

In this issue ★ p.1 > Introduction "How can we break the link between disability and poverty?" ★ p.2 > Disability, poverty and social exclusion: a look disability poverty and at European policies on social inclusion ★ p.4 > Interview with Fintan Farrell, EAPN "The European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion – a success?" ★ p. 5 > Living in poverty – personal perspectives ★ p.6 > Isabelle Durant, MEP, "The fight against poverty and social exclusion of persons with disabilities must continue" ★ p.7 > Interview with Jan Jarab, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights "Inclusion of persons with disabilities in society can help to avoid living a life in poverty" ★ p.8 > Conclusions and recommendations

Introduction | How can we break the link between disability and poverty?

If we want to start an analysis on the living conditions of persons with disabilities and their families in society we have to understand the concept of disability. Defining disability is complex and controversial. The multi-dimensional nature of disability is far more than an individual health or medical problem. Disability is the outcome of the complex interactions between the individual's functional limitations (physical, intellectual or sensorial conditions) and the social and physical environment. Arising from impairments, disability has strong social implications leading to social and economic disadvantages, denial of rights, and limited opportunities in society. Therefore, it should be accepted that disability is a human rights issue of marginalisation and exclusion.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities underlines the closely related issues between poverty and disability. It is emphasized in the Preamble that "Recognizing the valued existing and potential contribution made by persons with disabilities to the overall well-being and diversity of their communities, and that promotion of the full enjoyment by persons with disability of their human rights and fundamental freedoms and of full participation by persons with disabilities will result in their enhanced sense of belonging and in significant advances in the human, social and economic development of society and the eradication of poverty". Generally, poverty and disability reinforce each other, increasing the vulnerability and exclusion of individuals. Furthermore, "Highlighting the fact that the majority of persons with disabilities live in conditions of poverty, and in this regard recognizing

the critical need to address the negative impact of poverty on persons with disabilities".

Evidently, disability and poverty are often manifestation of the same process. "Poverty is not simply a matter of incomes that are too low to meet basic subsistence needs. It is above all, a symptom of imbedded structural imbalances, which manifest themselves in all domains of human existence. As such, poverty is highly correlated with social exclusion, marginalisation, vulnerability, powerlessness, isolation and other economic, political, social and cultural dimensions of deprivation...It results from limited or no access to basic infrastructure and services, and is further compounded by people's lack of access to land, credit, technology and institutions and to other productive assets and resources needed to ensure sustainable livelihoods."

(1995 Poverty Assessment Study Report cited by Dube and Charowa 2005:9)

The relationship between disability and poverty is often described as a vicious circle, and many elements of this cycle are inevitably inter-linked. Living in poverty increases the likelihood of injury, impairment and disability; the exclusion of disability leads to greater rates of poverty. We can see in this diagram that the basic link in this cycle is exclusion. It is often assumed that being poor and disabled leads to the most severe isolation possible. Noticeably, both disability and poverty are symptoms of the way that society is organised. Apparently high levels of stigma and prejudice towards people with disability, even in the 21st century, lead to their deeper exclusion and discrimination in society. In addition their limited access to basic health care programmes, educa-



tion and employment, malnutrition and sub-standard living conditions, disabled people and their families frequently fall further and further into chronic poverty without prospect to come out of this cycle. Without better inclusion of disabled people automatically they become an economic burden for society. In the current situation of financial crisis it is essential to take those facts seriously into consideration in the process of planning and development of strategies and actions. "Eliminating poverty is unlikely to be achieved unless the rights and needs of excluded people and disabled people are taken into account."

Many surveys, statements and policies have been produced for disability and poverty reduction. Lots of international agencies have done beneficial work on this field, too. Maybe, the public speaking

has changed to some extent, but disabled people are still among the most marginalized in society.

Recently, at the EASPD Conference in Skopje, FYROM Macedonia in October 2010, the main warning of the participants was that the austerity measures implemented by governments endanger social services all over Europe. Generally, the social sector faces extreme cuts on the budget and the consequences of this lack of funding could break the backbone of the European welfare systems.

