



EAPN contribution to the report for the Human Rights Council for June 2013 on the human rights approach to participation of persons living in poverty in decisions that affect their lives

This contribution to the UN Report on the Participation of People Experiencing Poverty provides a brief picture of the European Anti Poverty Network's (EAPN) work over the past 22 years on strengthening direct participation of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion in 3 areas:

1. In NGOs – looking at changing internal governance
2. In anti poverty policy-making of the European Union – looking at stakeholder engagement and policy-making governance aspects from the perspective of involving people experiencing poverty in advocacy work
3. In building more equal and more democratic society – looking at empowering people experiencing poverty to change communities and strengthen overall democracy.

This contribution is further substantiated by EAPN publications on strengthening direct participation of people experiencing poverty and policy monitoring reports, where participation is assessed (see the list and links to the publications at the end of this paper). The case studies in the enclosed publications highlight the arguments in this paper and give several concrete examples on each of the 3 areas. Finally, while this paper does not strictly follow the guidelines for contributions, the case studies in the publications have been drafted along similar structure as the questionnaire and we hope that the UN report draws on both the paper and the case studies.

Introduction to EAPN's vision of participation

European Anti Poverty Network (EAPN) is fighting for a Democratic Europe Free of Poverty and Social Exclusion! We believe that participative democracy is an important mechanism to ensure that people engage in shaping more equal and democratic societies where everyone has a good life. EAPN has, since its foundation, aimed at strengthening the fight against poverty with people living in poverty and social exclusion, by promoting direct participation and influencing EU and national anti poverty policies.

Participation of people experiencing poverty is a threefold objective in EAPN's work (clearly reflected in the Network's vision, mission, values and objectives as highlighted in the EAPN Strategic Plan):

1. Strengthening participation of people and activists with direct experience of poverty and social exclusion in NGOs;

2. Promoting good governance, a strong civil dialogue through participative policy-making, where people living in poverty and the organizations that represent them are involved in the entire policy-making process, from policy design to implementation and evaluation;
3. Empowering people in poverty to take an active role in shaping their lives, their communities and a more democratic, equal society.

These are translated into concrete goals under the EAPN's Strategic Plan and it is mainstreamed in all our work.

Each of these three objectives will be explained below.

Messages of EAPN on Participation of People Experiencing Poverty:¹

Drawing on the experiences of our members (29 National Networks in the EU + Norway, Iceland, FYROM and Serbia and 18 European Organisations, networks of organisations themselves), EAPN has developed a set of key messages on the participation of people and activists experiencing poverty and social exclusion, reflecting its impact at four levels:

1. Personal development - a) respect for individuals and helps overcome stereotypes; b) builds confidence and helps break prejudice; c) contributes to developing pathways out of poverty; d) contributes to sharing and solidarity; and e) strengthens active citizenship;
2. Transforming organizations, equally applicable to public structures – a) inclusive, diverse and strong organizations; b) transformation, legitimacy and ownership; c) requires time and financial resources;
3. Improved governance – a) enriched policies with a positive impact; b) evaluation to ensure policies adequately respond to realities; c) poverty proofing and social impact assessment of policy initiatives in all fields with an impact on poverty (economic, health, finances, research etc);
4. More and better democracy – a) political commitment to poverty eradication; b) understanding the real causes of poverty; c) educates society and challenges systems conducive to poverty; d) societal commitment to combating poverty and social exclusion.

¹*Small Steps – Big Changes, building participation of people experiencing poverty, EAPN 2009 (see the link to the full publication <http://www.eapn.eu/en/news-and-publications/publications/eapn-books/eapn-book-small-steps-big-changes>)*

European Meetings of People Experiencing Poverty – a key forum in the European Union and a best practice example in itself, contributing to the three objectives, as mentioned above²

In the late 1990s, EAPN along with other social NGOs pressed the European institutions for an anti-poverty policy that really delivers. This intensive lobbying resulted in the implementation of the European Social Inclusion Strategy decided on at the Nice Summit in 2000.

We set great store by Objective 4 of that strategy, subsequently the EU Lisbon Strategy (and restated in the European Platform against Poverty) which calls for all relevant actors to be mobilised, especially people experiencing poverty. Since then, much has been done to get the words reflected in actions.

