

GETTING OUT OF THE CRISIS TOGETHER

*Alternative approaches for an
inclusive recovery*

EAPN CONFERENCE

Friday 23/09/2011 - Brussels

PROGRAMME



The financial & economic crisis together with current austerity policies are having a devastating impact on the daily life of people experiencing poverty and are threatening social cohesion. The policies being pursued by Member States (MS) and the EU seem likely to increase poverty and social exclusion, and are putting at risk the European Social Model. An open and transparent debate is needed to assess the effectiveness of current approaches and to explore alternatives.

This important conference organised by the European Anti-Poverty Network aims to analyze and raise awareness of the social impact of the crisis and the austerity measures in all EU countries, and the EU role. It will be a unique opportunity to learn from the ground, to develop alternative approaches and to strengthen alliances for change.

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Cover Image: UK Delegation's presentation, 10th European Meeting of People experiencing poverty, designed by Migrants Voice and ATD Fourth World.

Practical information

Date: Friday 23 September 2011

Venue: International Auditorium, International Trade-Unions House, 5 Boulevard Albert II, 1210 Brussels

Languages: French & English in the plenary sessions. Of the 6 workshops there will be 2 in French and English and 4 in English only. Whispered translation will be organised amongst EAPN delegations for those who need it.

Participants: Approximately 200 participants – consisting of 120 EAPN members (1 representative from each national network in each of the 3 working groups - social inclusion, employment and structural funds working groups, EAPN European Organisation members and people experiencing poverty participating in an EAPN training taking place in Brussels on the 21 and 22 September), and 80 stakeholders from Brussels: social NGOs, social partners, representatives from EU and national authorities, academics...

Preparatory session: For EAPN members a ½ day workshop will be organised on the afternoon on 22 September to prepare together for the conference.

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Useful documents:

EAPN reports on the social impact of the crisis:

- [Is the European project moving backward? February 2011](#)
- [The social impact of the crisis and of the recovery package, December 2009](#)
- [Working Paper: Re-engaging Hope and Expectations – Getting out of the Crisis Together](#)

All these reports will be available in hard copies at the conference.

Context

The consequences of the crisis in terms of economic downturn and unemployment are well documented and well known. The devastating social consequences both of the crisis itself and of the austerity packages implemented are mostly under-assessed and ignored in the public debate.

Based on the reality people on the ground face, EAPN has highlighted the following in two crisis reports:

- The crisis is having multifaceted consequences, impacting on people already in crisis, outside work as well as those in work,
- The policy choices being made by EU and MS are likely to generate a dramatic increase in deprivation, poverty and social exclusion,
- The most vulnerable and discriminated against are affected the most,
- Worrying social tensions are arising between different groups, and People Experiencing Poverty are increasingly stigmatized in a context where the emphasis is put on individual responsibility,
- NGOs, who play a key role in cushioning the impact of the crisis as well as supporting the voice of the disempowered, are gravely weakened and their contribution to society at stake.

The crisis is far from being over and new negative developments are reported every day. The harsh austerity policy packages implemented nationally are worsening the situation of people already badly hurt by the crisis. Together with the choice made in favour of more deregulation, they are jeopardizing the European social model with cuts applied to services and social protection benefits, as well as downward pressure on wages.

EAPN shares with other actors the idea that the crisis was not inevitable, and more the result of deregulation and increasing inequality than public sector spending. The austerity now imposed on people is neither fair, nor efficient for ensuring an inclusive recovery which can benefit all.

At the European level, the 2020 Strategy provides the EU framework that coordinates national government responses to the crisis. This new strategy clearly states a strong social ambition with notably:

- One of the five headline targets aiming at “**ensuring that at least 20 million fewer people are in or at risk of poverty** and social exclusion”,
- **A new Guideline 10 devoted to “Promoting Social inclusion and combating poverty”**,
- The setting up of a **European Flagship Platform against poverty and social exclusion**,
- The promotion of a clear **partnership principle** (Recital 16).

