

A shared message from social NGOs across Europe

2010 BUILDING A
EUROPE FOR ALL
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2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion

2010 has been designated as the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. The Year comes during a time of severe financial, economic and social crisis. Part of the necessary response to this crisis is the renewal of a common vision for the type of society we want to create. A commitment to building a Europe where women and men of all ages can live free of poverty and social exclusion, should be the legacy of the 2010 Year. This would contribute to a real recovery plan to address the current crisis.

Poverty and social exclusion are ...

...*"having your human rights trampled on"*

...*"days without bread are the longest days"*

...*"stealing our future by keeping us out of touch with the knowledge-based society"*

"working full-time, but not earning enough to make a decent living"

... *"what really wears homeless people out is time. Always waiting, always being on the go..."*

...*"being paid regularly, but my debts still mounting up anyway"*

"hard to talk about, but when I did start to talk to others I felt no different from them and I wasn't embarrassed"

...*"waking up in bad housing conditions which saps the will to do anything"*

"I am old and live alone. I am sick. I am afraid of loneliness ... I cry a lot but try to look calm and collected when I go out"

...*"constant pressure. It wears you down. Nobody prepared me for living in such harsh conditions"*

... *"every agency wanting the same papers. And more photocopies every time."*

"I am undocumented, so for you I don't exist"

... *"my children will inherit my poverty"*

(Voices of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion in Europe)

Poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon

It is not simply the lack of financial resources and income, whether through employment or social benefits. It also encompasses the notion of **vulnerability, precariousness, lack of opportunities, injustice and denial of rights**, such as access to education and health, housing, employment, services and infrastructure, as well as access to information, culture and political participation.

Against the backdrop of the worldwide financial and economic crisis, NGOs are concerned that the current **EU strategy of 'growth and jobs' and market liberalisation, without attention to fairness, inclusion, participation and re-distribution, has failed to deliver a social Europe, where everyone has access to fundamental rights.**

2010, the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion, represents an opportunity to make policy changes that will have a real impact on fighting inequalities and create a Europe free of poverty in the long term. **We therefore call for a wide mobilisation at local, national, and European level.**

Poverty is a daily reality for millions of people across the European Union:

16% of the EU population are at risk of poverty, i.e. about **79 million people**.

There has been **no significant decrease** of people at risk of poverty since 2000 (15% of the EU population in 2001 in 15 Member States), whilst prior to the crisis there had already been increases in 5 Member States. Fighting poverty and social exclusion must take into account the gender dimension.

30 million people are undernourished in the European Union (European experts Congress on Nutrition, Aug. 09)

Having a **job does not always protect people** from the risk of poverty. In 2007, 8% of EU-27 citizens in employment (aged 18 and over) lived below the poverty threshold; this means about **19 million working poor**.

In 2007 the income of the richest 20% in the EU was nearly 5 times higher than the income of the poorest 20%.

4% (more than 19 million people) living in Europe lack an indoor flushing toilet for sole use of the household.

18% of people in Europe live in housing that has significant problems with damp.

64% of EU citizens believe that more decision making should take place at European level to protect social rights (Eurobarometer Sept. 2009).

(Unless indicated otherwise, all statistics are from Eurostat)

Ending Poverty and Social Exclusion across Europe means

Access to rights and dignity for all

It is time once and for all to break the stereotypes in relation to people experiencing poverty: there are no 'deserving' or 'undeserving' poor. The economic crisis and changes in social protection systems have left more and more people exposed to poverty and insecurity resulting in the reality that poverty can no longer be seen as something distant and remote. Social rights, to health, housing, education, culture and income, are fundamental rights which must be available to all, irrespective of age, gender or legal status. The cycle of intergenerational transmission of poverty must be broken. Principles of solidarity, equality between women and men, equal opportunities for all and non-discrimination must shape policies aimed at ending poverty and social exclusion.

An economy at the service of people and public interest

Europe's economic systems must be redesigned to safeguard people from poverty and social exclusion. Increased public investment and a fairer redistribution of resources and wealth must regain a central place in designing both economic and social policies. Social economy, linking economic activities with the realisation of social goals such as access to health care, decent employment and affordable housing, should be promoted, not only to respond to new needs in the community but also as source of employment, in particular for vulnerable persons and disadvantaged groups.

Mobilising all policies

Poverty has both structural and personal causes, and is generated and perpetuated every day through inadequate policies and lack of political commitment. Poverty cannot be accepted as part of society's structure. It is time to rethink the system – to put into place policies where solidarity, social rights and the public good comes first. Building a poverty-free Europe requires that all policies – social, economic, employment, health, education, cultural, housing... - are mobilised and co-ordinated at all levels and implemented in a mutually reinforcing manner.

Guaranteeing universal services and providing necessary targeted measures

Accessible universal services for all are essential foundations for redressing the inequalities leading to poverty and social exclusion. In addition, specific measures are necessary, recognising that people facing extreme forms of poverty and social exclusion are particularly vulnerable and that their fundamental rights are extensively violated.

Participation and commitment

Participation and commitment of everyone is central to building inclusive societies. Strong and well functioning representative democratic institutions are

essential to ensure the defence of the public interest. Transparency and accountability in policy-making are needed to foster trust in our democratic processes. Participatory democracy is necessary and must ensure that the voices of people experiencing the poverty and social exclusion are heard and acted upon. The engagement of individuals through voluntary activities should be recognised and promoted. Particular efforts are needed to empower people experiencing poverty and social exclusion to actively engage in their communities.

