

Anti**POVERTY** MAG

Magazine of the European Anti Poverty Network

NO. 129 | 2009

April–August, 2009

www.eapn.eu

10 demands for the next European Parliament

EU political leaders
share their views



European elections:
why bother?



Your vote should help to decide the EU priorities!

FINTAN FARRELL, DIRECTOR EAPN

Welcome to this special issue of the EAPN magazine on the European Parliament Elections. Between 4 and 7 June, millions of EU citizens in the 27 EU Member States will vote to elect the European Parliament for the period 2009 – 2014. The choices that will be made in this election will have an enormous impact, not just for people living in the EU, but for the whole global community.

These elections take place during one of the most severe economic crises since the 1930's. For EAPN, the failure, for many years now, to adequately address poverty and to tackle the growing levels of inequalities, within the EU and globally, is one of the root causes of this crisis. In this issue EAPN sets out its 10 demands for the next European Parliament in order to reverse this failure and to achieve a more social and sustainable EU capable of guaranteeing a dignified life for all. We have requested the main political groupings in the current European Parliament to respond to our demands and to present their vision for a social Europe. We hope that by reading the magazine you are assisted to make a more informed choice about how to use your vote.

The European elections must generate a real awareness about the vision for society and the priorities for action, of the candidates and political parties presenting themselves for election. The election campaign could be a key way to address the perceived democratic deficit in the EU but only if the parties succeed to communicate alternative visions which give a choice to the electorate. The media must play a key role to enable this communication to happen.

It is not enough that 27 different elections, with different national priorities, take place in the same period of time. The next Parliament will elect the President of the European Commission and give direction to the EU priorities. We need an election that is really about the priorities that should be pursued at EU level. We hope that fighting poverty and inequality will be one of these priorities. Your vote should help to decide.

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EUROPEAN ANTI POVERTY NETWORK

AntiPOVERTYMAG

Magazine of the European Anti Poverty Network
N°129, April – July 2009

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This magazine is supported by the Directorate-General for Employment, social affairs and equal opportunities of the European Commission. Its funding is provided for under the European Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity PROGRESS (2007–2013).

For more information see:

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/progress/index_en.html

The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect the position or opinion of the European Commission.

The European Parliament elections: why bother?

The EU debates often sound far away from our day to day reality, although they define 80% of the legislation which impacts on our daily lives. In the fight against poverty and exclusion and the building of a more cohesive and inclusive society, the European Parliament is a key actor.

These are the first reasons why EAPN has decided to launch a campaign on the European Parliament elections, presenting 10 demands to all candidate MEPs.

The European Parliament is gaining in power and assertiveness

According to the Nice Treaty, the newly elected European Parliament will appoint the next President of the Commission. The European Parliament is no more the purely consultative assembly initially established, but has moved towards a true legislative assembly. The co-decision procedure now covers 43 areas (including incentive measures for combating discrimination, asylum policy, measures against clandestine immigration and incentive measures for employment). If the Lisbon Treaty enters into force, the Parliament will see its competences extended, notably in the fields of Justice and Home Affairs (covering migration policy), Services of General Interest, as well as cohesion policy.

Recently, the European Parliament has used the co-decision provisions, as well as their right to adopt own initiative reports, to defend an ambitious vision of a Social Europe, closer to the concerns of the people. The current European Parliament mobilized, for example, in the area of services (see the *European Parliament Resolution on a European Charter on the Rights of Energy Consumers*, adopted in June 2008), as well as on the controversial issue of Working Time regulation. The Report on the 2010 Year against poverty by Marie Panayotopoulos-Cassiotou MEP has led, on the request of EAPN and other social NGOs, to a strengthened thematic scope, including the question of access to rights and resources, health and social protection, as well as to a stronger commitment from the Commission in favor of the participation of small and grassroots NGOs in the Year.

EAPN's views are taken into account by a number of active MEPs

Under the current legislature, EAPN's active lobbying at national and European level has brought our points to the attention of MEPs. A number of European Parliament reports picked up on our concerns, notably on **employment** (Anne Van Lancker Report on the Employment Guidelines 2008-2010, 2008), **social inclusion** (Gabriele Zimmer Report, 2008; Jean Lambert Report, 2009), **social economy** (Patrizia Toia Report, 2009) and **energy poverty provisions** in the energy package (Eluned Morgan). The European Parliament's report on the internal market in electricity (rapporteur Eluned Morgan) called for strong measures to tackle energy poverty, supporting EAPN's claims to put the issue higher on the EU agenda (the final text is currently being discussed with the Council which turned out to be less progressive). Recently, the Report from Jean Lambert on Active Inclusion reflected our views very strongly, and will be a valuable instrument for pushing for the implementation of the Active Inclusion Recommendation adopted by the Commission in October 2008.

