

**To the attention of:
European Council - European Commission - European Parliament**

Declaration by delegates

Delegates to the 11th EU Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty show the red card to the EU Institutions

This is the Eleventh European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty. For some of us it is an exciting new adventure, for others a familiar annual occasion. For all of us, it is a time of hope in a possible change.

But this year, more than ever before, we feel abandoned by those who declare they stand at our side, working for us and with us.

Ever greater numbers of people are homeless and living in precarious conditions (there's no need to cite official statistics; just look around, just ask the staff in the shelters), ever greater numbers are losing their home because they can't afford to pay their rent or their mortgage, ever greater numbers are without a home because they are discriminated against.

Everywhere unemployment is mounting, workers are increasingly insecure, young people cannot imagine a future. As a 17-year-old girl has said, "Right now I have no dreams". Can there be anything worse than not having a dream when you are 17 years old?

All this is happening because the governments of the member states and the European institutions are not looking beyond the fiscal accounts. They are allowing the burden of the crisis to fall fully on the poor, the vulnerable, who bear no blame for it, while those who should be called to account are going practically unscathed and are even growing richer.

We feel that EU leaders have lost sight of the objectives for which the European Union was born 60 years ago: objectives that included respect for rights, widespread material and social wellbeing, solidarity and cooperation.

We call on you to follow up your many fine words with action. The policies now being used to combat the economic and financial crisis are only creating more poverty and social exclusion. You must take this message to heart and act accordingly: Europe's future depends on it!

We too have rights, and not just on paper. We have the right to an adequate minimum income, to a quality job, to efficient and affordable social services, to water, electricity and a dignified place to live in, to health.

We have never thought the European Meetings of Persons Experiencing Poverty were the solution to all the problems. But we know it is perhaps a unique occasion to make our voice heard, to influence, with direct input, the shaping of policies that do concern us closely but that also have implications for the whole of society.

We want a real EU Inclusion strategy that has meaningful actions at local, national and European levels capable to meet the EU poverty reduction target. As people directly impacted we want to be part of deciding the actions to be taken and to be involved in the delivery and evaluation of these actions. We want financial investment to support such actions.

We want to make ourselves heard and seen not only in this room but also in the public space, so today at 12.30, one or two delegates from a number of the delegations will leave the meeting to assemble before the Building of the Council of the European Union to make a photo there, symbolically showing the red card to the European Union leaders and leave there our messages, while the rest of our colleagues engage in the agenda we are sure you will understand that this extraordinary time needs some extraordinary action.

Finally during this Danish Presidency we are reminded of the Hans Christian Anderson story of the Emperor's new clothes. In showing the red card to the EU Institutions today, for what we see as the failure to take seriously the commitments you made when you agreed the EU poverty reduction target, we take inspiration from the young child in this story, who dared to reveal that the Emperor was naked. We are encouraged that this revelation was a moment of awakening and a new beginning for the Emperor and we hope our action today will have a similar result.