The first European Meeting of people experiencing poverty was held in 2001 under the Belgian presidency of the EU at the instigation of the Belgian government.

Over time, these meetings have turned into an EU Presidency/European Commission initiative, a development of major political significance. The Meetings have gradually risen up the European authorities and Member States' agendas, and began to be seen as a big policy event where the expertise of people experiencing poverty can be leveraged. This is an achievement that EAPN has been strongly committed to build upon and has been calling upon policy-makers to take forward the process, the results these meetings have produced and a commitment and recognition of more and stronger participative processes, including by allocating adequate financial means. They have empowered people living in poverty to become activists and represent their peers and groups in forums at different levels. They have also stimulated many national participative consultation and policy-making processes in various EU member states. National Anti Poverty Networks have used the preparatory processes around the EU meetings to put in place internal participative methodologies and to stimulate such changes among public authorities, not only in terms of policy-making and consultation but also in terms of empowering service-users and supporting self-organised groups.

The European Meetings of People Experiencing Poverty have addressed the following topics, so far:

2001 – at the initiative of the Belgian Government, the first meeting addressed **housing, health, training and incomes**. The Belgian Government has subsequently supported,

² For more information on the EU Meetings of People Experiencing Poverty, visit <http://www.eapn.eu/en/what-we-do/issues-we-focus-on/the-european-meetings-of-people-experiencing-poverty-a-process-going-forward> and read chapter 12 of *Small Steps – Big Changes, building the participation of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion*, EAPN 2009: <http://www.eapn.eu/en/news-and-publications/publications/eapn-books/eapn-book-small-steps-big-changes> .



together with the European Commission, the organisation of all the following yearly EU Presidency Meetings of People Experiencing Poverty and Social Exclusion.

2003 – under Greek EU Presidency the meeting focused on **good participation practices**, particularly demanding a face-to-face dialogue with policy-makers.

2004- the Irish EU Presidency hosted the meeting **“Participation is a two-way street”** asserting the need for recognition of the expertise people experiencing poverty from their daily realities and that authorities need to ensure a dialogue on equal footing;

2005- the Luxembourg EU Presidency hosted the meeting on **images and perceptions of poverty**, which explored stigma, self-stigma and the need to raise public awareness on tackling poverty and social exclusion. The Presidency also proposed an EU Council Conclusion calling on all EU Member States to organise regular national meetings of people experiencing poverty.

2006 – the Austrian EU Presidency organised the meeting on **“How do we cope with everyday life?”** tackling all aspects of poverty and social exclusion.

2007 – the German EU Presidency meeting focused on **“Strengthening Progress, drafting next steps”**, which recognized steps made but asserted that the EU would not be able to eradicate poverty by 2010. The meeting also highlighted the empowerment factor of engaging with such forums.

2008 – the Slovenian EU Presidency meeting **“Four Pillars in the Fight against Poverty”**, focused on 4 topics: social services, services of general interest, housing and minimum income.

2009 – the Czech EU Presidency meeting **“Where we live - What we need”** addressed the topics of Housing, Financial Inclusion and Access to Basic Services.

2010 – the Spanish EU Presidency meeting **“Starting point for a new deal”** called upon governments to stop cutting public services and invest in them as a poverty-prevention measure and stop seeing social expenses as a burden or loss.

2011 – the Hungarian EU Presidency meeting focused on **“Employment, Work, Jobs: the reality of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion”** looking at all forms of employment and the struggles people have to making ends meeting with low quality low paid jobs in an increasingly insecure labour market.

2012- the Danish EU Presidency meeting tackled **Homelessness and Housing Rights**.

The messages have been taken up by NGOs and policy-makers in national and European policy-making processes, including through the Social Open Method of Coordination

(hereinafter Social OMC) and hopefully it will become a more clear process under the new Europe 2020 Strategy.

All of these meetings are well documented and a separate impact study has been carried out in 2010 to look at the value of these meetings, the national and local processes they have stimulated and the policy messages they have created in the first ten years. For a comparative analysis of the impact of the European Meetings of People Experiencing Poverty, between 2001-2010, see [Impact Study on the European Meetings of People Experiencing Poverty](#) (OASeS, University of Antwerp 2010 on request of EAPN).

