

PeP

EUROPEAN MEETINGS OF
PEOPLE
EXPERIENCING
POVERTY

LISTEN TO THE EXPERTS OF POVERTY, EXCLUSION AND INEQUALITIES

13th European Meeting of People experiencing Poverty

Funding the fight against Poverty

Investing in the EU Poverty Reduction target

Brussels, 22-24 September 2014



10 Key Messages

#2014PEP

The 13th European Meeting of People experiencing Poverty (PeP) was organised in Brussels on 22 to 24 September 2014, by the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) with support from the European Commission and the EAPN Fund. The focus of the 2014 meeting was on funding the fight against poverty and social exclusion. In addition workshops discussed key themes from previous meetings: Minimum Income, Homelessness, Wealth and Inequality, Migration and Poverty, and Youth and Social Inclusion.

For more information see: <http://voicesofpoverty-eu.net/> and twitter #2014PEP

"I am confident that EU financial instruments like the European Social Fund and the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived can help to make a difference."

László Andor, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion.

5 Key Messages on the Use of Structural Funds to fight Poverty and Social Exclusion

1. Words are not enough

The next round of Structural Funds will provide increased funding for fighting poverty and exclusion with 20% of the European Social Fund earmarked for social inclusion and the requirement to develop anti-poverty strategies. People in poverty insist this must not be an empty promise. They insist that the European Commission and the European Parliament must ensure that Member States deliver on this commitment with an increase in the quantity and quality of projects that tackle poverty and foster inclusion. Vigorous monitoring and reporting on how the 20% earmarked for social inclusion is used, is expected.

2. Trust in Anti-poverty NGOs is needed

Many of the delegations expressed the feeling that Authorities behave as if they don't have trust in NGOs. Unless this trust is developed and local and national anti-poverty NGOs get more access to Structural Funds many of those who need support and opportunities the most will not be reached. This is particularly the case for individual and groups who as well as experiencing poverty experience discrimination such as migrants, Roma and Travellers. NGOs are also better placed to deliver projects that address broader social inclusion and participation beyond narrow employment-only approaches which are so necessary to reach to people and communities experiencing multiple disadvantages. Rules and procedures for receiving and managing the funds must not be so unnecessarily bureaucratic as to effectively exclude NGOs from receiving funding under the Structural Funds.



3. Anti-poverty NGOs are partners for the Structural Funds

The legal framework says that all stakeholders have to participate in the process. It is no longer something we just hope for, it is compulsory. Anti-poverty NGOs should be part of the Committees planning, implementing and evaluating the use of structural funds.

4. Anti-poverty NGOs need access to transnational learning

The 20% allocated for social inclusion and/or technical assistance funds should include transnational measures defending a Social Europe. Civil society, including people with direct experience of poverty, have expertise and they should be able to exchange and learn from experiences across EU countries including sharing case studies on projects to fight poverty and social exclusion.

5. Structural Funds are very helpful but coherence is needed

Structural Funds are very helpful but they cannot close the gap from damage inflicted by policies, such as cuts in services and social protection, negative country-specific recommendations, tax avoidance or cheating. Large scale corruption is a major problem in many European countries and this corruption can also feature in how Structural Funds are used and can undermine much of the good that the funds can make. Coherence is needed and all policies must be mobilized if finally progress can be made on the poverty reduction target.

5 Key Messages from the Thematic Workshops

1. Access to adequate Minimum Income

Poor quality minimum income schemes trap people in poverty and desperation, are often linked to poor quality employment and the two together contribute to growing “grey” economy, which makes difficulties for everybody. In countries with better schemes many people only need the scheme for a short time, but even in these countries some people also need other support such as social and cultural.

2. Migration and Poverty

Ensure that the human rights of migrants are respected. Ensuring migrants a path to regular status and a limit processing time will be essential to ensure their social inclusion. Fostering self-organised and local based initiatives is key to successful outcomes.

3. Wealth and Inequality

Inequality has a huge impact on the self-esteem and mental health of people and is a waste of human potential! The problem is not scarce resources, but unequal distribution. Inequality is the consequence of political choices so change is possible. More progressive tax systems and tackling tax evasions is needed and necessary for the provision of decent and accessible essential services and high level social protection systems. As well as looking at minimum income, we should look also at maximum income. We have a common interest, equal societies are better for everybody.

4. Homelessness

Participation is not just about re-integration of individuals but also about helping to provide better services. We need the 4 Ps: it must be good for the **p**erson, must be good for **p**ractice, must be good for **p**olicies and must lead to appropriate **p**erception of homeless people. You need to share power all the time so that people don't feel that their voices aren't heard. To build incentive and motivation there is a need for follow-up and change and not only tokenistic engagement.

5. Youth and Poverty

It is necessary to broaden the focus of policy interventions from youth unemployment to wider social participation, including the fight against youth poverty and social exclusion. Priority needs to be given to quality youth work which should ensure that young people from key groups and communities are not left behind including, migrants, minorities, people with disabilities and people from disadvantaged areas and regions. Investment in employment should ensure quality and durable entry level jobs that answer not only labour market needs but also young people's dreams.