

A. What? Objectives of the European Year

1. Taking into account the results achieved so far by the European strategy to fight poverty and social exclusion, what are the main challenges/obstacles still to be addressed across the EU in combating poverty and social exclusion? How could the European Year highlight these? What should the Year's objectives be?

Key Challenges:

- To place the fight against poverty in the wider context of maintaining and developing rights based approaches which seek to guarantee access to social, economic and cultural rights for all and which create and maintain societies free of poverty. To date the discussion and discourse on poverty is in danger of being seen as an issue just concerning 'poor' people rather than an issue effecting the whole of society and the protection of all people from the risk of poverty and social exclusion. Social protection and social inclusion policies are, at best, in danger of being reduced to just being 'factors of production' rather than being seen as key investments for fostering a decent society and for maintaining social cohesion. There is a need for a wider debate which recognises the structural causes of poverty and the threat that poverty is to the whole of the society and the need for a fundamental rights perspective which challenges the present dominant economic and development models.
- To consolidate, build ownership and strengthen the EU Social Inclusion Strategy in order to increase its effectiveness: In the wider perspective the evolution of an EU social Inclusion strategy is still a relatively new development. We now have the EU Inclusion Strategy for 6 years and the progress made must be judged against the reality that this is a very short period when compared for instance with the reality that we have cooperation on the common market strategy for half a century. In addition, the revision of the Lisbon Strategy and the questions it raised about the place of social cohesion in the EU agenda, the adjustment of the objectives for the strategy in the context of streamlining and the new processes which places the inclusion strategy in the context of a wider Open Method of Coordination (OMC) on Social Protection and Social Inclusion means that even within these six years there have been interruptions which have caused difficulties for the consolidation of the strategy. The strategy is also too often seen as an EU level exercise rather than as a genuine effort at mutually reinforcing cooperation, at all levels, aimed at making progress on the agreed common objectives of the strategy. To reach this more dynamic reinforcing cooperation there needs to be both greater links made to political and policy making processes, and greater investment, at all levels, to ensure the participation of all relevant actors, including people experiencing poverty and the organisations in which they participate. In particular the Year should be used as an opportunity to get real political commitment and ownership at the national level. In addition, a greater concentration of efforts on the priority issues identified during the last 6 years of EU Social Inclusion Strategy is needed.
- Other challenges needing to be addressed include:
 - Lack of a human rights approach to the fight against poverty and social exclusion, including the rights to freedom from discrimination as articulated in the European equality legislation.
 - Financial constraints and lack of innovative thinking on welfare state reform
 - Lack of awareness within public opinion and of visibility of the problem of poverty within the EU
 - The difficulty of mainstreaming the fight against poverty beyond specific policy areas and lack of a holistic approach going beyond narrow labour market definition

- The need for meaningful involvement of a wider range of actors in the strategy including, parliaments, social partners, service providers, media and local and regional actors.

In order for the European Year to address these challenges it needs to be focused on the fight against poverty and social exclusion within EU Member States and establish objectives which have challenges at all levels (local, regional, national and EU) such as:

- To raise awareness of the causes, the prevalence and multiple faces of poverty in today's European Union. The European Year should lead to a greater understanding in the general public of the complex structural realities which cause poverty in the EU and the extent to which millions of people bear the burden of poverty due to structural failures in our societies.
 - To create awareness about the achievement of the European Social Model/s and the need to protect and deepen this rich cultural heritage. The European Year should seek to generate a discourse which recognises the rich cultural heritage that is the European Social Model/s. The achievement that this model represents in terms of developing and maintaining societies where people can develop and reach their potential with vastly reduced risks of poverty and social exclusion and the need to further develop this model/s so as to provide protection from the risk of poverty and social exclusion for all who live in the EU Member States.
 - To build momentum at all levels around existing and new policy initiatives and tools. The European Year should reaffirm the objective to "make a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty" and on the basis of evaluations and assessment made of existing policies and actions to fight poverty and social exclusion. The Year should build momentum to strengthen existing policy initiatives and tools and to launch new policy initiatives and tools capable of reaching the objective of making a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty. The Year should also seek to ensure a better mainstreaming of social inclusion across all relevant policy areas and actions.
 - Enhance meaningful participation of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion and the organisations in which they participate. The European Year should stimulate a debate and create solutions to ensure the meaningful participation in society of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion, the strengthening of the organisations in which they participate and the development of stronger frameworks to ensure their involvement in activities designed to make a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty.
2. **How can the Year contribute to reiterate and strengthen the political commitment of the European Union and its Member States to eradicate poverty and social exclusion, and in particular to the preparation, for 2011, of a follow-up to the previous cycle of the Open Method of Coordination?**

