal - by approaching Member States and by getting involved in the stakeholders' consultation organised by the Commission - as well as after by meeting Van Rompuy's cabinet in view of the November extraordinary summit on the EU budget. We repeatedly stressed the crucial need for this Fund to meet the basic needs of a growing number of people and for this issue to be put in the more global framework of an integrated EU anti-poverty strategy, allocating the adequate amount of funding to Structural Funds and particularly to the European Social Fund.

1) See on European Commission's website: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=1704&furtherNews=yes>.

2) There would be one simplified Operational Programme per country. The Commission's proposal is that a 15% co-financing rate would be requested from Member States (with a possibility of lowering this rate for countries encountering temporary budgetary difficulties, like Troika countries). The Commission would also provide 11% pre-financing to cover the expenses of the first winter campaign starting from 2014.

3) including Croatia who will join the EU in 2013.

4) [www.consilium.europa.eu/media/1775173/st15599en12.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/1775173/st15599en12.pdf).



# Tying food aid into access to good quality food for all

BY DOMINIQUE PATUREL, EAPN FRANCE, RESEARCHER AT THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF AGRONOMIC RESEARCH (INRA), FRANCE

*"Re-thinking the food aid agenda in terms of access to good quality food for all is vital to the shape of food issues to come."*

The current debates on the new funding for the European Programme of Food Aid to the Most Deprived Persons (PEAD) have made food aid the high-profile poster child for the impact of the current social, political and economic crisis. The massive rise in insecurity and poverty has left growing numbers hunting for ways of getting enough to eat. Knowing where the next meal is coming from is an increasing problem for the most vulnerable: food aid then becomes the response to this form of exclusion. Provision is based mainly on charities. And yet, decent quality food is in plentiful supply and no-one in France is starving to death for the moment. But there are still some 3.2 million people who cannot get enough good quality food to eat. So there is nonetheless a food insecurity issue today.

European - and, consequently, national - systems have had to introduce food traceability and proof requirements that it has gone to the intended recipients: some of those most in need cannot satisfy these requirements and so this help is denied to them.

At the same time, some local produce is struggling to find buyers and some farmers' incomes are in an increasingly shaky position. Experimental schemes that combine food aid with direct-to-consumer sales should be supported as ways to start offering other forms of access to food. The experimental Restos du Coeur de l'Hérault (Hérault hot meal distribution services) based on a unique partnership around the Montpellier wholesale fruit and vegetable market is a case in point. Giving food aid users an opportunity to consume local produce helps both put fresh food in their diet and supports farmers' local outlets in their region. It also helps to restore the link between what we eat and how it is produced.

Lessons can be learned from this for food aid but more broadly for the food service sector. More specifically, it tells us about the wide variety of food aid supply chains, the diverse forms of local direct-to-consumer sales organization, the cross-fertilization between types of distribution channel that go to make up food systems including the interplay between direct-to-consumer sales and traditional distribution channels. Which is why re-thinking the food aid agenda in terms of access to good quality food for all is vital to the shape of food issues to come.

## Structural Funds: perspective from Caritas Europa

BY ARTUR BENEDYKTOWICZ, POLICY AND ADVOCACY OFFICER, CARITAS EUROPA

Across all the EU countries, Caritas organisations are in the front line of helping those who suffer most from poverty and social exclusion. Our activities are not only linked to delivering an immediate relief like clothes or food to those experiencing poverty in its most extreme forms, but also aim at assisting people in overcoming poverty and social exclusion. Having a strong grassroots base and being familiar with national conditions, Caritas has developed knowledge and expertise in helping those who are identified as the most vulnerable groups. In recent years, this expertise was efficiently applied through specific projects financed by the European Social Fund (ESF). In many areas of ESF intervention - like supporting employment in social economy enterprises or helping youth at-risk-of social exclusion - Caritas has proved that the methods applied by non-profit organisations can lead to positive long-term outcomes.

