



Brussels, 15 June 2009

**Reference:** European Council 18 and 19 June.

To: EU Prime Ministers and Heads of State

Dear Prime Minister,

On the 11-13 June, EAPN held its **20th General Assembly in Vienna**, involving over 200 members, against the backdrop of the financial, economic and social crisis and the European Parliamentary Elections. The GA final declaration stressed that the EU must recognize the failure of the current *"Growth and Jobs strategy and market liberalisation to protect and develop a social Europe"* even before the crisis - failing to reduce poverty and social exclusion despite the pledge made in 2000. They underline that *"the record low turn outs in the European Parliamentary elections only highlight decreasing engagement and participation of citizens in the European project whilst the advancement of extremist/racist and anti-European parties are deeply worrying"*. EAPN delegates underlined the **need for the EU to prove its relevance, and its capacity to contribute to the realisation of a fairer, more inclusive, anti-racist society as a matter of urgency**. We wish to see this reflected in both the short term responses to the crisis and the long-term vision and strategy for post 2010.

#### **Build on the Employment measures and act on full Social Impact**

The June European Council's agenda is primarily focussed on furthering proposals to deal with the current crisis. Whilst many of the Commission's proposals on an EU framework for better financial regulation, and defending employment are welcomed, EAPN is surprised that no discussion is being had on the broader social impact for people who are already poor, trapped in low-paid precarious jobs, or excluded from the labour market, or on ways to stop the increasing racist and discriminatory attacks on migrants and ethnic minorities including Roma. Such an analysis would build on the important review carried out by the Social Protection Committee and include action to counter the negative impact on specific groups who are being scape-goated in the crisis; on those in low-paid and precarious jobs, trapped in cycles of indebtedness, or threatened with homelessness and housing exclusion, as well as the impact on the financing and provision of essential social and other services. **EAPN calls for an urgent Summit on the full social impact of the crisis involving all stakeholders.**

#### **Action not just words on Active Inclusion**

A principle focus of the Council will be the Commission's Communication "Shared Agenda for Employment". Whilst EAPN welcomes the explicit reference to the Commission's Recommendation on Active Inclusion: promoting integrated approaches to support those excluded from the labour market, underlining the importance of adequate income support for a dignified life, we regret the lack of any specific recommendations for action. The EPSCO Council Conclusions *"underscored the crucial importance of social security systems in mitigating the impact of the crisis,"* with some delegates calling for a strengthening of the security aspects of flexicurity. EAPN therefore calls on EU leaders to **make specific recommendations on an Active Inclusion action plan to implement integrated approaches at national level**, including a strengthening of adequate income, social security and protection measures.

### **Building a new post 2010 vision which learns from the crisis**

But short-term solutions to the crisis will not be enough to stem the rising employment and social crisis and the growing credibility gap facing the EU. This is the moment to make transformative policy changes that can have a real impact on growing inequalities and poverty and to create an EU where the aspirations of Article 2 of the Lisbon Treaty are made a reality: *“The Union shall combat social exclusion and discrimination, and shall promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of the child. It shall promote economic, social and territorial cohesion and solidarity among Member States”*. **EAPN calls for a new EU vision and post 2010 Strategy** which can ensure effective access to rights and dignity for all, deliver an economy at the service of people and public interest, promoting the mobilisation and participation of all, as well as solidarity with the global struggles against poverty and social exclusion.

### **A genuine stakeholder debate on a post 2010 social and sustainable strategy**

The response to the crisis must not be allowed to wholly dictate the post 2010 strategy. We want a genuine, face to face stakeholder discussion which can openly analyse the weaknesses of the current model and strategy and build on short-term solutions towards a viable social and sustainable vision for an EU we can trust. Only in this way can ordinary people and grass-roots organizations recuperate their faith in the EU project. EAPN has developed its own proposals to contribute to this debate, based on discussion with its members over the last year. We provide a summary and attach the full paper. We would urge EU leaders to consider our proposals and to develop this debate actively with all stakeholders to arrive together with a post 2010 strategy capable of engaging people once more in the EU.

#### **EAPN Proposals: A new vision: AN EU WE CAN TRUST:**

- to put people and planet, before profit.
- to put the economy at the service of social and sustainable development.
- to recognize the fight against poverty, inequality and social exclusion and the defense of fundamental rights, as a priority challenge and pre-requisite for progress (at EU and global level).

#### **1. A new social and sustainable post 2010 EU strategy which makes progress on poverty and inequality a pre-requisite.**

- Make the implementation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights, the Millennium Development Goals and the reduction of the poverty and inequality (in the EU and globally), a pre-requisite for progress post 2010.
- Establish new overarching objectives prioritizing social cohesion and the defense of fundamental rights, delivered through a balanced architecture (economic, employment, environmental and social), which strengthens and reinforces the role of the EU Social Protection (pensions, health and long-term care) and Social Inclusion Strategies.
- Develop more effective tools to ensure implementation, including EU and national targets on poverty and exclusion, homelessness etc, new multiple indicators to measure progress beyond GDP, and effective use of EU Budgets including Structural Funds to deliver social inclusion.
- Make a commitment to avoid any sort of *social dumping* in order to gain competitiveness in the global economy. Labour rights social welfare standards and progressive taxation systems should be protected and extended.

#### **2. A Social Pact – Delivering on Rights and Solidarity which:**

- Challenges the causes of poverty by reducing inequality and achieving a fairer share of wealth.
- Transforms social protection into a springboard: Guaranteeing adequate income, universal social security systems and access to quality social services.
- Creates a pathway to inclusion: Making an integrated Active Inclusion approach a reality.

- Defends quality employment and creates new jobs for new needs: Investing in quality social/green jobs and social economy.
- Challenges discrimination and promotes diversity.
- Promotes global social justice and equity.


### **3. Building a dynamic partnership for change**

- Implementing participative and effective governance involving people experiencing poverty and NGOs, at all levels and stages of the EU policy cycle, through an effective civil dialogue.
- Ensure financial and other support to NGO's, guaranteeing their independence as key agents facilitating the empowerment of people experiencing poverty, and as service providers.

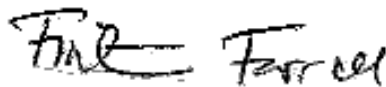
We hope you will take the opportunity of the June Summit to reflect on the lessons from the crisis and the European Parliamentary elections and plan how to actively promote broad stakeholder debate including people experiencing poverty and the NGOs that support them, on how to deliver a more social and sustainable Europe – an EU we can trust!

We hope you will take on board our key messages in your debate, and welcome any opportunity to enter into dialogue on any of these questions.

Yours faithfully,



Ludo Horemans  
President



Fintan Farrell  
Director

Fintan Farrell

cc

Mr Barroso, Current President, European Commission,

Mr Spidla, current Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Gender Equality

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