The European Year must be used to strengthen the mechanisms both within the Streamlined OMC and with the revised Lisbon process of the National Reform Programmes. The Year must be prepared with a thorough evaluation and assessment of the progress made in the OMC to date which could include:

- Events on the legacy of the OMC
 - In 2000 the EU has set itself the objective to make a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty by 2010, but three years before the fixed deadline, 78 million people (in EU 25) are still facing poverty in the wealthy area that is the EU. In order to assess the steps achieved over the last decade a thorough evaluation and assessment of the OMC on Inclusion, involving all the relevant actors, is necessary in the run up to the 2010 year.
 - Lessons learnt, good practices exchanged, and positive policy developments and good processes need to be well documented and communicated.
 - A common basis of understanding needs to be agreed to allow for effective action to address the key priorities identified during the EU Social Inclusion Strategy, leading to an enhanced strategy after 2010 and a clear direction to enable the European Commission to take up its role as driver of the OMC more firmly.
- Identifying ways to refresh the NAP Inclusion/Streamlined process as a planning tool, integrating local/regional and national levels, and wider stakeholder involvement including engaging parliaments. This could include:
 - The establishment of cross cutting working parties involving all government departments.

- Specific involvement of Parliament – development of pilot Parliamentary Committees and Working Groups.
 - Development of pilot regional and local action plans for social inclusion
 - Broadening civil society participation including the participation of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion at all levels
 - Development of funding mechanisms to support greater citizen involvement in the processes (organized civil society)
 - The development of stronger communication tools
 - Develop the participation of people experiencing poverty and the organisations in which they participate in the employment part of the NRP.
 - Making sure that all Member States integrate the common priorities identified during the EU Social Inclusion Strategy (see Joint Reports) fully in their NAPs.
 - Making sure that the NAP includes sufficient detail about policy planning to allow for valuable exchange and mutual learning for Member States and civil society.
- Linking the NAP Inclusion process to the NRP more dynamically and ensuring a link to Structural Funds
- Follow the same steps above with the NRP process
 - Ensure revision of the integrated guidelines (macro, micro and employment) to reflect role of the Lisbon strategy in eradicating poverty and social inclusion
 - Ensure joint meetings between the actors/government officials responsible for all processes and stronger joint institutional mechanisms both in the planning process, the national report writing stage and at the EU level
 - Ensure that the NRP has to specifically monitor how far it is supporting the achievement of the NAP Inclusion goals/priorities, and specifying what resources are used, including Structural Funds.
- Linking the NAP Inclusion process to a participative model of social impact assessment
- Developing a participative process model, tools and instruments which promote stakeholder involvement in a process to appraise new legislative proposals/ scrutinise the account taken of social impact assessments and assess the social impact once legislation is introduced.
 - Link this process to the on-going NAP process.
- Ensuring common efforts to protect high level social standards accessible to all.
- Building on the 1992 recommendation on Minimum Income and ensuring that the current debate on Active Inclusion results in concrete proposals to strengthen the access for all to high level social standards, including adequate income for a dignified life.
 - Agreeing a common approach to the setting of social standards at EU level through a process of dialogue involving the European Union, Member States, people experiencing poverty and the general public to agree on a 'basket' of essential goods and services necessary for a dignified life and complementary programmes and actions at all the appropriate levels to ensure that everyone has access to such a 'basket'. This approach could be piloted as part of the PROGRESS programme and then the lessons learned could be integrated into the OMC on social inclusion.
 - Strengthening the application of international instruments such as the Council of Europe's European Social Charter (revised version, 1996) and the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights could play an important role in securing high level social standards accessible to all.
 - Ensuring that the outcome of the debate on the Constitutional Treaty results in strengthening the EU's social dimension and ensuring that actions follow from these new possibilities.
 - An EU Directive to require Member States to guarantee the resources needed for human dignity could also provide useful added value and should be investigated further.
 - Consideration should be given to the reintroduction of an EU Poverty Programme similar to what was proposed in the fourth EU Poverty Programme. Such a programme would be in addition to the OMC on Inclusion and would assist to develop a common understanding of the approach to the fight against poverty in an EU of 27+ Member States.

