

Network news



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE EUROPEAN ANTI POVERTY NETWORK

N°118 | MAY/JUNE | 2006

Editorial

Poverty under the research microscope

Strand One of the Community Programme to combat social exclusion provides the opportunity to support analysis and research to improve the understanding of poverty and social exclusion in Europe. Specifically, it has financed studies on such varied issues as micro-credit, statistical indicators, access to culture and child poverty.

Research occupies a key place in the fight waged by all players against these social ills. Analysis is obviously not just a numbers game, but must aim at a comprehensive overview of all the factors that cause poverty and social exclusion. This more forensic, qualitative approach must be readily available to close the gap that can open up between academics, civil society and politicians.

Only if this triangle of actors is properly organised will there be the hope of ultimately ridding the world of poverty: only once the multidimensionality of poverty has been clearly understood can all relevant actors take appropriate action for and with people experiencing poverty and social exclusion.

The problem is that, once published, these studies often sink slowly into oblivion... let alone only being known and accessible to a select few to begin with. This special issue of *Network News* therefore aims to make that omission good with a "macro" look at the areas and findings in the hope of prompting you to look more closely into what research turned up... under the microscope.

V. Forest

All studies presented in this issue are available at:
http://ec.europa.eu/comm/employment_social/social_inclusion/studies_en.htm

RESEARCH ON INCLUSION

CONTENTS

Thematic studies

- Roma face widespread discrimination **2**
- Indecent housing for migrants **2**
- The intergenerational transmission of poverty **3**
- Second Chance Schools in Greece... **3**
- Micro-credit for social inclusion..... **4**
- Self-employment in Romania..... **4**
- Accessing culture is a basic right..... **5**
- The digital divide **5**
- Indicators to reflect poverty at regional level..... **6**
- The Laeken indicators **6**

News from Norway

- The second richest country in the world **7**
- Norway and the EU: a long story..... **7**
- EAPN Norway, a partnership network..... **8**
- Social assistance in Norway **8**

Roma in an enlarged European Union

Roma, Gypsies and Travellers still face widespread discrimination in today's Europe.

Roma are the European Union's largest minority ethnic community. Although precise figures are unavailable, there are possibly over ten million Roma in Europe as a whole. The study analyses the widespread discrimination and social exclusion that Roma, Gypsies and Travellers face in a range of fields.

Education

In the Czech Republic, 75% of Romani children of primary school age are schooled in remedial special schools. Only half of Roma children in Germany attend school at all and of those who do attend, a high number - up to 80% in some areas - attend "special schools". In Spain, many state schools, especially those in areas with large Romani populations, have in recent years become "ghettoised". Racial segregation in education is also reported from France, Denmark, and the UK.

Employment

Roma and other groups regarded as "Gypsies" face significant barriers in the labour market, and as a result disproportionately higher numbers are unemployed: 87.5% of the Slovak Romani population was unemployed in 2003, as compared with 14.2% for the population as a whole. In addition, in a number of countries, employers attempt to submit listings stating that "Roma need not apply". Unfortunately, in some cases, labour offices have marked job-seeker listings for employers with the ethnicity of the person seeking work, such that potential employers can see who are "Gypsies".

Housing

Many Roma throughout Europe live in substandard or extremely substandard housing, and often in slum ghettos or site locations. In some countries, many Roma report that "the ground is disappearing beneath our feet" because of massive

expulsions of Roma through forced evictions from housing/municipalities, as well as because of the sale of social housing stocks. In large towns and cities in particular, it can often happen that Roma apply for social housing and they are not provided with it, or they are provided only if that particular municipality has some special programme for Roma housing.

Health care

Very serious public health risks, such as tuberculosis, are widely reported as prevalent among Roma. Although Roma are as exposed as other communities to increasing drug use, adverse socio-economic circumstances, such as those experienced by Roma, are also known to place individuals and communities at risk. Evidence would seem to suggest that drug abuse is on the rise in some Roma communities, although reliable information is scarce.

