

Network news



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Editorial

Gender equality - still just wishful thinking

It isn't immediately obvious that the word "gender" refers not just to women but also to men, and the distinct roles assigned to both in society in all places, cultures and periods. Gender equality is still more hope than reality, and calls for differentiated approaches and

measures.

It stands to reason, therefore, that poverty has to be measured differentially, too, especially by factoring in traditional role allocation. Although European rules have been instrumental in getting women in many countries greater freedom, more opportunities in society, more equal rights, the ability to be independent and even (in theory) full equality with men, differences still remain.

For men, work may be about independence, participation and rights, but for women, juggling home and job is often what stops them from playing a fuller part in society, meeting the demands of the job market and benefiting from the rights it gives. That is why women are more vulnerable and slip more easily into poverty.

The gender-poverty equation may consist of a complex set of factors, but real gender equality would reduce if not abolish most of the inequalities existing between men and women, not least in terms of female poverty.

Alida Smeekes

EAPN Strategic group on "Gender and Poverty"

GENDER AND POVERTY

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Inequalities entrenched as ever

Gender equality remains more hope than reality in many respects. Despite some big steps forward, stereotypes and prejudices are hard to shift!

Young or old, in-work or not, the lot of European women is much more precarious than that of men. But we need to look past this finding at the impact of stereotypes and prejudices that are still at work in our societies despite the advances achieved by feminism over the decades.

Women's poverty and social exclusion stem from a variety of causes, but the root factors essentially lie in an implicit and explicit "social contract" shaped by a male worldview. This "contract" sharply divides women and men's responsibilities in both the public and private spheres, holding back women's participation in economic, political and social life.

Not just a women's thing!

There may be no getting away from the male norm in a patriarchal society, but that is not to say that women's empowerment is just a women's thing! Gender equality is good for men, too, by helping strengthen equal rights and opportunities in all aspects of life. Parental leave opportunities for both parents are a good case in point. Gender equality is also about addressing disadvantages experienced by men, such as accessing rights regarding childcare.

But, as ever, men still get the best deal from a society which treats women as "dependents". And even with the growth of a new generation of men who helps more with home care, women are still the first to stop work or go part-time to be homemakers and childcarers. Let alone the rising number of lone parent families, 85% of them headed by women.

The glaring inequalities of the past - addressed by legislation - have given way to less visible

but no less unacceptable employment inequalities.

Better educated, but not getting the jobs...

One area where women have done best is education. At EU level, in 2004, the percentage of women aged 20-24 with at least upper secondary qualifications was 5% higher than that of men in the same age bracket. Also, the share of female higher education graduates rose to 58% in 2003, and they now account for 41% of PhD graduates. Women also outnumber men in adult education and training in 21 of the 25 Member States.

But this must not conceal the fact that despite being better educated, women bear the full brunt of sexist segregation, because they tend to work in lower-paid sectors. In the research field, for example, men accounted for 86% of academic staff who are full professors in 2002. And only 31% of managerial positions in industry were held by women in 2003.

Women bear the full brunt of sexist job market segregation

A 15% pay gap!

"Equal pay for equal work", the saying goes. But not for women: in 2003, the pay gap for the enlarged Union was 15%, rising to 25% in Cyprus. One factor which explains this is the high share of part-time employment among women (30.4% on average against just 6.6% for men). The new Member States have a much lower proportion of part-time jobs, partly due to labour market rigidity and partly due to the lower wage level, which makes this option less available.

The gender gap in employment stood at 15.8% between 2002 and 2003 in the Union of 25 (but over 40% in Malta!). Unemployment rates were 10% for women and 8.3% for men in 2004. Achieving work-life balance remains a challenge: women with young children show employment rates over 13% lower than childless women. The simple reasons for this are limited access to childcare and the perpetuation of sexist stereotypes. Men do less than 40% of all domestic work and only 25% to 35% of childcare work.

A few definitions...

Whereas "sex" refers to an objective physical reality, the **concept of gender** refers to the point-in-time division of men and women's roles in a particular society. So, masculinity and femininity are normative roles that express society's expectations of individuals. These expectations are not static but are responsive to cultural and social changes. However, the individual often internalizes these expectations as part of their personality. Existing gender relations - which are often power relations - tend to be institutionalized and so become entrenched.

Gender analysis is a tool that helps highlight what may be women and men's different needs, specific constraints and opportunities. It aims in particular to redress inequalities that women in society suffer, and so help move towards a more equal society (equality in law and in fact).

