



The Social Protection Award 2010

The Executive Committee of the Finnish Federation for Social Welfare and Health (STKL) presents annually a Social Protection Award for distinguished work in the field of social welfare and health. The award comprises a Drummer-boy statuette by sculptor Raimo Heino and a certificate of honour.

In 2010 the Executive Committee of STKL has decided to give the award to the European Anti-Poverty Network, EAPN.

The European Anti-Poverty Network was established in Brussels in 1990. It was born of the need to reduce poverty and to have the NGOs working against poverty in different countries to join together. Especially the civil society activists working at the grass-roots level were the driving force in establishing the network. In the EU, due to its original character, the interest was even then first and foremost in the economic development. The founders of EAPN felt that this would need to be changed. In this regard, the Network and STKL have a joint mission: defending the rights of the people, who are in the worst position.

During the past twenty years, EAPN has expanded. Its 26 national networks operate in nearly all the current EU Member States and work is also carried out in the countries that are in the process of, or interested in, joining the EU. Members of the network also include 23 European level NGOs. The Finnish Network was established in 1994 and already the next year it became a member of EAPN.

The evolution of the network has made the great discrepancies in welfare within the EU clearly visible. EAPN has played an important role in the production of information and creating a dialogue to exchange experiences between NGOs from different countries.

EAPN is, above all, an important actor in the EU. Its opinions carry weight. The Commission and the Parliament listen to its demands. It is a great achievement that poverty and social exclusion have become a topic of a public debate. EAPN has been determinedly lobbying for them to become a political issue, too. On the one hand, inclusion of the competence to reduce poverty in the Treaty of Amsterdam and, on the other hand, the national action plans for the reduction of poverty and social exclusion, along with information exchange between Member States, have been important steps in this regard. Already for several years, people experiencing poverty from different countries have gathered in Brussels in the spring and prepared their own demands to the decision makers. EAPN has made it possible. The starting point has always been to work directly with poor people and have their voices heard.

In presenting the Social Protection Award, the Finnish Federation for Social Welfare and Health wants to draw the attention to the inequality, which has grown too much everywhere in the world, including Finland and the EU. The Finnish Federation and EAPN share the same demand: welfare

and the right to a life in dignity belong to everybody. There is a need to a fairer distribution of income. A better balance between the economic growth and social objectives is a necessity and the way of sustainable development.

Although it is still a long way to a real change in the reduction of poverty, EAPN has achieved remarkable results and poverty can no longer be dismissed. This is indicated by the fact that the reduction of poverty has been made one of the main goals in the EU:s strategy for the next decade and the debate on setting quantitative targets is currently going on.

2010 is the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. With the Social Protection Award STKL wants to draw the attention of the decision makers to poverty and social exclusion: it is time for decisions and action, not just talk.

At the same time, STKL wishes to acknowledge the persistent and resolute fight against poverty and inequality, which has been carried out by EAPN and its activists. This acknowledgement belongs also to you personally, Mr. Farrell. Your way of working is like the whole network in a nutshell: action for change with a strong will and a huge heart. We wish EAPN success in its important and challenging work and in its upholding the vision that eradication of poverty is possible.

Helsinki 21st, April 2010

The Finnish Federation for Social Welfare and Health

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