3. How can it draw most effectively on all lessons learnt in the context of implementing the OMC up until today, and also upon previous European Years and on other initiatives such as for example the gender equality roadmap and the European Youth Pact?

A number of lessons can be learnt from the **experience of previous European Years**, which should be taken into account in drafting the framework for 2010. One of the key lessons to be retained is that to be successful, the Year needs to raise visibility, and awareness of poverty in the EU as well as to challenge attitudes, in order to deliver concrete solutions and policy change at EU and Member States levels (e.g. European Year against racism which led to a new Directive). This also means safeguarding a pan European dimension and finding the right balance between pan EU level and national, regional and local level activities. A successful EU Year will also leave a legacy at all levels, local, regional, national, and EU. The engagement of all relevant actors early in the process at all levels is essential to ensure that ambitious objectives will lead to desired outcomes at all levels.

It should be noted that successful European Years were often Years “of” and not “for” specific groups (such as that of Disabled People), with strong levels of participation from an initial stage. This is all the more important for a year dealing with people who experience poverty and social exclusion. For the same reason, cooperation with private companies (for instance in implementing communication campaigns) should be considered with caution and seek to meet high ethical standards. Specific attention should also be paid to access to projects and funding mechanisms, where difficulties might arise for smaller organisations (need for core and matching funds). A specific scope also needs to preserve for mid and small size projects, which are particularly well suited to reach out to the most marginalised groups (and should thus play a crucial role for the 2010 Year). In particular small scale, easily accessible funds should be facilitated at the national and local levels, which would provide space for engagement and innovative thinking on key issues. Finally, a good European Year involves early planning and strong follow up: regular progress reports should be published by Member States during the following years, and the nature and scope of the evaluation needs to be planned already ex ante, with the involvement of stakeholders.

4. How can the Year contribute to an increased political visibility for the social objectives of the European Union, in response to citizens' concerns and aspirations?

The EU's contribution to a more inclusive society has undoubtedly become a key concern of EU citizens, as has been seen in relation to the debates on the Constitutional Treaty. However, EAPN believes it is crucial to avoid one-sided campaigns that could be perceived as “propaganda”. The best way to give the EU's social objectives more visibility is on the contrary through balanced information and debate, acknowledging numerous steps forward (Employment and anti-discrimination legislation, EU poverty programmes and commitment to fight poverty, establishment of the Open Method of Coordination on Social Inclusion), but also obstacles and inner contradictions faced by the EU (in particular ensuring that the fight against poverty is efficiently mainstreamed in all EU policies, such as those linked to competition).

The Year is also an opportunity to give more visibility to EU policies, and in particular the OMC on Social Protection/Social Inclusion, which would be strengthened by increased awareness from both social inclusion actors and the general public. For example the national monitoring committees could be asked to generate key messages regarding the value of the OMC in the national context, which would be disseminated with the launch of the Year. Innovative dissemination such as national and local radio slots could highlight the contribution the OMC has made to developments nationally.

5. In relation to the above-mentioned objectives, what do you see as the key message(s) of the European Year of Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion? And how can this key message(s) be best communicated?

