

Laying the Foundations for a Fairer Europe

Ensuring an adequate Minimum Income for all
EAPN/BAPN Conference, Brussels 24 September 2010
Draft Programme (27.05.10)

An important conference organised by the **European Anti Poverty Network (EAPN)** to contribute to the **2010 European Year against Poverty and Social Exclusion** building consensus towards the need for progress on the guarantee of an adequate minimum income for a dignified life, as a basis for a fairer EU.

This conference is supported by the **Belgian Presidency of the EU** (July to December 2010) and organised with the support of the **European Commission** (PROGRESS) and the **Belgian Ministry**.

Practical Information

Date: Friday 24 September 2010 – 9.00am – 5.30pm

Venue: MCE Conference Centre, Rue de L'Aqueduc 118, Waterleidingstraat, 1050 Brussels

Languages: French, English and Dutch. Whispered translation will be organized amongst EAPN delegations for those who need it

Participants: Approximately 180 participants – consisting of 80 EAPN members (1 representative from each national network, 1 person living on minimum income and EAPN EU NGO members), 20 EAPN members from BAPN, 80 stakeholders from Brussels: social NGOs, social partners, representatives from EU and other national authorities, academics and others concerned with social policies

Preparatory Session: For EAPN members, a ½ day workshop will be organized on the 23rd (from 2.00pm) to prepare together for the main conference

Context

Minimum Income provisions are **social assistance schemes of last resort**, and are therefore a lifeline for the people in greatest poverty. They are a basic human right, underpinned by the Charter of Fundamental Rights and a key pillar of the European Social Model. Minimum Income schemes generally cover people of working age and access to the schemes often requires that the person is actively seeking work. But an adequate income is necessary for people throughout the life cycle, enabling every woman, man and child to lead a dignified life.

EAPN has been running a long-standing campaign on the importance of adequate Minimum Income Schemes, convinced that high quality Minimum Income Schemes are an essential foundation for inclusion and for building fairer societies. (See www.adequateincome.eu). Some important progress has been made in this regard, in the EU.

In June 1992, the European Council issued a recommendation on common criteria concerning sufficient resources and social assistance in social protection systems. This recommendation stimulated positive revisions and developments in Member States' minimum income schemes. In 2008, the Commission adopted a recommendation on Active Inclusion of people excluded from the Labour market which "recognised the individual's basic right to resources and social assistance

sufficient to live a life that is compatible with human dignity”. During 2008/9 important steps have been taken towards implementation, including the EU Social Inclusion Independent Experts synthesis report on minimum income across the EU. This report highlighted that the continuing lack of schemes in 3 Member States (Hungary, Greece and Italy), and confirmed that most minimum income schemes continued to keep people below the poverty line, falling far short of providing an adequate income.

A major issue has also been how adequacy of levels are established. “Make work pay” policies, have too often been used to drive down minimum income levels, below already inadequate minimum wage levels, rather than developing a positive upward hierarchy between minimum income and minimum wages.

The social impact of the crisis has further underlined the importance of minimum income and social protection systems as “automatic stabilisers”, promoting social cohesion as well as preventing and alleviating poverty. However the pressure to reduce public deficits and to comply with the Stability and Growth Pact, is putting pressure on Member States to implement cuts in minimum income levels and to tighten eligibility, with devastating impact on people already or newly living in poverty.

2010 offers key opportunities for progress – as part of a positive legacy for the EU Year against Poverty and Social Exclusion, building on the proposals for a Poverty target and programme in the heart of the Europe 2020 Strategy. During 2010, the European Parliament is also developing an important own initiative report on “minimum income as a tool to fight poverty” in support of these demands.

Aims of the conference

Starting from the experiences of people living on a minimum income, the conference will engage in a timely review of the role of minimum income in promoting a better life for all, and review the progress made, in the context of the European Year against Poverty and Social Exclusion. The aim is to press for concrete proposals which can ensure an adequate minimum income as a lasting legacy from the 2010 year that will directly impact on the lives of the 80 million people in poverty in the EU. Such proposals could include the proposal for a Framework EU directive on Minimum Income which would mark a historic step forward in EU cooperation to achieve a high level of social standards in the EU, in the context of the new Treaty.

Objectives

- 1) Highlight the reality of living on a minimum income for people in poverty and the social and economic impact of ensuring an adequate income.
- 2) Carry out a stocktaking of progress on guaranteeing adequacy and on follow up to the Active Inclusion Recommendation.
- 3) Exchange experiences on positive examples and methods of establishing adequacy, as well as alternative approaches to financing.
- 4) Identify recommendations on how to advance EU cooperation to ensure adequate minimum income, linked to a political declaration for the year and commitments under the Hungarian Presidency.

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8.30 Registration

9.00 Welcome and Opening

- Mr Ludo Horemans, President of EAPN
- Mr Philippe Courard, Minister of Social Affairs, Belgian Government/Belgian Presidency

9.30 Laying a foundation for a fairer EU: the role of adequate Minimum Income

Chair: Mr Hugh Frazer, University of Maynooth

- People in poverty, living on minimum income (BE and HU)
- Governor of Belgian National Bank (tbc)
- Mr Jozef Niemiec, Confederal Secretary, ETUC

10.15 Ensuring an adequate minimum income – What progress in the EU?

- Ms Antonia Carparelli, Head of the Social Inclusion Unit, European Commission
- Mr Eric Marlier, Manager of Independent Experts Group

Debate with audience, whispered translation will be used for some participants

11.00 Coffee and tea break

11.30 6 Parallel Workshops: Overcoming the challenges (continued 2.30-3.30)

The workshops will explore **current key challenges and consider what EU and national policy tools and instruments** can help to make progress on ensuring an adequate income for all in the EU. Each workshop will involve expert input, including views from a person living on minimum income, followed by debate with participants. As the conference will involve people living on minimum income, who may need translation, whispering interpretation will be organized in each workshop.

In the afternoon session: the workshops will agree **1 Key message, 2 concrete recommendations and a question** for the decision-makers panel in the afternoon.

Workshop 1: Moving Forward on EU Social Standards and EU Directive
Workshop 2: What is an adequate income? – The role of participative budgets
Workshop 3: Developing Integrated Adequate Income approaches which guarantee adequate income, access to quality services and jobs
Workshop 4: Ensuring adequate income throughout the life cycle (older people/ children)
Workshop 5: Minimum Income and Minimum Wage – establishing a positive hierarchy
Workshop 6: Financing adequate income – alternative approaches

1.00 – 2.30 Lunch and Information Exchange Market Place

During the lunch break, participants can visit stalls from national networks and talk to participating organizations. A guided tour will be offered in English/French/ Dutch.

2.30 Workshops continue

- Workshop agrees 1 key message/ 2 recommendations and 1 question to pose to final panel

3.30 Coffee and tea break

4.00 Final Plenary: What way forward? How can progress be made?

Chair: Mr Ludo Horemans, President of EAPN

- **Recommendations: EAPN and Independent Experts Report**
- **Feedback from workshops: key messages/recommendations and questions**
- **Round Table Panel Debate with EU decision makers**
 - Minister for Social Affairs, the Belgian Government/Belgian Presidency
 - Representative from the Hungarian Presidency of the EU (tbc)
 - Mr Laszlo Andor, European Commissioner for Employment and Social Affairs
 - Ms Pervenches Bères, Chair of the Employment Committee, European Parliament.(tbc)

Debate with the floor

- **Conclusions: Mr Ludo Horemans, President of EAPN**

5.30 End of Conference