



9th EU Meeting of People experiencing Poverty
Brussels, 25 & 26, June 2010

2010 starting point for a new deal

Summary Report



INTRODUCTION

About 130 delegates (people experiencing poverty) from all EU Members States and Norway as well as 80 representatives of National and EU Institutions, NGOs and Academics attended the 9th EU Meeting of People experiencing Poverty. The focus of the meeting was on: 1) evaluating the follow up from previous meetings and 2) future priorities for EU action, taking the opportunity of the European Year 2010 for combating poverty and social exclusion as a starting point for a new deal.

The meeting was organised by the Spanish Presidency of the EU and on behalf of the Presidency Ms Isabelle MARTINEZ welcomed the participants and expressed the hope that the meeting would contribute to a strong commitments in the final declaration of the 2010 EU Year. In recognition of the 2010 year the meeting was hosted for the first time in the European Parliament. Ms. Pervenche BERÈS, MEP, President of the Committee for Employment and Social Affairs welcomed the delegates and called for a new European balance between economic and social policies, underlining that the EU has work to do to make people voice heard. Ms Adelia FERNANDES, representative of the 8th Meeting, addressing the opening session, stressed the importance of people experiencing poverty have a voice and participate in the social inclusion process.

EVALUATION OF THE FOLLOW UP FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Responding to the demand to show the impact of the previous EU meetings the European Commission provided a table (see below) which attempted to show the links between the discussions at the EU meetings and the actions of the Commission. The inputs from the Commission representatives (Lenia SAMUEL, Deputy Director General, and Antonia CARPARELLI, Head of Inclusion Unit, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities) at the meeting drew on the information contained in this table. In addition EAPN with support from the Belgian Ministry for Social Affairs has commissioned research on the impact of the European meetings and the preliminary findings from this research was presented at the meeting

Table provided by the European Commission - Follow up of demands coming from the European Meetings of People Experiencing Poverty

AREA 1: OVERARCHING OBJECTIVES

<i>Demands from the Meetings</i>	<i>Commission Response</i>
Reduce the gap between economic and social policies	EUROPE 2020; headline poverty reduction target, new social guideline to ensure follow up.
Priority on Active Inclusion, Child poverty, migrants	These issues have been followed up and further follow up is planned in the Commission's work programme.
Media involvement	The designation of 2010 as the Year to combat poverty and social exclusion is intended to raise awareness and involve the media.
AREA 2: FINANCIAL INCLUSION	
<i>Demands from the Meetings</i>	<i>Commission Response</i>
Micro-credit schemes to be made available	New micro-credit facility for young people and self-employed partly funded through PROGRESS
Minimum income adequate to live in dignity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2008 Active Inclusion Recommendation includes this demand • Follow-up report on adequacy of minimum income schemes in Member States • European Parliament Report supporting minimum income schemes above poverty threshold • Priority under 2010 Round Table and informal ministerial meeting
AREA 3: HOUSING EXCLUSION AND HOMELESSNESS	
Homelessness should be a key focus for action	2009 Thematic year on homelessness - results in 2010 Joint Report
Housing should be a focus of Structural Funds	Enhanced use of Structural Funds for improving housing stock agreed
AREA 4: SERVICES	
Universal right to access social services	Identified as the Third pillar of Active Inclusion
Access to affordable and quality health care for all	Commission Communication on health inequalities
Equal opportunities in education	EUROPE 2020: headline target for reducing early school drop-out; Youth on the Move Flagship initiative
Affordable access to energy and other basic services	EU Energy Package includes focus on energy poverty
AREA 5: PARTICIPATION	
Participation must be regular and be given formal status and structure	Key priority under the EU Platform on poverty and social exclusion
Dialogue at all levels	EU Platform on poverty and social exclusion to enhance further involvement and participation of all stakeholders

	established under social OMC
Participation of people experiencing poverty	Key objective of social OMC; EY2010 and to be enhanced under the EU Platform on poverty and social exclusion
Indicators for monitoring participation	Commission supported study on the involvement of stakeholders just finalised

Ms. Danielle DIERCKX, University of Antwerp -Belgium- reported that the purpose of the research is to address the following questions.

- A. What is the impact on people experiencing poverty?
- B. What is the impact on civil society actors / institutions?
- C. What is the impact on poverty policies? (EU + national level)
- D. How is the participation in the meetings evaluated?