Gender mainstreaming refers to the systematic inclusion of women and men's specific conditions, priorities and needs in the planning, implementation, follow-up and evaluation of all policies with the aim to promote gender equality.

Male-centric social protection

The foundations of the welfare state laid after World War Two defined women mainly as mothers and dependents. In many countries, women's social protection rights (health care, widow's pension, etc.) "derive" from their husband's employment status.

Women's pension entitlements are significantly lower than men's because of their lesser labour market participation (unwaged work, part-time, prolonged career breaks, etc.). Many older women today have no social security coverage or at best a minimum pension.

Towards individualization of rights?

Many feminist groups are demanding individualization of social protection rights, including pensions, as the only way to achieve gender equality and give women the benefit of individual social security coverage. That would encourage them back into the labour market which in turn would promote a better share-out of family duties. Obviously, this needs to go in hand with better childcare provision, statutory parental leave entitlements and employment rights for non-standard, part-time and flexible workers. But even more than that, it needs a change in attitudes!

But individualization of rights is no magic bullet. It may ensure independence, but will not necessarily deliver financial equality. Scrapping widow's pensions, for example, would be very bad for older women with a shorter contribution record than their husband. Also, individualization does not address the problem of women who are very much out of touch with the labour market and completely reliant on social welfare.

The only way to grasp this nettle is by phasing-out the old systems to assure continued security for older women who still depend on their widow's pension and other derived rights. There are other options, like introducing a residence qualification

for social protection entitlement, increasing "minimum" entitlements, or calculating pension benefits over best average earnings instead of contribution record. Other possibilities include compensating women for the disadvantages they suffer, or improving dependent or child care entitlements.

Double or triple discrimination

Women are not just discriminated against on sex grounds. Immigrant, disabled, young and lesbian women, and lone mothers, can suffer double if not multiple discrimination.

Sexist and racist discrimination against immigrant women and members of ethnic minorities in employment is probably the most concerning: they are lagging in labour market integration because they tend to be exposed to discrimination and confined to very traditional roles, and if they do overcome the obstacles, they remain concentrated in very low-paid jobs. In 2000, immigrant women earned on average 10% less than EU national women. Not to mention that many are undocumented and working cash-in-hand.

Changing family patterns and women's rising labour force participation have increased the demand for undeclared and underpaid domestic help. Use of an immigrant "cleaning lady", whether legally-resident or undocumented, is a "solution" chosen by many European households. This keeps many migrant women struggling with insecurity, and often leads to economic exploitation.

V. Forest

Sources: European Women's Lobby, EAPN Report A Social Europe for women also?, European Commission Report on equality between women and men, 2005.

Individualization of rights is no magic bullet

A EUROPEAN INSTITUTE FOR GENDER EQUALITY

The European Council called in June 2004 for a European Institute for Gender Equality to be set up. It should open its doors in 2007. It will be funded by the Commission, with a proposed budget totalling 52.5 million euros for the period 2007 to 2013, and will support the EU institutions and Member States in promoting gender equality, and combating sex discrimination.

The Institute will gather, analyse and disseminate reliable and comparable research data, and information needed by policy-makers. It will have a documentation centre and a library which will be open to the public. The Institute will also be tasked with stimulating research and exchanges of experience by organizing meetings between policy-makers, experts and other stakeholders; it will raise awareness of gender equality policies through events like conferences, campaigns and seminars. Another task will be to develop tools for supporting integration of gender equality into all Community policies.

Proposal for a European Parliament and Council Regulation:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/news/2005/mar/genderinstitute_en.pdf

The scourge of domestic violence

Violence against women is taking its toll on Europe: it beats cancer and car accidents as the main cause of mortality and invalidity in women aged 16 to 44! The Council of Europe reports that one in five women in Europe will be a victim of gender-based violence during her life. Physical abuse affects women of all ages, sections of society and cultures, 90% of it committed by family members or other relatives.

Defeating stereotypes, violence against women is not mainly a problem of poor families - it permeates all society. But it does stop them playing a full part in community and economic life, and can force them into poverty and social exclusion. How many women have had to flee home to escape partner-related violence, despite being the victims? Fear of finding themselves destitute and homeless is often why women stay with an abusive partner.

Domestic violence is a main cause of women's poverty. A way to stamp it out is for economic, social and law enforcement policies to give better protection to women and to develop victim support services.

V.F.

The hidden face of poverty

Although the burden of poverty on women is growing, data on women's real-life situations are sparse.