More broadly, EAPN has been working with the aim of developing visibility and regular working relations with the European Parliament through a variety of channels.

- We have been jointly supporting the Secretariat of the European Parliament Intergroup against Poverty and Social Exclusion, with ATD Fourth World, and have participated in other Intergroup meetings, such as the Social Economy Intergroup. Under the Presidency of one MEP, Intergroups gather a large number of MEPs sharing the same thematic concerns, across different political groupings. Intergroups aim at fostering visibility and transversal debate concerning their issues, and make statements regarding the Parliament activities in this area.
- At EAPN, we have been systematically sharing positions with the members of Employment and Social Affairs Committee, as well as with the Presidents of the main political groups.
- EAPN took the floor in relevant specific hearings organized by political groups and Committees,

- EAPN has been keeping regular contact with friendly MEPs and European Parliament staff, and they have actively participated in EAPN events.

In the next months, the newly elected Members of the European Parliament will be a key target of EAPN's campaign for adequate Minimum Income. The appeal for Adequate Minimum Income schemes will be presented in an event planned in September in the Parliament (see www.adequateincome.eu).

The national level is decisive for engaging in essential regular dialogue

The European Parliament is the only directly elected EU institution, and MEPs relate first to national and local constituencies. EAPN's experience is that MEPs are more inclined to pick up on EAPN's positions in Brussels if they already know about anti-poverty activism and EAPN in their own constituency. Therefore, it is crucial that social NGOs on the ground engage with them, not only when there is an election campaign, but also during their mandate. We must make visible what we are doing, the reality we witness, what difficulties we are facing and what we expect from policy-making.

Making connections between the realities on the ground and EU level debates is not easy, so engaging with MEPs from both levels can be very fruitful. It is a way to demonstrate that the general positions we take at the EU level are consistent with the concrete experience shared by members, and to show strongly how a more social Europe is needed and demanded.

Engaging in the EAPN campaign for the European Parliament elections is not an end in itself, but the starting point of the relationship we need to build with the women and men who represent us. Only a long term and demanding relationship with our political representatives can help address the EU democratic deficit.

CLAIRE CHAMPEIX, EAPN POLICY OFFICER AND THE EAPN POLICY TEAM



EAPN Key demands for the next European Parliament:

Delivering Social Cohesion and closing the gap on Poverty and Inequality must be an absolute priority for the EU!

Failure of the current EU approach

As a result of the dominance of competitive and neo liberal policies the EU is currently facing the worst financial, economic, social and political crisis since the 1930's. The inescapable consequence is increasing poverty and social exclusion: workers losing their jobs, people on low-incomes losing their homes or unable to afford housing. Those who do not have jobs finding themselves further from the labour market, while families are driven further into debt and people on the poverty line are threatened with reduced or frozen social benefits. In response to this crisis EU Governments are financing astronomical bail out packages to financial institutions.

But at what cost and will this investment of billions address the needs of the people living in the EU?

The current financial and economic model, which has been supported by the EU's Lisbon strategy, is based on the priority of the markets over social rights and environmental concerns. Too often this model has exacerbated the position of the poor and undermined social commitments by prioritising "growth and jobs" at any price. It has failed to put the 'public good' at the heart of EU actions. The EU has prioritised liberalisation and defence of largely unregulated markets, at the expense of strategies that promote equity, social justice and the reduction of poverty and inequality within the EU and globally.

EAPN calls for a fresh start

The new European Parliament, being chosen as the voice of all Europeans, will have the huge responsibility of preparing and implementing the global EU strategy to replace the existing Lisbon strategy. In doing this the Parliament must respond to the needs of the citizens and respond to the current crisis and the response cannot be just more of the same!

Globalisation, climate change, economic recovery and demographic change, are currently recognised as the key challenges for the EU. With 79 million people in the EU facing poverty, with growing inequalities within and outside the EU, there is a growing sense of precarity and anxiety among large sections of the population. The EU must take urgent action to address these very real fears and anxieties.

Social Cohesion including the **fight against poverty and inequality and a fairer distribution of wealth within and outside the EU** must be seen as one of the **principal challenges to be addressed by the EU**. The EU must become the **promoter of social and sustainable development** and the European Parliament must be at the fore front of delivering this change.

Members of the European Parliament must play a vital role as a bridge between EU institutions and their constituents. EAPN calls on all candidates for the European Parliament elections to respond to our 10 demands. At national and EU level we will watch attentively campaign statements and make our views heard.