EAPN believes the 2010 Year's key messages should aim not only at raising awareness of the prevalence of poverty, but also at showing that solutions do exist and call on new steps to be taken. In addition to this for EAPN it is essential that the messages of the Year should be about the importance of maintaining and developing high level social protection systems and social inclusion approaches which are universal in nature and which are about

protecting everybody in society from the risk of poverty and social exclusion and is about maintaining social cohesion. In addition it is necessary to seek more targeted support for specific groups who face particular difficulties. It is difficult in advance of agreed objectives for the Year to think about key messages but key messages might include:

- The fact that 78 million people (EU 25) are facing poverty within the borders of such a prosperous EU is a violation of fundamental human rights.
- Particular groups such as ethnic minorities, migrants, disabled people, women and older and younger people, are more at risk of poverty simply because they belong to a particular demographic category.
- Fighting poverty is thus not a cost, but an obligation upon EU Member States, and should be seen as a collective responsibility involving not only decision makers, public and private actors but also citizens and residents of the EU.
- A number of tools have already been put in place, going from minimum income schemes to judiciable rights, which should be more widely known, acknowledged and developed.
- Yet a real commitment is still needed to reach the goal of eradicating poverty from within our borders, which requires strong political will.
- The reality of wealth and the extent of inequalities in the EU require that you can not speak about fighting poverty while remaining silent about wealth and inequalities.
- The fight against poverty within the EU cannot be successful without a reflection on its external dimension, including how to better mainstream the fight against poverty *worldwide* in EU policies.

However, communication on a difficult issue needs to be handled with caution. EAPN would recommend paying specific attention to the choice of PR companies in charge of communication campaigns and ensuring a strong stakeholder involvement, at all stages of the preparation, to make sure the right message is sent out. Perhaps the key work of such PR companies should be rather directed at media relations rather than advertising. A lot of work would need to be done in this regard in advance of the Year to try to encourage films, radio and TV documentaries, key festivals, school competitions, etc to take a part in contributing to the objectives of the year. In addition, reflection is needed on how best to make use of new forms of media to contribute to the Year. Who?

B. Involvement of stakeholders

1. How would you like the Year to involve your particular organisation?

EAPN is a representative network of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and groups involved in the fight against poverty and social exclusion in the Member States of the European Union. Created in 1990, it now brings together 24 national networks of voluntary organisations and grassroots groups active in the fight against poverty within each member state of the EU as well as European organisations whose main activities are related to the fight against poverty and social exclusion.

Active in advocacy, analysis, information exchange but also training targeted to NGOs EAPN will contribute to the 2010 Year by channelling back and forth the experience and views of its members and is ready to fully contribute to the planning, implementation and evaluation of the year, both at EU and national level, by taking part in the structures to be put in place (in particular EU and national monitoring committees). Besides, EAPN is looking forward to sharing its experience engaging with the European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty, as we believe the issue of participation should be a core principle of the European Year.

In addition EAPN seeks in advance of the European Year to build a broad based alliance with other relevant actors in order to build momentum and ambition for a successful EU Year against Poverty and Social Exclusion.

2. What mechanisms can ensure that the Year encourages the participation in society of disadvantaged groups?

The mechanisms to ensure the participation of disadvantaged groups can not be thought of in terms of participating in the EU Year alone. Instead this must be seen as part of a longer term approach which builds on existing good practices and which seeks to develop and replicate these good practices. In the first instance the

participation of disadvantaged groups and people experiencing poverty and social exclusion depends on investment to overcome the out of pocket costs which prevents people experiencing poverty and social exclusion from participating. A second level of investment is required to ensure that people experiencing poverty have or can maintain organisations which defend their interests. A third level of investment should be targeted towards the necessary facilitating of meaningful participation through appropriate stakeholder forums at the different levels so as to directly involve people experiencing poverty. This approach in favour of the participation of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion and of people coming from disadvantaged groups must find a way to ensure their participation in the development, implementation and assessment of National Action Plans on Inclusion, as well as developing participation on other relevant policies.

3. How can the Year best involve – constructively, together – the various stakeholders – people experiencing poverty; NGOs; community groups; social partners; local/regional authorities; service providers; national authorities, citizens in general?

