

EAPN Report

This year the work of the National Poverty Conference (nak) concentrates on further preparation of our activities for the European Year 2010 which we have been organising and discussing since last year. Therefore the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs granted a promotion of about 44,000 € on 20 January. In the National Poverty Conference co-operate central players in the field of poverty reduction, such as Diakonie, Caritas (protestant and catholic welfare organisations), German Red Cross, Workers' Welfare Organisation and the Confederation of German Trade Unions.

Our activities concentrate on the focus week in Berlin from 20 to 25 June 2010. We aim to network experts, people experiencing poverty and helpers. We also want to direct public attention to the problem of poverty.

Many people are oblivious of the fact that in our land, one of the most prosperous in the world, there is also a grinding poverty rampant. Actual census acts on the assumption that 18% of German people live on or below the poverty threshold. At least 3 million children and adolescents are affected by poverty; 2.2 millions of them live on the level of social minimum collateral. Especially affected by poverty are also single parents; 42% of whom obtain social basic care. Regarding single parents with more than 3 children this percentage reaches 72%. But also gainful employment does not protect against poverty. 1.3 million employees depend on complementary social basic care.

The fact that the social basic care in Germany is insufficient also bothers the Federal Constitutional Court. The social welfare organisations, organised in the National Poverty Conference, in their statements on the current proceedings pointed out that the level of the social basic care is too low. Within the next days we expect a verdict whether or not the social basic care secures the socio-cultural minimum living wage in a verifiable legal way, which we can hardly conceive with regard to our everyday work.

Thus we want to sensitise the public and promote a social climate which tackles poverty and social exclusion consequently instead of blaming the poor for their situation. We introduced our working programme at our press conference in Hamburg on 27 January. Our activities will not run out with the focus week but will set a course time and again over the whole year. At the Labour Ministry's official opening on 25 February we will hold a workshop in which dedicated people experiencing poverty will report as experts on their perspective.

A focus week event central to people living in poverty is the fifth meeting of people living in poverty, to be held Monday 21 and Tuesday 22 June. The meeting is designed to help these people networking and phrasing political and social requirements from their perspectives. It will be staged in the premises of Berlin's city mission which is renowned for its competent support for the homeless.

At a forum meeting on 23 June, together with representatives of social welfare organisations and initiatives, of politics, media and people experiencing poverty, we will elaborate the various faces of poverty and show approaches. At the permanent representation of Rheinland-Pfalz, at close quarters to Bundestag and Federal Government we will discuss in working groups themes such as poverty and housing, poverty and education, poverty and health as well as poverty and employment. The results will be presented directly to headliners of politics, economy, science and media in order to take advantage of their function as disseminators of information for social change.

In the same place our day of action will proceed on 24 June. On the one hand we will inform persons of politics and media about networking services in Berlin quarters especially affected by poverty and on the other hand we will invite school classes to inform themselves in detail. At noon we depart to one special quarter with each of the groups and show them on-site

problems as well as professional and honorary helpers who combat poverty. In this project we co-operate with dedicated persons from Berlin who work for various organisations and centres.

These are only 3 highlights. The focus week will combine a wide range of events, such as the exhibition "Kunst trotz(t) Armut" ("Art despite/defies Poverty"), a film project about people living in bankruptcy, meetings and church services as well as various other cultural and political activities and initiatives.

During the whole European Year 2010 every member of the National Poverty Conference will start own initiatives. We will present them to the public in a corporate programme. In the year's finale we plan a joined closing meeting, which shall serve as both, a demonstration as well as a culturally attractive event. For this event we want to involve the patroness of the year, Bishop Margot Käßmann, who is also the President of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany..

Beside the activities of the National Poverty Conference the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs promotes projects with an amount of about 1.4 Mio €. Of the 800 submitted tenders 70 made it on the shortlist. The final decision is expected shortly and will be presented to the public at the ministry's opening on 25 February. It will also be published at the homepage www.mit-neuem-mut.de. Within the advisory council very diverging assessments emerged about the aims of these projects and their promotion between the ministry on the one side and social organisations and trade unions on the other side. Application deadline was 28 September 2009.