Social security and debt

Some countries have in recent years amended laws with the effect of removing eligibility for social assistance from Roma. In a number of cases, direct discrimination against Roma has been reported in the field of social protection. For example, in Romania, some local authorities apply discretionary means tests for eligibility for social benefits in a racially discriminatory manner. Usury has deepened the cycle of poverty of many Romani communities. It seems that interest rates have increased to 100% or more, and that violence or threats of violence in the context of debt collection is more frequent than previously.

Lack of personal documents and statelessness

A serious obstacle to the exercise of basic rights by Roma throughout Europe, as well as their access to services crucial for social inclusion, is a lack of personal documents. For example, a large number of Roma in Slovakia are unable to access a range of basic services because they lack a residence permit. In extreme cases, Roma lack citizenship, and the very worrying phenomenon of statelessness has arisen among Roma in some countries.

Source: "The situation of Roma in an enlarged European Union"

Indecent housing for migrants

In the EU, people from ethnic minority communities and immigrants are at greater risk of exclusion from the housing market.

In France, a number of studies have highlighted the bad housing conditions particularly of households of Turkish, Algerian, Moroccan and black African origin. In the UK, Bangladeshi, Caribbean and African households are over-represented in social housing, high-rise housing and in overcrowded conditions. Housing segregation on ethnic lines has also been more distinct in Sweden in recent years. In Belgium and Spain, where home ownership predominates, ethnicity is correlated with poor housing rather than tenure differences. In Hungary, Romania and Slovenia, the numbers of migrants are small, but the Roma population suffers a range of socio-economic disadvantages, reflected in poor housing circumstances. Poor housing conditions and urban segregation figure among the most striking material expressions of poverty hitting the Roma community in this group of countries.

Source: "Policy measures to ensure access to decent housing for migrants and ethnic minorities"

Preventing the intergenerational transmission of poverty

Reducing poverty amongst children and young people is at the top of the EU agenda.

Throughout the past 20 years the rates of child poverty in Europe have increased considerably following societal changes and transitions. The reasons are manifold: high rates of unemployment, temporary and low-paid employment, a growing diversity in family structures going alongside with a growing number of lone parents, etc.

In 2001, 19% of dependent children under age 16 in the EU were living in low-income households (compared to 15% of adults). However, the national child poverty rates range from about 5% in Nordic countries to 27% in Portugal. Financial poverty is often only part of a deprived life situation that impacts the development of children and limits their chances in the future.

Health problems, low educational achievement, low self esteem and well-being, behavioural problems and limited social contacts are some of the problems that affect poor children more often than their better off peers.

Making child poverty visible

Against this background child poverty has become a serious concern for many EU Member States and efforts are made to reduce the number of children growing up poor and to prevent the intergenerational transmission of poverty. Progress is uneven though with some countries setting clear targets for the elimination of child poverty and others just starting to develop strategies while some Member States don't recognise child poverty yet as a political priority.

In this context the objective of the study on child poverty is to make the situation of poor children in Europe visible and to support the development of coherent strategies to first reduce and prevent child poverty and second to foster the social inclusion of children and young people. The report analyses exemplarily the situation in

six EU Member States, i.e. France, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom. As a comparison the United States are included as well.

Youth unemployment and early school leaving

Another study concerning 13 countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and the UK) focuses in particular on youth unemployment and early school leaving. Youth unemployment ratios range between 5.6% in Austria and Denmark and 14.2% in Poland. Rates of early school leaving range between 4.2% in Slovenia and 39.4% in Portugal.

While in Slovakia and Poland young people stay in education to avoid unemployment ('discouraged workers' effect also relevant in the UK), in Italy or Spain as well in Portugal, they prefer to leave education as soon as job opportunities arise even if they are precarious and/or in the informal economy.

