

## Open Letter from the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN)

### EAPN Challenges the EU to live up to its Values and Beliefs

**On the eve of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (17 October 2015) EAPN issues this open letter to the heads of States and Governments in the European Union.**

Since 1987, the **International Day for the Eradication of Poverty** invites states to *“present and promote concrete activities with regard to the eradication of poverty and destitution”*. The **Europe 2020 Strategy** commits Member States to achieve a poverty-reduction target. The newly adopted **UN Sustainable Development Goals** commit governments to take action to “end poverty”. It is now time for the EU to bring coherence to all these commitments and adopt a comprehensive and integrated strategy to eradicate poverty, which is built with and for people experiencing poverty.

Participation of people experiencing poverty themselves has been at the center of the International Day's celebration since its very beginning. The international day is an opportunity to celebrate the tremendous efforts of millions of people who live every day facing poverty and yet find the energy to contribute to solutions to end their poverty, the poverty of their families and communities and propose policy solutions at all the levels. The **expertise of people experiencing poverty needs recognition not only on the 17<sup>th</sup> of October**, but in all dialogues and forums which seek to address poverty and the underlying inequalities.

**The EU has a key role to play to combat poverty as one of the richest regions in the world.** It has to do so both **within its borders as well as outside of them**. It has to do so even when faced with the current unprecedented migration and refugee crisis that is putting Europe and its member states to the test.

The migration crisis is a crisis which compounds the **ongoing series of crises** which the EU has been experiencing over the years, **born out of policies which continue to disregard the well-being of people and the exacerbating widespread growth in inequalities**. EAPN reminds that first and foremost the people who suffer from these crises are people with the same needs as our families and friends and need to be responded to in a way that respects their dignity. EAPN expresses its solidarity with the migrants desperately trying to enter and survive in Europe. **EAPN insists that it is immoral to put the needs of those in desperation in competition with the needs of those living in poverty. Instead of creating competition between the poor, now is the time to address inequalities**, to counteract tax avoidance and tax fraud, to tax financial speculation, so that the wealth is available to redistribute to ensure

that the needs of all people experiencing poverty are met. **We must fight poverty and not to fight the 'poor'.**

These crises result in a political and humanitarian crisis that can only be addressed if Europe sticks to the values and principles enshrined in its Treaties and in International Human Rights Conventions. Europe cannot turn a blind eye to wars, conflict, torture and hunger and fail to acknowledge its role in the creation of these conflicts and fail to take responsibility for the impacts and aftermath.

EAPN with its 31 National Networks and its 18 European Organisations, comprising more than 6000 organisations across the European Union and beyond, reminds the Heads of State and Government in the European Union that:

- **Poverty is a violation of human rights** and is now experienced by the 121 million in the EU and the number is growing;
- **The EU has the responsibility to respond swiftly to this crisis of poverty with an integrated strategy** which sees social policy as an investment not a cost and that combined with equitable tax/benefit systems can result in reducing poverty and inequality and ensuring inclusive and sustainable growth.
- **Macroeconomic policies must deliver on social objectives** at the service of social inclusion and cohesion. Europe 2020 goals and targets must be restored to the heart of the key political processes at EU level including the European Semester exercise.
- **Common and high-level EU social standards must be progressed** to ensure an adequate income for all throughout the life cycle, including the adoption of an EU framework directive for adequate minimum-income schemes.
- **Effective civil-society involvement** is crucial, including the participation of people experiencing poverty and their organisations in the design, implementation and monitoring of policies. Such effective participation requires adequate and continuing financial support for the work of civil society.