



JOINT PRESS RELEASE

Poverty Reduction Target needs to be backed by EU Funds

NGOs urge Member States to respect their commitments

Brussels, 15 May 2012 – Today, 14 social NGOs are launching their campaign *EU Money for Poverty Reduction NOW!* to urge Member States to respect their commitments to reduce poverty by ensuring that the necessary EU Funds are allocated for social inclusion and fighting poverty.

In October 2011, the European Commission proposed the draft regulation for the next Round of Cohesion Policy. In its proposal, a minimum share of 25% of the Cohesion policy budget is devoted to the European Social Fund (ESF) and at least 20% of the ESF is earmarked for social inclusion and fighting poverty. This was widely welcomed by Social NGOs as a concrete proposal to give credence to the poverty reduction target agreed by EU leaders as an integral part of the Europe 2020 Strategy. Incredibly, 26 out of 27 Member States seem ready to reject this proposal.

The Campaign *EU Money for Poverty Reduction NOW!* launched by the Social NGOs seeks to secure:

- The allocation of at least 25% of the Cohesion Policy budget to the European Social Fund (ESF);
- The earmarking of at least 20% of the ESF to social inclusion and poverty reduction.

Alongside initiatives at EU and national levels carried out by the NGOs involved, **this campaign aims at gathering as much support as possible through the petition:**

http://www.avaaz.org/en/petition/EU_Money_for_Poverty_Reduction_NOW_1/

This campaign is coordinated by the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) together with its members FEANTSA, Caritas Europa, ENAR, Eurochild, Eurodiaconia, AGE Platform, as well as the Social Platform, SOLIDAR, the European Women's Lobby, the European Disability Forum, EASPD, ICSW Europe, Workability Europe and ISFW Europe.

Quotes from NGOs involved in the campaign:

Fintan Farrell, Director of EAPN: *"It is incredible that Member States seem set to block a proposal that would show that the EU is there to support people who experience poverty and social exclusion. 'Social investment' and 'poverty reduction targets' must transform from being nice ideas into concrete actions such as a stronger European Social Fund clearly committed to fighting poverty and social exclusion."*

Heather Roy, Vice-President of Social Platform: *"If Member States want to keep to their word and lift 20 million people out of poverty by 2020, we need the allocation of 20% of the ESF budget to social inclusion and combating poverty as one of the tools to effectively deliver on this target. We therefore strongly oppose any reduction of this percentage."*

Jorge Nuño Mayer, Secretary General of Caritas Europa: *"The economic crisis hits particularly the most vulnerable. Social cohesion and fighting poverty cannot be efficient without the participation of*

the social NGOs and without adequate financial means. We need the decisive contribution of the structural funds and the ESF particularly!"

Dr. Chibo Onyeji, ENAR Chair: *"Ethnic minorities and migrants are disproportionately affected by poverty due to the additional barrier of discrimination. EU Member States can show their commitment to reducing poverty in Europe by 2020 by making sure the European Social Fund allocates sufficient resources to social inclusion measures - in particular for vulnerable groups."*

Jana Hainsworth, Eurochild Secretary General: *"Children cannot wait until economic recovery for investment. Family support and quality children services are needed now to ensure all children grow up happy, healthy and confident - otherwise our future looks very bleak."*

Conny Reuter, SOLIDAR Secretary General: *"Combating poverty is not a cost, but an investment."*

Luk Zelderloo, Secretary General of EASPD: *"The structural funds are crucial instruments to promote more inclusive communities and a more cohesive society in Europe. The European Commission, European Parliament and Member States should adopt a clear and strong legal framework facilitating this key role of the structural funds. Poverty and exclusion should be tackled."*

Anke Seidler, Director Workability Europe: *"In the current funding period, people with disabilities benefitted from the ESF through projects where they were able to improve their skills and employability. This is clearly the best way to enhance their inclusion in the main stream labour market and thus protect them against social exclusion and poverty."*

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More information on the campaign and background information can be found on EAPN's website:

www.eapn.eu

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