The European Union should approach these challenges by developing multi-level responses to the complex sets of factors impacting on the everyday life of persons with disabilities and their families. Putting disability issues properly on the economic growth agenda would open new opportunities for persons with disabilities

and their effective contribution to the economic development of their countries. Therefore, we need to work all together to keep the European welfare systems alive and to set the ground for the improvement of the current situation of persons with disabilities and their families which is crucial for the successful implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities all over Europe.



Dr. Vasilka DIMOSKA,
Programme Manager in the
Republic Centre – PORAKA,
FYROM Macedonia and
EASPD Board member

Disability, poverty and social exclusion: a look at the connection between disability and poverty

There has been much talk lately on poverty reduction and social inclusion in the EU. The European Commission's recent EU2020 initiative promising to lift 20 million people out of poverty in the next decade (one of its "headline targets"), as well as the declaration of 2010 as the European Year against poverty and social exclusion have catalysed attention on these very important issues. Certainly, it is high time to take action and redress the unacceptable situation that has such large numbers of people in the EU living in or at risk of poverty – even though Europe is one of the wealthiest regions of the world. This situation has become all the more urgent in light of the infamous financial, eco-

nomical and social crisis of recent years, which cannot be blamed for "creating" poverty and exclusion in Europe in the first place, but which has brought about a clear proof of the dysfunction of our economic systems. These, despite years of growth, have not been able to close the gap between rich and poor Europeans. On the contrary, this gap has progressively widened, making European societies less equal than before, notwithstanding recent efforts to address these issues.

At the same time, discussions increasingly centre on the topic of income inequalities and on the growing gap between rich and poor people in Europe. Improved economic standards in recent years have not been shared equally.

Disability poverty in Europe

There is a lack of specific data on **poverty and disability** in the EU, but what information is available indicates that disabled people are **twice as likely to live in poverty** as non-disabled people. This is due to various reasons: people with disabilities have much **lower levels of employment** than non disabled people, and when they are employed, they are much **more likely to be in low-skilled, and therefore lower paid jobs. Barriers in the environment** also contribute to lower employment levels. Inaccessible transport, for example, might mean that people with disabilities cannot take up employment even though they have found an occupation.

Research recently carried out in the UK clearly exemplifies this situation: 30%

of disabled adults of working age live in poverty: this is double than non-disabled adults, and worryingly, an upward trend has been observed in recent years. Moreover, a lack of employment can't only exacerbate poverty but also social exclusion, especially when disabled adults live in single households. The relationship between employment and poverty is an important one, since, even though paid work cannot certainly be considered as an "insurance" against poverty, as data on the "working poor" demonstrates, it has also been proven that **work can substantially reduce the risk of being in poverty**. At the same time, **social security benefits** are not sufficient to keep workless household of people with disabilities out of poverty. It has also been shown that the problem is rooted in people with disabilities **having fewer qualifications**, which amplifies difficulties in finding employment. What is interesting to note though is that this fact can be replicated at every level: i.e. no matter the qualification level, disabled people are more likely to be willing to work, but unable to find employment, and if they are employed, they are more likely to be paid less.

Proper access to **high quality education** on an equal basis with others is therefore one of the key tools to ensure that people with disabilities can have the same life opportunities as everyone else. Education means access to qualifications and training, greater opportunities to choose a career, greater integration in society and increased self-determination.

Yet, it is important to keep in mind that **disability poverty is about more than unemployment and low incomes**. It is about lack of opportunities and expectations that stem from something as broad as people's attitudes, to something as specific as an individual person's aspirations. Poverty causes stress, bad health conditions and isolation. Poverty means losing personal freedom and often creates a vicious circle whereby disabling conditions amplify, and poverty is handed down from one generation to the next.

These observations were among the results of a recent survey carried out in Flanders (Belgium), one of the richest regions in the EU. The research, conducted by the University of Antwerp and titled "Disability, Income and Access to Health Care" found that 25% of disabled people in Flanders live under the poverty line, and that even people who have an income above this level often find it hard to make ends meet. One of the consequences is that the people **don't get the necessary access to health care** simply because going to the doctor, or the dentist or buying a new pair of glasses or other equipment is too expensive. **Red tape** linked to getting all reimbursement is also considered a burden, as is a **lack of accessible information**, which also contributes to people not receiving the health care that they need. The survey also found that many disabled people **lack choice also in terms of housing**. Many of them live on social housing estates simply because other options aren't affordable.

