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## **ANTI-POVERTY FORUM MALTA ANNUAL REPORT 2013**

APF Malta is a network of 13 organisations working together as a network on poverty. The Forum organises a number of conferences, seminars and focus groups, promotes research, disseminates information and creates awareness on poverty and social exclusion in Malta. Based on the 4 pillars of the MASS approach, the following is the work carried out by APF Malta during 2013.

### **Influencing National Governments for Better Policies: Advocacy, Lobbying and Policy-Making linked to European Level developments**

Thanks to EAPN Funding, during 2013 APF Malta organised three national conferences. The first conference was held in conjunction with the largest trade union in Malta – the General Workers Union (GWU). This conference discussed the reality of precarious work in the labour market. One of the key speakers was APF Malta Chairperson Saviour Grima and the then Hon Minister for Family and Social Solidarity Ms Marie Louise Coleiro Preco (today President of the Republic of Malta).

The second conference was on '*Child Poverty in today's world*'. The Minister for the Family and Social Solidarity concluded this conference by noting that whilst various NGOs work to eradicate poverty in Malta, statistics show that poverty is on the increase. She stressed that it's essential that NGOs start working together since duplication of work is getting us nowhere. Sharing resources together and a joint effort should lead to positive results. Minister Coleiro Preca announced that the government will be investing in Family Resource Centres around the island to support families in need. She also admitted that the government agency Appogg is short of professional staff, and pointed out that more investment will be directed to increase professionals in this agency.

The conference was well-attended with over 100 participants mainly social workers, educational psychologists, youth workers, teachers and leaders of various social and educational NGOs. APF Malta received positive feedback from participants. At the end of the conference. APF Malta noted that extra-curricular activities at a cost are almost impossible to sustain for families who are undergoing financial stress, resulting in children being excluded from attending school activities and extra-curricular ones. APF Malta also suggested that an online service database should be created where all services are categorised. This will assist families or individuals in need of a service to identify where to seek assistance, according to the needs.

The third conference organised by APF Malta was on *Elderly in Poverty in Malta Today*. Statistics show that 17.3% of the elderly in Malta amounting to 11,000 persons are at risk of poverty. Following the speakers contribution and the feedback from participants, APF Malta concluded by noting that we all have to be more sensible towards the needs of the elderly, and asked for a legislation which safeguards the rights of the elderly – a legislation which will protect the elderly from any kind of abuse they might experience due to their vulnerability, including the rights of the elderly when nominating a proxy to take care of financial assets. The current situation is that it is quite an easy procedure to nominate a proxy, but very difficult and bureaucratic to reverse same.

APF Malta also suggested that an online database of all services available should be make available for services to be easily accessible and known to all. Finally, APF Malta also noted that to encourage the elderly to live in the community and not in an insitution, there should be a revision of the means test currently being done for the carers' pension.

The conference was well-attended. Participants included Ministry officials, trade unionists, social workers, carers, representatives of local councils and elderly organisations. Overall APF Malta received very positive feedback from the participants.

Whilst acknowledging that all conferences reached their aim, one must note that following all the conferences organised, more awareness was raised on poverty in Malta, through the various media coverage given to these conferences. Following the conferences APF Malta was also invited to participate in various television and radio programmes. This in itself was a good way to lobby on poverty.

In 2013 the Government of Malta announced that it was preparing a strategic plan against poverty and social exclusion. This was very well received by APF Malta. To this extent APF Malta invited Hon. Dr Yana Mintoff Bland - the Government's appointed consultant on this project – for a meeting. During this meeting APF Malta listed a number of recommendations that needed special consideration to address poverty in Malta.

Eventually, the Government launched the Green Paper on Poverty and Social Exclusion on the 29<sup>th</sup> January 2014. Both the Prime Minister and the Minister for the Family and Social Solidarity noted that poverty in children and the elderly will be the main groups targeted by this policy. One must note that poverty in these two groups were the focus of APF Malta's conferences organised during 2013. APF Malta provided the Ministry with feedback on this Green Paper.

APF Malta was also invited to be part of the Government's Sub-Committee of the Commission for the Development of a Child Policy and Strategy. APF Malta meets regularly with Ministry officials and experts on this subject working on the formulation of this strategy.

### **Participation of People Experiencing Poverty and Social Exclusion in Internal and External Workings of the National Network**

During 2013, meetings of the APF Malta ExCo were held on a regular basis, whereby a number of local issues on poverty and social exclusion were discussed. All ExCo members represent people experiencing poverty and social exclusion. To this extent, participation of people experiencing poverty is consistent and regular in all meetings held.

APF Malta also participated in the People Experiencing Poverty in Brussels in June 2013. In preparation for this event, a number of meetings were held with people experiencing poverty and social exclusion, whilst three persons were chosen to take part and share their experience in this meeting in Brussels.

### **Development and Growth of the Network (including growth and training and capacity building actions)**

During 2013, APF Malta worked to increase its' membership. A meeting was held with Alleanza Kontra l-Faqar - a Maltese NGO working to raise awareness and eradicate poverty in Malta. Following this meeting and discussion within ExCo, Alleanza Kontra l-Faqar joined APF Malta network. To this extent APF Malta now consists of 13 organisations. The organisations that are part of APF Malta are the following:

- Millennium Chapel Foundation
- Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice
- Caritas Malta
- 'Ejjew Ghandi' Children's Homes
- National Association of Pensioners
- Alleanza Kontra l-Faqar
- OASI Foundation
- Richmond Foundation
- Paulo Freire Institute
- Discern
- S.O.S. Malta
- St. Jeanne Antide Foundation
- Fondazzjoni Suret il-Bniedem

Two members of APF Malta participated in the 'Learning Forum' held in Estonia organised by EAPN and Dignity International and with the collaboration of EAPN Estonia. The theme for this Forum was *Strengthening our base and the impact of our action – A space for member-led learning, exchange and development*. This learning forum was beneficial to expand the knowledge and experience of APF Malta members.

### **Governance and Internal Democracy (including internal governance, respect of statutory requirements, management in the network and funding).**

As per APF Malta Statute an Annual General Meeting was held in February 2013. During this meeting the Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer presented their annual report, highlighting the events and activities of APF for 2012. No election was held.

APF Malta ExCo met regularly during 2013. Meetings were held monthly, however at times more meeting were held to discuss various issues which arose from time to time. The year 2013 has been very fruitful. Apart from the ExCo meetings, members felt that not enough was being done by APF to achieve its aims of fighting poverty and social exclusion.

As a result of the above the Executive Committee decided in a meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2013 to

appoint a sub-committee with the specific aim to formulate a Strategic Plan for 2013 and to establish objectives and an action plan.

The sub-committee met on several occasions to plan and action the agreed objectives, namely:

1. Lobbying on behalf of vulnerable people.
2. Promoting the participation of people experiencing poverty.
3. Mobilising collaborative efforts among VOs involved in the fight against poverty
4. Tapping into the EEA Funds.

In 2013 ExCo agreed to apply for the EAPN Funding contracts under the following projects. Project 2: The Euro 2020 and the Flagship Platform against poverty; Project 3: Translation of EAPN Documents and Project 4: Translation of EAPN Magazine. Unfortunately due to lack of manpower in 2013, APF Malta only managed to obtain the funds under project 2 by organising three national conferences.

In July 2013, APF Malta applied for the Government's scheme '*Release of Public Officers to work with Voluntary Organisation*'. Application was accepted by the Office of the Prime Minister and a public officer was eventually released for 1 year to work with APF Malta as from 24<sup>th</sup> October 2013.