Data collected by Eurostat, the EU's Statistical Office, reveal that women today are more affected by monetary poverty than men - 17% against 14% in the EU-15 in 2001. Older women remain more at risk of poverty than men in the same age group. Lone parents, usually women, also suffer multiple disadvantages, and are particularly vulnerable to social exclusion.

The statistics may aim to reflect the reality, but questions have to be asked about how the data are collected. The European figures in fact derive from a survey based on a standardized questionnaire, involving an annual interview of a representative panel of households and individuals. But, the basic statistical unit is the household, and most interviews are done with the - usually male - household head only.

What access to income?

Also, in order to reflect differences in household size and composition, the income figures are given "per equivalent adult". This means that the total household income is divided by its equivalent size using a scale that gives a weight of 1.0 to the first adult, 0.5 to any other household member aged 14 and over, and 0.3 to each child below age 14. The resulting figure is attributed to each member of the household, whether adult or child.

This, therefore, is what determines whether a woman will be considered as living in poverty or not. The problem is that this procedure takes no account of income distribution within the household. A woman may very well not be statistically considered as living in a poor household while actually enduring poverty and social exclusion by not having fair share of the household income.

Unless gender-specific indicators are defined, women's poverty and the inequalities they suffer will remain invisible.

A wide range of situations

Women are at greater risk of poverty than men: they experience it more often, and for longer periods, and face multiple gender-specific obstacles to escaping it (social welfare dependency, lack of access to the job market, low-paid work, etc.). But that does not make women a uniform group: they have a wide range of life situations: legally-resident and undocumented immigrant women are among the most marginalized; poverty among rural women is even more invisible because it can be located less easily; older women - especially those living alone - are particularly vulnerable. Lone mothers, whose numbers have increased dramatically in recent years, are among the worst affected households.

A more detailed, qualitative rather than quantitative analysis is needed to get a clearer picture of the complex set of situations in which women live, to give policy-makers a clearer grasp of women's poverty.

V.F.

Data for the EU-25	Women	Men
"At risk of poverty" rate after all social transfers, 2001	16%	14%
Adults living in jobless households, 2004	11.5%	9.2%
Employment growth, 2003	+0.7%	- 0.2%
Employment rate (among the 15-65 age group), 2003	55.1%	70.9%
Unemployment rate, 2003	10%	8.3%
Long-term unemployment rate, 2003	4.5%	3.6%
Very long term unemployment rate, 2003	2.6%	2.0%
Youth unemployment rate (15-24), 2003	18.5%	18.4%
Life expectancy at birth, 2002	81.1	74.8
People aged 18 to 24 not in education or training	13.6%	18.1%
Average age at retirement, 2003	60.5	61.5

The Flora Network: occupational integration and consultancy

Training, exchange and production of knowledge for women with low educational skills, gender consultancy.

Welcome to Belgium's Flora Network.

Situated not far from Brussels' Gare du Nord railway station in a big colourful building housing dozens of NGOs, the Flora Network links together groups set up to help vulnerable women with few educational skills - many of whose origins lie outside Belgium - to integrate into society and access jobs, either on the traditional market or through developing community-based enterprises.

"Flora aims to highlight the mechanisms of discrimination and help change current labour market values and norms", says Flora Network consultant Anne Kervyn. "For that, we focus on developing the network and its information, training, exchange of experiences and know-how activities. But we are also a political lobby".

All women have talents!

The network was launched in 1993 with the name Flora in tribute to Flora Tristan who toured 19th century France in a bid to build up a mass movement against poverty and exploitation. She argued that there were many parallels between the oppression of women and the oppression of workers.

"We hold a festive forum in alternate years that draws over 150 women", Anne Kervyn goes on. "In 2003, the theme was 'We have talents!'. We ran a series of workshops that helped women learn to become trainers themselves". It is an approach that aims to spotlight front-line practices from a gender perspective. The expertise developed out of these clashes of discussion aims to foster more mainstreaming of gender differentials in training, inclusion and job schemes at all stages of their design, implementation and evaluation.

Along with its permanent activities, the Flora Network has launched projects financed by the

European Social Fund. One of these - 'Gender Consulting & Training' - provides consultancy and training on gender issues to actors in the field of social and labour market integration. For Anne Kervyn, *"this project allows good practice in NGOs to be identified. In fact, we started with our members to test out this pilot project. Because even though there might not be any men in all-woman NGOs, that doesn't mean they aren't present! We have to change women's ingrained stereotypes, too."*

Flora uses the responses and good practice that come out of this internal analysis to inspire other organizations and sectors, and exert pressure on policy-making. The Gender Consulting & Training scheme therefore addresses four kinds of demand:

- General analysis of an association: generally speaking, the request is to "come and see", which may result in recommendations and support for their implementation;
- Studying a specific project from a gender perspective, where a group asks for "a hand" in setting up a project;
- Devising socio-vocational training schemes to expand women's prospects, especially on the non-traditional labour market;
- Informing the development of equal opportunity policies.