All this information points to the double link between poverty and disability, and helps to explain the way in which poverty can lead to, or exacerbate a disability.

European Policy on social inclusion

It is a well known fact that the European integration project is at heart an economic one. Yet, a progressively closer union between Member States has led to an increasing need to ensure that a social dimension is also present in European policies. Efforts in this field have been coordinated over the past 10 years through the so-called Lisbon Strategy, a plan agreed by European Heads of State and Government in 2000. The Lisbon Strategy has been widely criticized for not delivering on its aims. While it is true that up to the year 2008 some progress has been achieved, e.g. an increase in overall employment levels (from 62.2% to 65.9%), not enough attention was paid to social and territorial cohesion, and the

impact on poverty reduction was minimal, with relative poverty amongst the EU population increasing from 2005 to 2010 by 2% - with the effects of the crisis already palpable.

It is against this backdrop that the European Commission decided to launch a new strategy to deliver a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth over the next 10 years period: the EU 2020. The social inclusion dimension of this plan is much more prominent than in its predecessor and clear, quantitative targets have been set in several areas, something that will hopefully help systematise implementation efforts and ensure a clear commitment in reaching these targets. EU leaders have agreed, not without difficulties, to lift 20 million Europeans out of poverty by 2020. This is one of the 5 "headline targets", the others being on research, energy, employment and education – it is clear that social inclusion features high in this new agenda. For what concerns poverty reduction, the target agreed upon by the Member States, not without difficulties, is an aggregate of 3 indicators that capture different dimensions of poverty: monetary poverty, material deprivation and jobless households. All this represents very good news, and shows that there has been a realisation by the European elite that social policies can no longer be considered ancillary to the economic ones, and that concrete efforts have to be made to ensure the well being and quality of life of all people living in the EU. It is also clear that a strong involvement from local authorities and civil society will be key in delivering these policies and contributing to the creation of lasting change.

This is why it is so worrying to realise that so little reference is made to social services in the EU 2020 strategy. Ensuring access to and the delivery of high quality public and social services should be the key focus of the renewed social policies of the Member States if they are to tackle in an effective way the effects of the financial, economic and social crisis. This crisis has affected vast numbers of people in Europe, unemployment has increased

exponentially and the need for high quality services has grown accordingly. Middle income households have come under pressure as jobs have been lost and incomes and assets have deteriorated. Yet, these people are better placed to access services that previously they didn't need, since they are better educated, better integrated into societies and better able to manage the required bureaucracy. The most vulnerable are therefore once again

at risk of not being able to access the vital support that they need.

In December 2010 the European Commission proposed to establish a European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion, as one of its seven flagship initiatives for action to serve that goal. The Platform aims at creating a joint commitment among the Member States, EU Institutions and the key stakeholders to

fight poverty and social exclusion. The EU 2020 and its flagship initiative show a willingness to work towards social justice in Europe. It is to be hoped that there will be enough political will both at EU and Member State level to ensure that the necessary financial tools will be provided in order to adequately implement these plans.

Miriana Giraldi,
Policy Officer, EASPD

The European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion – a success? Interview with Fintan Farrell, Director of the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN)



Fintan Farrell

In your opinion what were the achievements of the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion?

The timing of the Year at the key moment when the European Institutions were developing and shaping their key strategies for the coming decade was decisive for ensuring that poverty and social exclusion

had a high profile at the point when these strategies have been negotiated. This in part contributed to the achievement of key steps forward including the poverty reduction target, a social Guideline in the Europe 2020 strategy and the adoption of the flagship programme: the European Platform against Poverty. In addition the Year was used to make steps forward in key thematic areas that had been identified through the Social Open Method of Coordination including Active Inclusion (the call for a framework Directive on Minimum Income), Child Poverty (the commitment to a Recommendation) and homelessness (follow up from the Consensus Conference). The link between discrimination and poverty was also highlighted during the year.

