

Laying the Foundations for a Fairer Europe

Ensuring an Adequate Minimum Income for All

**EAPN and BAPN Conference
Brussels, 24 September 2010**

MCE Conference Centre
Rue de L'Aqueduc 118 - Waterleidingstraat 118 - 1050 Brussels

This conference is supported by
the **European Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity - PROGRESS (2007-2013)**
and
the **Belgian Secretary of State for Social Integration and Combating Poverty**

Within the framework of the **Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union**



An important conference organised by the **European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN)** and the **Belgian Anti-Poverty Network (BAPN)** to contribute to the **2010 European Year against Poverty and Social Exclusion** building consensus towards the need for progress on the guarantee of an adequate minimum income for a dignified life, as a basis for a fairer EU.

This conference is supported by the European Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity - PROGRESS (2007-2013) and the Belgian Secretary of State for Social Integration and Combating Poverty within the framework of the **Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU** (July to December 2010). The information contained in this document does not necessarily reflect the position or opinion of the European Commission.

Practical Information

Date: Friday 24 September 2010 – 9.00am – 17.30pm

Venue: MCE Conference Centre, Rue de L'Aqueduc 118, Waterleidingstraat, 1050 Brussels

Languages: French, English and Dutch. Whispered translation will be organized amongst EAPN delegations for those who need it.

Participants: Approximately 180 participants – consisting of 80 EAPN members (1 representative from each national network, 1 person living on minimum income and EAPN EU NGO members), 20 EAPN members from BAPN, 80 stakeholders from Brussels: social NGOs, social partners, representatives from EU and other national authorities, academics and others concerned with social policies.

Preparatory Session: For EAPN members, a ½ day workshop will be organized on the 23rd (from 14.00pm) to prepare together for the main conference.

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Other useful information on:

- EAPN Campaign for an Adequate Minimum Income for all! www.adequateincome.eu
- 2010 European Year Coalition of Social NGOs www.endpoverty.eu

Context

Minimum Income provisions are **social assistance schemes of last resort**, and are therefore a lifeline for the people in greatest poverty. They are a basic human right, underpinned by the Charter of Fundamental Rights and a key pillar of the European Social Model. Minimum Income schemes generally cover people of working age and access to the schemes often requires that the person is actively seeking work. But an adequate income is necessary for people throughout the life cycle, enabling every woman, man and child to lead a dignified life.

EAPN has been running a long-standing campaign on the importance of adequate Minimum Income Schemes, convinced that high quality Minimum Income Schemes are an essential foundation for inclusion and for building fairer societies. (See www.adequateincome.eu). Some important progress has been made in this regard, in the EU.

In June 1992, the European Council issued a Recommendation on common criteria concerning sufficient resources and social assistance in social protection systems. This recommendation stimulated positive revisions and developments in Member States' minimum income schemes. In 2008, the Commission adopted a recommendation on Active Inclusion of people excluded from the Labour market which "recognised the individual's basic right to resources and social assistance sufficient to live a life that is compatible with human dignity". During 2008/9 important steps have been taken towards implementation, including the EU Social Inclusion Independent Experts synthesis report on minimum income across the EU. This report highlighted the continuing lack of schemes in 3 Member States (Hungary, Greece and Italy), and confirmed that most minimum income schemes continued to keep people below the poverty line, falling far short of providing an adequate income.

A major issue has also been how adequacy of levels are established. "Make work pay" policies, have too often been used to drive down minimum income levels, below already inadequate minimum wage levels, rather than developing a positive upward hierarchy between minimum income and minimum wages.

The social impact of the crisis has further underlined the importance of minimum income and social protection systems as 'automatic stabilisers', promoting social cohesion as well as preventing and alleviating poverty. However the pressure to reduce public deficits and to comply with the Stability and Growth Pact, is putting pressure on Member States to implement cuts in minimum income levels and to tighten eligibility, with devastating impact on people already or newly living in poverty.

2010 offers key opportunities for progress – as part of a positive legacy for the EU Year against Poverty and Social Exclusion, building on the proposals for a Poverty target and programme in the heart of the Europe 2020 Strategy. During 2010, the European

Parliament is also developing an important own initiative report on “minimum income as a tool to fight poverty” in support of these demands.

Aims of the conference

Starting from the experiences of people living on a minimum income, the conference will engage in a timely review of the role of minimum income in promoting a better life for all, and review the progress made, in the context of the European Year against Poverty and Social Exclusion. The aim is to press for concrete proposals which can ensure an adequate minimum income as a lasting legacy from the 2010 year that will directly impact on the lives of the 84 million people in poverty in the EU. Such proposals could include the proposal for a Framework EU directive on Minimum Income which would mark a historic step forward in EU cooperation to achieve a high level of social standards in the EU, in the context of the new Treaty.

