

Cypriots less poor but migrants still in dire straits

By Jacqueline Theodoulou

A FOREIGN FAMILY with a two-year-old child have been living in a container outside a factory in Nicosia.

The shocking revelation was made by the European Anti-poverty Network (EAPN) in Cyprus yesterday, which announced that there had been a 0.2 per cent reduction in Cypriots living on the verge of poverty, in contrast to most other European countries where the levels are rising.

Speaking on behalf of one of the Network's member organisations, the Cyprus Coordinating Committee for the Protection and Welfare of Children, Ninetta Kazantzi explained that these figures did not include foreigners living on the island, such as refugees, political asylum seekers and financial migrants.

These people, said Kazantzi, have a number of other problems to deal with, on top of poverty, such as racism, isolation and exclusion – a matter that was recently raised at a European level in a meeting between anti-poverty organisations in Brussels.

According to Kazantzi, the gathering was shown a clip of photos of a foreign family in Cyprus, with a child under the age of two, living in a container outside a factory in Nicosia, with a water tank on top of it but no water taps. There was also an electrical generator installed by the father, though this provided no heating or cooling system.

But generally, Kazantzi said unemployment and poverty levels in Cyprus are relatively good compared to other European countries.

She explained that Cyprus had managed to reduce the percentage of its population that was living on the verge of poverty by 0.2 per cent – from 16 per cent to 15.8 per cent.

"The majority of these people are pensioners, with a percentage of 52 per cent," said Kazantzi. Child poverty is also around 16 per cent, she added.

Housing problems are not as intense in Cyprus as there are a large number of Cypriots who own their own homes.

But Kazantzi pointed out, "There is a problem with the housing estates due to the fact that many units have not been repaired properly. There is also the problem of living conditions for foreign workers, which should be monitored more successfully".

The Network has launched two anti-poverty campaigns, the first one distributing EAPN's 10 demands towards candidate MEPs for the new European Parliament (EP).

"The Cypriot Network has already held meetings with all candidate MEPs from all parties and has given the 10 demands," said Kazantzi.

The demands involve fighting poverty in the policies and practices used to deal with people living in poverty that are passed by the EP.

The second campaign is to secure an increase of the minimum wage.

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