10 demands to put the fight against poverty at the heart of the EU Agenda

| | |
|----|---|
| 1 | <p>Make Social Cohesion and the fight against poverty and inequality in the EU and the promotion of global equity a named EU priority and a specific pillar of an integrated post 2010 social and sustainable Lisbon Strategy. The focus of the economic recovery package should contribute to this priority.</p> |
| 2 | <p>Set and monitor EU and national levels targets for poverty and inequality reduction as part of a highly visible EU strategy against poverty. This strategy should include specific measures to address extreme forms of poverty as well as addressing relative poverty so as to ensure a more equitable society. The strategy should be supported by a reinforced Open Method of Coordination on social inclusion and social protection and the follow up of the Commission Recommendation on Active Inclusion.</p> |
| 3 | <p>Set benchmarks for active governance in decision-making processes at EU and Member State levels, ensuring the participation of anti-poverty NGO's including people experiencing poverty in the development, implementation and evaluation of all policies that impact on poverty and social exclusion.</p> |
| 4 | <p>Make progress on developing an EU framework to defend high level social standards and to guarantee a dignified life for all. A framework directive on adequate minimum income schemes as a follow up to the Commission Recommendation on Active Inclusion would be an important step in creating such a framework.</p> |
| 5 | <p>Ensure access for all to affordable quality services, including social, educational, child care and health services, and housing, transportation, energy and water services. The specific characteristics of these services of general interest should be respected by EU law and an assessment of the impact of the privatisation and liberalisation of these services on social cohesion, poverty and inequality should be undertaken.</p> |
| 6 | <p>Put the commitment to 'Decent and Quality Work' back at the centre of the European Employment Strategy, through analysing the causes of the rise in 'working poor' as well as the benefits of adequate living wages as a necessary base for sustainable growth. To foster the creation of "green and social jobs" that could combat climate change, address market failures, support economic recovery and give stable and quality work to many.</p> |
| 7 | <p>Support social economy and inclusive entrepreneurship as vital sources of inclusive job creation and concrete support for those furthest from the labour market. Ensure this is reflected in EU employment policies and as a specific objective of EU Structural Funds spending.</p> |
| 8 | <p>Strengthen EU anti-discrimination legislation including the fight against discrimination based on social origin and develop better systems for the enforcement of existing legislation and the promotion of pro-active policies and measures to address all forms of discrimination.</p> |
| 9 | <p>Mainstream the fight against poverty across all policies through effective and participative social impact assessments, which ensure the engagement of stakeholders. An impact assessment on tax policies with regards to wealth accumulation, distribution and inequality should be a priority. The development of an indicator of societal progress that reflects social and environmental well-being and that goes beyond progress measured by GDP would be an important tool to enable citizens to be aware of whether real progress is being made.</p> |
| 10 | <p>2010 has been declared the EU Year against Poverty and Social Exclusion: MEPs can play a positive role as ambassadors for the year, in doing so they can help to ensure that the fight against poverty and social exclusion is given a high profile in the first year of the life of the renewed European institutions.</p> |

“Solidarity is the foundation of our society” – The European People’s Party

How do you respond to the EAPN manifesto for the European Elections?

The European People’s Party recognizes the importance of your 10 points – putting poverty at the heart of the EU agenda, while pointing out that many issues raised by EAPN are of Member State competence.

The EPP agrees that economic recovery, climate change and demographic change are among the key challenges facing the European Union.

We agree that the EU must become the promoter of social and sustainable development and also believe in a strong European Parliament. We concur that the EP should be at the forefront in order to play a vital role as a bridge between EU Institutions and their constituents.

Furthermore we would like to highlight the importance of defending a high level of social standards and the guarantee of a dignified life for all. The access to affordable quality services should also be ensured. Decent and quality work must be supported strongly as should the social market economy and inclusive entrepreneurship.

What are your social priorities for the next mandate?

For the European People’s Party, solidarity is the foundation of our society. Economy is at the service of society based on the individual, on freedom, solidarity and social cohesion. This is reflected by our idea of a Social Market Economy. For us, the European project always had a social dimension.

We consider economic dynamism in Europe not only as compatible with social responsibility, but rather as a precondition for it. **Everybody is entitled to income, work and an old age pension. This becomes increasingly a challenge as rising prices for food and energy particularly affect people with lower incomes as well as the unemployed. It is essential to further promote a knowledge-based society, able to create new employment opportunities in a sustainable way. The social security systems should on the one hand help those in need by applying**

the principle of solidarity and on the other hand have a stimulating element for unemployed to enter the labour market.

