



## EAPN GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2008 – FINAL DECLARATION

### Ensuring a lasting legacy from 2010 (the EU Year for combating Poverty and Social Exclusion)

On 25-27 September 2008, EAPN held its nineteenth General Assembly in Albena, Bulgaria. At this General Assembly the Network welcomed into its membership **EAPN Romania**.

Early preparation is essential for a successful EU year and under the banner “**Ensuring a lasting legacy from 2010**” the delegates to the General Assembly adopted the following **declaration**.

The European Anti Poverty Network (EAPN)

- Having regard to the **Social Package** presented by the European Commission on 2 July 2008;
- Having regard to the implementation of the revised **Lisbon Agenda and the EU Inclusion Strategy (Social OMC)**;
- Having regard to **recent judgements of the Court of Justice** of the European communities, in relation to the rights of posted workers
- Having regard to the lack of progress on developing an effective EU Framework capable of guaranteeing access to affordable services:
- Aware that the **numbers of people living in poverty** in the EU is remaining constant, and in some countries is growing;
- Aware of the **increasing threat to hard won social rights** and the increasing precarity faced by many EU citizens and residents;
- Aware that the **fall out from the current financial crisis** is disproportionately carried by people living in poverty, particularly in terms of increased housing, energy and food prices;
- Aware that we are coming to the **end of the current 5 year term** for the EU Institutions.

States that

- The EU which was once seen, as the promoter of the European Social Model is in **danger of being seen as the defender of market freedoms to the detriment of social rights**;
- That the commitment to achieving **economic growth has been no guarantor of reducing poverty and achieving greater social cohesion**;
- Despite political declarations in relation to the strengthening of the fight against poverty and social exclusion that in this period, in many Member States and at EU level, it has been **more difficult to get serious political commitment and attention to the fight against poverty and social exclusion**;
- Increasingly people experiencing poverty are held responsible for their own poverty and are being pushed into low quality, low paid employment;
- The growing **attacks on human rights**, in particular in relation to ethnic minorities (particularly Roma) and migrants (including undocumented migrants) and the lack of a strong defence for EU equality and anti discrimination legislation, should be a cause for growing alarm.

- Governments must play a more active role to address the shortcomings of the free market by regulating the economic system.

In the light of the above the delegates stressed their belief that **2010 as the EU Year for combating poverty and social exclusion** takes on even greater significance. We the representatives of NGOs working with and for people experiencing poverty and social exclusion across the European Union call on the EU and member states to ensure a lasting legacy from the 2010 year capable of **delivering a decent life for all**. To achieve these credible messages must emerge clearly from the year, including the following:

- **Social Progress is possible** and all policies must contribute to the fight against poverty and the achievement of social inclusion;
- **Stereotypes in relation to 'people experiencing poverty' must be broken** and respect for human rights, including social and economic rights, must be defended as the basis for a decent society;
- **More and better democracy is needed**, including properly resourced participatory democracy infrastructure;
- Achieving **a fairer redistribution of wealth** is possible and a re-found awareness of the importance of public wealth.
- The fight against poverty in the world and the fight against poverty in Europe is part of **one and the same struggle**.

Concrete actions at EU level which should support these messages include:

- The establishment of a **Social Progress Pact** to direct political attention to the need to put social cohesion and the fight against poverty at the top of the EU agenda and at the centre of the post Lisbon strategy;
- Ensuring the EU Charter for Fundamental Rights is respected in all its dimensions and enforced through judicable rights;
- The establishment of **ambitious targets** at EU and Member State levels to eradicate poverty in the EU by 2020, to be monitored through a high visibility **annual scoreboard**;
- Establishing an **indicator of societal progress** which goes beyond that measured by Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and takes better account of the quality of life of the citizens;
- Ensuring that all Member States make progress so that their **Minimum income schemes are adequate for a dignified life**. As a first step, this should seek to ensure that such schemes are at least at the risk of poverty level, with a commitment to develop accurate adequacy levels through a participative mechanism;
- Ensuring the implementation of existing **EU anti discrimination legislation** and bring forward enhanced legislation to strengthen the EU equality and anti discrimination framework;
- The establishment at EU level of an independent body with the capacity to verify if human rights standards are met in the EU detention centres for asylum seekers and migrants;
- Developing specific guidelines, principles and benchmarks on **good governance in social inclusion policies**;



- Developing a new EU Community **Poverty and Social Inclusion programme** capable of supporting the EU Inclusion Strategy, while at the same time ensuring that EU Structural Funds deliver on poverty and social inclusion objectives.
- The development of an EU tax on financial transactions, as part of the reform of the EU budget.

The delegates to the General Assembly expressed **their commitment to work in solidarity with other actors**, to identify what could be the **legacy from the 2010 year at local, regional and national level** and to contribute to the achievement of **a legacy at EU level in line with this declaration**.