



Comité européen des associations d'intérêt général
European Council of Associations of General Interest

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CEDAG Position Paper:

“European Year 2010 against Poverty and Social Exclusion”

In the framework of the European Year against Poverty and Social Exclusion in 2010, CEDAG is committed to support a number of actions implemented by its member organisations and by other NGOs working on the issues of poverty.

It is true that a lot of civil society organisations, public institutions and other bodies have started to run campaigns and activities aiming at encouraging more action and political decisions in order to reduce poverty and social exclusion in the EU. CEDAG welcomes very much these initiatives but would like to highlight the fact that the implemented actions need to be sustainable and must be run continuously and under both short and long-term perspectives until the EU reaches concrete and real results of poverty and social exclusion reduction and ideally their eradication.

According to a Eurobarometer survey on poverty and social exclusion run in 2009 “Nearly 80 million people in the EU, or 16% of its total population, live below the poverty line”. This figure is alarming and is compounded by the regional disparities still existing between the EU Member States and inside them, pointing to the lack of social cohesion.

In fact, if the Northern European countries, such as Sweden, Finland and Denmark reveal rather positive social realities with relatively low poverty rates and good social protection systems, other countries, especially those which have entered the EU more recently, are facing very serious social and economic problems.

In addition to this, the following realities need to be seriously taken into account and must be solved:

- The access to Services of General Interest, and especially to Social Services of General Interest such as health care, social protection, affordable social housing and education is still limited to a portion of the population
- The costs of basic Services of General Interest are often too high to be affordable for families whose household incomes are too low;
- The individual fundamental rights, especially those of the most vulnerable people, are too often infringed and discrimination is one of the phenomena which engenders social exclusion;



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- Access to the employment market seems to be more and more reserved to highly qualified profiles, the most traditional and manufactured sectors being almost completely saturated; but having access to the labour market is not sufficient. Honest salaries and good working conditions must be provided as well. As the coalition of European NGO networks for the fight against poverty¹ clarified *"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"*;
- Education and professional training often don't ensure equal opportunities for poor people and are very often too expensive so that the poorer cannot afford the access to university degrees; moreover, scholarships are not given in every country neither to the same number of students nor at the same amounts.

As a result of these problems, CEDAG would like to call the European leaders and the national and regional governments to take clear political decisions as regards the eradication of poverty and social exclusion by setting concrete objectives and ways of achieving it by means of social inclusion policies, sustainable social protection systems and the recognition of the social economy sector as comprising competent social services providers which need to be addressed the necessary support to best carry out their responsibilities to help the European citizens to deal with their various daily problems.

The principle of solidarity should not only be a concept, but should be put into practice. It inter alia includes ensuring people who are in contact with service users have good social skills and the ability to treat people experiencing social and economic difficulties in a professional but also human way.

It is not enough to recognise rights; these rights must be effective.

Therefore, providing an enabling environment for the care sector should be a priority for the coming years.

In the light of the previous Lisbon Strategy failure in achieving the goals it had set in 2000 and the weakening of the Open Method of Coordination, CEDAG and its members would like to see in the new 2020 strategy, a real commitment from the European governments and Institutions in fighting poverty by adopting inclusive policies rather than adopting a *"big declarations and few actions"* approach.

¹ <http://endpoverty.eu/-About-the-COALITION-.html>



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In this sense, CEDAG hopes to observe the completion of the targets² adopted by the European Commission and presented in the report *"Europe 2020 – A European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth"*³, especially under the headline *"Reduce the number of Europeans living below national poverty lines by 25%, lifting 20 million people out of poverty"*. The proposals represent some relevant progress in comparison with the previous Lisbon Strategy.

However, the risk is to remain on the stage of a mere vision without Member-States real commitment in operating the necessary reforms for empowering social inclusion and social cohesion.

In order to achieve positive results, CEDAG proposes to the European institutions and to the national, regional and local governments, to regularly establish dialogue with the civil society organisations and to adopt measures proposed by their representatives which have the knowledge and the expertise in dealing with the treated topics.

Moreover, CEDAG widely supports the recommendations of the Social Platform for an effective Open Method of Coordination on social protection and social inclusion⁴, especially the recommendation 1: *"Increase visibility and political commitment to the Social Open Method of Coordination, and improve its coherence with the wider post-2010 strategy"*.

In CEDAG's point of view, a renewed and reinforced Open Method of Coordination is crucial since it is the only instrument currently available at European level which can consolidate already existing actions by setting new orientations and encourage Member States to adopt common objectives about social matters which fall under their responsibilities.

² [Overview of the strategy's targets and actions](#)

³ Access the report, following the link: [Europe 2020 – A European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth](#)

⁴ To read the document click: [5 recommendations for an effective OMC on social protection and social inclusion](#)