Work for everybody is the central goal of our economic and social policy, as well as the most effective shield against poverty and social exclusion.

New and sustainable jobs can only be created by a dynamic economy. The EPP considers the



Wilfried Martens, President of the European People’s Party

level of unemployment in some parts of Europe to be unacceptable. Skills shortages, especially in the lower segment of the workforce contribute to this problem as well as the high level of taxation. We need more active systems in order to increase the employability of the unemployed. In the first place, this requires investment in human capital in order to establish a well-trained and highly motivated work force.

The opportunity to promote “green” investments should also be explored. This will enhance the position of the European economies and create new jobs. The EU must also make an effort to see that the European economic, social and ecological values that are aimed at sustainable economic growth are also perceived as an attractive model by the rising new economies. In this sense the EU’s role as a global partner should be further encouraged and sustained.

The European People’s Party main proposals

1. The creation of jobs is our core priority. Only if we manage to reach a high level of employment, will we be able to safeguard prosperity for everyone and assure the future of our social security systems. We consider it our duty to care for good working conditions and for reliable social security systems. Finally, we need more active systems in order to increase the employability of the unemployed;
2. The coordination of research programs has to be improved and the overall spending on research and development has to be increased to 3% of GDP in 2010 and 4% in 2015 in order to improve Europe’s position when it comes to research and innovation;
3. National policy makers all over Europe have to improve the viability of social security systems;
4. The burden of pension schemes should be proportionally distributed across generations in order to safeguard solidarity between generations;
5. Family friendly policies that improve flexibility for working parents have to be introduced;
6. Better child care and housing policies have to be provided and parental leave for both working parents should be encouraged;
7. Flexible retirement must be encouraged and those who are still fit and willing to work should be able to do so, even after their official retirement age;
8. Life-long learning is especially important in order to cope with the challenges posed by technological change.

The EPP is the political family of the centre-right committed to a federal Europe. The EPP group brings together Christian Democrat, Conservative and other mainstream centre and centre-right political forces from across the 27-member European Union. In the current European Parliament, the EPP-ED group holds 277 out of 732 seats. See references of national parties in membership of the EPP and their election manifesto on www.epp.eu

“Calling for a European Social Progress Pact” – The Party of European Socialists

How do you respond to the EAPN manifesto for the European Elections?

I applaud the commitment of EAPN in fighting poverty and strongly welcome their support for a renewed effort on social justice. At the Party of European Socialists (PES) we too share the view that tackling exclusion and inequality has to be a top priority. Like EAPN, we firmly believe that full employment, strong public services and decent jobs need to be the central pillars of any such strategy, all of which are reflected in the record of Socialist MEPs over the last five years and in our ambitious manifesto for the next mandate.

What have been your main achievements in the current mandate?

The Socialist group in the European Parliament has delivered real progress since 2004, acting as a bulwark for workers' rights in the face of a European Commission and Council both dominated by conservatives. Just last December we led the way in banning long working hours by pushing for and voting overwhelmingly in favour of a maximum 48-hour week, a policy that protects workers and enables them to better reconcile work and family.

We also supported job security by insisting that European Labour Law uphold core employment rights and permanent contracts. We voted for new rights for temporary agency workers and secured amendments to strengthen works councils. Whilst the Right has allowed freedom of movement to undermine wage agreements, the PES group has put reassessment of the problematic Posted Workers Directive back on the political agenda.

Universally accessible, high-quality public services are another cornerstone to any credible anti-poverty strategy. Socialists have played a leading role in campaigning for a clear European legal framework for this field. We pushed through alterations to the Services Directive to protect social provisions, to scrap the unfair 'country of origin' principal and to eliminate threats to the right to work. A major victory in this area was when we worked successfully to

incorporate social inclusion, affordable public services, better financial regulation and fairer pay deals into the Lisbon growth and jobs strategy. This echoed our actions in 2005, when we lobbied for the Stability and Growth Pact to safeguard social protection and redirect expenditure to key public investments.

As Jacques Delors and I wrote in the report New Social Europe, the EU “must engage in a process of managing globalisation to create



Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, President of the Party of European Socialists

the conditions for widely-shared prosperity and social justice.” One of our achievements from this parliament was the creation in 2007 of the 500 million euro European Globalisation and Adjustment Fund to help workers who are made redundant to find new jobs. We then put pressure on the Commission to extend the flexibility and reach of the fund, opening up financing over longer periods and for micro-credits and cooperative projects.

In these endeavours, we progressives have repeatedly come up against opposition from conservatives and liberals. Neither the right-wing EPP nor the liberal ELDR mentions inequality or poverty in their manifestos for the upcoming elections. In contrast, we have put forward a set of concrete proposals for a social Europe. Many of the demands made by EAPN are covered in our programme.