### Calling for minimum shares for the European Social Fund and a separate budget for the European Aid to the Most Deprived

Caritas Europa (CE) has, therefore, tried to share its observations and ideas regarding the 2014-2020 EU Structural Funds with those who could have an impact on the final shape of the Funds. The main message of our advocacy is that EU Funds must support the Europe 2020 objectives, especially those expressed by the poverty reduction and employment growth targets. Therefore, and given the negative impact of austerity on the most vulnerable, Caritas Europa has called particularly for ensuring the minimum allocation of 25% of the cohesion funds to the ESF and for earmarking 20% of the ESF to social inclusion and the fight against poverty. Moreover, CE strongly supports another proposal of the European Commission, to define the € 2,5 billion Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived as a separate budget within the Cohesion Policy's budget. CE has also called for several additional changes in the legislation on EU funds that could enhance social economy (also through ERDF assistance) or the capacity building of social NGOs.

### Action!

Given the specific calendar and complex procedure of adopting EU Funds legislation and the post 2013 budget, we have tried to target different stakeholders of the process, in different time-slots. Among policy makers who received Caritas positions were MEPs, mainly the members of EMPL and REGI committees, the European Commission and the Council. CE also used the opportunity to present its messages on the future EU Cohesion Policy through its Shadow Report on the Europe 2020 Strategy. Apart from Commissioners Andor (who had a meeting with CE President and Secretary General), Rehn and Vassiliou, the specific Directorates General of the Commission and its Secretary General were among its recipients. Given that, in 2013, the 2014-2020 Operation Programmes are to be adopted, we think it is important to have an influence on their contents, notably through the European Semester. Caritas organisations were also encouraged to lobby their governments directly. They were invited to contact other national networks, e.g. in the framework of EAPN's campaign "EU Money for Poverty Reduction now!", and to collect signatures under the petition handed over to the Cypriot Presidency.

At Brussels level, Caritas Europa - apart from supporting the aforementioned EAPN campaign and Social Platform's actions - was also part of the Coalition made of EAPN, Eurodiaconia, Red Cross and FEBA supporting the continuation of the Food for Deprived Programme (petitions sent to Council President Van Rompuy).

Caritas Europa is the network of Caritas organisations on the European continent. The united strength of its 49 members, present in 46 European countries, makes of Caritas Europa one of the major social actors in Europe.

Caritas Europa is also one of the seven regions of Caritas Internationalis, the biggest network of Catholic charities in the world devoted to reducing poverty and campaigning for social justice.

Caritas Europa focuses its activities on issues relating to poverty, social exclusion and inequality, migration and asylum in Europe. On the global level, Caritas Europa is actively engaged in humanitarian assistance and international development throughout the world.

[www.caritas-europa.org](http://www.caritas-europa.org)



# EAPN Spain's Structural Funds lobbying

BY SALI GUNTI, EAPN SPAIN

**In 2004, EAPN Spain decided to extend its political advocacy to the Structural Funds. There were a number of reasons why. One was EAPN Spain's firm belief in the Structural Funds' potential - especially the European Social Fund - for helping to develop activities to include the most disadvantaged individuals into society and work by fostering innovation, promoting gender equality, facilitating transnational relations and so on.**

Small and medium-sized Spanish NGOs had proven their ability to manage these funds, such as through Community Initiatives which were then poised to disappear. Four Spanish Network NGOs have since 2000 proved their ability and effectiveness in implementing the "Fight Against Discrimination" Operational Programme (OP).

This specific programme aside, small and medium-sized NGOs, unlike other social activators, had no access to the Structural Funds, which stopped cohesion policy from fulfilling its role as an enabler for drawing regions and citizens closer together.

The financial aspect of the Funds was not a priority for EAPN Spain at the time: the first essential was to maintain a coherent strategic position - funding would follow. The Network's first aim was to play into the development of the Operational Programmes so that NGOs could have a say in their planning and introduce measures to address the needs of the most vulnerable groups. It also wanted OP projects to be run on a multiannual basis - at least three years - and for NGOs also to be involved in the monitoring committees.

