

## **European Conference on Minimum Income and Social Standards**

The European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) is organising a major conference in connection with the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion, 2010. The aim of the conference is to achieve consensus around the need for progress on guaranteeing an adequate minimum income for all, which is necessary in order to lead a dignified life. An adequate minimum income as the basis for a fair EU. The conference will be supported by the Belgian Presidency of the EU (July to December 2010) and organised by the European Commission (PROGRESS programme) and the Belgian Ministry.

The provision of a minimum income is a social security measure of last resort, and therefore represents the rescue of people living in severe poverty. The benefit in the form of a minimum income is often targeted at people who are in the category of working age people, and access to this benefit is often dependent on the condition that the person in question is actively looking for work. Having a minimum income is a basic right, a human right, backed up by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

EAPN has had a campaign on the importance of an adequate minimum income for some time, based on the conviction that high qualitative minimum incomes are essential when it comes to inclusion and building a fair Europe.

In June 1992, the European Council produced a recommendation concerning social criteria in relation to adequate funds and social assistance in social protection systems.

The recommendation stimulated the revision and further development of the legislation on minimum income in the Member States. In 2008 the Commission adopted a recommendation On the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market which recognises that individuals have a basic right to resources and social assistance that enables them to live with human dignity.

During 2008-2009 important steps were taken towards implanting this, including the submission of an independent expert report into EU social inclusion that highlighted the fact that, as well as the lack of legislation concerning a minimum income in three Member States, most minimum income legislation actually still kept people below the poverty line and therefore fell far short of providing an adequate income. In 2010 the European Parliament is producing an own-initiative report on "minimum income as a means to combat poverty". Will it be enough, however?

Based on the experiences of people who have to survive on a minimum income, the conference will take a look at what actions have been taken, over time, to follow up on these recommendations, it will look for available alternatives and, in the context of the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion, it will press for proposals that ensure a lasting legacy, proposals that have to have a direct impact on the lives of millions of Europeans. These proposals may include the idea of bringing forward a European directive on minimum income. That would be a historic step forwards in EU collaboration in achieving a high level of social standards within the EU, and this in the context of the new Treaty.

### Practical information

Preparatory session: a half-day of workshops will be organised for the EAPN members on the 23rd (from 2 pm) in order to prepare the conference together.

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Participants: Around 180 participants – consisting of approximately 80 EAPN members (1 delegate + 1 person in poverty from each national network plus EU NGO members of the EAPN), 20 EAPN members of the BAPN, 80 stakeholders from Brussels: social NGOs, social partners, representatives of the EU and other national bodies, academics and others involved in social policy.

[Video report](#) about the 8th European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty and Social Exclusion (in French)