Despite the detailed documentation of each of these meetings and the analysis of its impact over several years, at the time of making this contribution, EAPN is negotiating with the Irish EU Presidency and the European Commission to ensure that these important EU forums continue to bring together people with direct experience of poverty in the future, ensuring that they provide valuable expertise and input to the EU anti poverty policies.

1. Objective one – strengthening participation of people living in poverty and social exclusion in NGOs

Building on 20 years of work at national and EU level, in 2010 EAPN has adopted a Strategy for building a more participative network at all levels. The strategy reflects the commitment EAPN and its members have towards building more participation of people experiencing poverty in our work and in the work of anti-poverty NGOs. It also builds on the good practices that some EAPN members have put in place in terms of participative approaches.

1.1 Eliminating internal barriers to build a broader activist base of people experiencing poverty

EAPN believes in growing, continuous participation of people and activists living in poverty and social exclusion. EAPN members, anti poverty NGOs, are looking at putting in place support mechanisms that contribute to personal development and growth through activism. Participation by persons experiencing poverty is often assumed to mean that these persons would come to speak about their own lives and realities. EAPN believes that participation should not reduce persons living in poverty to their experience-sharing, it should stimulate and support their active empowerment and direct participation as representatives of groups, NGOs and an anti poverty movement that stands for principles of democracy, equality and respect for human rights, and to drive a more self-organized ethos. Members of EAPN are continuously revising their internal democracy rules to eliminate any barrier and to ensure a growing number of activists with direct experience of poverty engaging in national and European work. Keeping this challenge in constant sight, strengthens the empowering aspect of participation both for the people who participate in some meetings, for activists

that take up the fight against poverty more continuously as a result of these initiatives and for the anti poverty networks and organisations carrying out this work.

1.2 Developing methodologies to build better participation of people experiencing poverty

Participative practices are as diverse as anti poverty NGOs are, each taking an own approach to ensuring more direct participation. Service providing organizations have been putting in place mechanisms to better engage the beneficiaries of their services (service-users) in improving their internal policies and the quality of their services (often represented through advisory or consultative or even co-decision-making bodies). Such mechanisms also empower people to build better pathways out of poverty. Advocacy organizations, while not always being established by self-advocacy groups, have tried to ensure the groups whose interest they uphold are well represented (these are sometimes represented through quotas or pillar structures). Many people and groups experiencing poverty and social exclusion have volatile living situations or experience such forms of exclusion that makes it difficult for them to meet or engage on a permanent basis (for example: homeless persons, undocumented migrants, ethnic minorities, ex-prisoners, former drug addicts, and other groups). Anti poverty NGOs, those in membership of EAPN and not only, have developed collective participative practices that allow them to reach out and involve these groups of people on a more continuous basis. Some of EAPN members have mapped out such practices and shared them, and have also developed own methodology guides to building participation. Some of these practices are recorded in EAPN's two publications on good practice, mentioned below and referenced at the end of this paper.

1.3 National participative processes and meetings

The European Meetings of People Experiencing Poverty (see details further in the paper) have encouraged EU Member States to support similar forums at local, regional or national levels. These have also helped EAPN National Networks to put in practice structured consultation processes that allow training and guidance leading to empowerment and personal development of people living in poverty, and their growth into representing their communities in local, regional or national consultative structures. Such structures have also served as a tool to reaching out and engaging more people living in poverty, through thorough and broad national preparatory processes, with the European Meetings of People Experiencing Poverty. In the eleven years that these meetings have developed, many national initiatives were born, supporting a growing number of activists with direct experience of poverty representing their communities in organizations, in policy-making and in public debates. Such initiatives have been supported with EU funding for awareness-raising on the EU Strategy for Social Protection and Social Inclusion, through the Social OMC process.

1.4 Training, capacity building, peer learning – non-formal and formal education approaches to strengthening participation of people experiencing poverty

By developing a conscious awareness of the state of participation in their activities, anti poverty NGOs have carried out many training, capacity building and other educational activities in support of better participation of people experiencing poverty. EAPN has also organized training and capacity building activities on engaging with the EU anti poverty work, to allow for the activist base, particularly among those with direct experience of poverty, from its National Networks to better engage with EU policy-making. These activities were also a space to highlight the diversity of national initiatives on participation and to inspire EAPN members to take up each other's initiatives and use them to enrich their own practices. These activities have also increased the number of activists with direct experience of poverty in EAPN's policy and lobby work.

