



European Year 2010 – Preliminary evaluation - 2010 NGO Coalition

The EY2010 NGO coalition called for the 2010 Year to contribute to: 1) an effective awareness-raising campaign on the structural causes of poverty and social exclusion, 2) enhanced dialogue with people in poverty and anti poverty NGOs, 3) a strong political legacy from 2010, and 4) funding to underpin EU Commitments to fight poverty and social exclusion. NGOs are making a first assessment of the impact of the European Year in relation to these demands. This assessment is based on responses to a questionnaire completed by members of the EY2010 NGO Coalition and the EAPN National Networks. We recognise that many people, including Commission and Ministry officials, NGO staff and volunteers, Local Authority officials, people experiencing poverty and social exclusion and many others have contributed enormous amounts of work and energy to seek to make the Year a success. After high expectations and a year of busy activity it will be necessary to get some distance to make a real assessment of the impact of the Year, so this is just an initial input.

1) Key Messages:

- The timing of the Year at the key moment when the European Institutions were developing and shaping their key strategies for the coming decade was decisive for ensuring that poverty and social exclusion had a high profile at the point when these strategies were been negotiated. This in part contributed to the achievement of key steps forward including the poverty reduction target, a social Guideline in the Europe 2020 strategy and the adoption of the flagship programme, Platform against Poverty.
- In addition steps forward were made in key thematic areas that had been identified through the Social OMC including Active Inclusion (the call for a framework Directive on Minimum Income), Child Poverty (the commitment to a Recommendation) and homelessness (follow up from the Consensus Conference). The gender dimension of poverty and the poverty experienced by Migrants and Roma were also highlighted during the year.
- However, despite these positive developments NGOs see a huge gap between the positive rhetoric developed in the context of the Europe 2020 strategy and the actual reality of the narrow economic governance approach and austerity measures imposed by Member States and the EU Institutions in their response to the crisis. There has been no effort made to make a social impact assessment on these decisions and the result is that the fundamental rights of people experiencing poverty ad social exclusion will be further undermined.
- One of the most positive outcomes of the 2010 year was the establishment of new alliances in the context of actions prepared during the year. These

alliances were between NGOs but also with other actors including institutional actors, local authorities, trade unions, academics, media, cultural organisations, schools It is hoped that these alliances will outlive the 2010 year.

- To ensure effective and adequate preparation, EU Years should be run by 'independent committees' at National and European levels, made up of representatives of appropriate stakeholders. These committees should have a duty to consult widely and should be in place at least three years before the Year to ensure an adequate planning for the Year.
- It is important that there be an independent evaluation carried out on the Year and that this evaluation should help to give transparency on how the Budget for the Year was spent.
- The decision to use Structural Funds infrastructure as the basis for dispersing funds for the 2010 Year created a lot of difficulties and unnecessary bureaucracy.

2) Sustainable Policy Impact from the Year:

- A minority of the reports received reported that they thought the year would have some sustainable policy impact at the National level with the vast majority answering negatively to this question. Most said that 'austerity measures' which will increase poverty and social exclusion is the lasting legacy from 2010 Year (they acknowledge that the EU Year is not responsible for that).
- There was a more positive assessment at European level with the reintegration of social concerns in the Europe 2020 and the achievement of the Poverty Reduction target being highlighted. However people withheld judgement until they saw the content of the Platform against Poverty
- The Year helped to keep a focus on key themes which have emerged through the OMC: Child poverty, Homelessness, Active Inclusion (Adequate Minimum Income) and it is hoped this will contribute to a further advance in these areas.
- The theme of discrimination and poverty seems to have generated some support in the Year however the focus was almost exclusively on migrants and Roma and this could give the false impression that other forms of discrimination such as the discrimination experienced by ethnic and religious minorities is of less importance. The gender dimension of poverty received some recognition in the Year. The family dimension to tackling poverty also received visibility during the year.
- It was assessed as positive that the Spain and Belgium had the Presidency of the EU during this year as they both have a generally positive disposition towards the European Union and to social concerns.
- At this stage it is not possible to assess if there will be real funding commitments to support the policy legacy from the Year.

3) Greater public awareness on Poverty and Social Exclusion:

- 9 national networks/organisations who responded answered Yes that the Year had contributed positively to awareness raising, 4 answered No and 13 answered a little.
- Some felt that there had been a major step forward in awareness raising but two reported that the Year was almost invisible in their country. Several report that financial crisis has dominated the debate, hiding the fact that poverty existed long before the crisis began.
- There was some feeling that the Year at European level raised attention across institutional actors who before had not expressed themselves on poverty and social exclusion.

