

Brussels, 19 December

To the attention of: EU Prime Ministers and Head of States
EU Ministers for Social Affairs

**“EVERYONE DESERVES A DECENT LIFE.
ADEQUAT MINIMUM INCOME.”**

The European Anti-Poverty Network call on the Member States of the EU:

- 1) To recognise Adequate Minimum Income schemes as an essential element of the Social Protection System and the solid foundation on which to build decent society.
- 2) To guarantee as a basic right, access for all, to Adequate Minimum Income capable of sustaining a dignified life.
- 3) To engage positively in the current Commission consultation on Active Inclusion and support the proposal that ‘income support sufficient for a dignified life’ should be given key importance in a comprehensive approach to the fight against poverty and social exclusion.



Today in the European Union more than 78 millions people are suffering, or at risk of, poverty and social exclusion: this is not acceptable.

The EU has set itself the ambition of having making a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty and social exclusion by 2010. As a European network of organizations working with people experiencing poverty, we are committed to contribute to this objective. We are convinced that to achieve this ambition, the EU and Member States needs to promote effective policies based on fundamental rights, and achieve important changes in the public opinion with regards to the image and perception of poverty and social exclusion and the people who live in poverty and social exclusion.

From the experience on the ground of our members in 24 countries of the EU, we share the conviction that Adequate Minimum Income schemes accessible to all who need them are essential if we really want to build in the EU a decent society, free from poverty and social exclusion. This is why we are launching now a campaign for Adequate Minimum Income (see on EAPN website all the details of this campaign: www.eapn.org) Considering Adequate Minimum Income for a dignified life as a right is one important way to show that a commitment to fundamental rights is taken seriously by Member States, and would give concrete meaning to the solemnly proclaimed Charter of Fundamental Rights.

We are convinced that Adequate Minimum Income is an efficient poverty prevention tool, avoiding people to be left behind in poverty when faced by difficulties in their life. We are convinced that Adequate Minimum Income when implemented together with accessible quality services and a personalised support to access the labour market for those for whom paid employment is an option, allows sustainable social integration of the most excluded. We are convinced that Adequate Minimum Income is indeed a positive incentive to get back to the labour market for those who can do so, since it provides the necessary security to overcome some of the barriers that the most excluded are facing on the labour market. We are convinced that adequate minimum income is beneficial, not only to the recipients, but also to the whole of society, since it can avoid the health and education of millions of people to be put at risk and support the full participation of all in society.

Today, despite the 1992 the European Council recommendation to Member States to *"recognize the basic right of a person to sufficient resources and social assistance to live in a manner compatible with human dignity"* ([Recommendation 92/441/EEC](#)), existing minimum income schemes still present huge weaknesses in terms of adequacy and accessibility. Increasing conditionality is attached to receiving these social benefits, and negative images and discourse are undermining the importance of this poverty prevention tool.

We urge all governments of the EU to adopt an ambitious and positive approach to minimum income, and to implement, through a participative process, the right to Adequate Minimum Income for a decent life to all.

The current [European Commission consultation on the promotion of the active inclusion of people furthest from the labour market](#), (COM 2006 544 final) proposes to develop a comprehensive strategy for 'Active Inclusion' combining income support at a level sufficient enough for a dignified life, with a link to the labour market through job opportunities or vocational training, and better access to quality services. We value this proposal, allowing progress to be made against poverty and social exclusion, including [through the provision of Adequate Minimum Income, implanted through a strengthened Open Method of Coordination for Social Inclusion and Social Protection](#).

We urge all governments of the EU to engage positively in this consultation, open till February 2008.

We hope that you will take our views into consideration,
Yours faithfully,



Fintan Farrell
Director



Ludo Horemans
President