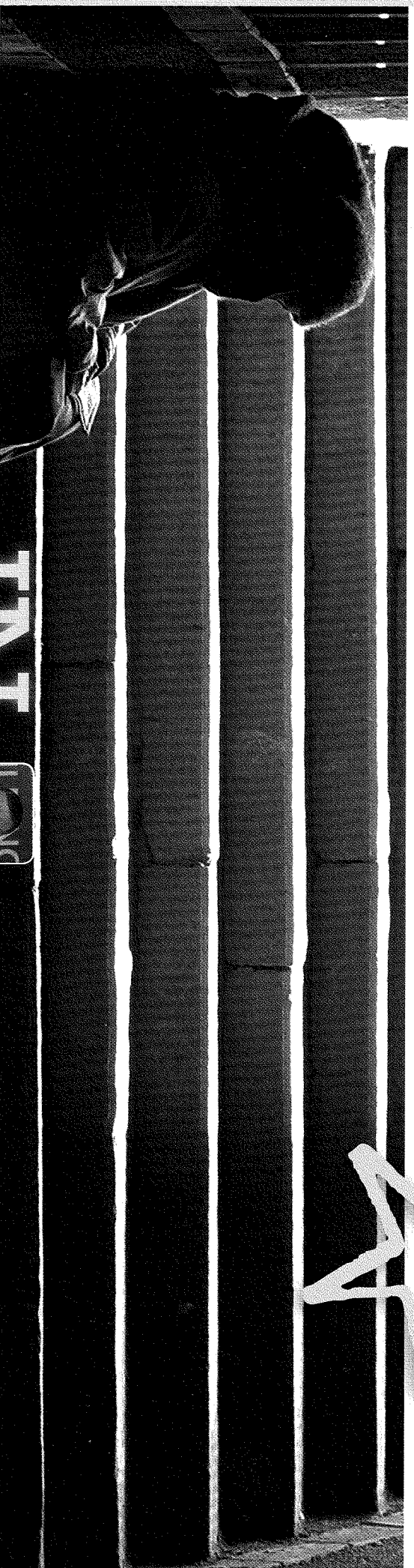
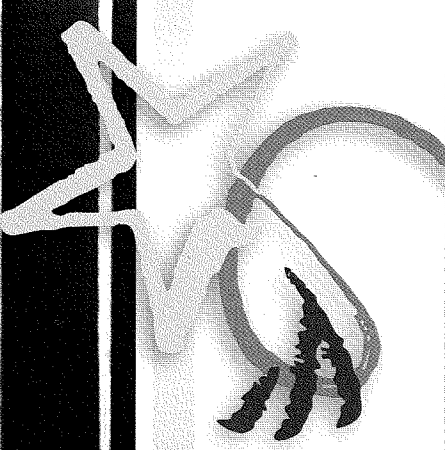




EUROPE III



Finian Farrell, Director of the European Anti-poverty Network (EAPN)

A strong voice fighting against poverty in Europe

EAPN is an independent coalition of NGOs involved in the fight against poverty and social exclusion. EAPN was established in 1990 and has 26 National Networks and 23 European Organisations in its membership. EAPN aims to contribute to developing a Social Europe free of poverty. To do this EAPN provides an information, exchange and lobbying platform for its members and works in alliances with other concerned actors. EAPN coordinates the 2010 NGO Coalition.

EUROPE III – How can the influence of the media be better used to inform public attitudes on issues around poverty?

In the first instance poverty needs to be seen as a denial of fundamental rights and media coverage should reflect the need for decent societies to priorities the fight against poverty and social exclusion. Focusing on solutions that have worked, presenting positive stories about the role of social assistance to lift people from deep poverty could help to transform the image of people who live in poverty in the society. In EAPN we say that 'you can not speak about poverty and remain silent about wealth' therefore we think that a media that really wants to understand poverty and social exclusion in Europe must also be prepared to look at what is happening to wealth and inequalities in our societies

EUROPE III – Do you think that the key to eradicating poverty is through enabling people to work?

With 18 million people in Europe in work and still not earning enough to be lifted above the poverty threshold it is clear that a 'work first' approach will not provide the solution to poverty. However it is clear that quality work or decent work as defined by the ILO, is central to creating societies free of poverty. The way we organise employment and the distribution of the profits that come from jobs, so as to be able to provide security not just for workers but also for children, older people and for people who can not access employment, will determine the

Interview



extent to which enabling people to access employment will also help to eradicate poverty.