1.5 Transnational cooperation through projects – a lot of richness, an unsure future

So much transnational learning and inspiration happens through common activities, meetings and projects. These help people build common ideas and take actions that bring communities closer together around solutions to poverty. A lot of transnational project work which happened under EU funding has developed analysis and recommendations to improving participation of people experiencing poverty. Projects on consensualized Budget Standards, on Awareness Raising involving people experiencing poverty on Mainstreaming Social Inclusion, funded from EU programmes such as PROGRESS, contributed significantly to advancing the understanding and support for participation of people experiencing poverty in policy-making. These produced methodologies, indicators of better measurement, toolkits and other useful tools that strengthened the commitment to involving people experiencing poverty in policy-making. Unfortunately, many of such crucial funding lines have been cut, reduced or made inaccessible for NGOs in the past several years. EAPN believes and continues to advocate for EU and national funding for participation and participative policy-making. Research and analysis proves time and again the enormous benefit of participation and EAPN will continue to make the case for that, despite all odds.

2. Objective two: EAPN's contribution to promoting good governance, a strong civil dialogue through participative policy-making, where people living in poverty and the organizations that represent them are involved in the entire policy-making process, from policy design to implementation and evaluation

Under the Lisbon Strategy, the Social Open Method of Coordination (OMC) established for the first time an explicit goal to eradicate poverty through an innovative governance process involving Member States and grass-roots actors. This process encouraged Member States to make progress on combating poverty and social exclusion, through agreeing common

objectives and indicators, developing National Action Plans for Inclusion (then National Strategic Reports for Social Protection and Social Inclusion), monitoring and reviewing results together and identifying priorities for follow up, including through peer reviews. Good governance and direct participation of people experiencing poverty were advanced, primarily through NGO pressure, which achieved the important outcome of explicit references in the Common Objectives, and support to engagement through funding Programmes (such as the EU Programme for Social Change and Innovation/then Progress). EAPN members, particularly the National Networks, argued that without a strong national civil dialogue, without consultation of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion and their NGOs, social policies would not achieve the right impact. This was recognized initially through the Social OMC in Common Objective 3 on good governance, transparency and involvement of stakeholders in the whole policy-making process³ and has recently been confirmed by the European Commission in their new European Platform against Poverty Initiative:

The participation of people experiencing poverty is acknowledged as a paramount objective of inclusion policies, both as a tool for individual empowerment and a governance mechanism.”⁴

In the framework of the Social OMC, which was the implementation mechanism for the EU Strategy for Social Protection and Social Inclusion, work on good governance, one of the three overarching objectives of the Social OMC and as part of that, work on direct participation of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion, advanced through:

1. National consultations, developing regular structured dialogues with anti poverty NGOs and people experiencing poverty on the design, delivery and evaluation of National Action Plans on Social Protection and Social Inclusion.
2. Yearly EU Meetings of People Experiencing Poverty.
3. Yearly Round Tables on poverty involving PEP and their organisations in a yearly exchange on the process/outcomes of the Social OMC and the National Action Plans on poverty, including on issues of governance.
4. Peer reviews and learning from good practice – involving representatives of governments, academics and NGOs (EAPN has been stakeholder expert in many of these peer reviews as the Network most closely associated with this objective).
5. Monitoring the governance of the EU Strategy for Social Protection and Social Inclusion, particularly of the consultation or stronger involvement of anti poverty NGOs and people living in poverty and social exclusion - EAPN and other EU networks

³ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=755&langId=en>;

⁴European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion EC, 2010, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:0758:FIN:EN:PDF>

published monitoring reports and subsequent positions asking to strengthen the governance of the Strategy and lobbied on the findings and recommendations.

6. Development of voluntary guidelines on participation of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion in the Social OMC process – a commitment that the European Commission has made, still to be implemented.
7. Funding awareness-raising and transnational exchange projects under the EU Programme for Social Change and Innovation /then PROGRESS – which was directly used to fund participation activities, and to establish new dialogue processes.