What are your social priorities for the next mandate?

We are calling for a European Social Progress Pact with goals and standards for national social, health and education policy in order to ensure needs-based welfare benefits. This would be accompanied by a social progress clause in every piece of European legislation. We also pledge to continue pushing for a European framework for public services, a European pact on wages to set out the need for decent minimum wages, and a reexamination of the posted workers directive.

Other priorities include care for the elderly, better information and consultation rights for workers, strengthened consumer rights, financial regulation, and anti-discrimination policies. These all have an important part to play in fighting poverty and social exclusion. It goes without saying that the current economic situation poses serious threats to social coherence. That is why, as part of our strategy for a more just society, we have developed an ambitious recovery plan based around smart green growth and jobs. This includes investment in public transport, research and development, infrastructure projects and energy efficiency, and is accompanied by a new Skills Fund designed to ensure better work in the future.

Unlike the Right, we do not believe that the economic crisis is an unavoidable law of nature. We believe that we can shape our future and emerge from the current difficulties stronger and fairer. More than ever before these European elections are about political choices.

The Party of European Socialists brings together the Socialist, Social Democratic and Labour Parties of the European Union.

The Socialist Group in the current European Parliament has 213 members, making it the second largest political force.

Reference of national parties in membership of the PES, as well as their election manifesto are available on www.pes.org

“Social cohesion is a core priority”

– The European Green Party

What have been the main achievements of your party’s MEPs during the current mandate?

Combating poverty is at the core of our political priorities in the European Green Party. In the current European Parliament, the Green Group has fought hard for the rights of Europe’s poorest people in the face of neo-liberal and conservative policies which far too often encourage a race to the bottom of social standards among the Member States.

In terms of Green achievements during the current mandate, the Green Group succeeded in achieving the recognition of the concept of multiple discrimination in the Anti-Discrimination Directive, and persuaded other political groups to broaden the remit of the Directive so that it covered all discrimination, regardless of the reason. Greens played a key role in strengthening the Working Time Directive. In particular, Greens succeeded in removing a proposed “opt-out” which currently weakens this Directive, and means that a considerable number of workers are not protected. In terms of social security benefits, Greens led the work on implementing regulation 883/2004. This regulation will ensure that citizens moving within the European Union do not lose their social security benefits; that they are informed about their rights and have access to healthcare and social security when and where needed. Greens were also successful in their campaign for the Parliament to demand “Equal Pay for Equal Work” which would ensure that all workers in the EU, including mobile workers, would have the same rights in the workplace.



Ulrike Lunacek, spokesperson

How do you respond to the EAPN manifesto for the European Elections?

Greens appreciate the valuable work carried out by the European Anti Poverty Network and particularly the challenge to political parties laid out in the EAPN’s Key Demands. We globally agree with your demands. More precisely we make the following comments to each of them.

1. Social Cohesion should not be *a pillar* but at the core of the action. We need to move away from activating Labour Market Policies that blame the individual, to an integrated Social Cohesion approach.
2. We look forward to joint action during the Anti-Poverty Year. We want to continue working on the link between poverty and environmental conditions. The poorest suffer most from environmental damage. Here we can build on long-standing Green expertise.
3. Having been founded in grassroots movements in the 70s and 80s we are faithful to our principles and work on active governance. Greens will continue to fight the EU’s non-transparent structures such as High Level Groups, and call for true involvement of all stakeholders.
4. Greens will continue to fight together to protect Services of General Interest (SGI). We have constantly called for a framework directive on SGI accompanied by legislation on health and social services.
5. The latest Commission proposal on cross-border health care does not go in the right direction because it is based on a market approach to health services.
6. Greens are supporters of the Decent Work Campaign. Instead of subsidising jobs that endanger the environment or do not provide for a living wage, we need a labour sustainable market policy, based on skills and good working conditions.
7. Greens support and fight to protect the social economy.
8. In the field of anti-discrimination, we have achieved a lot, but there is still a way to go.
9. Mainstream the fight against poverty in all policies? Yes!
10. We look forward to cooperating with you and others and thank you for the existing support and input to our MEPs.

What are your social priorities for the next mandate?

Safeguarding fundamental rights will be at the core of our action in the next Parliament. One measure which would be of great practical use as well as symbolic value would be



Philippe Lamberts, spokesperson

the introduction of Social Clauses in order to demonstrate that fundamental rules and the Fundamental Rights Charter prevail over market legislation. Also we call for strengthening of the World Trade Organization concerning Social Policy. Greens will work on this and will use the Anti-Poverty Year to this extent.