Objectives

- 1) Highlight the reality of living on a minimum income for people in poverty and the social and economic impact of ensuring an adequate income.
- 2) Carry out a stocktaking of progress on guaranteeing adequacy and on follow up to the Active Inclusion Recommendation.
- 3) Exchange experiences on positive examples and methods of establishing adequacy, as well as alternative approaches to financing.
- 4) Identify recommendations on how to advance EU cooperation to ensure adequate minimum income, linked to a political declaration for the year and commitments under the Hungarian Presidency.



Since 1990, the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) has been an independent network of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and groups involved in the fight against poverty and social exclusion in the Member States of the European Union.



The Belgian Anti-Poverty Network (BAPN) is engaged in the fight against poverty at national level through associations involving people experiencing poverty and through civil society partners.

Laying the Foundations for a Fairer Europe

Ensuring an adequate Minimum Income for all

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Friday 24 September 2010

Languages – EN/FR/NL - whispered translation will be used for some participants

8.30 Registration

9.00 Welcome and Opening

- Mr Ludo Horemans, President of EAPN
- Mr Philippe Courard, Secretary of State for Social Integration and Combating Poverty, Belgian Government

9.20 Opening Session

Chair: Mr Hugh Frazer, University of Maynooth

Laying a foundation for a fairer EU: the role of adequate Minimum Income

- People experiencing poverty, living on minimum income (BE and HU)
- Mr Philippe Delhez, National Bank of Belgium
- Mr Jozef Niemiec, Confederal Secretary, ETUC

10.00 Appraisal and Recommendations on Minimum Income schemes made by the EU Network of Independent Experts on Social Inclusion

- Mr Eric Marlier, Manager of EU Network of Independent Experts on Social Inclusion

10.15 Ensuring an adequate minimum income – EU plans?

- Ms Antonia Carparelli, Head of the Social Inclusion Unit, European Commission

Debate with audience

11.00 Coffee and tea break

11.30 6 Parallel Workshops: Overcoming the challenges (continued 14.30-15.30)

Workshop 1: Making progress on EU Social Standards: an EU Directive on Minimum income

Workshop 2: Using Participative Standard Budgets to calculate adequate

income

Workshop 3: Minimum Income as part of Integrated Active Inclusion approaches

Workshop 4: Ensuring adequate income throughout the life cycle (children/older people)

Workshop 5: Minimum Income and Minimum Wage – establishing a positive hierarchy

Workshop 6: Financing an adequate income for all

(See details for workshops on pages 8 to 10)

The workshops will explore **current key challenges and consider what EU and national policy tools and instruments** can help to make progress on ensuring an adequate income for all in the EU. Each workshop will involve expert input, including views from a person living on minimum income, followed by debate with participants. As the conference will involve people living on minimum income, who may need translation, whispering interpretation will be organized in each workshop.

In the afternoon session: the workshops will agree **1 Key message, 2 concrete recommendations and a question** for the decision-makers panel in the afternoon.

13.00 – 14.30 Lunch and Information Exchange Market Place

Towards the end of the lunch break (1.45), participants can take their coffee and dessert in the exhibition area and visit stalls from national networks and participating organizations. A guided tour will be offered in English/French/Dutch.

14.30 Workshops continue

- Workshop agrees 1 key message/ 2 recommendations and 1 question to pose to final panel

15.30 Coffee and tea break

16.00 Final Plenary: What way forward? How can progress be made?

Chair: Mr Ludo Horemans, President of EAPN

- **Summary EAPN Recommendations**
- **Feedback from workshops: key messages/recommendations and questions**
- **Round Table Panel Debate with EU decision makers**

- Belgian Secretary of State for Social Integration and Combating Poverty
- Representative from the Hungarian Presidency of the EU (tbc)
- Mr Laszlo Andor, European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
- Ms Pervenche Berès, Chair of the Employment Committee, European Parliament

Debate with the floor

- **Conclusions:** Mr Ludo Horemans, President of EAPN

17.30 **End of Conference**

Workshop 1: Making progress on EU Social Standards: an EU Directive on Minimum income

Current EU instruments have not so far succeeded in guaranteeing an adequate minimum income for all, with 3 Member States (MS) without national systems, and most MS providing levels below the official poverty threshold. Increasing numbers of stakeholders including the European Parliament, and Independent Experts, are pressing for a stronger EU role in defending social standards. EAPN participated in an important PROGRESS funded project investigating the way forward in this field. The new horizontal social clause in the EU Lisbon Treaty appears to add weight to this demand, with its requirements for MS to work actively to promote full employment and adequate social protection systems. Is progress possible? Particularly in the context of Europe 2020? Could an EU framework directive on minimum income be the first step? How could support be built? *The workshop will explore the potential for progress on EU social standards including an EU framework directive to guarantee a minimum income.*

Facilitator: Mr Ludo Horemans, President of EAPN, BAPN

Speakers

- Ms Anne Van Lancker, EAPN Consultant: Proposals for an EU Directive on Minimum Income
- Mr Aurelio Rodriguez, Chair of the Social Protection Committee (tbc)
- Participant living on minimum income (EAPN Italy)