Poverty among young people does not only concern those without work - depending on benefit entitlements - but increasingly also the employed. At EU level, the poverty rate among young people is higher than the overall average (19% compared to 16% in 2001), a difference of 10% in Slovenia and 25% in Italy. In particular among young people, atypical employment - mainly fixed-term contracts and part-time work - has increased in some contexts to well over half of the youth labour force (especially in Finland, Poland, Slovenia, and Spain). In Northern European countries in particular this most often coincides with young people's choices, whilst in Central, Eastern and Southern Europe young people are more often forced to accept these as the only opportunities available; undeclared work also plays an important role in Greece and Italy and is also gaining importance in Central and Eastern Europe.

Sources: "A thematic study using transnational comparisons to analyse and identify what combination of policy responses are most successful in preventing and reducing high levels of child poverty" and "Thematic Study on Policy Measures concerning Disadvantaged Youth"

SECOND CHANCE SCHOOLS

Second Chance Schools - in Greece - is a programme offering the opportunity to early school leavers of over 18 years of age, to complete compulsory education, thus facilitating their access to the labour market.

The first Second Chance School (SCS) was opened in Western Athens. The programme is now implemented at a national level, with 32 SCS in operation. It is funded by the European Social Fund (75%) and national resources (25%). The main activities of the programme are the following:

- Expansion and enhancement of the operation of SCS,
- Provision of adult education as well as basic skills for a successful occupational and social integration,
- Provision of courses in Greek language for adult migrants.

The pedagogical method used in SCS is based on a very strong personal individualised teacher-student relation, facilitated by the small number of students in each class. The use of the 'project' method, the opening of the school in the local community, the respect of the students' needs, the innovative teaching methods, the alternative evaluation of students constitute an integral part of these schools.

See: <http://www.ekep.gr/english/education/deuteris.asp>

Self-employment in Romania

Romania has experienced very strong economic growth over the last years, with a GDP growth in 2004 of 5%. A very high percentage of the Romanian workforce is self-employed, over 39%; a large proportion of the self-employed work in the agricultural sector.

Ongoing compliance with complex regulatory regimes is challenging. This, combined with high contribution rates to social funds from employers, helps to keep Romania's informal economy substantial. The informal sector could represent as much as 49% of GDP.

In Romania the welfare safety net is virtually non-existent. Even individuals on benefits have to engage in an entrepreneurial activity on the side in order to make ends meet. Official unemployment is low at 6.6% but unemployment among the young and the educated is rife. Underemployment is also an issue; it could reach as much as 20% of the workforce. The Roma are twice as likely to be unemployed as the population at large. Programmes specifically targeting the socially excluded, such as the Roma, to help them become self-employed don't appear to exist.

Micro-credit for social inclusion

How can micro-credit, micro-enterprise development and self-employment help people facing poverty and social exclusion?

A ccording to the study *"Policy measures to promote the use of Micro-credit"*, micro-credit and related self-employment promotion schemes are as a way of enabling those at risk of poverty and social exclusion to participate in society through self-employment. This research has identified bridges and barriers between the social welfare system, employment/enterprise system and financial system. This integrated view is, in the authors' opinion, *"necessary for turning self-employment and micro-finance into effective policy tools for social inclusion"*. The following eight countries have been reviewed: the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Poland, Romania, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

Barriers

The study has identified four main barriers for those experiencing poverty and social exclusion in accessing services for self-employment and micro-enterprise development:

- Barriers relating to individual circumstances: Lack of self-confidence as a result of long-term unemployment, lack of skills, health-related barriers, care responsibilities, etc.
- Pre self-employment barriers: Risk of losing low but stable income, such as benefits ('inactivity trap'); high level of self-employed contribution to social security systems; the need for a business plan as a condition for accessing finance; regulatory requirements for business creation and registration, etc.
- Barriers between the social system and employment/enterprise system: If social welfare benefits are higher than the potential earnings that can be obtained in self-employment or waged employment, the incentive to search for an activity decreases. In addition, wage-related benefits, like insurance against unemployment and pensions, are lost in the transition to self-employment.
- Barriers resulting from poor exit strategies of

support programmes: Most support programmes only focus on the start-up phase and on soft and income support for the self-employed person.