Solidarity across the globe

The European dimension of the fight against poverty and social exclusion cannot be dissociated from global challenges linked to demographic change, migration, climate change, and decent work. The structural causes generating poverty are linked, and increased solidarity between the different struggles to end poverty across the globe is needed. The EU needs to strengthen its role as a global actor for trade justice, debt cancellation, poverty eradication and the effective application of decent work standards for everyone.

**2010 must show that there is a strong political commitment to build a Social Europe and End Poverty
We need Political Action now!**

The EY 2010 END POVERTY NGO coalition is coordinated by EAPN, the European Anti Poverty Network

It includes: the **National Networks of EAPN**, **AFEM** (Association des Femmes de l'Europe Méridionale), **AGE** (European Older People's Platform), **ATD Quart Monde**, **Autism Europe**, **Caritas Europa**, **CEBSD** (Combined European Bureau for Social Development), **CECODHAS** (European Liaison Committee for Social Housing), **CECOP** (European Federation of workers' cooperatives, social cooperatives and social enterprises), **CEV** (European Volunteer Centre), **COFACE** (Confederation of Family organisations in the EU), **Eurodiaconia**, **EAEA** (European Association for the Education of Adults), **EASPD** (European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities), **EBU** (European Blind Union), **EDF** (European Disability Forum), **EFSC** (European Foundation for Street Children), **ENAR** (European Network Against Racism), **EPHA** (European Public Health Alliance), **EPPF** (International Planned Parenthood Federation European Network), **EPR** (European Platform for Rehabilitation), **ERIO** (European Roma Information Office), **ESAN** (European Social Action Network), **EURAG** (European Federation of Older Persons), **Eurochild**, **European Social Platform**, **EWL** (European Women's Lobby), **FAI** (International Federation of Associations of Christian Associations of Italian workers), **FEANTSA** (European Federation of Organisations working with the Homeless), **FEFAF** (European Federation of Unpaid Carers at Home), **ICSW** (International Council for Social Welfare), **IJJO** (International Juvenile Justice Observatory), **ILGA Europe** (International Lesbian and Gay Association Europe), **Inclusion Europe**, **MHE** (Mental Health Europe), **Red Cross EU Office**, **SMES-Europa** (Mental Health Social Exclusion Europa), **SOLIDAR**, **Workability Europe** and **Yes Forum** (Youth and European Social Work), **YFJ** (European Youth Forum).

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Social NGOs call for

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An awareness-raising campaign on the structural causes of poverty and social exclusion

Launch a high-profile awareness-raising campaign on the structural causes and consequences of poverty and social exclusion as well as the causes and social impact of the current crisis. This campaign should highlight the growing gap between rich and poor and the role of the State in regulating the creation of wealth and redistributing its benefits towards the universal realisation of economic and social rights.

Enhanced dialogue with people in poverty and anti poverty NGOs

People in poverty, and the organisations that support them, are essential parts of finding long-term solutions to poverty. EU and National Guidelines must be developed and implemented to foster their participation and active involvement in governance. Financial investment at all levels, local, national and European is needed to support the implementation of the guidelines and to ensure the resourced and active participation of anti poverty NGOs as equal partners in decision-making processes at all levels.

A strong political legacy from 2010

A new overarching social and sustainable EU strategy, based on fundamental rights, which puts people and planet first and makes progress on eradicating poverty and inequality a pre-requisite in the development of all EU policies.

A special European Council on Poverty and Social Exclusion, with a declaration by Heads of States and Governments which asserts the fight against poverty and social exclusion as a key priority for the EU agenda. This declaration should lead to a revitalised EU Social Inclusion Strategy (as part of the Social Open Method of Coordination) which engages all stakeholders and ensures progress on agreed national and EU poverty targets. The declaration should commit to tangible steps forward on guaranteeing access for all to decent work and affordable, quality universal services – a decent home, affordable heating, education, health and long-term care, adequate minimum income, training and employment services....

Real progress on the adequacy of Minimum Income Schemes, so as to be capable of lifting every child, adult and older person out of poverty and delivering on their right to a dignified life. The agreement of a common EU definition of adequacy and of common methods to establish adequacy as well as regular updating in line with the cost of living, should inform an EU Framework Directive on Minimum Income which would mark a historic breakthrough in EU cooperation to achieve higher level social standards.

A commitment to ending street homelessness, building on the European Parliament's written declaration and the development of a European framework definition of homelessness to enable the gathering of comparable and reliable data and to provide annual updates on action taken and progress made in EU Member States towards ending homelessness.

Funding to underpin EU Commitments to fight poverty and social exclusion

An EU poverty programme: a new programme should build on the social inclusion section of the existing EU programme (PROGRESS) and provide additional support for activities within Member States to enable national level stakeholders to engage with the EU strategies and to support exchange of knowledge and learning through national and local level 'demonstration projects' in the fight against poverty and social exclusion. This programme should allocate sufficient funds to support the participation of people experiencing poverty in policy making and for the capacity building of their organisations. New commitments to ensure that **EU Structural Funds deliver on the fight against poverty and social exclusion.**