Specific areas of concern include our attempts to revise the posted workers’ directive so that it is strong enough to ensure equal rights for workers in the same workplace. Minimum rights must also be given to all workers so that social dumping can be avoided.

We support legislative action to strengthen the right to a decent living income and hope to spread the idea of a basic income across the EU - also to trigger new and innovative ideas for truly fighting poverty rather than administering it.

Lisbon has not delivered, so we do hope and fight for a Post-Lisbon agenda that puts the people at the heart of the action and focuses on a demanding sustainable social agenda.

The European Green Party is a European political party based on the Charter of European Greens, and promotes the development of a sustainable and socially just Europe.

In the current EP, Greens cooperate with representatives of stateless nations (“regionalists”) within the Greens/European Free Alliance European Parliamentary Group which count for 43 MEP from 14 countries. Access national member parties and petition for a new green deal at www.europeangreens.eu

“21st century Europe needs peace, democracy, social justice and solidarity” – The European Left Party

What have been the main achievements of your party's MEPs during the current mandate?

Driving forward a development towards a European Union of social and economic justice rather than a mainly market oriented union has been the key task of all our MEPs throughout the current legislature. The reduction of the number of people living in the EU in poverty should rank first on the list of tasks.

The most important report in this regard during the entire mandate was drafted by our MEP Gabriele Zimmer. Parliament's *“Report on promoting social inclusion and combating poverty, including child poverty, in the EU”* was adopted in October 2008 with more than 540 votes in favour.

The report emphasised that, primarily, social inclusion policies have to guarantee the fundamental right of all people to life in dignity and to participate in society. Fulfilling that primary aim social inclusion policies have to provide sufficient income to avoid social exclusion for people, an inclusive labour market, better access to quality services, gender mainstreaming, anti-discrimination and active participation.

But our MEPs are also responsible for a number of other reports crucial for a successful approach to inclusion policies.

In addition our MEPs tabled a very high number of amendments attempting to improve Commission legislation proposals or reports drafted by other political groups. However, we faced a constant opposition from the conservative and liberal parties when we were demanding decent work and decent wages.

How do you respond to the EAPN manifesto for the European Elections?

We agree with the EAPN analysis that the failed neo-liberal policy characterizing the Lisbon Strategy is a root cause of this worst economic and social crisis since the 1930's. Commission, Council and the majority parties

in the European Parliament have prioritised the deregulation of markets at the expense of safeguarding social justice.

We remember well the answers we received from governments when we demanded the necessary financial efforts to break the vicious circle of poverty by granting a minimum income for all and by investing in access to education, health services and child care. We



Lothar Bisky, President of the European Left Party

were consistently told the money would simply not be available. Thus we have to agree with EAPN's notion of the astronomical figures being made available now to bail out failed bankers.

The ten demands EAPN states in its manifesto are just as necessary to be met. In the aforementioned Zimmer-report the European Parliament already supported them to quite some extent. However, since the report was not a legislative one, continued pressure from EAPN and other forces inside and outside the parliament must be welcomed to achieve the stated goals.

What are your social priorities for the next mandate?

It depends on the outcome of the European Elections. In the common election platform of the Party of the European Left *“Together for a change in Europe”* we state that *“21st century Europe needs peace, democracy, social justice*

and solidarity.” With the Lisbon Strategy, the living and working conditions of the majority of Europe's population have rapidly deteriorated, featuring longer working hours, longer working lives, insufficient wages, growing long-term and youth unemployment, mini jobs, temporary employment and unpaid internships as scandalous realities. Thus our MEPs will strive to replace the concept of *“working poor”* by with a concept of decent work and dignified lives for all. We will follow-up the respective decisions we already achieved in the European Parliament and continue to fight for their implementation. This includes the call for a framework approach ensuring a minimum income corresponding to 60% of the average income in each member state.

Inside and outside the parliaments we will campaign for fixed targets for the reduction of poverty and in particular of child poverty. We will strive for legislation dealing with particularly vulnerable groups and people suffering discrimination due to their ethnic backgrounds or on other grounds.

We will continue to work for an improved co-ordination of the social security systems and the introduction of high minimum social standards across the European Union. We will fight for the strengthening of trade unions' rights and where necessary campaign for the rephrasing of current legislation in a reaction to recent verdicts of the European Court of Justice. We will continue to campaign for the adoption of social cohesion and overcoming poverty as priority goals of the European Union.

European Left Party

On January 2004, a meeting of the parties took place in Berlin, which, triggered the initiative for the founding of the Party of the European Left. Members of the European Parliament representing the Party of the European Left (EL) have formed the parliamentary group GUE/NGL (United European Left/Nordic Green Left).