Bridges

The study presents six dimensions that determine the potential of micro-credit and self-employment:

- Entrepreneurial context: How entrepreneurial is the society and how much does it support its entrepreneurs?
- Policy environment for micro-enterprises: Are there policy measures that promote self-employment in general, and for socially excluded in particular?
- Welfare bridge: How developed is the system for taking people from unemployment to employment (including self employment)?
- Legal framework for micro-finance: Is there a supportive legal framework for microfinance services?
- Financial bridge: Are financial services available for excluded groups and self-employed?
- Funding and support for micro-credit providers: Is micro-credit supported through direct and sustained funding?

The research has identified different interest groups or stakeholders that could contribute to the design and implementation of policy measures that promote micro-credit as means to finance self-employment:

- Labour ministries and employment agencies could support policy measures that promote self-employment as an alternative for waged employment for unemployed people.
- On the basis of partnerships with micro-credit organisations banks could identify and test a new group of potential customers.
- Social welfare institutions could offer self-employment as an activation option, which is partly self-financing.
- Micro-enterprise/finance support organisations could build the bridges between the three above-mentioned stakeholders and receive funding for that.

Source: *"Policy measures to promote the use of micro-credit for social inclusion"*

Access to culture as a basic human right

Effective access to and participation in cultural activities is an essential dimension of an inclusive society.

Inclusion in cultural activities is often an important stepping stone in addressing social exclusion. This study suggests that the groups most at risk of cultural exclusion are those who are financially and socially disadvantaged, young people, disabled people, immigrants and refugees.

In the eight Member States concerned (Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Sweden and the UK), the research authors have discovered a huge range of initiatives, ranging from those providing language classes for immigrants to using drama or dance in schools to celebrate different cultures or projects specifically aimed at encouraging employment in the creative industries. This could include drama workshops, training in digital media, creation of rap music centres and local history groups for older people.

All countries are extending access to the Internet with libraries and other local community venues playing a key role to provide access to ICT facilities. This is often particularly important for elderly people who are less likely than others to have access to a computer or the internet at home, as well as a lack of technical competence to deal with new technology.

A low political priority

Unfortunately, these initiatives are often unknown outside the geographical area in which they operate. This sometimes reflects a lack of drive at central government level to actively promote engagement in cultural activities as an important tool for addressing social exclusion.

There is a lack of systematic connection or coherent policy between Ministries since 'culture' seems to have a relatively low political priority. In a number of the countries visited there were no

cohesive programmes aimed at linking social inclusion with culture. Limited funding and short-term targets and initiatives are perceived to act as barriers to mainstream consideration of the role culture can play tackling social exclusion.

In addition, most 'high level' cultural policies are primarily directed at existing institutions such as protecting heritage, art galleries, the performing arts, libraries, museums and the general population rather than being targeted at particular sections. Concentrating on visitor or user numbers may only disguise the lack of access to cultural services and activities by those who are particularly disadvantaged. This may also have the effect of misdirecting funds from projects that seek to work with excluded groups to support the achievement of national participation targets.

Culture as a means of building personal confidence

Local agencies better perform

Lack of awareness of the positive role culture can play in addressing social exclusion seems to be more of a national than a local problem. There are many examples of local agencies working together to address the multi-dimensional nature of social exclusion. This has led to a combination of programmes being available that include social protection measures and access to health care and housing as well as encouraging participation in local cultural projects, sports activities and education, training and employment. Germany's Social City programme and the United Kingdom's urban renewal programme provided good examples of this.

Local agencies are also aware of the importance of culture as a means of building personal confidence, consolidating identity, preventing social exclusion and providing routes for a number of people into employment in both the creative industries and other sectors.