First of all, EAPN would like to re-state the importance of enshrining the 2010 year in a real dialogue and partnership culture, which is all the more necessary for an event requiring a high level of participation from marginalised groups. We thus call on the EU institutions, but also national implementing bodies, regional and local public authorities to:

- Ensure that the Commission's own *Minimum Standards for Consultation* and national civil dialogue standards (such as the UK Compact, or the Estonian Civil Society Development Concept) are met regarding key decisions.
- Acknowledge that such dialogue can only make a difference if understood as a process covering different policy stages (from the planning to the implementation and evaluation of the Year) and levels (from the local to the European level). This might require exchanges of practices and possibly the setting up of minimum partnership requirements which should be taken into account at all levels (or at least ensures that public administrations are held accountable).
- Devote sufficient time for stakeholders to consult their membership and thus plan well in advance.
- Understand dialogue as a two-way process and be held accountable for decisions taken.
- Ensure the participation of a wide range of stakeholders; acknowledge their added value and specificity.
- Acknowledge the added value of engaging with NGOs for the delivery of projects (innovation and flexibility, daily contact with most marginalised groups, possibility to reach out to the most excluded), but also its necessary counterpart: the need to provide adequate funding mechanisms, technical assistance and training.

In terms of the efficient cooperation between different stakeholders, EAPN is strongly convinced of the need to provide an approach based on stakeholders' shared responsibility, thus avoiding the widespread feeling that tackling poverty and exclusion should be left to the NGO sector (and acknowledging public and private actors' duty). EAPN therefore believes that, along with community groups, NGOs, public authorities and service providers, actors from other sectors (in particular economics, finance, trade, housing) should be held accountable and fully involved in the debate. Yet such a wide-ranging consultation needs to be approached with specific precautions, and in particular:

- Ensuring a real balance of power between the stakeholders (and making sure non-profit ones are not outnumbered due to a lack of resources)
- Ensure that there is from the beginning a real agreement on expectations from different stakeholders and on the objectives of the consultation.

In terms of governance, such cooperation could take different forms:

- Setting up of multi-stakeholder committees at EU and Member State levels, composed of representative groups with a strong track record in the fight against poverty and social exclusion as well as representatives of other relevant actors. These multi stakeholder committees should be in place from early 2009 in order to be able to prepare well for a successful EU year and in order to be able to identify and begin to plan for direct outcomes from the year.

- Guidelines should be provided to ensure that minimum partnership standards are met throughout the EU. These guidelines should particularly highlight that the National Monitoring Committees/Implementing Bodies should be inclusive of all relevant stakeholders, including those who experience poverty and the organisations they are involved in.

C. How? Overall design, framework and types of actions

1. What types of actions/initiatives would you consider useful for achieving the objectives of the Year at both EU and national and sub-national levels?

Building upon the experience of previous European Years, but also given the specific nature of the fight against poverty, EAPN believes the main types of actions to be taken should be the following:

Assessment of effectiveness of current policies – The Year needs to be prepared with a thorough assessment of the effectiveness and weaknesses of current policies and actions. It is only on the basis of such a thorough assessment that the foundation can be built for new steps to be advanced during the EU Year.

Information and educational campaigns - EAPN would first like to recall that web-based tools need to be approached with caution, as access to internet among people experiencing poverty remains limited.

- Information and educational tools could be centred on the following aspects: which rights for people experiencing poverty; extent of poverty in the EU, experience of people experiencing poverty, myths and stereotypes; from words to action: what can be done? This should both put forward the experience of people experiencing poverty and might involve well know figures with personal experience of poverty (“ambassadors”).
- Beyond leaflets, a series of TV, local radio and internet spots could also be produced.
- On the occasion of 17th October, a specific issue of some key EU newspapers could be produced in cooperation, with articles from different Member States.
- Citizens, decision-makers, journalists could be invited to spend a number of days with an organisation involved in the fight against social exclusion, so as to better grasp the daily reality of people experiencing poverty and the work of these organisations.
- School based activity such as a poetry or poster competition.

Debates, seminars – In particular, in each Member State, governments should commit to holding a participatory meeting between key actors on poverty eradication and solutions to be proposed. This should be replicated at European and sub-national level (depending on level of devolution within each Member State).

European Meeting of People experiencing poverty – For this specific Year, the meeting could take place in the European Parliament, thus raising awareness among MEPs and allowing for enhanced contact between People Experiencing Poverty and decision-makers. It is hoped that in the run up to the Year Member States will have invested in this process so that significant meeting of people experiencing poverty can also be held at Member State level during the EU Year.