To get there, the Network needed enough technical capacity to press a clear and reasonable agenda to the authorities. This meant EAPN Spain engaging with a number of things:

1. The Network got involved in EAPN Europe's Working Group then its Task Force on the Structural Funds, facilitating the sharing of experiences and the setting-up of a support group.
2. It set up a standing Working Group on the Structural Funds which since 2002 has developed the following activities shaped by the regional set-up and management of the Structural Funds in Spain:

At the national level:

- Lobbying the Management Unit which has a direct line to the European Commission and manages the European Social Fund budget in Spain and that of three multiregional OPs. The Network has had an ongoing dialogue with it since 2005, and is also talking to the Ministry of Economy which is responsible for the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF);
- The Network has also translated into Spanish the handbooks and documents produced by EAPN Europe and the Structural Funds Working Group.
- It also enlisted outside expertise, especially at the outset.
- It had to improve its own executive committee's awareness of the importance of the issue.
- It was highly active in EAPN's European campaign "EU money for poverty reduction NOW!"<sup>1</sup>.

At the regional level:

- Taking political advocacy activities up to the regional level, because each region manages its own OP and this is the level where specific community-based activities are run.
- Since 2005 EAPN Spain has run seminars and training courses on the Structural Funds in each

region to: review the characteristics of cohesion policy; analyze new aspects of regulation; exchange experiences and good practices in other regions; and invited Fund regional officials to take part in these seminars.

- After the seminars and training sessions, Structural Funds working groups are set up in the regions to leverage direct policy lobbying at the regional level and also play a supporting role in the national working group.
- Each EAPN Spain regional network develops region-specific proposals (social and economic situation, unemployment figures, school failure, etc.) that reflect the proposals for a Regulation on the Structural Funds and the European Code of Conduct on Partnership.

EAPN Spain now enjoys national recognition in the matter as a member of both the "Fight Against Discrimination" Operational Programme monitoring committee and the "Social Inclusion" Network jointly managed by the Management Unit, the Ministry of Labour and the Department of Social Services, as well as various regional monitoring committees.

Where institutional dialogue is concerned, politicians attended many of our regional seminars (Andalucía, Galicia, Extremadura, Castilla la Mancha, etc.) while the networks in some regions are talking to their authorities over the programming for 2014-2020.

EAPN Spain is hopeful that the period 2014-2020 will see the Funds being more accessible to NGOs in order to meet people's specific needs to the best of their ability, especially in terms of social inclusion, access to training and employment.

## Eurochild: Making children visible in the EU budget

BY RÉKA TUNYOGI,  
PARLIAMENTARY OFFICER, EUROCHILD

**As the EU proceeds to adopt a new long-term budget, children's rights continue to be threatened daily by the lack of access to adequate protection, healthcare, housing, education, nourishment or family support. More than one in four children live at risk of poverty and social exclusion in the European Union today. Yet, it is impossible to tell how much of the EU budget is invested in children.**

Over the past year, Eurochild has been working on changing that perception within the negotiations on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2014-2020. We believe that through wise investment in children, existing policy shortcomings and the impact of the economic crisis could be mitigated. Eurochild not only aims at putting a bigger emphasis on social-inclusion priorities, but also on making children's rights more visible throughout all the instruments.

**Not only a financial minimum, but a policy commitment from all Member States**

Eurochild joined EAPN's campaign for keeping 20% for social inclusion in the ESF, seeing this benchmark not only as a financial minimum to be respected,

but as a policy commitment from all Member States to be fulfilled. Influencing the draft regulations on the Structural Funds (General Regulation, European Social Fund, and European Regional Development Fund) was also powered by recognising their potential to develop family and community-based care and services to prevent children from going into the alternative care system.