Source: "Report of a thematic study using transnational comparisons to analyse and identify cultural policies and programmes that contribute to preventing and reducing poverty and social exclusion"

THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

The initial thinking on the digital divide focused on the differences in terms of having (home) access to the internet. In Europe, the number of households having a connection to the internet was 43% in November 2002, a closer look per country unveils discrepancies ranging from as low as 14% (Greece) to as high as 68% (the Netherlands).

Along with the availability of internet access, there are many noteworthy socio-demographic factors, such as income, educational level, gender, age, employment status, ethnicity and type of household (e.g. single-parent). Access to the internet varies as can be expected: the higher the household income or the younger or the more Western ethnicity and so on, the more they have internet.

It is not surprising that these variables influence internet access. It has been used as an argument to state that the digital divide is not that digital, but another façade of social exclusion.

Source: "Thematic Study to Analyse Policy Measures to Promote Access to Information Technologies as a Means of Combating Social Exclusion"

The Laeken indicators

1. Low income rate after transfers with low income threshold 60% of median income (broken down by gender, age, most frequent activity status, household type and tenure status; as illustrative examples, the values for typical households);
2. Distribution of income (income quintile ratio)
3. Persistence of low income
4. Median low income gap
5. Regional cohesion
6. Long-term unemployment rate
7. Persons living in jobless households
8. Early school leavers not in further education or training
9. Life expectancy at birth
10. Self perceived health status
11. Dispersion around the 60% of median low income threshold
12. Low income rate anchored at a point in time
13. Low income rate before transfers
14. Distribution of income (Gini coefficient)
15. Persistence of low income (based on 50% of median income)
16. Long term unemployment share
17. Very long term unemployment rate
18. Persons with low educational attainment

See: http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/social_inclusion/indicators_en.htm

What indicators to reflect poverty at regional level?

Towards a new set of indicators of poverty and deprivation to be used at regional level.

The study “Regional indicators to reflect social exclusion and poverty” takes as its point of departure the Laeken indicators of poverty and social exclusion. Indicators of poverty, deprivation and social exclusion of course have an important territorial dimension, pointing to the need to take account of regional and local differences.

In an ideal context, one may introduce regional analysis within each of the indicator fields, for instance producing poverty rates by NUTS regions (*), urban-rural classification, etc. However, according to the study, “*simply the introduction of more extensive breakdown is neither possible because of data limitations, nor sufficient in itself (...). It is also necessary to consider whether there is need for addition to the existing indicators developed primarily for application at national level - region-specific indicators able to capture aspects which are essentially regional.*”

A new “portfolio”

The authors therefore suggest developing a more diverse “portfolio of indicators” for the purpose of addressing concerns of regional policy and research. As regards the geographical unit, they consider the NUTS regions as the most appropriate choice, notably because they are the most commonly used units for the formulation and implementation of social policy.

Alongside the ‘poverty rate’ indicator, i.e. 60% of the median income, the study presents a series of indicators which can be used at regional level:

- **Propensity to poverty** - The authors say that each individual has a certain propensity to poverty or deprivation, which could be measured;
- **Basic non-monetary deprivation** - these concern the lack of ability to afford most basic requirements, e.g. paying for a week’s annual holiday away from home; buying new, rather than second hand clothes; eating meat chicken or fish every second day, if the household wanted to, etc.

■ **Secondary non-monetary deprivation** : these concern enforced lack of widely desired possessions, such as a car, a micro wave, a colour TV, etc.

■ **Lacking housing facilities** : these concern the absence of basic housing facilities, such as a bath or shower, an indoor flushing toilet, hot running water.

■ **Housing deterioration** : these concern serious problems with accommodation: leaky roof, damp walls, floors, foundation, etc.

■ **Environmental problems** : these concern problems with the neighbourhood and the environment: shortage of space, noise from neighbours or outside, dwelling too dark/not enough light; pollution, grime or other environmental problems caused by traffic or industry.