A participatory method

"Consultancy goes through various stages", stresses Anne Kervyn. "Firstly, we analyse the demand, then we collect data - written, or in individual or group interviews - to put forward the tentative conclusions which we hand in to the client. That leads to areas of work in the form of recommendations. Then, if the client wants, we can give support to implementation".

The method tries to maximize the participatory element, bearing in mind that while the relational and behavioural changes benefit women, they also have to be "owned" by men, who also have to gain from them.

V.F.

Flora Network website: www.florainfo.be

WOMEN ON THE MARCH AGAIN

The idea of holding a world march of women in 2000 was inspired by the enormous success of the Women's March against Poverty which took place in Quebec (Canada) in 1995, in which 850 women marched for 10 days and were greeted by 15,000 people at the end of the walk. The Beijing Conference held the same year proved that women everywhere were struggling for equality, development and peace. The idea of a World March was launched at the Conference.

As a world network of actions against poverty and violence against women, the World March of Women was joined by nearly 6000 women's groups in 163 countries and territories in 2000. Since 2003, women worldwide have contributed to the Women's Global Charter for Humanity, launched publicly on 8 March 2005. The Charter embodies five fundamental values: equality, freedom, solidarity, justice and peace.

Women are marching again in 2005 to promote the Charter this time. The world relay of the march will be taking the Charter to 50 countries between 8 March and 17 October. A wide range of national activities are also being organized. At noon on 17 October 2005, women in each time zone will rally for an hour for the "24 hours of global feminist solidarity".

World website: www.marchmondiale.org
Activities in Europe:
<http://mmf.lecarrefour.org/europe>





Colette De Troy

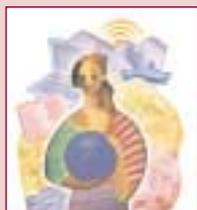
Beijing+10: what outcomes?

The International Conference on Women's Rights "Ten years after Beijing: ensuring gender equality, development and peace", tied into the session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, was held in the UN from 28 February to 11 March 2005.

This review and appraisal of the 1995 Beijing Conference opened on a mixed picture. The last ten years have seen much new legislation and legal reforms, and improvements in access to education and health care. But new challenges have also emerged, like the devastation wrought among women by HIV/Aids, the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women, and people trafficking.

The resurgence of a type of conservatism on the international stage threatened to roll back the gains made by the Beijing Conference. Women's sexual and reproductive rights were in the firing line. The meeting ended, however, with governments adopting a declaration that reaffirmed the pledges given 10 years before, and intends to speed up the efforts to achieve gender equality.

Website: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/>



"Trafficking of women is nothing less than slavery"

Poverty, migration and people trafficking loomed large in the interview we had with Colette De Troy of the European Women's Lobby.

EAPN: Is migration the breeding ground for people trafficking?

Colette De Troy: *It is one factor. Individual migration in itself stems only from the need to seek a better life elsewhere. The European Union has shut its doors on this type of migration, which has fuelled growth in illegal migration. Illegal transport by people smugglers is seen as an organized crime activity. People trafficking is what you get when people are recruited and smuggled in to be exploited.*

Who is mainly involved in this trafficking?

Firstly, people wanting to leave their country of origin (central and eastern Europe, Russia and its satellite countries, but also further afield Third World countries), where women are bearing the brunt of deteriorating economic and social conditions. Then the traffickers, of course, who earn big money from trafficking in women, and are often involved in organized crime. But also, and this is key, a "market" has grown up in Europe: and sex market demand is particularly voracious. Women tend to be seen as an endless supply of use and throwaway "inputs".

How do women get trapped?

Poverty, hardship, inequalities, domestic violence - all these things drive them to look for a better life. They're first lured with the prospect of employment, which is a total sham. Often, they aren't abducted: traffickers trick young and vulnerable women with promises of love and big money. In fact, they are being bought for a highly profitable sex market which has nothing to do with a labour market. Some countries, like the Netherlands, Germany and Austria, have tried to regulate commercial sex work, but that has just made the "market" more acceptable and visible, and pushed up demand. We are dealing with real exploitation from which only the flesh merchants and criminals gain.