By the end of the review of the Lisbon Strategy (2010), the following picture could be drawn on the objective of strengthening direct participation of people experiencing poverty in EU anti-poverty policy-making processes:

- The EU rhetoric on participation had changed with EU documents and speeches of Commissioner responsible for fight against poverty and social exclusion, regularly mentioning anti poverty NGOs and the participation of people experiencing poverty in policy-making;
- Under the Social OMC:
 - o People experiencing poverty in some countries, became part of a regular dialogue process on developing effective anti poverty policy at national, regional and EU level.
 - o EU Meetings of People Experiencing Poverty were financed from EU funding programmes yearly.
 - o Recognized role and participation in the Round Tables of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion.
 - o Peer exchange and learning had encouraged Member States to initiate participation and consultation practices, at least in relation to the EU processes and to organise regular National Meetings of People Experiencing Poverty similar to the EU meetings;⁵
 - o EU funding was dedicated to awareness raising projects, involving people experiencing poverty, projects focusing on participation and good governance including the financing of national meetings and actions.
 - o Common Objectives of the Social OMC, including the one on participation of people experiencing poverty, were re-confirmed in 2010.
 - o The European Commission guidelines on National Social Protection and Social Inclusion reports included an explicit governance guideline, specifically requiring that Member States organize consultations with anti poverty NGOs and people experiencing poverty.

⁵<http://www.peer-review-social-inclusion.eu/key-themes/governance>

- Although the Social OMC (2000-10) has established the overarching objective of a significant impact on the eradication of poverty, the results were weak, with the number of people at risk of poverty remaining stable.

2.1 Europe 2020 Strategy – the new strategy is very challenging in terms of participation and good governance

Antipoverty NGO were crucial actors in achieving a poverty target in the new Europe 2020 Strategy amongst its 5 overarching key targets, and an explicit governance principle to involve stakeholders, including civil society in its development,. However, the first two years of its implementation have showed steps back in governance and direct participation of people experiencing poverty in the National Reform Programmes (NRPs) and National Social Reports (NSRs). EAPN was happy to have achieved its goal to get poverty among the key priorities and targets, and has established a strategy to attempt to engage with NGOs and people experiencing poverty at the national level in the NRPs and NSRs, and pressurizing together for improvements in the priorities in the overarching policy framework set each year in the Annual Growth Survey and in the country-specific recommendations. The new national governance mechanism – National Reform Programmes (NRP,) has been challenging to engage with for anti poverty NGOs and people experiencing poverty, representing a step back on the participation process promoted by the Social OMC. Meanwhile the Social OMC's own process through the National Social Reports and engagement focus has been significantly reduced, with uncertainty hanging over its future.

Economic or financial government departments responsible for the NRPs have tended to sideline Social Ministries input and have not been giving the same weight to anti poverty NGO input, despite the strong call for engagement from EAPN and other social NGOs. EU funding has increasingly been deviated from supporting NGO-led awareness-raising and engagement and innovative project work towards large, public authority-led social policy experimentation projects, with minimal focus on participation or governance processes.

As a result, it is hard to sustain the momentum on participation of people experiencing poverty and the work and engagement of anti poverty NGOs in these processes. Further financial pressure and cutbacks on NGO support or to consultation processes makes any initiatives difficult, especially for advocacy NGOs. Although 12 national networks managed to have some engagement and input into the consultation process on the NRPs and 8 on the NSRs only 4 anti poverty networks felt their input had an impact on the final NRPs. Governance in 2012 was rated worse than in 2011 and it is seen as a serious step back from the previous Social Inclusion and Social Protection Strategy, implemented through the Social OMC. EAPN networks shadow country-specific Recommendations gave a strong backing to the need for participation, which were highlighted widely at EU level.

For details on EAPN's assessment of the NRPs, particularly on the governance and participation aspects, please see examples as well as overall assessment in the [2011 EAPN Report – Deliver Inclusive Growth: Put the Heart Back into Europe](#), and the [2012 EAPN Report – An EU Worth Defending – Beyond Austerity to Social Investment and Inclusive Growth](#) and the country-specific Recommendations

A major concern has been the lack of clarity on the future of the Social OMC, as this has been the main driver and framework for progress on participation of people experiencing poverty. Although the new European Platform Against Poverty started with good intentions, backing the EU Meetings of People Experiencing Poverty, and a stronger link with the Annual Convention encouraging more direct participation, the lack of any real focus on participation, or process linking the national level, or connection to the Social OMC, has consistently undermined any active governance process. As a result, this year, the EU Meeting is threatened with extinction, and no systematic priority given to engagement of people experiencing poverty in the Annual Convention.