Some data for the EU15

The very large differences among regions of Italy are particularly noteworthy. Regions in North and Central Italy are among the top 20% of EU15 NUTS1 regions with the lowest poverty rates; by contrast, regions in South Italy are among the bottom 20% regions with the highest poverty rates, along with two Spanish NUTS1 regions (Centro and Sur) and three British NUTS1 regions (Yorkshire and Humberside, East Midlands, West Midlands).

Considering the overall non-monetary deprivation rates, the NUTS1 regions showing the greatest levels of inequality do in fact also have the greatest levels of inequality in monetary income. The whole of Portugal and Greece, southern Spain and southern Italy have the highest deprivation rates (with the maximum of 34% in Canarias). The NUTS1 with lowest rates are all in Germany. Note that the study presents few data for the new Member States since there is a very limited set of common indicators available for these countries.

Source: “Regional indicators to reflect social exclusion and poverty”, Università di Siena

(*) The Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS) subdivides each Member State into a whole number of NUTS 1 regions, each of which is in turn subdivided into a whole number of NUTS 2 regions and so on.

The second richest country in the world after Kuwait!

Nevertheless a lot of people in Norway are financially and socially excluded...

The Norwegian Government has participated in the process of National Action Plans on social inclusion since 2002, in the framework of the Community Action Programme. That year they published their "Plan of action for combating poverty".

Employment

In Norway the employment rate is more than 73%. However 700,000 people or 15% of the population (2005 figures) of working age are standing outside the labour market. There is a lack of 350,000 jobs for those groups that are included in different labour market 'activation' programmes or policies aimed at helping them to re-enter the labour force.

Poverty today

There are approximately 360,000 people facing poverty (or 7.8% of the population), according to the EU definition (60% of the national median income) over a period of three years. The gap between the richest and the poorest has increased and during the period 1999-2003 the poverty rate has increased by 36%. Among the people experiencing poverty, 5200 are homeless.

Future reforms and actions

Since the beginning of the 90's, anti-poverty groups and the Welfare Alliance (see next page) have done a lot of lobbying work to demand reforms in the welfare sector. One of these is our demand to reorganise the welfare sector for these anti-poverty groups, and to have an administration office to help people get work, pensions and social security benefits ("One shop stop"). This is particularly important for such groups.

This summer, for the first time, new administration offices (New Work and welfare administration – NAV) will be opened. They will be then established in each municipality within four years from now. EAPN Norway has taken part in the core group during the planning period and has especially contributed to highlight the views of the users, both at the individual level and at the level of the system reform.

A long way to go...

Still there is a long way to go, and as Norway has no income floor we need a standard for minimum income in Norway. For instance the responsibility of setting the level of social welfare benefits is delegated to each municipality. That's the reason why EAPN Norway calls for a guaranteed minimum income financed by the State and not by the local authorities as it is the case today. The Government is not too happy about our demands but, in our view, eradication of poverty also means improved economical framework conditions for those who are on the "sideline".

Still there is a long way to go as our demands for a guaranteed minimum income has not been met yet. If the three-party Norwegian Government is serious about its promises to eradicate poverty, we think that the introduction of an "economic floor" is the right means to start.

Our welfare system has to build on the right to live a life in dignity for all, not on charity principles.

Leiv Markved

Chairman - EAPN Norway / the Welfare Alliance

During the period
1999-2003
the poverty rate
has increased by
36%

NORWAY AND THE EU: A LONG STORY...

Norway's relations with the EU are mainly governed by the Agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA). The EEA Agreement is in force since 1 January 1994 and extends the Single Market legislation, with the exception of Agriculture and Fisheries, from the EU Member States to Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

Despite two failed attempts by referendum to enter the European Community in 1972 and the European Union in 1994, the question of whether or not Norway should once again apply for EU membership has been regularly raised in the past few years in the national Norwegian policy debate. However, the Stoltenberg-government, which took office on 17 October 2005, has stated that it will not apply for Norwegian EU-membership during its term in office.