The first results show that the evaluation of participation in the meetings itself was very positive with every question scored 75% or more satisfaction rates. However on the impact of the meeting on policies, an interesting 'contradictory' result was observed. That is, 59% of the policy makers believe the meetings have had an impact on policies, but 78% of people experiencing poverty see little or no impact from the meetings on the development of policies.

The full results of this research will be available at the Social Inclusion Round Table (October 2010).

FUTURE PRIORITIES FOR EU ACTION

The workshops provided the opportunity to reflect on the evaluation of the impact of the meetings but the workshops primarily focussed on suggestions for future priorities. The delegates highlighted their priorities on cubes which were presented in the final plenary.

Workshop report: The rapporteur summarised the outcome of the workshops under the following 3 questions:

What does poverty mean in the year 2010? Although poverty is still denied, poverty is well a reality in 2010. Poverty can't be restricted to one element, but is a multidimensional phenomenon where all the aspects are connected. Access to decent housing can't be reached without an adequate income, which is also linked to health. To merge this complexity, a holistic approach is needed. But, people experiencing poverty are not a homogenous group and this diversity has to be taken into account to conceive efficient strategies. In order to surround this complexity, too large definition has to be avoided as well as to restricted indicators, avoiding limiting the indicators to the economic growth but taking all the social protection into account.

Who is willing to fight poverty? Decision makers have to stress the visibility of their actions as well as to integrate the affected persons in their conception, their application and their evaluation. Participation of people experiencing poverty has to become the core of political actions and strategies, in a process where decision makers are accountable for their decisions. At the beginning, participation could more easily be implemented at the local level, reaching after the different power levels up to the EU level. Contributing to the growth of people experiencing poverty, in order to be efficient, participation has to cross a real and responsible political will. Delegates and decisions makers regretted the still large gap between theory and realities. Despite rights are in the laws, they are not always respected nor applied.

How should we fight poverty? Existing instruments, policies and laws should be better used (Fundamental rights charter, European funds...) in order to reduce/suppress the gap between

declarations and realities. Addressing poverty requires a global approach. It's obvious that poverty was existing before the crisis that this crisis enhanced poverty by weakening populations already fragile before; consequently, cutting in social benefits is to be avoided. The daily survival can not be based on informal solidarities.

A priority is to improve **housing** conditions, giving every EU citizens the access to an adequate housing which is the main condition for a dignified life. Access to a decent housing remains difficult and, more over, the costs for **energy** have risen incredibly.

The large differences in the levels of income, high interests for debts have been underlined making a debate on an **adequate minimum income** urgent.

In the near future, it is urgent to break the circle of poverty by affecting means to the fight against **child poverty**. Meeting children's needs is meeting everyone's needs: housing, health, access to services, income, employment.... Taking measures to fight child poverty is fighting against all the aspects of poverty and together, it proposes solutions that need also to address **family poverty**. Access to **education** is a basic condition to invest in a better future for children. Access to **social services** is one strategy to improve the situation of families.

The importance of creating opportunities to access **decent work** was also highlighted.

The proposed EU Platform against Poverty has to include all the stakeholders including people experiencing poverty. **Participation** has to be implemented including people experiencing poverty from the start of the process and also in the implementation, monitoring and until the evaluation of the policies. For participation to be a positive experience, decision makers must be accountable and make transparent their decisions.

REFLECTIONS

The Reports from the workshops were responded to by, Mr Juan MATO, General Director Social Policies, Family and Child, Ministry for Health and Social Policy (Spain), Robert VERRUE, Director General, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Ludo HOREMANS, President EAPN, Aurelio FERNADEZ LOPEZ, President of the European Social Protection Committee and Phillipe COURARD, Secretary of State for Social Integration and Combating Poverty, Belgian EU Presidency. They assured the delegates that the input from the meetings does make a contribution to policy making and they each responded to particular aspects in the reports from the workshops that struck them.

At the end of the meeting Ms Erzsebet BARTA, Ministry of Social Affairs, Hungary reflected on these EU-meetings as a unique event. People experiencing poverty can talk about their experiences and practices. Its merits lie in the exchange of good practices and in strengthening cooperation between actors. She mentions the firm commitment to continue the dialogue. Hungary will hold the 10th such meeting in 2011.