However, EAPN is concerned about the lack of policy consistency being promoted by the Commission and the Member States who give top priority to budget stability and economic growth at all costs. (See the January 2011 Commission Annual Growth Survey, Economic Governance package and the Euro Plus Pact). EAPN is alarmed that these decisions are taking place without adequate public and democratic scrutiny or a proper assessment of their social impact.

Aims of the conference

*This conference aims at providing a **unique space for exchange** between anti-poverty activists, trade-unionists, other NGOs activists, policy decision makers and researchers on the causes and the consequences of the crisis and on possible alternative approaches. As a participative network, the voice of people experiencing poverty will be at the centre of the debates which will give a large space to the **presentation of members' experiences and mobilisations**.*

*We hope to use this space for exchange as **a catalyst for mobilisation and for strengthened alliances** around common demands at the national and European levels.*

Objectives

- **Lobby** EU decision makers in the context of the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy for:
 - the social consequences of the crisis to be better addressed,
 - the causes of the crisis to be tackled and alternative approaches openly explored.
- Strengthen **alliances with key partners who are building** alternative responses to the crisis, building on the 2010 NGO Alliance and the Spring Alliance.
- **Empowering members** in order to facilitate their mobilisation for alternative approaches to the crisis and their participation in policy making in the framework of the 2020 Strategy.
- Strengthening a more active **participation of people experiencing poverty** in developing solutions in the network.

The European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) is an independent network of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and groups, established in 1990, fighting for a Europe free of poverty and social exclusion.



Programme

Morning session

9.00 - 10.30 Opening plenary: Is the EU on the right track for reducing poverty and promoting a fair and sustainable response to the crisis?

Chair: Ludo Horemans, EAPN President

→ Welcome from Chair

→ Key note speeches: (20')

- Opening intervention, **Justine Bark**, Author of 'Diary of a Jobseeker'
- EAPN position on the crisis, **Katherine Duffy**, EAPN UK Expert and author of EAPN position

→ Round Table: How is Europe 2020 going to reduce poverty in the context of the crisis response? (40')

- **Lauris Beets**, Chair of the Social Protection Committee (SPC)
- **Marcel Haag**, Head of Unit: Strategic Objective Prosperity, Secretariat General, European Commission
- **Frederic Daerden**, MEP, Rapporteur of the European Parliament Opinion on the Platform against Poverty, S+D, Belgium
- **Maureen O'Neill**, EESC, Rapporteur of the European Economic & Social Committee Opinion on the Platform against Poverty

→ Debate (30')

10.30 - 11.00 Coffee break

11.00 - 12.30 6 parallel WORKSHOPS - Social impact of the crisis: realities lived by people experiencing poverty and EAPN national networks at the national level, positive alternatives and mobilization?

(see comprehensive programme of the workshops below)

12.30 - 14.00 Lunch break

Tables will be available for participants to display material illustrating the impact of the crisis and the mobilization they are engaged in, in relation to the tackling of the crisis.

Afternoon session

14.00 - 15.30 6 parallel WORKSHOPS - What alternative solutions are being developed?

These workshops will focus on alternative solutions at national and EU level for delivering a social and sustainable growth.

(see comprehensive programme of the workshops below)

15.30 - 16.00 Coffee break

Premier screening of EAPN's short film on activation practices in the EU: 'Unlocking a Door to Active Inclusion' in the auditorium

16.00 - 17.30 Closing plenary - How to strengthen alliances and mobilization for an alternative approach?

Chair: Fintan Farrell, EAPN Director

→ Feed back from workshops (30')

→ Panel discussion: What way forward? (30')

5 organisations will be asked to highlight their response to EAPN proposals and feedback from workshops, and set out steps for moving forward.

- **Patrick Itschert**, Deputy Secretary General of the ETUC
- **Pieter De Pous**, Policy Director of the European Environmental Bureau / Spring Alliance representative
- **Conny Reuter**, President of the Social Platform
- **Alexandra Strickner**, European ATTAC Network
- **Olmo Gálvez**, Movimiento 15-M (Spanish movement)

→ Debate (30')

Workshops Programme

MORNING WORKSHOP SESSION:

Social impact of the crisis: realities lived by people experiencing poverty; alternatives and mobilization

These workshops will aim at an exchange of experience on the ground regarding:

- the consequences of the crisis and the effectiveness and fairness of government's exit strategies – negative and positive examples from EAPN's national networks;
- the mobilization of civil society aiming at raising awareness of the social impact of the crisis and demanding adequate responses.

