

EAPN GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2010 – DRAFT FINAL DECLARATION

EU Year 2010: Building a Europe for All

On 10-12 June, EAPN held its 21st General Assembly in Limassol, Cyprus. At this General Assembly, the Network welcomed **EAPN Estonia** into its membership.

This General Assembly took place at **the mid point of the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion** and a week before the crucial European Council to decide on the poverty reduction target in the **Europe 2020 Strategy**. The General Assembly was also the occasion to mark the 20th anniversary of EAPN.

At this General Assembly, EAPN held a conference on **the situation of poverty and exclusion amongst migrants in the European Union**. Cyprus, as one of the frontline EU Member States receiving migrants who take huge personal risks to try to seek out a better life, was considered as a very suitable place to inspire EAPN's discussions on this theme.

The current decisions on **exit strategies from the crisis** which involve enormous cuts in public expenditure are starting to have a disastrous impact on all efforts to combat poverty and social exclusion. EAPN believes that there can be no exit strategies from the crisis without an exit strategy from poverty and that enormous cuts in public spending are not a solution. Equitable solutions must be found and these must include more specific policies to tackle the ever-growing feminization of poverty.

EAPN is also concerned that across the EU unemployment is over 10% and rising, 8% of workers experience in-work poverty, and that the self employed are also feeling the burden of the crisis because of limited access to support and social security.

In the light of the above the 140+ delegates to the General Assembly coming from 26 National Networks and 13 European Organizations declared the following:

- **Poverty is caused by structural policies that are based on inequality, rather than on people's changing needs. It is a consequence of the denial of fundamental rights.** The ultimate objective in any decent society must be the eradication of poverty and social exclusion. In order to reach this objective, human rights legislation at European and national level must be enforced, strengthened and monitored and new legislation developed as necessary.
- **More equal societies are better for everyone.** More rights for people experiencing poverty means more rights for the whole society. The fight against inequality and discrimination is a pre-requisite to reducing the risk of poverty.
- **In order to promote social cohesion and achieve high level social standards for all, we need a stronger, more ambitious EU social project.**

- We need to promote a **positive and realistic discourse on migration to emphasize migrants' fundamental rights** and to recognize that migration can benefit **all parties involved: host and source countries and migrants** themselves. It can also contribute to a poverty-reduction strategy.
- We must also recognise the reality that **all over Europe migrants are at a high risk of poverty and social exclusion. This is not the inevitable effect of migration** but rather the consequences of EU governments' policies towards migrants. The EU should also review **policies that create poverty in the countries of origin.**
- The work of EAPN and other actors concerned with achieving a more social Europe has produced positive results but this has been contradicted and undermined by the **dominant culture** which has been shaped by a neo liberal paradigm.
- We acknowledge **the tremendous courage of those people living in poverty and those who act with them in solidarity** and their commitment to continue the fight against poverty and social exclusion until no one has to live in poverty any more.
- We must recognise that the economic and financial crisis is the result of **speculation without rules or regulation.** Those responsible should be made accountable. It is intolerable that ordinary people, especially people experiencing poverty, pay for a crisis that they did not cause.
- **The long-term cost associated with not addressing poverty** or pressing for a fairer and more effective distribution of the wealth in our societies will mean that our exit from the current crisis will inevitably lead to social tensions and a next round of crisis with perhaps even more devastating effects.

The delegates to the General Assembly called for:

1) **An ambitious Europe 2020 Strategy**

- Decide on a clear concrete target for the reduction of poverty capable of making progress on combating poverty, social exclusion and inequality.
- Put the fight against poverty, social exclusion and inequality at the heart of the economic, financial and fiscal policy of the EU and the Member States.
- Take the financial, economic and social crisis as an opportunity to work on a redistribution of income and wealth, including taxation on financial transactions. Let those who have built up huge profits pay the largest part of the crisis.
- Increase social investment instead of cuts in social expenditure and lowering salaries.

2) **The establishment of effective European and National Platforms against Poverty**

- Transform the Social OMC into dynamic EU and National Platforms against Poverty, involving all key actors, in particular by building on the expertise of EAPN and its national networks, to ensure visibility and ownership, promote mutual learning and ensure delivery on common objectives and the poverty targets, through a country and thematic focus.
- Develop quality mechanisms to assess current instruments and move forward on establishing European frameworks to guarantee EU social standards.
- Mobilize EU financial instruments to support the development of social and sustainable service infrastructure, demonstration projects and better participation and governance.
- Recognise social actors as a key priority to achieve social cohesion and provide the necessary resources to support social integration programmes to prevent the risk of social breakdown as well as funding to support network activities such as EAPN.
- Ensure that Social Inclusion objectives are mainstreamed across Europe 2020 and linked to an effective ex ante Social Impact Assessment of new legislation and policies.

3) **Implement commitments made in the EU Inclusion Strategy of the Active Inclusion Recommendation**

- Implement the Principles on Active Inclusion by:
 - Agreeing an EU framework directive on adequate minimum income sufficient to live a life in dignity and to participate fully in society.
 - Developing inclusive labour markets that provide personalised pathway support services to access work, and quality jobs with sufficient pay so that no one who is working still lives in poverty.
 - Guaranteeing access to quality services, such as free health care and education, decent and affordable energy-neutral homes. All cuts of services connected with basic needs like food, electricity/gas, heating and water must be banned, because daily life without them becomes inhumane.
- Ensure progress on developing and implementing National Strategies to combat homelessness.
- Develop an EU Recommendation on addressing Child Poverty.

4) **A human rights-based migration policy**

- Start the debate for a common migration policy and management of migration flows to ensure a better welcome for migrants that arrive in the EU so that they can build their future in a humane and decent way. We strongly demand the implementation of the UN Charter of Rights of Migrants by the EU.
- Ensure that addressing the needs of migrants, their integration and participation, becomes a priority for the future EU Inclusion strategy.
- Promote more accurate media reporting and increase positive migrants' visibility so that public attitudes can change.
- Ensure better access of migrants to decent work, social services, education and health care and to an adequate income
- The current approach of ignoring the reality of undocumented migrants in the European Union must stop and real efforts must be made to ensure that they have access to fundamental rights such as access to education and health care.
- Increase the support for projects in developing countries, that create a better future for the population living in poverty, instead of investing in all kinds of safety systems to keep migrants out of Europe and put pressure on the wealthy elites in these countries to do the same.

5) **Secure an ambitious legacy from the 2010 Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion**

- Building on the proposals made above, secure at the end of the European Year the commitment of Heads of State and Governments to put the fight against poverty and social exclusion in the heart of social, economic, financial and fiscal policies of the Member States and of the EU.
- Recognise that the task to develop a greater awareness of the causes and consequences of poverty is a long-term project which requires a major investment in awareness-raising and participation, to engage society in the goal to achieve the eradication of poverty and social exclusion.
- Involve all actors of civil society and all levels of public administration in the implementation and follow up of the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion.

If 2010 is to produce a real impact, it has to visibly improve the concrete reality of migrants and all people experiencing poverty across Europe. A future EU strategy has to generate a new political culture and policies which will not create new forms of poverty but rather **guarantee a good life for all**. The

participation of people experiencing poverty, including migrants, and the NGOs that support them at grass roots level is crucial to ensure this delivery.