

WHAT ARE WE SPEAKING ABOUT? WORDS AND CONCEPTS.

Social security and welfare benefits is a name for the incomes provided by public authorities on various grounds: for sickness and disabilities, age, familial responsibility, unemployment etc. Some of these income supports are called **replacement benefits** since they replace income from work when people are unemployed.

Benefits are organized on the basis of assurance or social assistance. Minimum Incomes schemes are distinct from **minimum wage schemes** which offer employees a floor level of salary fixed by law or collective agreements.

Minimum Income provisions are social assistance schemes of last resort and are therefore a lifeline for the people in greatest poverty. Most EU Member States have some kind of Minimum Income scheme, though their accessibility and adequacy vary enormously. Most are not effective enough against poverty.

In 1992 the European Council recommended Member States to recognize the basic right of a person to “sufficient resources and social assistance **to live in manner compatible with human dignity**”.

The levels of Minimum Income should be fixed, with the participation of people concerned, in relation to the national standard of adequacy and decency.

Minimum Income schemes should be complemented with quality accessible services and, for those people able to return to the labour market, positive actions to support them back into employment. This is why we promote the notion of **Adequate Minimum Income for a dignified life**.

Adequate Minimum Income should be at the heart of the promotion of high level Social Standards, so that the European Union and the Member States are seen to be promoting social cohesion.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- **Get Informed!**

See the comprehensive range of information on the issue in the European Union (including comprehensive briefing, fact sheet...) on www.eapn.org.

- **Spread the message!**

Disseminate the logo and campaign material, make sure your organization is engaged in the campaign (see the campaigning guide on www.eapn.org).

- **Call on political leaders to take action for Adequate Minimum Income for All!**

Download the open letter to EU governments from www.eapn.org and send it to your political leaders before the 28th of February 2008.

WHO ARE WE?

Created in 1990 by organizations working with people experiencing poverty and social exclusion, EAPN (European Anti-Poverty Network) works for a society where the effective exercise of fundamental rights by all is a reality, where everyone can be a full member of society, and where poverty and social exclusion are seen as a denial of fundamental rights. See www.eapn.org.

EAPN is supported by the European Commission.



TO EVERYBODY CONCERNED ABOUT SOCIAL JUSTICE...

“The way people look at you is humiliating. You are not considered a human being.”

“The problem is not that we run out of money occasionally; the real problem is that we live our entire lives that way and our children grow up into this too.”

These quotes illustrate the hard conditions that 78 million people in the EU have to suffer daily. **This is not acceptable in one of the wealthiest areas in the world. If we want a Europe with greater social justice, we must make a stand for an adequate income that allows for a decent life for all!**

Many people, at some point in their lives, find themselves in situations where they have to rely on welfare benefits. **But there are serious flaws in the accessibility and the adequacy of welfare benefits.** This reality is not sufficiently acknowledged or debated.

An EU recommendation on common criteria for minimum income based on social rights was passed in 1992. Yet now in 2007, huge weaknesses continue to exist!

- Minimum income schemes do not exist in all EU countries.
- Accessibility for all is not guaranteed. Some groups are not entitled to Minimum Income because of their age, employment situation, or status as migrants.
- Complexities of the systems prevent people from taking up their rights.
- Minimum Income schemes are not set at adequacy levels sufficient to lift people out of poverty.

“I can't be sociable. My self-confidence is ruined, because every day I must worry about the next day.”
“I have lost friends as I cannot participate in their activities.”

Increased conditionality placing people in more precarious situations.

More and more conditions are being placed on receiving the Minimum Income. Benefits are reduced

after a certain period, as an incentive to greater activity in seeking employment.

People do want to find work and be useful in their society but they are faced with many obstacles and barriers (such as discrimination, insufficient access to education etc...) which prevent them from doing so. Sanctions unjustly leave people in situations where they receive no income at all to live on.

“I had my income reduced due to a ceiling of social welfare after 6 months. This means that now I don't have enough money to buy food in the last week of the month.”

The failure to introduce adequate Minimum Income schemes results in **huge costs for the whole of society, because the health and education of millions of people are put at risk.** Their ability to contribute to society is thus undermined, and they are left unable to take up their rights and responsibilities.

NOBODY SHOULD BE LEFT BEHIND!

Adequate Minimum Income is essential to allow everyone to participate in society.

- An adequate income, sufficient for a dignified life should be recognized as a **basic right** for all.
- Adequate Minimum Income schemes are a first step in a fairer sharing of wealth and the solid foundation on which to build **decent societies.**
- Adequate Minimum Income for a dignified life is the only secure basis for supporting **sustainable social integration.**
- Member States should recognize Adequate Minimum Income schemes as an essential element of **Social Protection Systems.**
- Adequate Minimum Income schemes should be **easily accessible to all.** The particular obstacles faced by some groups in accessing Minimum Income should be tackled.
- Adequate Minimum Income should be implemented in an integrated manner together with

accessible **quality services**, and personalised **support for access** to the employment market.

- Minimum Income schemes should be set at levels which allow everyone in society to enjoy **a decent standard of living** and participate fully in society.
- **People experiencing Poverty** should be actively involved in the shaping of Minimum Income schemes.

GET INVOLVED NOW! AN INITIATIVE IS BEING TAKEN NOW AT EU LEVEL.

In 2006, the European Commission published a consultation on “Active Inclusion”. A new strategy was proposed, combining “income support at a level which is sufficient for people to have a dignified life with a link to the employment market through job opportunities and vocational training, and better access to enabling social services”.

The next step will take place in 2008: be ready!

17 October 2007 saw the launch of a second consultation about concrete proposals on how to move this strategy forward, including a new EU Recommendation, and a new tool to support its implementation. It will only be implemented if it is widely supported in the EU, and notably if Member States respond favourably to this proposal by the end of the consultation period (February 2008).

It is time to state clearly that adequate Minimum Income schemes are a fundamental prerequisite for an EU based on social justice and equal opportunities for all!

See the back page of this leaflet for more details on how to become more involved in our campaign and how to take action!

Quotations from the Report of 5th Meeting of People experiencing Poverty, Austrian Presidency of the EU, 2006 and “Voices from the Poverty Line”, EAPN 2006.