Women who fall prey to people traffickers are nothing short of slaves. Their passports get taken away, they are shunted from country to country so they lose all bearings, they are intimidated with threats of being handed over to the police, and above all, they are abused, sometimes extremely violently. The police often treat them as illegal immigrants rather than as victims of crime, and they end up being deported.

The Council of Europe is poised to adopt a draft convention for the protection of the victims of people trafficking. Unfortunately, the European Commission - which is negotiating on behalf of most of the Member States - taking a pretty unenlightened line at the moment. Properly amended and adopted, this Convention could result in women being treated and protected as victims rather than as just illegal immigrants.

How can people trafficking be stopped?

One thing is to work on improving living conditions in the source countries. One researcher recently predicted that if migration from Bulgaria continues at its present rate, the country will only have elderly people left in 2050. But also, there is a need to act here on reducing demand both in the sex market, to give a sense of responsibility to the men that buy women. Trafficking can also concern men, for example in the building industry, illegal sweatshops and agriculture.

Also, the scope of the Geneva Convention needs widening; at present you can only get refugee status under it for political persecution. The kinds of persecution that women suffer - like forced marriages, genital mutilation, adultery, etc. - should be taken into account. The legislation is changing in many countries, but there is still a long way to go before women get real protection from falling prey to people traffickers.

Interview V.F.

Colette De Troy is coordinator of the European Women's Lobby Policy Action Centre on Violence against Women. Website: www.womenlobby.org

Lisbon Strategy on Presidency menu

Among the priorities of the Luxembourg Presidency we find in the first line the mid-term review of the Lisbon process, then the

examination of the Stability and Growth Pact and the financial perspectives for 2007-2013.

If the appropriate financial means for the European budgets 2007-2013 are not adequately planned, every strategy will fail. It is ridiculous that some countries are pleading for a 1% line of national taxes going to Brussels (which is already false, because they come back to the regions on a large scale) whereas about 1.24 % could preserve the current level of engagements.

Sustainable development

Sustainable development is another European strategy, and it is not the third pillar of the Lisbon strategy as the Presidency wants to highlight. Sustainable development is a guiding principle for all European policies and therefore also the Lisbon Strategy has to be linked with it, which means already that a Lisbon strategy only focused on competitiveness, growth and jobs, without taking into account the social and environmental issues, will not be compatible with the sustainable development strategy.

To get more cohesion in the European policies, not only the sustainable development strategy has to be strongly linked to the Lisbon strategy, but also to the employment strategy, the inclusion strategy and the social agenda. And why not make out of all this one strong and coherent policy? Of course with a strong commitment to the social cause!

Regarding the Lisbon strategy we must first admit that the Luxembourg government failed like the others to achieve the goals set in 2000 in the Portuguese capital. But on the other hand we are pleased that unlike many others the Luxembourg

authorities from the beginning have made very clear, that "the social dimension is at the heart of the Lisbon strategy".



There is a straight way from the statement that Jeannot Krecké, Minister for Economy, made on the first Lisbon colloquium on 12 October 2004 ("Every word counts in the Lisbon strategy, it's not only about competitiveness and growth") to the last one from François Biltgen, Minister for Employment, who argued that even if it is right, that there will be no social cohesion and no sustainable development without competitiveness, without growth and without the creation of jobs, it is on the other hand clear that these are only necessary conditions and are not sufficient for more social cohesion and more sustainable development.

'Growth and jobs' are not sufficient for more social cohesion

'Pillars' cannot be divided!

So let's hope that more and more governments will accept the good arguments of the Presidency. And we could even add to the opinion expressed by François Biltgen: not only are competitiveness, growth and more jobs not sufficient to lead to more social cohesion, but vice-versa only social cohesion can lead to economic prosperity! Because without social cohesion there will be no growth! In this sense it is also wrong to speak about three equal pillars of the Lisbon strategy. These three elements, economic prosperity (competitiveness, growth and jobs), social cohesion and environmental considerations are interdependent and therefore cannot be divided!

Whatever the outcomes of the Spring European Council are, it is in the Member States where the concrete work then has to be done. And here we will be on the blocks: in every European country the EAPN national network will closely monitor what national governments will put into practice!