EUROPE III – To what extent do you think that education is a solution to preventing poverty?

Primarily, we need to examine the extent to which our key educational systems are helping to create more equal outcomes for all or are reproducing inequalities. Evidence seems to show that investment in early childhood education is key to more equal outcomes and this sort of investment in education could play a major part in addressing poverty. Other aspects of education such as second chance opportunities and recognition of the importance of informal education are also ways in which education could contribute to addressing poverty. However statistics show that investment in life long learning is most likely to be directed at people who have already had high investment in their education. Such prioritisation shows how we need to use instruments such as poverty impact assessment when designing educational policies to try to ensure that education plays a key role in addressing poverty.

EUROPE III – What policies and strategic plans would you like to see being put into place at EU, national and local level in the current recession to prevent an escalation of poverty?

For EAPN it would be about taking more seriously policies that already exist such as the EU Inclusion Strategy (Social OMC) which have at their core National Action Plans for Inclusion. If these policies and strategies which exist for 10 years now had been at the centre of our political considerations then there is evidence to suggest that we would be in a better situation now to deal with the crisis. If we keep the proposed target to fight poverty at the centre of the EU 2020 strategy than may be we will have learned something social from the crisis. In the meantime EAPN places great importance on the adequacy of

2012: A new World Summit to promote sustainable development

In 1992 the United Nations convened the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. It was attended by the largest number of Heads of Government ever before present at a single meeting, and thousands of others – Ministers, officials, business, trade unions, and many other representatives of organised (and disorganised) civil society. The Earth Summit established global principles for sustainable development and the comprehensive Agenda 21 outlining how it should be implemented. It also established the Framework Conventions for Climate Change and for Biodiversity. It inspired action at many different levels throughout the world to implement the sustainable development agenda.

Now the United Nations has decided to convene a new Summit in Rio in 2012, to review progress and to breathe new life into

Editorial



Derek OSBORN (UK), Member of Group III
President of the Sustainable Development Observatory at the EESC
from 2006-2008

the sustainable development agenda throughout the world. Particular attention is to be given to two themes – greening the global economy, and strengthening governance for sustainable development at all levels. As in 1992 there is to be active civil society participation in the new Summit process. The EESC has therefore taken early action by setting up a Study Group to identify the aspirations and potential contribution of organised civil society in Europe and to make an early input to official European Union preparations. Links have been established with the Commission, with the Council, and with some of the key civil society organisation in Brussels; and the Rapporteur is attending the first UN preparatory meeting in New York in May.

It is too early to forecast outcomes of the 2012 process.

Minimum income schemes as essential for people in poverty and as the foundation for building more decent societies.

EUROPE III – How do you see the role of NGOs in tackling poverty in the future?

NGOs play many different roles at many different levels. For EAPN one of the essential roles is to enable people who carry the burden of poverty and social exclusion to be heard in the society. One way forward to help to re-establish trust in our political institutions is to invest in greater participation of all in our societies. Practices such as civil dialogue, forums of people experiencing poverty, participatory budgeting, standard budget mechanisms, show the way forward in this regard. In addition NGOs as service providers and as actors in the social economy will also play a key role to address poverty and social exclusion in the future.

EUROPE III – What impact does the Coalition for the Year on Poverty want to see as a result of the activities during the year and how does it see the momentum of the year being taken forward?

There is a fortunate coming together between the timing of the year and the development of the future EU strategy, Europe 2020. The coalition members will want to see the fight against poverty and social exclusion at the centre of this strategy. The thinking developed over the last years by coalition members should be reflected in the actions under the 'Platform against Poverty' which is proposed as one of the key flagships of the new strategy.



Click here : <http://www.eapn.eu/>
for more information about this network

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But it is already clear that European civil society will have important contributions to make. There are several organisations in Europe that are making key contributions to the global debate on the greening of the world economy and how this can be done in a way which supports the development aspirations of the developing world as well as transforming the economies of the developed world. Similarly there is a wealth of European civil society experience about the governance of sustainable development at all levels, and many excellent examples of progress at local and regional level. EESC and its civil society friends and partners are well placed to make a significant contribution.

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