Studies (eurobarometer), aimed at assessing the changing patterns of poverty in the EU, assessing citizens’ perceptions, but above all at building a new consensus around political solutions. Any survey should be conducted in advance of the Year so that its results can be used to raise awareness about the importance of the Year.

EU wide campaign on poverty eradication, whereby different actors from society would be mobilised and might subscribe to a common pact, stressing individual and collective responsibilities.

To ensure a legacy for the Year it is necessary that ambitious proposals are developed, at all levels, in advance of the Year. Then the activities funded should also contribute to ensure outcomes to match these ambitions.

2. How can the Year best be framed and steered by the EU level? What kind of support (advice, technical assistance, guidelines, financial, etc) would you expect from the EU level in the implementation of the Year? What about corresponding support from Member State and local/regional level?

The fight against poverty involves complex governance structures and levels, often highly decentralised. However, keeping a strong EU dimension is crucial both to share good practices and avoid competition between different models, thus providing a vision of EU solidarity. This can be safeguarded through different actions.

- It is essential that the budget made available for the Year is capable of generating the type of engagement and the range of activities that would be needed if the Year is to have a lasting impact.
- The provision of a specific logo for the Year would contribute to highlight the EU level dimension of what can first appear as isolated national or local actions.
- It is also crucial that a pan European steering committee provides sufficient guidelines, both in terms of EU dimension and common messages. In this view, such a committee should also comprise representatives of European, and not only national, organisations. The implementation of the guidelines should be monitored, with some provision for holding Member States to account if they have not sufficiently implemented them, well in advance of the Year so that corrective measures can be put in place.
- Specific EU level highlights need to be given strong visibility in the media, in particular the Round Table on Poverty and the meeting of People Experiencing Poverty.

Besides, it is crucial to ensure a level playing field in terms of NGOs' access to the activities across Member States. Specific support should also be provided so as to ensure access for organisations and projects involving the most marginalised groups. Working close to the ground, such organizations can find it difficult to access EU projects. National Committees for the Year against poverty should ensure that a 'small grants fund' allows these type of organisations to access funding for projects for the Year. Specific attention should be paid to financial mechanisms that allow access to such projects (possibility of small grants, pre-financing, global grants, match-funding facilities), which should be mentioned in the Decision for the Year, but also encouraged through exchange of good practices.

3. How can the Year link back in the most effective way to existing EU policies and strategies in a wide sense (e.g. gender equality issues; combating discriminations and promoting equal opportunities, etc.) and to results of previous European Years in issues related to the fight against poverty and social exclusion?

The Year should aim at better highlighting the link between poverty, gender and discrimination, among others through the following actions:

- Mainstreaming discrimination and gender equality throughout the planning, implementation and evaluation of the Year; providing specific tools and mechanisms in this view;
- Better documenting the issue by publishing a study on the link between discrimination and poverty, including highlighting the direct experiences of those who experience the link between poverty and discrimination.
- Raising awareness of this link by spreading good practices from throughout the Member States
- Development of policy tools: Publication of a toolkit on how to better integrate equal opportunity issues in the OMC on Social Protection/Social Inclusion, as well as of checklist on mainstreaming discrimination in social inclusion work. Such documents would build upon the diversity of experiences from throughout the EU.
- All Directorates General of the EU Commission as well as relevant EU Agencies, should be asked to assess how they can contribute to the objectives of the Year and should be asked to make a report following the Year on how they have contributed to the success of the European Year. For example; DG Agriculture could address how in the context of CAP (Common Agriculture Policy) reform support for the EU food aid programme can be maintained.

4. How can the Year ensure the best interaction with activities under current EU programmes and Funds in the social field (PROGRESS, ESF etc.) but also in other areas as, for example, Education, Active Citizenship, Youth, etc.?

The activities under the PROGRESS (in particular the social inclusion part of the programme) will be a natural complement to the activities of the Year. Some of the key activities, Round Table, Key studies, statistical work, surveys, etc should be planned as to how they can give maximum added value to the Year. The Year should also present a challenge to mainstreaming social inclusion concerns across all other parts of the programme. However it is important that additional funding is made available for the Year and that the normal activities under the PROGRESS programme are not presented as the funds for the year.