Robert Urbé

EAPN-Lëtzebuerg Executive Committee member

SNAPSHOT OF EAPN-LËTZEBUERG

The Luxembourg Anti-Poverty Network "EAPN-Lëtzebuerg" is a non-profit-making organization set up in 1990. It currently has thirteen member associations: Aarbechtshëllef, ATD Quart Monde, Association Nationale des Assistantes d'Hygiène Sociale, Assistantes Sociales et Infirmières Graduées du Luxembourg, Colabour, Confédération Caritas Luxembourg, Croix-Rouge Luxembourgeoise, Femmes en détresse, Fondation Jugend an Drogenhëllef, Foyers et Services de l'Entraide, Initiativ Rëm Schaffen, Inter-Actions, Ligue médico-sociale, and Paerd's Atelier.

Because of the country's size, Luxembourg's government agencies, central departments and NGOs in a specific sphere are typically in direct contact. EAPN-Lëtzebuerg works to uncover opportunities for dialogue with the different bodies, and relations are good. EAPN's April 2005 conference on "Reinforcing the EU Social Inclusion Strategy" and the 4th Meeting of people living in poverty were organized on this basis. Various of EAPN-Lëtzebuerg's proposals have found their way into past Luxembourg national action plans on social inclusion. The new website www.eapn.lu was launched in mid-March.

EAPN-Lëtzebuerg is entirely volunteer-run; it has no paid staff. All currently available resources are committed to the organization of the events mentioned, held under the Luxembourg Presidency.

Marco Hoffmann
President, EAPN-Lëtzebuerg

The good times are gone!

The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg stands at a watershed. Despite strong economic growth and a poverty rate below the European average, unemployment is rising and social protection is feeling the strain.

Luxembourg may have successfully evolved into a modern welfare state since the 1970s, and even managed to weather the steel industry crisis, but unemployment is rising steadily (4.7% in January 2005) at rates well above those recorded in the recession years (1970s and 80s), despite a host of job creation measures (1/2005: 3460) and an increased female employment rate (at 52%, which is still lower than the EU-25 average). Economic growth may be an impressive 4.2%, but the good times are gone. The service sector is expanding, but has no job opportunities for those from less academic backgrounds, and jobs are still being lost under the growing pressure of more exacting requirements.

Investing in education for all

For EAPN-Lëtzebuerg, the fault lies with the associated tendency for disadvantaged groups with limited access to basic and continuing training to be almost entirely excluded from the service sector. Even increased spending on research and the advent of the knowledge-based society - now a daily refrain - are bringing no direct benefit to people living in poverty. Radical changes to the highly selective educational system and, especially better integration of our foreign fellow-citizens into the Luxembourg educational and vocational training system are essential. The school drop-out rate is much too high (about 20%) and must be brought down.

On top of this, the Bolkestein Directive's country of origin principle will allow social welfare agencies

to market their services in all EU countries without having to work to standards that are entrenched at national level. This EU directive may well be up for revision by June 2005, but we risk seeing minimum standards eroded in the social sector and national legislation being sidelined (in Luxembourg, the ASFT Act, among other things).

The low-paid are feeling the pinch

Statistically-speaking, the poverty risk may have fallen to 10.2% in Luxembourg in 2003, but a rising number of people are living on unemployment or other social security benefits, and having increasing difficulty getting back into the labour market because of the demand for ever-higher skills.

Legal index-linking of pay and the guaranteed minimum income are under threat

The statutory index-linking of pay (since 1944; renewed in 1973), and the guaranteed minimum income (RMG) are under threat. A recent study (T. Pamukçu, Luxembourg, 2004) argues that the employment

growth link to the minimum wage has a negative impact in Luxembourg, and that this inflation-adjusted scheme should be scrapped. EAPN-Lëtzebuerg argues that this would turn the low-paid (20% of workers) into "working poor", and the economic wage differential (difference between guaranteed minimum income and the lowest wages) will ramp up the pressure on those enduring poverty and unemployment.

There is no point waiting to 2010, then complaining that things have got worse; instead, we should remember the fundamental idea put out by the European Parliament on 12 April 1989, in the "Declaration of Fundamental Rights and Fundamental Freedoms", which at the time also included fundamental social rights. In the EU Constitution, most articles of the Charter of fundamental rights apply to those in work. A social Europe must guarantee the same fundamental rights for all, rich or poor.

Klaus Schneider - Development Officer - EAPN-Lëtzebuerg

EAPN includes the objectives of gender equality in all its areas of work.

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Network News aims to generate debates on specific themes. The views expressed are not necessarily those of EAPN. If you want to comment on the content of this issue, send an email to team@eapn.skynet.be



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