



2010 BUILDING A  
EUROPE FOR ALL  
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## Call for an EU decade of action to fight Poverty, Social Exclusion and Inequality

### EAPN Statement at the end of the 2010 EU Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion

At the end of the 2010 EU Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion, EAPN calls for **an EU decade of action to fight poverty, social exclusion and inequalities**, as a follow up to the agreement of an EU target to reduce poverty by at least 20 million by 2020. With this statement, EAPN makes **a first assessment of what has been achieved in the 2010 Year** and what is still needed to ensure a decisive step towards the eradication of poverty, social exclusion and inequalities.

EAPN expresses its **appreciation of the efforts of all people experiencing poverty and the NGOs in which they participate**, who, despite their precarious situations and their day to day struggles for survival, have invested energy and time in the numerous activities of the Year. Their active participation in events, bringing their experience and analysis to the solutions needed, has been crucial to the success of the Year. However the real test of the success of the 2010 Year must be whether it has contributed to a real improvement in the lives of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion.

We also want to acknowledge **the many other stakeholders with whom we have worked in alliances this year**, in particular the EY2010 NGO Coalition, the Social Platform, Spring Alliance, trade unions, regional and local governments, academics, EU and National Authorities, as well as individuals working in local communities, who have shown their solidarity and worked together to make a success of the 2010 Year. The Spanish and Belgian EU Presidencies have also played a key role in relation to the achievements of the Year. We appeal to all to continue and strengthen these alliances to ensure delivery on the legacy from the Year.

For EAPN, it is clear that **a renewed commitment of our society as a whole to the fight against poverty, social exclusion and inequalities has hardly started**. High levels of poverty, increasing levels of inequalities, the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, and austerity measures which ask the 'poor' to pay for the crisis are a real threat for the cohesion of our societies. Only a shift to a development model which has **equity and sustainability** at its core can address this threat and re-establish confidence in our Democratic Institutions. Therefore, the European Union and each Member State must re-establish as their primary goal, the responsibility to ensure that the common goods are used for the common good.

EAPN commits itself to engage in the debate that looks at **the root causes of the crisis and seeks alternative solutions** that try to ensure that everyone has access to a good life. It is unacceptable that reducing public deficits is done at the expense of people experiencing poverty. Instead responses to the crisis should tackle the real causes of the crisis and close the income and wealth gaps. Measures that reduce inequality and generate the revenue needed for high levels of social protection and for accessible

and affordable social services and services of general interest must become central in the response to the crisis. Such measures should include: actions to tackle tax evasion and avoidance, increasing taxation on wealth and high income earners, and taxation of speculative financial transactions.

The new **Europe 2020 Strategy**, the establishment of the EU poverty reduction target, and the proposed Platform against Poverty could be a major step forward, provided it is understood that the ambition must be to improve the situation for everybody in terms of their access to rights, resources and services. We insist that the 'Europe 2020 strategy' and the 'Platform against Poverty' as well as ensuring progress on the poverty reduction target must also ensure that **reducing inequalities** becomes a priority for EU actions. Adequate indicators must be used to ensure a transparent monitoring of progress.

To be successful, Governments will need the help of all relevant actors and the support of the majority of their citizens. Therefore, the '**Platform against Poverty**' must build on the Social Open Method of Coordination and ensure the continuation of **National and Local Action Plans for Social Inclusion** that are based on an integrated approach, developed and implemented with the involvement of all relevant actors, including people experiencing poverty and social exclusion. This approach should also ensure concrete follow-up of the already agreed priorities of: 1) active inclusion (including integrated implementation of its three pillars and explicit action to progress the accessibility and adequacy of minimum income schemes), 2) child poverty and 3) homelessness.

In addition, the Platform must ensure greater mainstreaming of equality issues in all actions to fight poverty and social exclusion. The Platform must also ensure that social concerns are mainstreamed across all policy areas and that funding commitments are adequate to the objective to reduce poverty. The Platform must also ensure opportunities for NGO participation in trans-national projects aimed at ensuring exchange of practice and mutual learning.

The **National Reform Programmes** under the Europe 2020 Strategy must build on the 'Platform against Poverty' and ensure that all policies and programmes contribute to the fight against poverty, social exclusion and inequality. As poverty is a multi dimensional issue, concrete measures and actions are needed across a whole spectrum of areas including: effective regulation of markets and fiscal systems, health, education and housing policies which ensure accessibility and affordability. Economic and employment policies must also aim at reducing poverty and inequalities and ensure a sustainable exit from the crisis which promotes prosperity and well being *for all*.

The close of the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion should also be a new beginning. We call on the leaders of EU Institutions and Member State Governments to provide **political leadership** to go beyond narrow economic interests and to deliver a truly Social Europe. We urge all people to join in this decade of action to eradicate poverty, social exclusion and reduce inequalities.

**Fighting poverty is everybody's business and in everybody's interest.**