4) Building a stronger anti poverty NGO sector:

- Most positive finding was the extent to which the Year helped to build new alliances at national and also at European Level.
- A small minority of national networks/organisations expect that the Year will contribute to new funding being available for Networking, campaigning and advocacy work. Most NGOs are dealing with cuts to their budgets so it gets harder to take commitments on the importance of 'civil dialogue' seriously.
- In some countries where dialogue structures with anti poverty organisations was previously very weak, the Year has helped to create some positive dynamics.
- At European level the final content of the Platform against Poverty will be crucial to evaluating the success of the year.

5) Engagement in the 2010 Year:

- Of the 20 NGO national networks and organisations (EAPN and others) that reported having been part of National Implementing Bodies, 13 said that this was a good experience. However a number of organisations involved in the 2010 NGO Coalition reported that their National members had difficulties to engage with the National implementing bodies.
- Stakeholder involvement in the European level actions for the year organised by the Commission was generally thought to be at the level of information exchange rather than real involvement in decision making.
- Many NGO actions during the Year at national and European level had created visibility for the fight against poverty, such as the national meetings of people experiencing poverty and the Human Ring against poverty organised by the EY2010 coalition.
- In most countries a positive assessment of the involvement of People Experiencing Poverty in the Year (not always through official events of the Year) was made. There was also a general positive assessment of their involvement and contribution in EU level events.
- The vast majority of responses reported that there was an open call for projects from the Year (including one that was issued at the end of October 2010).
- In 12 out of 19 national networks/organisations reported that they or their members were successful in receiving funding support from these calls. 3 who did not receive funding from the call reporting receiving funds from

other sources. Organisations whose mission is not directly the fight against poverty and social exclusion reported great difficulties to receive funding for projects for the year. This was seen as a missed opportunity to engage new actors in the fight against poverty and social exclusion.

- There was major disappointment that a call for proposals were not available for European level actions of NGOs. This was particularly true for NGOs who don't receive PROGRESS funds.
- There was a general feeling that the money used for communication agencies would have been more effectively used for the task of awareness raising by having more money directed to the support of projects. There were a few exceptions where Networks reported good support from the communication agencies appointed by the Commission at national level.
- The National Focus weeks received a very favourable assessment
- The efforts made by Commission officials to take part in so many of the events organised was highly appreciated.

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The **EY 2010 END POVERTY NGO coalition** is coordinated by **EAPN**, the European Anti Poverty Network. It includes: the **National Networks of EAPN**, **AFEM** (Association des Femmes de l'Europe Méridionale), **AGE** (European Older People's Platform), **ATD Quart Monde**, **Autism Europe**, **Caritas Europa**, **CEBSD** (Combined European Bureau for Social Development), **CECODHAS** (European Liaison Committee for Social Housing), **CECOP** (European Federation of workers' cooperatives, social cooperatives and social enterprises), **CEV** (European Volunteer Centre), **COFACE** (Confederation of Family organisations in the EU), **Eurodiaconia**, **EAEA** (European Association for the Education of Adults), **EASPD** (European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities), **EBU** (European Blind Union), **EDF** (European Disability Forum), **EFSC** (European Foundation for Street Children), **ENAR** (European Network Against Racism), **EPHA** (European Public Health Alliance), **EPPF** (International Planned Parenthood Federation European Network), **EPR** (European Platform for Rehabilitation), **ERIO** (European Roma Information Office), **ESAN** (European Social Action Network), **EURAG** (European Federation of Older Persons), **Eurochild**, **European Social Platform**, **EWL** (European Women's Lobby), **FAI** (International Federation of Associations of Christian Associations of Italian workers), **FEANTSA** (European Federation of Organisations working with the Homeless), **FEFAF** (European Federation of Unpaid Carers at Home), **ICSW** (International Council for Social Welfare), **IJJO** (International Juvenile Justice Observatory), **ILGA Europe** (International Lesbian and Gay Association Europe), **Inclusion Europe**, **MHE** (Mental Health Europe), **Red Cross EU Office**, **SMES-Europa** (Mental Health Social Exclusion Europa), **SOLIDAR**, **Workability Europe** and **Yes Forum** (Youth and European Social Work), **YFJ** (European Youth Forum).

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