**Steps forward on the promotion of children rights and well being**

Our amendments and regular contacts with the European Parliament were not in vain. Eurochild was pleased to see the European Parliament gave its support to stronger grounds in its reports to invest in children. We especially welcomed the commitment from the EP on the European Social Fund to include an investment priority for promoting children rights and well-being, so as to protect children at risk and combat child poverty. The EP report on the European Regional Development Fund was improved to support transition from institutional to family- and community-based services.

Under Heading 3 (Security & Citizenship) Eurochild has been advocating for implementation of the

Lisbon Treaty, and a stronger wording in the regulations when it came to promoting the protection of the rights of the child in programmes that support fundamental rights and citizenship, and justice in the European Union.

Our advocacy tools included meetings in the European Parliament, followed by regular contacts, drafting amendments and voting recommendations. Eurochild members were mobilised more than once to reach out to their national governments. Realising the potential of joining forces, Eurochild has been actively cooperating on the MFF with members of the Children's Rights Action Group; the European Expert Group on Transition from Institutional to Community-based Care; the Social Platform, and of course EAPN.

**Investment in children today creates a more inclusive society tomorrow**

Eurochild has been repeatedly calling for making children more visible in the EU budget. This continues to require both outreach and targeted advocacy efforts, and help from our members. We stand strong knowing that wider civil society and children's rights NGOs have the same vision: investment in children today creates a more inclusive society tomorrow.

<sup>1</sup> The President of EAPN Spain wrote to Spain's permanent ministerial representative to the European Union and an EAPN Spain delegation met the head of the Management Unit to give him its position on the 2014-2020 budget. All the campaign tools were translated and put out across communication channels, messages were sent to the media and spread through other newsletters, regional networks and social organizations.





BY NELLIE EPINAT, COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER, EAPN

**Coordinated by EAPN and 19 other social NGOs, the campaign *EU Money for Poverty Reduction NOW!* urges Member States to respect their commitments to reduce poverty and ensure that the necessary EU funds are allocated, to effectively and efficiently fight poverty and social exclusion.**

## WHY?

In October 2011, the European Commission released its proposal on the next Round of Cohesion Policy (2014-2020)<sup>1</sup> calling for 2 minimum shares: a minimum share of 25% of the Cohesion Policy budget to the European Social Fund (ESF), and at least 20% of the ESF strictly for social inclusion and fighting poverty.

This was widely welcomed by social NGOs as a concrete proposal to give credence to the poverty reduction target agreed by EU leaders as an integral part of the Europe 2020 Strategy, but the vast majority of the Member States showed reluctance towards the proposal, despite their commitments, despite the context of a deepening crisis and the devastating consequences of austerity measures and the growing gap of inequalities in society.

EAPN and 19 other social NGOs reacted and launched their campaign *EU Money for Poverty Reduction NOW! Calling for:*

- The allocation of at least 25% of the Cohesion Policy budget to the European Social Fund (ESF);
- The earmarking of at least 20% of the ESF to social inclusion and poverty reduction.

In addition to that, all the NGOs involved and their National Networks were invited to disseminate this campaign through their social media.

## An intensive lobbying work

Given the reluctance of 26 out of 27 Member States to back the minimum shares for ESF, the campaign has been targeting most of its lobby initiatives towards national Governments both at national and EU levels.

An obvious ally in this campaign has been MEP and Rapporteur on the ESF Regulation Elisabeth Morin-Chartier, whom EAPN interviewed in September 2012: *"As parliamentarians, representing the European citizens, we want and we'll fight for this 20%, ring-fenced for the fight against poverty"*.

At EU level, EAPN met representatives of the Council and the Cabinet of the European Coun-

cil President, Herman Van Rompuy to expose the importance of backing the minimum shares as proposed by the European Commission.

The coalition of NGOs wrote to Member States to be transparent and state clearly the position taken by their respective countries. Only 3 countries replied... generally in favour of greater flexibility for Member States in the use of the ESF according to their national priorities.

At national level, National Networks contacted their national authorities directly. For instance, EAPN Spain contacted and met Representatives both at national and EU levels to try to convince the Spanish Government of the importance of the campaign's key demands.