One of the most positive outcomes of the 2010 year was the establishment of new alliances in the context of actions prepared during the year. These alliances were between NGOs but also with other actors including institutional actors, local authorities, trade unions, academics, media, cultural organisations, schools ... It is hoped that these alliances will outlive the 2010 year.

The EU 2020 strategy has quite some ambitious targets on social inclusion but are there financial means and the political will to achieve these targets?

The reality that we are facing today is austerity measures everywhere in Europe. It's hard to speak of achievements of the 2010 Year when we know about the harsh realities that people are living at this very moment. These are imposed by Member States and the EU Institutions in their response to the crisis. There has been no effort made to make a social impact assessment on these decisions and the result is that the fundamental rights of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion will be further undermined. So it is clear that for the moment the

financial means and political will to achieve the social targets in the EU 2020 strategy does not exist. As social NGOs we will have to try to bridge the gap, or at least highlight the contradiction, between the positive rhetoric and the harsh reality over the coming years.

Facing the cuts in the social budgets and the increasing need for support services for more and more people, how do you think the Member States will close the gap between the increasing needs and the decreasing budgets?

At the moment the Member States securing the existence of social services and social protection systems are not the first priority of most Member States. The Member States need to invest in services and the social protection systems now, so that they play their part as 'economic stabilisers' and to avoid the enormous future costs that will be associated to not investing in these areas.

Getting the EU Institutions and the Member States to recognise the need for this shift in priorities is a huge task as it requires an absolute shift in the guiding political paradigm. This is a huge task a NGOs can not shy away from playing their part to achieve this change. Only if we make progress in this direction can we ensure a reversal from the current reality of increasing needs and ensuring that the budget available is put at the service of the public good.

How does the Year and the outcomes from the Year impact on people with disabilities and other groups facing discrimination?

Organisations of people with disabilities are better placed to answer this question. It would be interesting to note how they engaged in the Year and what direct outcomes they sought. For the 2010 NGO Coalition highlighting the link between discrimination and poverty was one of our key objectives for the Year. Some progress was made in this direction. It is clear to me that if we are to make real progress in the fight against poverty then equality issues must be mainstreamed across all inclusion policies. It therefore will be important that National Action Plans on Inclusion (or whatever similar plans emerge in the EU 2020 strategy) must contain direct commitments to tackle the exclusion faced by groups including people with disabilities.

Living in poverty – personal perspectives

My name is Vasile Vlad I am almost 40 years old. I was born in Sipoteni in the Republic of Moldova. I have a very severe form of myopathy called Charcot-Marie-Tooth. This is a genetic peripheral neuropathy which consists of a muscular atrophy and a progressive sensitive neuropathy (the peripheral nerves are affected) concentrated in the superior and inferior extremities. It is a genetic, hereditary, degenerative disease produced by a chromosomal anomaly which determines the damage of the peripheral nerves. Nowadays, the disease Charlot-Marie-Tooth cannot be definitely cured, but there is a series of treatments which helps to reduce the symptoms and improves the mobility.

Up to the age of 18 I was able to move myself independently. I have graduated



You need a lot of support and a strong character to escape poverty

The story of Vasile Vlad, client of the Association of Charity and Social Assistance (ACASA) in Moldova



from school from the community. Due to the disease and the lack of adequate treatment at the age of 19 I became a wheelchair user. When I was young my mother took care of me, but I was always looking for an independent life, to be independent and to do everything on my own. Still, the most important problem was the financial situation. The pension I was receiving from the government as an invalid was very miserable, but then there was also a period when even this miserable pension was not paid at all. Seeing the difficult situation my mother was passing through while taking care of me and my brother, who has the same diagnosis, but is 11 years younger, I could not stay and not to do anything. I started to repair different electronic devices, radios, TV sets, but due to the fact that the disease was progressing I was not able to fulfil this job for a long time, because I could not use the indispensable instruments for this activity. At the age of 23, I opened the first little market in the community I was living in. At that time, all markets were state running organizations as the private sector was not developed at all. All state markets were empty.

7 years ago I implemented a project in the community through the ACASA Association which consisted opening a computer centre, aimed at offering the possibility from different categories of people from the community, regardless of their statute and financial situation, to learn to use a computer and to have access to the internet.