In the current European Parliament, 41 MEP are members of the GUE/NL political group.

See national parties members of the European Left Party election Platform:

www.european-left.org/english/elections_2009/electoral_platform

“A competitive European business to raise standard of living”

– The European and Liberal Democrats Party

Unlike the other articles of this magazine, this article is based upon extracts from the European and Liberal Democrats Party manifesto.

Liberals have contributed to peace, unity and prosperity within the EU...

Over 60 years, Liberals in the European Union have contributed much to achieving peace, unity and prosperity. We continue to work towards a more capable and democratic Union, the completion of the single market, a safer environment, and the promotion of civil liberties and fundamental rights. We want the Union to take the lead in tackling global security challenges and in responding to the international financial crisis and its consequences. The Union must be modernised and strengthened according to the values and principles of liberal democracy and market economy.

Liberals are the third largest group in the European Parliament and frequently make the difference in terms of law and policies.

... and expect the soon implementation of the Lisbon Treaty

ELDR believes in the necessity to adopt the Lisbon Treaty and call for its implementation. The Treaty considerably reforms the institutions of the European Union, enhances transparency, strengthens its democratic character and equips the EU with the necessary tools for today's global challenges. European Liberal Democrats urge EU member states to agree on methods for its swift implementation.

Freedoms!

ELDR demands respect of all fundamental freedoms in the EU, especially freedom of press, thought, speech, liberty of association, religion and ownership, and upholding the rights of minorities and those of individuals to privacy and protection of their personal data and dignity. ELDR wants the EU to become a real area of freedom, security and justice, and calls for stronger co-operation

between police and judicial services to effectively combat cross-border crime, terrorism and corruption. The fundamental procedural rights of suspects must be respected under all circumstances. ELDR supports the notion of a 'fifth freedom' - the free movement of knowledge, including greater mobility for students, academics and researchers - between mem-



Annemie Neyts, President of ELDR

ber states, so as to encourage inventions and discoveries. ELDR calls for a single market for intellectual property.

A competitive European business to raise standard of living

ELDR believes a competitive European business environment is essential to achieve the highest possible standard of living for Europe's citizens and to promote EU standards at global level. The single market should be reinforced and extended in energy, postal services, financial services, railways and health care, while further facilitating the free movement of services and workers, including the further mutual recognition of qualifications. Within WTO the EU should be the driving force for the abolition of customs duties and non-tariff barriers, and for opening Europe's single market to the wider world.

ELDR reaffirms that sustainable growth, independence of the European Central Bank

and national central banks, and a sound fiscal policy according to the Maastricht criteria followed by all member states – including those yet to join the euro – remain essential for prosperity and welfare. Only a truly competitive Europe, creating jobs and opportunities for all, will underpin the social dimension of the single market.

Policies of nationalisation would be a major mistake

ELDR welcomes steps to reform the financial system and emphasises that these must be based on better regulation coupled with proper supervisory implementation. A key guarantee for prosperity lies in the high-level personal responsibility of all market participants. A relapse into policies of nationalisation, over-regulation and protectionism would be a major mistake. ELDR supports intensified international cooperation among regulators and strengthening of international standards and believes a reformed IMF should play a leading role in this process in order to prevent future financial crises.

The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) is made of European parliamentarians from the political parties that are members of the European Liberal Democrats and of the European Democratic Party.

The ALDE group currently comprises 100 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) from 22 countries of the Union.

See references of national parties in membership of the ALDE on www.alde.eu and their manifesto on www.eldr.org/pdf/manifeste/eldr-manifeste-electoral-en.pdf.

European elections: some national EAPN networks already engaged!

At the time of drafting this magazine (end of March) many EAPN National Networks report that the campaign in their country has not really started yet, and candidates are not designated... However some networks are already getting prepared...!

EAPN France

OLIVIER MARGUERY, EXECUTIVE MEMBER

EAPN France mobilised around UNIOPSS* (National Interfederal Union of health and social organisations) to draft a memorandum to the French candidates to the European elections on several issues concerning the social economy sector and the place of social politics in current community processes. The memorandum also aims at highlighting several proposals for the next mandate, among which:

- Promoting a better knowledge of social economy, particularly in the non-profit solidarity sector at the EU level and improving the statistics tools used in social economy.
- Adopting the status of European association
- Elaborating a European Charter for Civil Dialogue
- Ensuring better legal security for Social Services of General Interest
- Promoting an ambitious European social agenda

More specifically, concerning the fight against poverty, the memorandum asks the European Parliament to:

- Contribute to the acknowledgement of the right for an adequate minimum income, linked to the average income all across EU member States,
- Promote active inclusion,
- Support initiatives that enhance the participation of people facing poverty and social exclusion.