Norway is closely linked to the Lisbon Strategy as Norway incorporates relevant EU legislation through the EEA agreement. However, under the open method of co-ordination between the EU Member States, Norway - as a non-member - is not formally included in this process.

Source: EC

EAPN Norway, a partnership network

EAPN Norway or the Welfare Alliance is a partnership network of organisations, associations and action groups whose aim is to support and help economically, socially and legally disadvantaged groups in Norway. It was founded on 6 March 1998.

History: Before 1998 some organisations used to meet occasionally, but already in 1996-1997 we set up collaborative projects which led to a research report entitled "The hunt of the fourth sector" about the new trend of self-organised groups. In 1997 we also organised a protest action called "Enough is enough" during the Parliament election campaign.

Since then our member organisations have collaborated more closely and coordinated different activities aimed at making poverty in Norway visible, such media work, lobbying and discussions between the member organisations, etc. Today the network consists of 24 member organisations with approximately 45,000 members.

Objectives: Our main objectives are to eradicate poverty, ensure increased participation of the users, and improve the working conditions of our member groups.

Working methods: Through the ideology of social sustainable development, and a bottom-up approach to make the voices of our members heard.

Our member organisations are supporting job seekers, tenants, single parents, job creators, households with children in poverty, parents of people with disabilities, people receiving an allowance and/or in training, convicts, immigrants, ex-drug users, etc.

Our role is to do lobbying work and coordinate contacts between our member organisations and politicians, the Government, different institutions, and to take part in working groups that support our member organisations' interests, that is, pro-

moting an increased participation of the users. Our main goal, which we have been lobbying for over the last 10 years, is to introduce a minimum income scheme in Norway, which would be research based and built on the standard budget for households, developed by the National Institute for Consumer Research. That means that a single person needs at least 10,000 euros per year after electricity and rent have been paid. The poverty line for a single person is 16,000 euros per year in Norway according to the EU definition (60% of the national median income).

Rolf Solvang

Member of the Board of EAPN Norway and the Convicts organisation in Norway (SON)

EAPN Norway contact person: Leiv Morkved: leiv@velferdsalliansen.no

Social assistance in Norway

The 132,100 social assistance recipients in 2004 received NOK 4.9 billion in total (EUR 630 million), or almost NOK 7,100 per person per month (EUR 910). The average recipient was on benefit for five months.

Although the number of social assistance recipients fell in 2004, their share of the population (total population: 4.6 million) was approximately the same as in the last five years, at 3%. Many recipients of social assistance have children and a spouse. If we include these, approximately 218,000 people received social assistance for a shorter or longer period in 2004. The age pattern among social assistance recipients has not changed much in the past years, and the largest group of recipients is aged 30-39 years. However, the largest group as a proportion of the population is the 20-24 age group.

At the end of 2004, there were 5,395 job positions in the social services. This only includes positions related to traditional social services tasks such as counselling, consultations, preventive work and work related to substance abusers. If positions related to job creation programmes are included, the figure increases to 6,084. There are still large differences between counties, but the average ratio of employees per 1,000 adults (aged 18 and above) was 1.7 full-time equivalents per 1,000 adults in 2004.

Source: Statistics Norway

Research is central to the fight against poverty and social exclusion

N° 118
May-June 2006

printed
in English and French
and also available in other languages
at www.eapn.org

Editor
F. Farrell

Responsible for publication
V. Forest

Rue du Congrès 37-41 Box 2
B-1000 Brussels
tel. 32 2 230 44 55
fax 32 2 230 97 33
E-mail: team@eapn.skynet.be
Internet: <http://www.eapn.org>

Contributors
C. Flémal

Bureau de dépôt
1600 Sint Pieters Leeuw 1

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

EAPN
EUROPEAN ANTI POVERTY NETWORK

With the support
of the European Commission

Surf to us at...
WWW.eapn.org

EAPN | N°118 | 2006

8