In each workshop the discussion will be introduced by presentations from two EAPN national networks, and an input from a person experiencing poverty.

Workshop 1 – Ireland and Iceland

ROOM E

Chair: Pierre Baussand, Social Platform

Presentation 1: **Ireland:** Fiona O'Sullivan & Paul Ginnell, EAPN Ireland

Presentation 2: **Iceland:** Vilborg Oddsdottir, EAPN Iceland

Workshop 2 – Spain and Denmark

ROOM D

Chair: Hugh Frazer, National University of Ireland, Maynooth

Presentation 1: **Spain:** Graciela Malgesini, EAPN Spain

Presentation 2: **Denmark:** Jesper Lauritzen & Per K. Larsen, EAPN Denmark

Workshop 3 – UK and Poland

ROOM C

Chair: Sean O'Neill, Children in Wales

Presentation 1: **United Kingdom:** Lisa Shanahan & Peter Kelly, EAPN UK

Presentation 2: **Poland:** Ryszard Szarfenberg, EAPN Poland

Workshop 4 – Hungary and Sweden

ROOM G

Chair: Heather Roy, Eurodiaconia

Presentation 1: **Hungary:** Daniella Orobej, EAPN Hungary

Presentation 2: **Sweden:** Gunvi Haggren, EAPN Sweden

Workshop 5 – Greece and Belgium – EN/FR

AUDITORIUM

Chair: Philippe Pochet, ETUI

Presentation 1: **Greece:** Maria Marinakou, EAPN Greece

Presentation 2: **Belgium:** Genevieve Baert & Christine Mahy, EAPN Belgium

Workshop 6 – Portugal and Estonia – EN/FR

ROOM B

Chair: Maciej Kucharczyk, AGE-Platform

Presentation 1: **Portugal:** Julio Paiva, EAPN Portugal

Presentation 2: **Estonia:** Irma Tramberg & Kart Mere, EAPN Estonia

AFTERNOON WORKSHOP SESSION: *Alternatives and alliances*

The workshops' objectives are:

- To discuss alternative approaches likely to deliver social and sustainable growth;
- To strengthen alliances aiming at promoting these alternatives.

Each workshop is devoted to key areas of EU policies where alternative approaches are seen as a priority.

Workshop 1 - Is stability/austerity the only way? Re-thinking EU macroeconomics basics

ROOM C

Chair: Michaela Moser, EAPN Vice-President, EAPN Austria

Rapporteur: Maria Jeliaskova, EAPN Bulgaria

Anti-poverty NGOs have been documenting the disastrous social impact of austerity policies on social cohesion. They question the primacy given to budget stability, economic governance and fiscal restraint through EU economic and monetary policies that underpin the EU 2020 Strategy. They are convinced that fairer alternative approaches to exit strategies, reducing public deficits, including taxation are possible. They want to discuss the shaping of the EU Budget. The workshop will discuss alternative macroeconomic approaches to exit strategies and to driving Europe 2020.

Inputs:

- Steffen Stierle, European ATTAC Network: Austerity Campaign Group
- Jeremy Leaman, Loughborough University / EuroMemo Group

Workshop 2 - An alternative use of Cohesion Policy is part of the solution

ROOM G

Chair: Stephan Backes, EAPN Belgium

Rapporteur: Katarzyna Gierczycka, EAPN Poland

Even during the current economic crisis, Structural Funds have fallen far short of their potential to promote social inclusion. Anti-poverty NGOs have been calling for Cohesion Policy to be better geared to developing social

inclusion and being more accessible to small scale projects and organisations. The EU 2020 Flagship initiative on Poverty and social inclusion make some positive proposals about Structural Funds. Nevertheless, a radical rethinking is needed to make sure that Cohesion policy will deliver on the social targets of the EU2020 Strategy and be a key instrument to ensure a positive response to the crisis. How to make it really happen?