At present we implement a new project which has the main goal of developing and to providing social services for members of the community and creating new working places for persons with disabilities together with their peers without disabilities. We opened a sewing workshop and a shoe workshop. I am actively involved in social life, I am a local councillor, I am the president of the commission for the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities within the Union of NGOs for persons with disabilities from Moldova. In my opinion the risk of poverty of a person with a disability is very high and you need a lot of support and a strong character to escape poverty.

Without the support of SASA and the Red Cross he wouldn't know how to survive

The story of M. S, client of the Social Association St. Andrew (SASA) in Varna, Bulgaria



Mr. S. is 22 years old, lives in Aksakovo close to the Black Sea and since 2009 he is client of the Social welfare centre of the Social Association St. Andrew (SASA), a Bulgarian-German Non-Profit Organisation in Varna. He is schizophrenic and has a mild intellectual disability. His monthly income is 129 Bulgarian Levs, which is about 66 Euro. His income barely covers his expenses for medicine and food but he can't afford to buy himself clothes or warm shoes. According to Mr. S. estimations, he needs at least 250 Levs (180 Euro) to be able to live a life in dignity. The official statistics say 251 Euro per person and month are needed to live in

Bulgaria, 45 % of this amount for food only, which makes 113 Euro for food per person and per month. He receives 9,75 Levs (5 Euro) for public transport and the same amount for medicine. He receives his meals on wheels every working day (breakfast, lunch, dinner) and food packages for the weekend from Social Association St. Andrew (SASA) and SASA-staff supports him also with medicine and dentists services from time to time. He also gets food packages from the Bulgarian Red Cross. Mr. S. has finished professional secondary education "cook assistant" at special needs boarding school "T. Samodumov" in the vil-

lage Kranevo. After finishing school he went back to the town Aksakovo. Unfortunately, Mr. S. is unable to get

a job as a cook assistant in his hometown due to his disability. Without the income of a job his living conditions will not improve as his family is too poor to support him financially. Without the support of SASA and the Red Cross he wouldn't know how to survive.

Silvia Grigorova, Coordinator of.
Social Association St. Andrew

I would be more than happy if I had some more pocket money to be able to go to the cinema from time to time



Interview with Willy Vander Stappen, resident at De Lork vzw, a service provider for persons with intellectual disabilities in Brussels, Belgium



Would you describe yourself as poor?

No, I don't think I am poor. I have the chance to live at De Lork. Here I have everything I need.

Do you have a job?

No, I don't have a job. During the day I attend the activities of the day care centre of De Lork.

Do you have enough money to live?

I would like to have some more pocket money so that I can buy something when I am outside in the streets for example to buy me a drink. Money doesn't make you happy and you can burn your fingers

but nevertheless I would be happy to have some more money available.

What would you like to buy if you had more money?

I would like to go to the cinema or eat a pepper steak in a nice restaurant or I would like to travel, for example to Japan. That must be a wonderful place. I would also like to eat an ice cream or a pancake or go to a concert or do some sports like swimming or boxing. Unfortunately I don't even have enough money to be able to buy a ticket to go to the cinema.

How much money do you get?

I have no idea.

Where does the money come from?

No, I don't know where it comes from.

Who is in charge of your money?

A lawyer takes care of my money but I don't see him very often. Actually, I haven't seen him for a very long time.

De Lork takes care of your food, your housing and your clothes. The ministry of Social Affairs takes over the rest to finance your life. Do you think that it's enough?

I would be more than happy if I had some more pocket money to be able to go to the cinema from time to time.

What do you do with your pocket money?

All I can afford is a coffee or a coke.

Political perspectives on poverty

The fight against poverty and social exclusion of persons with disabilities must continue

Isabelle Durant, MEP and Vice-President of the European Parliament



Isabelle Durant

The European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion 2010 is coming to an end but in reality, everything is starting. The people in precarious situations and the different organisations present on the field have worked all year round.



