



2010 BUILDING A
EUROPE FOR ALL
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2010
European Year
for Combating
Poverty and
Social Exclusion

AGE, the European Older People's Platform puts forward its message for 2010:

GUARANTEE DECENT LIFE AND RESPECT HUMAN DIGNITY IN OLD AGE!

A combination of factors such as low income, poor health, age and/or gender-based discrimination, reduced physical or mental capacity, unemployment, isolation, abuse, and limited access to services can all play a part in increasing the risk of poverty and social exclusion as people age. Given that people aged 65 and over are the fastest growing part of the EU's population, all Member States and the European Commission should use the 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion to address those specific threats faced by older people today.

On the eve of the launch of the 2010 European Year, AGE members call upon national governments and the European Commission to:

1. **Guarantee an adequate minimum income in old age to fight poverty and prevent social exclusion** – the right to minimum income schemes, including minimum pension, should be recognised as a fundamental right to ensure everyone's dignity and independence.
2. **Develop minimum income standard for pensioners guaranteeing decent life and personal dignity** – meet older people's expectations including also non-monetary aspects such as access to quality health and long-term services, decent housing and social or civic participation.
3. **Directly target older people in National Action Plans on social inclusion** – people aged 65 plus have the highest at-risk-of-poverty rate among all age population groups in 14 out of 27 EU Member States, while older women face the highest absolute poverty rate among all age and gender groups in the EU 27.
4. **Agree specific national targets for poverty reduction per age and gender** – and address important differences in old age poverty according to specific sub-groups such as older women, single older persons, older people in urban/rural areas, ethnic minorities and older migrants etc.
5. **Enforce gender equality in employment to ensure adequate retirement income for women** – as the lack of adequate resources among older women is a direct result of the discrimination against them in employment, governments should reflect deeply on existing social patterns and the traditional gender roles maintaining this disadvantageous situation.
6. **Provide adequate resources to live in dignity and support for social participation among the most vulnerable groups** – in particular older women, long-term unemployed older workers, workers on low wages or those forced to take early retirement, and older migrants.
7. **Facilitate a smooth transition towards retirement to strengthen social inclusion in old age** – by combating ageist attitudes of employers towards older workers, and encouraging their active ageing while retaining work connections.
8. **Promote individual well-being and quality of life at all ages through universal access to essential services including healthcare** – quality standards should be introduced and adhered to by public authorities.

AGE would like national governments and the European Commission take the necessary time during the coming months and **assess the Lisbon Strategy before setting in place a new EU policy agenda for 2020**. A firm commitment to **eradicating poverty and social exclusion by 2020** must be the overall aim for the new EU 2020 Strategy where **growth objectives support social cohesion**.

The EY 2010 Coalition of Social NGOs call for:

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An awareness-raising campaign on the structural causes of poverty and social exclusion

Launch a high-profile awareness-raising campaign on the structural causes and consequences of poverty and social exclusion as well as the causes and social impact of the current crisis. This campaign should highlight the growing gap between rich and poor and the role of the State in regulating the creation of wealth and redistributing its benefits towards the universal realisation of economic and social rights.

Enhanced dialogue with people in poverty and anti poverty NGOs

People in poverty, and the organisations that support them, are essential parts of finding long-term solutions to poverty. EU and National Guidelines must be developed and implemented to foster their participation and active involvement in governance. Financial investment at all levels, local, national and European is needed to support the implementation of the guidelines and to ensure the resourced and active participation of anti poverty NGOs as equal partners in decision-making processes at all levels.

A strong political legacy from 2010

A new overarching social and sustainable EU strategy, based on fundamental rights, which puts people and planet first and makes progress on eradicating poverty and inequality a pre-requisite in the development of all EU policies.

A special European Council on Poverty and Social Exclusion, with a declaration by Heads of States and Governments which asserts the fight against poverty and social exclusion as a key priority for the EU agenda. This declaration should lead to a revitalised EU Social Inclusion Strategy (as part of the Social Open Method of Coordination) which engages all stakeholders and ensures progress on agreed national and EU poverty targets. The declaration should commit to tangible steps forward on guaranteeing access for all to decent work and affordable, quality universal services – a decent home, affordable heating, education, health and long-term care, adequate minimum income, training and employment services....

Real progress on the adequacy of Minimum Income Schemes, so as to be capable of lifting every child, adult and older person out of poverty and delivering on their right to a dignified life. The agreement of a common EU definition of adequacy and of common methods to establish adequacy as well as regular updating in line with the cost of living, should inform an EU Framework Directive on Minimum Income which would mark a historic breakthrough in EU cooperation to achieve higher level social standards.

A commitment to ending street homelessness, building on the European Parliament's written declaration and the development of a European framework definition of homelessness to enable the gathering of comparable and reliable data and to provide annual updates on action taken and progress made in EU Member States towards ending homelessness.

Funding to underpin EU Commitments to fight poverty and social exclusion

An EU poverty programme: a new programme should build on the social inclusion section of the existing EU programme (PROGRESS) and provide additional support for activities within Member States to enable national level stakeholders to engage with the EU strategies and to support exchange of knowledge and learning through national and local level 'demonstration projects' in the fight against poverty and social exclusion. This programme should allocate sufficient funds to support the participation of people experiencing poverty in policy making and for the capacity building of their organisations. New commitments to ensure that **EU Structural Funds deliver on the fight against poverty and social exclusion.**

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