Rapporteur: Ms Izabella Marton, EAPN Vice President, EAPN Hungary

Workshop 2: Using Participative Standard Budgets to calculate adequate income

Most Minimum Incomes are established with little reference to people's actual needs. Consensual standard or reference budgets offer an innovative, but robust method for establishing budgets for an adequate income which can ensure a dignified life, based on real needs through a participative methodology. A recent PROGRESS funded transnational exchange project explored the potential benefits and challenges of such approaches, supporting the development of standard budgets pilot experiences in 11 countries. *The workshop will explore the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches, listening to those who have been actively involved, discuss how they can be transferred and mainstreamed across EU, and what key elements could form the base of a common methodology as part of an EU framework for ensuring adequacy.*

Facilitator: Ms Michaela Moser, EAPN Vice President, EAPN Austria

Speakers

- Ms Berenice Storms, Coordinator of the Belgian Standard Budget Project
- Ms Bernadette MacMahon, Director of the Vincent Partnership for Social Justice
- Participant from standard budget projects (BAPN and EAPN IE)

Rapporteur: Ms Karolien Schepens, BAPN

Workshop 3: Minimum Income as part of integrated Active Inclusion approaches

The integrated “Active Inclusion” approach promoted by the Commission and endorsed by the EPSCO, insists on the provision of an adequate minimum income as a key pillar to promoting inclusion for people who are excluded from the labour market, together with access to quality services and personalized support into quality jobs. However, this integrated approach is not widely known or understood and is currently weakly implemented across the EU.

The workshop will explore the benefits and examples of integrated approaches currently developed in the EU, the key role of minimum income and explore their strengths and weaknesses and how current obstacles can be overcome.

Facilitator: Ms Graciela Malgesini, Chair of EAPN Social Inclusion Working Group/EAPN ES

Speakers:

- Ms Heidi-Rusten Lohrman, Norwegian Qualification Programme
- Mr Per K Larsen, EAPN Denmark, Overførstergården Homeless Project
- Participant/s on minimum income/ EAPN Norway

Rapporteur: Mr Peter Kelly, EAPN Scotland

Workshop 4: Ensuring adequate income through the life cycle (children/older people)

The current reference to minimum income, in the 92 Recommendation and in the Active Inclusion Recommendation, refers primarily to people of working age. However an adequate income is necessary at all stages of the life cycle (including for children and older people). The OMC social protection strand puts particular focus on adequacy of pensions, whilst child poverty continues to be a key priority for most Member States, but how can this link be better made at EU and national level?

The workshop will consider how an adequate income could be calculated across the life cycle and what needs to be done to ensure a more integrated approach at EU and national level.

Facilitator: Ms Letizia Cesarini Sforza: EAPN Mainstreaming Group on Gender, Age and Demographic Change/EAPN Italy

Speakers:

- Mr Jean-Pierre Bultez, EAPN/AGE France – Chair of Social Inclusion group
- Ms Jana Hainsworth, Eurochild Chief Executive
- Participant living on a minimum income/ EAPN France

Rapporteur: Ms Ninetta Kazantzis, EAPN Cyprus

Workshop 5: Minimum Income and Minimum Wage – establishing a positive hierarchy

Minimum income levels are often calculated below minimum wages – so as to ensure an “incentive” to work and to “make work pay”. However, driving down minimum income and minimum wages to unacceptable levels, risks deepening poverty and inequality, and fails to provide a strong foundation for social cohesion or for a healthy economy.

The Workshop will explore how a positive hierarchy between minimum income and minimum wages can be established, how to tackle current traps moving between welfare and work and make progress at EU and national level, in the context of Europe 2020.

Facilitator: Philip O’Connor, chair of EAPN Employment Working Group (tbc)

Speakers:

- Maria Jepson, Director, ETUI research department
- Mr Michel Debruyne, Advisor, ACW Research, Belgium
- Participant from Roma Community/Czech Republic

Rapporteur: Mr Stephan Backes, BAPN

Workshop 6: Financing an adequate income for all

The demographic challenge of ageing populations/reduced birthrates is pushing Member States to look for new sustainable ways of financing social protection systems. Most policy options focus on increasing working lives, getting people into jobs and reducing social expenditure. Meanwhile, many countries’ response to the crisis and the pressure to reduce public deficits is focused on cutting social expenditure, which is only likely to increase poverty and widen the inequality gap.

The workshop will consider policy alternatives which rethink how public expenditure is raised and spent, and how to integrate them into current debate at EU and national level.

Facilitator: Ms Katherine Duffy, EAPN UK

Speakers:

- Mr Martin Schuerz, Senior Researcher, Austrian National Bank (tbc)
- Mr Dirk Geldof, Antwerp Public Centre for Social Welfare
- Participant on minimum income/EAPN Latvia

Rapporteur: Ms Maria Jeliaskova, Vice-Chair of EAPN Social Inclusion Working Group/EAPN Bulgaria