Inputs:

- Kinga Goncz, MEP (S&D), Member of the Working group on the future of the ESF
- Serafin Pazos-Vidal, CEMR / COSLA
- Brian Harvey, Independent Social Researcher

Workshop 3 - Creating quality employment and ensuring employment security are positive factors of cohesive and sustainable growth! – EN/FR

ROOM B

Chair: Patrick Boulte, EAPN France

Rapporteur: Colin Hampton, European Network of the Unemployed - EAPN

The EU is seen as supporting worrying developments in terms of employment policy. Evidence from the ground points to negative effects of national austerity policies, often driven by EU requirements, such as deregulation of the labour market, downward pressure on wages and working conditions, increased in-work-poverty. Unless a change of paradigm happens, towards sustainable and inclusive growth in employment policy, then neither the employment, nor the poverty targets of Europe 2020 can hope to be achieved. This can only be obtained through supporting integrated Active Inclusion approaches in employment, featuring personalised pathways towards inclusive labour markets (complete with adequate social protection and access to quality services), and investment in quality jobs (both existing and newly-created posts).

Inputs:

- Ronald Janssen, ETUC
- Diana Dovgan, CECOP

Workshop 4 - Strengthening social protection, including adequate minimum income for all, is the fair way out of the crisis: it really works – EN/FR

AUDITORIUM

Chair: Ludo Horemans, EAPN President, EAPN Belgium

Rapporteur: Vito Telesca, EAPN Italy

The role of automatic stabilization of social protection in the crisis has been formally recognized by the EU, as well as its key role in reducing poverty by 1/3. However, social services and social benefits are being the first hit by austerity measures. This approach will generate more poverty and social exclusion, exacerbating the hardship and insecurity faced by the most vulnerable, destroying the social floor, undermining consumption and the economy and preventing a sustainable, socially cohesive recovery. This workshop will gather arguments in favor of investing in minimum income and social protection including as productive factors, assessing the long-term social and economic impact of inaction and cuts, and discuss concrete proposals in the framework of the 2020 Strategy and the Active Inclusion approach (including an EU framework for minimum income).

Inputs:

- Marco Cilento, ETUC
- Bart Vanhercke, European Social Observatory

Workshop 5 - Services: Cushioning the social impacts of the crisis by defending universal, affordable, accessible and quality services

ROOM D

Chair: Robert Urbé, EAPN Luxembourg / Caritas Europa

Rapporteur: Sergio Aires, EAPN Portugal

The universal, affordable, accessible and quality nature of services is under threat despite the new provisions of the Lisbon Treaty and the recent European Voluntary Quality Framework on Social Services of General Interests. Services are indeed first to be cut in austerity policies despite the fact they are most needed by people to cope. The budget cuts are also being used to drive a growing privatization agenda leading to a worrying trend of poor, segmented services for specific target groups. Civil society initiatives should not compensate for a decline in public investment in services. Europe 2020 should invest in services as economic and social

stabilizers in time of crisis as well as explore the potential for socially innovative approaches, also building on bottom-up approaches led by NGO initiatives.

Inputs:

- Laura Jones, Eurodiaconia / Social Platform
- Jan Willem Goudriaan, EPSU

Workshop 6 - Democratic deficit: who decides?

ROOM E

Chair: Alexander Kraake, EAPN Germany

Rapporteur: Paul Dragan, EAPN Romania

*Increasingly people are losing confidence in the ability of democratic Institutions to protect their interests. The rescue packages from the crisis are seen to be acting in the interest of the elites in the financial institutions at the cost of investment in public services and social welfare. At the same time civil society organisations and anti poverty NGOs lack the necessary financial support to be able both to support people in need and fulfill their advocacy role. Challenging budget decisions and proposing democratic alternatives requires capacity building in economic literacy. One response to this reality has been the call for the practice of **'participative budgeting'**: a participative budget-setting methodology developed primarily by self-organised development organisations in the South. This workshop will discuss the development of this practice and explore to what extent this practice could be further developed in the EU. **Action Aid** has developed expertise in this area and will assist in the development of this workshop.*

Inputs:

- Hussaini Abdul, ActionAid Nigeria
- Laura Sullivan, ActionAid International
- Jorge Romano, ActionAid International