



## Key demands for the next European Parliament:

**Delivering Social Cohesion and closing the gap on Poverty and Inequality must be an absolute priority for the EU!**

### *Failure of the current EU approach*

As a result of the dominance of competitive and neo liberal policies the EU is currently facing the worst financial, economic, social and political crisis since the 1930's. The inescapable consequence is increasing poverty and social exclusion: workers losing their jobs, people on low-incomes losing their homes or unable to afford housing. Those who do not have jobs finding themselves further from the labour market, while families are driven further into debt and people on the poverty line are threatened with reduced or frozen social benefits. In response to this crisis EU Governments are financing astronomical bail out packages to financial institutions. **But at what cost and will this investment of billions address the needs of the people living in the EU?**

The current financial and economic model, which has been supported by the EU's Lisbon strategy, is based on the priority of the markets over social rights and environmental concerns. Too often this model has exacerbated the position of the poor and undermined social commitments by prioritising "growth and jobs" at any price. It has failed to put the 'public good' at the heart of EU actions. The EU has prioritised liberalisation and defence of largely unregulated markets, at the expense of strategies that promote equity, social justice and the reduction of poverty and inequality within the EU and globally.

### *EAPN calls for a fresh start*

The new European Parliament, being chosen as the voice of all Europeans, will have the huge responsibility of preparing and implementing the global EU strategy to replace the existing Lisbon strategy. In doing this the Parliament must respond to the needs of the citizens and respond to the current crisis and the response cannot be just more of the same!

Globalisation, climate change, economic recovery and demographic change, are currently recognised as the key challenges for the EU. With 78 million people in the EU facing poverty, with growing inequalities within and outside the EU, there is a growing sense of precarity and anxiety among large sections of the population. The EU must take urgent action to address these very real fears and anxieties. **Social Cohesion including the fight against poverty and inequality and a fairer distribution of wealth within and outside the EU must be seen as one of the principal challenges to be addressed by the EU.** The EU must become the **promoter of social and**

**sustainable development** and the European Parliament must be at the fore front of delivering this change.

Members of the European Parliament must play a vital role as a bridge between EU institutions and their constituents. EAPN calls on all candidates for the European Parliament elections to respond to our 10 demands. At national and EU level we will watch attentively campaign statements and make our views heard.

**10 demands**  
**to put the fight against poverty at the heart of the EU Agenda**

**1) Make Social Cohesion and the fight against poverty and inequality in the EU and the promotion of global equity a named EU priority** and a specific pillar of an integrated post 2010 social and sustainable Lisbon Strategy. The focus of the economic recovery package should contribute to this priority.

**2) Set and monitor EU and national levels targets for poverty and inequality reduction** as part of a **highly visible EU strategy against poverty**. This strategy should include specific measures to address extreme forms of poverty as well as addressing relative poverty so as to ensure a more equitable society. The strategy should be supported by a reinforced Open Method of Coordination on social inclusion and social protection and the follow up of the Commission Recommendation on Active Inclusion.

**3) Set benchmarks for active governance in decision-making processes at EU and Member State levels**, ensuring the participation of anti-poverty NGO's including people experiencing poverty in the development, implementation and evaluation of all policies that impact on poverty and social exclusion.

**4) Make progress on developing an EU framework to defend high level social standards and to guarantee a dignified life for all.** A framework directive on adequate minimum income schemes as a follow up to the Commission Recommendation on Active Inclusion would be an important step in creating such a framework.

**5) Ensure access for all to affordable quality services**, including social, educational, child care and health services, and housing, transportation, energy and water services. The specific characteristics of these services of general interest should be respected by EU law and an assessment of the impact of the privatisation and liberalisation of these services on social cohesion, poverty and inequality should be undertaken.

**6) Put the commitment to 'Decent and Quality Work' back at the centre of the European Employment Strategy**, through analysing the causes of the rise in 'working poor' as well as the benefits of adequate living wages as a necessary base for sustainable growth. To foster the

creation of "green and social jobs" that could combat climate change, address market failures, support economic recovery and give stable and quality work to many.

**7) Support social economy and inclusive entrepreneurship** as vital sources of inclusive job creation and concrete support for those furthest from the labour market. Ensure this is reflected in EU employment policies and as a specific objective of EU Structural Funds spending.

**8) Strengthen EU anti-discrimination legislation** including the fight against discrimination based on social origin and develop better systems for the enforcement of existing legislation and the promotion of pro-active policies and measures to address all forms of discrimination.

**9) Mainstream the fight against poverty across all policies** through effective and participative social impact assessments, which ensure the engagement of stakeholders. An impact assessment on tax policies with regards to wealth accumulation, distribution and inequality should be a priority. The development of an indicator of societal progress that reflects social and environmental well-being and that goes beyond progress measured by GDP would be an important tool to enable citizens to be aware of whether real progress is being made.

**10) 2010 has been declared the EU Year against Poverty and Social Exclusion: MEPs can play a positive role as ambassadors for the year**, in doing so they can help to ensure that the fight against poverty and social exclusion is given a high profile in the first year of the life of the renewed European institutions.