At the EU level, the link between the European Meetings of People Experiencing Poverty, under the spring EU Presidency, and the Annual Convention of the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion, under the autumn Presidency, has helped keep governance on the agenda in 2010-2012, however, already the cuts expected for 2013 will certainly be a step backwards in terms of participation of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion and the anti poverty NGOs, questioning the future of the EU Meetings of People Experiencing Poverty.

National consultation and participation processes which were built with hard work from anti poverty networks and with commitment from some national, regional and local public authorities have been significantly limited or cancelled altogether. While focusing on debt and deficit reduction, governments in most Member States have made non-transparent decisions to prioritize cuts in welfare budgets, driven at the EU level by non-democratic economic governance mechanisms including the Fiscal Compact. This was done, of course, without ex-ante social impact assessment, or any consultation of anti poverty NGOs, people experiencing poverty or other stakeholders. EAPN has highlighted this link and negative impact of democratic deficit on participation in its latest printed magazine [EAPN AntiPoverty Mag No. 136: The Crisis of Democracy: Anti-Poverty Organisations Respond \(EAPN 2012\)](#).

In conclusion, while there is a lot of room for improvement, making real progress on strengthening the participation of people experiencing poverty in EU and national policy-making has been at the rate of one step forward, two steps back. In practical terms, too few sustainable steps have been made and insufficiently mainstreamed into the general framework of EU policy-making, processes are more opaque and closed engendering among

people experiencing poverty and anti poverty NGOs a feeling of frustration rather than one of progress. These setbacks reflect the growing frustration of people and grass-roots organisations with the lack of civil dialogue, commitment to participative governance and the accountability of decision-makers at all levels, and have helped fuel the growing social movements mobilizing in defence of basic social rights.

In terms of practical examples, EAPN has collected and printed two publications on strengthening the participation of people experiencing poverty in anti poverty organizations and policy-making: [*Small Steps – Big Changes – building participation of people experiencing poverty \(EAPN 2009\)*](#) and [*Breaking Barriers – Driving Change – case studies of building participation of people experiencing poverty \(EAPN 2012\)*](#). Together, these publications highlight 25 examples of building/strengthening direct participation of people experiencing poverty in very different areas by National and European organisation members across Europe: from participation in organizations, to policy-making, working with the media, strengthening awareness-raising through public action, theatre, participative research and analysis etc. These case studies are described along the requirements for the UN Report and we would be hope that the UN report quotes and references some of these case studies, which highlight the hard work anti poverty networks and NGOs put into building better participation of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion. Each of these case studies includes a quote from persons experiencing poverty who were part of these initiatives, sharing their own perspectives and experiences of engagement.

In the EU policy-making arena, after an initial strong, positive development in the period 2000-2010, the engagement in regular dialogue processes has seen a setback. The failure to learn from good practices of positive engagement of people experiencing poverty on the ground and to prioritize participation and empowerment as central goals to achieve effective anti-poverty solutions undermines the objectives of poverty reduction. The fact that sometimes policymakers still shy away from meeting people living in poverty or from speaking next to them in public events, or from answering the questions and concerns they have speaks for the weak commitment decision-makers have. We continue to strongly advocate for better participation, clearer regular structured civil dialogue mechanisms and a transparent functioning governance system rooted in a strong and vibrant democracy.

3. Objective three: Empowering people in poverty to take an active role in shaping their lives, their communities and a more democratic, equal society

Our vision is of a Europe free of poverty and social exclusion, where everyone has adequate conditions for a good life. This means that democracy and poverty are closely linked and that when democracy weakens, poverty increases. We believe that participative democracy, along with strong civil dialogue mechanisms, are key to giving a voice to people experiencing

poverty and social exclusion. More and better participation safeguard democratic principles and contribute to the reduction of inequalities and social polarization that they create.

Under this objective, EAPN members have engaged people experiencing poverty in campaigns, awareness raising and work with the media, by shaping messages together and communicating them effectively in public debates. The on-going campaign for an Adequate Minimum Income: <http://adequateincome.eu/en/know-more>, the campaign for an EU We Can Trust and the work around the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion are proof of this engagement with broader democracy questions.

