

Brussels, 15 December 2010

Dear Ms Catherine Day,

**Re: Need to for urgent action to reinforce participation of stakeholders in the development, monitoring and implementation of National Reform Programmes.**

EAPN strongly welcomed the commitment made by the Commission and the Council to a new partnership principle in Europe 2020 (Recital 16 of the Integrated Guidelines), promising to engage national and EU stakeholders, including civil society, in the development and implementation of the National Reform Programmes.

*“Europe 2020 strategy should be implemented in partnership with all national, regional and local authorities, closely associating parliaments as well as social partners and representatives of civil society, who shall contribute to the elaboration of the national reform programmes, to their implementation and the overall communication of the strategy”. (Recital 16 – Integrated Guidelines)*

However, to date, the **partnership principle in Europe 2020 appears not to have been put into practice in most Member States.**

On the 28<sup>th</sup> September, we wrote to you highlighting our concerns that NGO stakeholders were not being engaged in setting national targets nor in the initial debates on the National Reform Programmes. We have now carried out an assessment with our members, alongside the Social Platform and the Spring Alliance, and can highlight:

- That in **almost no Member States have civil society stakeholders been consulted.** Indeed, from our information, consultation only took place in France and Slovenia. In a few Member States promises have been made of a consultation process for the full NRP, mainly in 2011 (Austria, Belgium, Ireland, Slovakia, Spain, UK.)
- Some Member States have claimed that the European Commission itself has not proposed **direct consultation of civil society stakeholders in the NRPs**, quoting the Commission’s advice note on preparing the NRP sent to Member States (22<sup>nd</sup> September 2010), which advised including in the NRP *“short illustrations of how stakeholders either deliver reforms or contribute to government policy making”*. This wording would seem to directly undermine the requirements of Recital 16 for direct engagement.
- As the **draft NRPs and targets have not been published** on the Europe website, and only been made publically available in a handful of Member States, **stakeholders are gravely in danger of be being left completely out in the cold and disengaged from Europe 2020 process..**

This worrying development represents a serious setback in delivery of the Guidelines and could **undermine the commitment from civil society to the new strategy. Urgent action is needed to get ownership** in Member States through an adequately developed consultation process involving civil

society, including people experiencing poverty themselves, as well as other key national and regional stakeholders. Only in this way can effective policies to deliver on the targets and priorities of Europe 2020 be developed, and the strategy made accountable and visible.

We recognize that the **setting of national targets, particularly in the area of poverty and social exclusion, has been a difficult challenge** for many Member States and that this initial period of drawing up the draft National Reform Programmes was particularly fraught. However, we urge the Commission to acknowledge **the weaknesses in the governance process and the need for urgent action to ensure effective participation** in the development of the full National Reform Programmes by Mid April and to counter any misunderstandings about the importance of direct engagement of NGOs according to the partnership principle (Recital 16) in the development and delivery of NRPs.

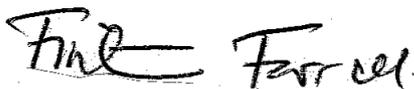
**We therefore call on the Commission and particularly the Secretariat General to:**

- Make an explicit public commitment with a letter to Member States calling for participative governance involving national stakeholders in the development and delivery of the NRPs and national targets, published transparently on the Europa website.
- Develop and publish guidelines for Member States based on Recital 16, setting out minimum standards for effective engagement of stakeholders, including civil society organizations and people experiencing poverty, in the development, implementation and monitoring of the full NRP in Mid-April, drawing on initial work carried out by the Social OMC.
- Publish the names and contact details for representatives of National Governments leading the consultation process (Mr and Ms Europe 2020) and a calendar of meeting times on the Europe 2020 Website.
- Ensure that a specific section in the NRP monitors fully the extent and effectiveness of stakeholder engagement, based on common indicators and providing a basis for Commission Recommendations.
- Publicize the best practices and invest in exchange and mutual learning on effective participative mechanisms at national level, through Peer Review, Studies and follow up instruments.
- Invest in participation by financing awareness-raising actions on NRP through PROGRESS.

EAPN has high expectations of Europe 2020 and respects its potential role to make a significant impact on poverty and social exclusion. **But governments alone will not be able to deliver on these promises.** The Europe 2020 strategy needs the support of ordinary people and organized civil society working alongside people experiencing poverty to embed accountability, provide credibility and restore faith in Europe 2020 as a **social and sustainable** project.

We very much hope that you will take **urgent action** to demonstrate your commitment to these principles and would welcome the opportunity to meet with the Secretariat General to discuss ways of improving the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement in the strategy.

Yours faithfully,



Fintan Farrell  
Director of EAPN