In addition, 2 joint letters were sent ahead of the June and November General Affairs Council meetings to urge Member States to deliver on the poverty reduction target through a strong and inclusion-friendly ESF.

Owing to the parallel negotiation on the EU budget, this call made in November was widened to the defence of an ambitious budget for Structural Funds. At this occasion, the list of all the people who had signed the petition was put with the joint letter and handed over to Mr Adonis Constantinides, Ambassador in charge of Cohesion Policy in the Cypriot Permanent Representation.

EAPN also reflected on the results of the November General Affairs Council meeting as well as the extraordinary summit on the EU Budget (22-23 Nov) by strongly urging Member States to reach an agreement which will ensure sufficient financial support to deliver on the poverty reduction target.

## What's next?

As the November General Affairs Council did not reach any agreement, the campaign will keep running until the final adoption by all the EU institutions. As the Council keeps undermining the minimum shares for the ESF, new lobbying actions will be targeted towards Members States as well as additional activities towards the European Parliament (which is expected to adopt all the Structural Funds Regulations by end of the first quarter of 2013) and the European Commission in the framework of the ongoing triologue negotiation process in view to putting this issue high on their agenda.

**Everything you want to know** on this campaign is available on **EAPN's website** [www.eapn.eu/en/what-we-do/our-campaigns/eu-money-for-poverty-reduction-now](http://www.eapn.eu/en/what-we-do/our-campaigns/eu-money-for-poverty-reduction-now).

To understand the issue better, you'll find a **leaflet** on that page available in 8 languages.

If you want to know even more, you'll also find the **background paper on the European Social Fund**.

Have you signed the campaign's petition?

Don't wait any longer and share it!

[www.avaaz.org/en/petition/EU\\_Money for Poverty Reduction NOW 1/](http://www.avaaz.org/en/petition/EU_Money_for_Poverty_Reduction_NOW/1/)

(also in French, Spanish, German, Portuguese and Italian)<sup>2</sup>

Follow the campaign on **Facebook**  
(EAPN European Anti Poverty Network)

on Twitter **#EUMoney20Percent**



- 1\ In EC, Draft Regulation for the next Round of Cohesion Policy, October 2011. The Regional policy of the European Union (EU), also referred as Cohesion Policy, is a policy with the stated aim of improving the economic well-being of regions in the EU and also to avoid regional disparities. More than one third of the EU's budget is devoted to this policy, which aims to remove economic, social and territorial disparities across the EU, restructure declining industrial areas and diversify rural areas which have declining agriculture.
- 2\ To see the page in a different language, just replace /en/ in the web address by the corresponding language code: /fr/, /de/, /es/, /po/, /it/.



# EU MONEY for POVERTY REDUCTION



Nearly 1 in 4 persons is in or at risk of poverty and/or social exclusion in the EU.

Member States must respect their commitments and allocate the necessary funds to the fight against poverty.

**SIGN THE PETITION** here

[www.avaaz.org/en/petition/EU\\_Money\\_for\\_Poverty\\_Reduction\\_NOW\\_1/](http://www.avaaz.org/en/petition/EU_Money_for_Poverty_Reduction_NOW_1/)

or from EAPN's website [www.eapn.eu](http://www.eapn.eu)

**All together**  
for poverty reduction and social inclusion.

This campaign is being run by EAPN with its members the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA), Caritas Europa, the European Network Against Racism (ENAR), Eurochild, Eurodiaconia, AGE Platform, Salvation Army, Mental Health Social Exclusion Europa (SMES Europa), International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) Europe, as well as the Platform of European Social NGOs (Social Platform), Solidar, the European Women's Lobby, the European Disability Forum (EDF), the European association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD), the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW) Europe, Workability Europe, Mental Health Europe, PICUM and Inclusion Europe.

Support 20% allocation of the European Social Fund  
for social inclusion and poverty reduction!

**We need YOUR support!**