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## Hanafin calls for resurrection of abandoned social partnership talks

By Louise Hogan  
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A SENIOR minister has sent out a strong message on the resurrection of the now defunct social partnership talks.

Social and Family Affairs Minister Mary Hanafin voiced hopes the process still had a future, as she stated the economy was turning a corner with an "upturn" expected by the end of this year.

Ms Hanafin pointed out positive progress in eliminating poverty in Ireland had been made through the agreements struck over the past two decades.

"Social partnership in Ireland is experiencing a difficult time at the moment," she told a European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) international conference staged in Dublin yesterday.

"But I would hope that when all of the social partners stop to look at how much progress we have made in the last few years by working together that they will all realise the best progress in the interest of the wider community can actually be gained by working together again."

Fr Sean Healy, the spokesman for the Community and Voluntary Pillar umbrella group engaged in the talks, said the resumption of discussions to target poverty and social inclusion would be a fitting way to mark the European Year for Combating Poverty.

After two decades of social partnership, the talks floundered just before the last Budget as sides couldn't reach agreement over a €1bn paycut for public servants.

Fr Healy called on the Government to engage on those parts of the 'Towards 2016' agreement which concerned inclusion, securing adequate income and services.

More than 225,000 were lifted out of poverty in the six-year period to 2008. Fr Healy said the challenge was now to keep that progress.

Anna Visser, director of the EAPN, said the EU must learn from its mistakes by adapting policies to serve society rather than the "obsessive focus on growth".

- Louise Hogan