A better mainstreaming of social inclusion concerns across all Structural Funds spending and in particular ESF funds should be set as a key outcome to be achieved from the year. Work needs to be intensified in this area in the years leading up to 2010 so that the year can be a catalyst to ensure a better ongoing mainstreaming of social inclusion concerns in structural funds.

D. Lasting Value

1. How can the Year further the objective of mutual learning?

The extent to which there is a bringing together of the learning to date in the OMC on Inclusion will have a determining effect as to how much the Year can further the objective of mutual learning. The many events that will be associated with the Year can provide an opportunity to disseminate this learning. This therefore implies that all actors prepare for the Year well in advance in order to be ready to disseminate learning. In addition the mutual learning components of the OMC will continue in the run up to the Year and during the Year. The learning from this mutual learning process based on Peer Reviews could be developed as a process with a multiplier effect in order to further develop this practice of mutual learning with similar practice at National Level between different actors and between different regions/local areas. The Year is an opportunity to highlight the benefit of mutual learning in the national context (see idea above regarding asking Member States to highlight the benefit they have gained from the process on the occasion of the launch of the Year).

2. How could the Year best interact with the National strategies for fighting poverty and social exclusion? How might it improve its consistency with the European strategy, strengthen the co-ordination of policies to promote social inclusion and encourage more effective policy making?

See answer to question A 2.

3. What would you consider a successful result at the closing of the Year?

A successful European Year will have reached both soft and hard outcomes, garnered increased awareness and political commitment. These cover in particular:

In terms of awareness raising:

- Raised awareness of the causes, the prevalence and multiple faces of poverty in today's European Union
- Raised awareness among the general public of the unacceptable prevalence of poverty *within* (and not only outside) a wealthy EU
- Enhanced EU citizens' and policy makers' knowledge and understanding of the different faces of poverty and its root causes, thus challenging widespread myths and stereotypes (see report of 4th European Meeting of people experiencing Poverty)
- Accessible information about existing legislation and how it can be implemented, thus raising awareness of their rights among people experiencing poverty.
- Raised awareness of the European strategy for the fight against poverty, including raised awareness of the huge potential for mutual learning under the OMC social inclusion, especially on issues where lack of information and expertise jeopardise effective policy making.

In terms of awareness about the European Social Model/s:

- Raised awareness that high level social standards accessible to all (which lifts people out of poverty) are a goal for a healthy and humane EU and not an unrealistic utopian vision.

- Challenge the vision that the fight against poverty is a cost for society
- A shift in the way political discussions are formulated from a narrow economist focus to a broader focus on the role of political institutions to be able to secure a 'good life for all'.
- A greater awareness of the need to protect and further develop the European Social Model/s.
- Increased support, political and financial, for policy change in a number of fields (inclusion, but also housing, employment, services, redistribution ...).

In terms of building momentum at all levels around existing and new policy initiatives and tools:

- Strengthened existing policy initiatives and tools at all levels (local, regional, national and EU levels). In particular a strengthened OMC on Social Protection and Social Inclusion in line with the answers given to question A2 above.
- Greater understanding that poverty eradication is a realistic objective, provided adequate policy responses are put in place (in particular minimum income schemes and "positive activation" policies, going beyond narrow labour market measures by tackling access to services, housing...)
- Significant new policies, concrete targets and tools at appropriate levels in order to be able to reach the goal of making a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty in the EU. At EU level these new developments should be reflected in the next EU Social Policy Agenda.
- Agree on innovative tools on how to better mainstream the fight against poverty across the whole range of policies at all levels.
- Employment, economic, monetary and competition policies, in particular, should have a noticeable better mainstreaming of social inclusion.

In terms of enhanced meaningful participation of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion and the organisations in which they participate:

- Greater resources (financial, time and personnel) available at all levels in order to secure the meaningful participation of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion and their organisations in activities designed to make a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty.
- Greater knowledge and implementation of good practices in participation.
- Space for small scale projects to consider emerging problems and innovative solutions.