EAPN has also invested in strengthening alliances with organizations outside Europe such as Dignity International or the Ekta Parishad Indian Ghandian movement of the landless in order to show solidarity with the global fight against poverty and to bring the learning of self-organized groups of people with direct experience to organizations in the European Union.

The austerity measures has driven millions of people across the EU Member States out onto the streets and many of our members have connected to these groups to share their concerns and to build a wider support for democracy and for a more social, and equal vision of society.

Whether trying to influence policies through dialogue, or building public alliances for alternative, more sustainable, development models that ensure a good life for everyone, EAPN is clear about the need to continue to work towards more and better participation of people experiencing poverty.

Participation is possible and we must work to make it happen!

Annex1: List of EAPN publications quoted in this contribution paper and including practical case studies that substantiate this contribution

Small Steps – Big Changes – building participation of people experiencing poverty, (EAPN 2009), a book highlighting 12 case studies by EAPN National Networks of building direct participation of people experiencing poverty in

1. Austria on using forum theatre to change legislation;
2. Belgium on dialogue groups as a consensus building method and through
3. Belgium on training and employment of experience experts on poverty in public services and NGOs;

4. France on involving people experiencing poverty in social inclusion policy-making;
5. Hungary on building a national network with equal representation of persons experiencing poverty and social exclusion and social professionals in the internal governance and all the work of the National Network;
6. Netherlands on developing a recipe book against poverty through local poverty conferences;
7. Norway on making poverty visible by mobilizing and organizing public hearings on poverty as an advocacy method;
8. Portugal on rooting policies in local realities and activating bottom-up participation;
9. Spain on developing a methodological guide to participation based on regional experiences;
10. United Kingdom on bridging the policy gap through peer reviews and lessons for governance;
11. European Meetings of People Experiencing Poverty as a catalyst of participation.

[Breaking Barriers – Driving Change – case studies of building participation of people experiencing poverty](#), (EAPN 2012) a book highlighting 15 case studies by EAPN National Networks and European Organisation members of building direct participation of people experiencing poverty in

1. Austria on working with the media on poverty-sensitive reporting;
2. Czech Republic on first Czech national meeting of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion;
3. France on introducing the social Open Method of Coordination tools and methods at national and regional level;
4. Ireland on supporting participation in the National Social Inclusion Forum;
5. Poland on first steps to creating discussion spaces between people experiencing poverty and public authorities and social services responsible;
6. Portugal on training people experiencing poverty to represent their communities in the National Consultative Council of People Experiencing Poverty;
7. Spain on the participation of people as a tool for social inclusion in the Basque Country;

8. Spain on the participation of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion in Castilla-La Mancha;
9. UK (Scotland) on building direct participation through evidence research, discussion forums and policy proposals in the EPIC project;
10. UK (Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centre) on involving unemployed persons in campaigning and service delivery;
11. ATD Fourth World on Fourth World People's Universities and the merging of knowledge;
12. AGE Platform Europe on INCLUSage – a project debating older people's needs;
13. Eurochild on giving a voice to children and young people;
14. Eurodiaconia on developing a toolkit on the participation and empowerment of service users.

[Reports, videos and presentations of all the EU meetings of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion](#) (2001-2012) can be accessed here.

[EAPN Report – Deliver Inclusive Growth: Put the Heart Back into Europe! EAPN analysis of the 2011 National Reform Programmes, Europe 2020](#), (EAPN 2011)

Please see particularly Executive Summary: Key Messages and Chapter 7: Embedding Meaningful Stakeholder Participation

[EAPN Report – An EU Worth Defending – Beyond Austerity to Social Investment and Inclusive Growth, EAPN analysis of the 2012 National Reform Programmes and National Social Reports](#), (EAPN 2012)

Please see particularly Key Messages on the 2012 NRP/NSR Assessments and chapter 6: *Towards a more democratic Europe 2020 Strategy: Governance and Participation of Stakeholders in the NRPs and NSRs*

[EAPN AntiPoverty Mag No. 136: The Crisis of Democracy: Anti-Poverty Organisations Respond](#), (EAPN 2012)

All of these and other EAPN publications can be accessed at www.eapn.eu.

We would be happy to provide printed copies of the main referenced papers, if necessary.

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