More info:

www.uniopss.asso.fr and www.eapn-france.fr»

EAPN Belgium

LUDO HOREMANS, EXECUTIVE MEMBER

We have foreseen several actions ahead of the European Elections, notably a memorandum, based on EAPN's manifesto and including:

- EAPN's campaign for an adequate minimum income to live in dignity, as well as the demand to raise minimum income schemes to at least above the European poverty threshold, as is already the case in Belgium for the minimum pension.
- The European Meeting of People living in Poverty. The reports of

the previous meetings will be transmitted with the memorandum and the network asks for the proposals to be taken into account at the European level.

This memorandum will be transmitted to the EP candidates, who will also be contacted on their local territory by the regional networks.

We link these elections with the European 2010 year on Poverty and with the EU Belgian Presidency in 2010, through:

- Regular contacts with Secretary of State Delizée, in charge of the fight against poverty.
- Our participation in the 2010 National Implementing Body steering group, to which we have already given our proposals.
- Our participation in the 7 preparatory seminars of Secretary of State Chastel, in charge of the Belgian Presidency and with whom we have already had a meeting,
- A meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs,
- A meeting with the Prime Minister."



EAPN Cyprus

NINETTA KAZANTZIS, EXECUTIVE MEMBER

- We have translated the EAPN 10 demands into Greek and we are ready to print a brochure that will be disseminated to the wider public through our member organizations.
- We will organise meetings with each group of candidates so that we can put our "de-

mands" forward. We will seek a commitment that if elected they will respect EAPN principles and proposals in the fight against poverty and exclusion.

- These meetings are foreseen to take place before our Easter in April (19th) as after that the campaign will be at its "height" and it will be rather impossible to get them together in groups.
- Each one of our member organisations will lobby candidates with the same demands, only stressing the ones more relevant to their core interest.
- The Foundation Pancyprian Coordinating Committee for the Protection and Welfare of Children has also undertaken to lobby candidates with the Eurochild demands on Child Poverty.
- Launching the Minimum Income Campaign will be part of our lobbying strategy as we plan a Press Conference for early April to which all present MEPs and candidates will be invited.
- We are in touch with the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation (the state TV and Radio station) and hope to persuade them to have a special mention of the Campaign and our lobbying efforts during the elections campaign – remains to be seen!



The European Parliament in Brief

The European Parliament represents “the peoples of the States brought together in the European Community”, as written in the 1957 Treaty of Rome.

It is the only European Union body directly elected by the European citizens, with **785 Members** representing **500 million citizens** from 27 countries, for five years.

Like national parliaments, the EP has **three fundamental powers: legislative, budgetary and supervisory.**

Legislation is proposed by the European Commission and adopted jointly by the EP and the Council of Ministers, according to the co-decision procedure, based on the principle of parity and which means that neither institution (European Parliament or Council) may adopt legislation without the other’s assent.

Although the EP cannot initiate legislation, it frequently adopts reports instigated by its committees called “own-initiative reports”, not legally binding but the EC is required to take a position on these reports.

The EP has 12 plenary sessions in Strasbourg, its official seat. **Plenary and committee meetings are open to the public.** At the heart of the political process, the standing committees do the preparatory work for the plenary sessions.

The EP is the only **directly elected institution at EU level** and decides on **European laws** that affect our everyday lives.

European Parliamentarians are elected for 5 years through direct universal suffrage since 1979. Elections are organised within each Member State’s electoral boundaries, under national laws. As laid down in the Treaties, the number of MEPs per Member State is proportional to its population.

More info?

- European Parliament’s website: www.europarl.europa.eu
- EU Civil Society Contact Group’s European Parliament toolkit: www.act4europe.org/code/en/materials.asp?Page=262&menuPage=262

Political Groups in the European Parliament

| LOGO | NAME | POLITICAL POSITION |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|
|  | EPP-ED Group of the European People’s Party and European Democrats | Christian Democrats |
|  | PSE Socialist Group | Socialists |
|  | ALDE Group of Alliance of Liberals and Democrats | Liberals |
|  | GUE/NGL Group of the European United Left / Nordic Green Left | Communists – Socialists – Workers |
|  | The Greens/EFA Group of the Greens / European Free Alliance | Greens |
|  | UEN Union for Europe of the Nations Group | National conservatives |
|  | ID Independence / Democracy Group | Eurosceptics, Eurocritics |