



3 December 2007

To: EU Ministers of Employment and Social Affairs

**Refer: EPSCO Council 5-6 December 2007: Lisbon strategy – for Growth, Jobs and Inclusion.**

Dear Minister

Successive Spring Councils have called for a strengthening of the social dimension of the Lisbon Strategy. The recent European Parliament resolution emphasised the need to enhance the integration of the social dimension in the next round of the Lisbon strategy, and urged the Commission to present updated integrated guidelines for 2008-2010. The conclusions of the sixth Round Table on Social Inclusion held in the Azores called for greater political visibility for social inclusion and that it be given its due “strategic centrality” at the European level. In light of these and other commitments, it is reasonable that the conclusions of your December Council should insist that the Lisbon Strategy for the period 2008-2010 be called the strategy for, **Growth, Jobs and Inclusion**. Such a change in title must also be reflected in the conclusions adopted under all of the relevant items on your agenda:

To strengthen the place of social inclusion in the Lisbon agenda requires a three fold approach. Firstly the **strengthening of the social dimension in the integrated guidelines** (macro, micro and employment). EAPN has previously written to you with proposals in this regard. Secondly a **strengthening of the integration between the Lisbon Strategy, the Open Method of Coordination on Social Protection and Social Inclusion and Structural Funds**. In particular the requirements and processes under the Lisbon strategy must show how the strategy and the structural funds are leading to an eradication of poverty. Thirdly the **Open Method of Coordination on Social Protection and Social Inclusion needs to be reinforced**. EAPN’s report “Light Year: Hard Work” (see link below) provides our suggestions about how to strengthen the social inclusion dimension of this strategy.

The recent Communication from the Commission on “**Active Inclusion**” represents a potentially very important step forward in the fight against poverty and social exclusion. EAPN welcomes the balanced approach to active inclusion presented in this communication. In particular the question of adequate Minimum Income, as part of the proposed integrated package, is of great importance and EAPN will launch a European Campaign on this topic on the 19 December. EAPN urges the Member States to respond positively and to give the necessary attention and focus to the follow up of this communication.

One of the essential elements to make real progress in the social field will be to ensure that Employment policies aim at building an inclusive Labour Market. The **flexicurity approach should integrate clearly the objective of social inclusion**. The European Parliament resolution on Common Principles on Flexicurity calls for the adoption of “a more balanced set of common principles of flexicurity” based on the “creation of quality employment and strengthening the values of the European Social Model”. According to the Employment Committee and Social Protection Committee joint opinion, “flexicurity approaches should also help fight against discrimination, poverty and social exclusion”. EAPN urges the Member States to adopt Flexicurity common principles reflecting this ambition, notably through referring to the need of a strong social protection in a situation where flexibility is already a reality. EAPN has already proposed rewording of the common principles (see link below).

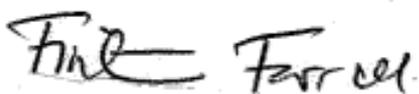
The recently released internal market review package raises some useful proposals to strengthen consumer rights and to present a social vision related to the social stocktaking, however it does little to answer the main concerns, raised by our members, concerning their negative experience of the impact of liberalisation on vital services of general interest, in terms of affordability, access, sustainability and quality. EAPN urges member states to state explicitly that the market alone cannot deliver the EU social and sustainable development model, and to urgently promote an **independent impact assessment and horizontal evaluation on the real impact of liberalisation on vital services of general interest**. EAPN welcomes the clarifications offered on Services of General Interest and Social Services, particularly in relation to public procurement and state aids, however this cannot be viewed as a substitute for a horizontal framework on SGI and SSGI which should affirm the predominance of the 'general interest' over the interests of the market and provide real legal certainty to providers and users.

The link between exclusion and discrimination is experienced daily by many of the people experiencing poverty. EAPN welcomes the progress made during the European Year of Equal Opportunities, in terms of awareness raising and understanding of the issues in relation to addressing discrimination. EAPN urges the Member States to support the Commission and European Parliament proposals and the conclusions from the recent closing event of the European Year in Lisbon, to bring forward in 2008 **an enhanced European legislation protecting people against discrimination on all grounds and in all areas of life**. EAPN also welcomes the joint discussion between Employment and Social Affairs Ministers and Justice and Home Affairs ministers on the migration. EAPN hopes that such a debate will lead to the creation of a positive narrative in relation to migration, to replace the existing narrative which is dominated by negative messages with resulting devastating effect for migrants in Europe as well as for ethnic minorities who are often caught up in this negative discourse.

An **active governance process** involving all stakeholders, including people experiencing poverty and social exclusion and organisations representing their interests, is necessary to effectively deliver the inclusion agenda. Such a governance process needs to be reflected in the Lisbon and OMC processes and it is essential that such an active governance process is specifically recommended for the follow up of the flexicurity approach.

We hope that you will take on board our considerations.

Yours faithfully,



Fintan Farrell  
Director

Cc: Commissioner Spidla, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities  
Mr Jan Andersson, President of the Employment and Social Affairs Committee in the European Parliament  
Ms Elise Willame, President of the Social Protection Committee  
Mr Emilio Gabaglio, President of the Employment Committee

- [EAPN progress report on the implementation of the Strategic Reports on Social Protection and Social Inclusion \(2006-2008\) - Light Year Hard Work!](#)
- EAPN letter on Flexicurity Principles: [EAPN letter to EU Ministers of Employment and Social Affairs, 1 October 2007](#)