It is unthinkable that this huge network stops functioning in 2011. The numerous recommendations formulated this year and the precise objective to reduce poverty in the 2020 strategy have to be put into place, step by step. An efficient monitoring of the progress of this implementation has to be set up. In all the Member States, the demand for services is increasing, for all the people living in precariousness but even more for disabled people. Public funding will have to be used in order to finance these services, to support the actions of the private and

public services but also of the different associations working on these issues. Austerity measures must focus on other inessential aspects, and not on the services to people with difficulties and programmes of social and professional inclusion. It is important for the future to integrate in all investment a horizontal approach in order to take into account the persons that are at risk of discrimination or precariousness.

This is the price to pay if we want this year 2010 to be more than an addition of events and awareness actions.

Inclusion of persons with disabilities in society can help to avoid living a life in poverty

Interview with Jan Jařab, Regional Representative, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

How does it come that in 2010 in Europe millions of people with disabilities can't enjoy their human rights?

Maybe the formulation of this question is a bit too pessimistic. Millions of people with disabilities in Europe can enjoy their rights better than a generation ago. But certainly we are still very far from guaranteeing the full enjoyment of rights of persons with disabilities in Europe. Why is it so? Partly because Europe and the whole world has only acknowledged quite recently that the issue of persons with disabilities is a human rights issue, which was expressed by the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. And partly it is due to the enormous differences between individual European countries in terms of how their standards of rights of persons with disabilities developed over the last decades.

Do you think the implementation of the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities will have an impact on the prevention of the risk of poverty of persons with disabilities and if yes how?

Yes, the Convention will definitely have an impact on the standard of their human rights – and that includes economic, social and cultural rights. Thus, it should have an impact in the long run also on the prevention of poverty. But how fast that happens will depend on the political will of the individual countries themselves,

on their policy approaches, and of course also on their overall socio-economic status.

The logic of the Convention is that every person with a disability should enjoy his or her human rights to the furthestmost extent and that societies should do their uttermost to make it possible. In some European societies, this is at least generally understood and shared as a goal by policymakers and the broader public, even if it might be incompletely achieved in reality. But in other societies, particularly in some of the new Member States and in those beyond the borders of the EU, one still often finds the old 19th century perception that persons with disabilities should simply be placed outside the community in institutions and provided with some kind of a minimum standard, ensuring bare survival. These minimalistic expectations will now, of course, be challenged by the UN Convention which speaks clearly against them.

What can Europe and the Member States do to break the link between poverty and disability, i.e. disability leading to poverty and poverty often also leading to disability?

European structural funds can be a very useful instrument to break this link, but it depends on how the Member States use them. They can use the European Social Fund to ensure employment for persons with disabilities or for creating infrastructures, for example educational ones, which will be accessible and favourable to persons with disabilities. Again, it is not only about poverty but it is about the general enjoyment of rights and about inclusion in society.

Of course, at present we have also another dimension, which is that of the economic crisis. There is a risk that poverty of persons with disabilities might actually



Jan Jařab

increase. Growing unemployment leads to loss of income. In addition, social services are very often the first ones that are facing cuts in the budgets. Unfortunately, this happens above all to progressive community-based services which are seen by the politicians as “soft” and dispensable. The Member States should avoid cutting the budgets of social services if they want to avoid the risk of increased poverty of the service users, including persons with disabilities.

What can service providers do to break this link?

Service providers can offer services that aim at the inclusion of persons with disabilities in society and also increase their potential employability. To do so, it is vital to overcome the paternalistic tradition of care institutions where everything was done for the persons with disabilities, and to insist instead on stimulating their activity and participation. There is such trend in Europe, but again, the development has been very uneven. There are particular problems in some of the East European States where they need to overcome the heritage of the communist system.

How do you see the future development especially in the light of human rights for persons with disabilities?

In the long run, I am optimistic. We can notice a growing sensibility towards the rights of persons with disabilities. And the more they will be included in society, the less there will be risk that they will become poor.



Conclusions and recommendations

Despite the clear increase in needs, public and social services will have to increasingly deliver more with fewer resources, given the focus of Governments across Europe to cut public spending and steer public finances back to sustainable paths. A survey recently carried out by EASPD shows that indeed, this is already the case: there is less access to employment, and ruthless cuts to social services translate into less availability of support.

This is why a clear strategy of support for public services in general such as transport, education, employment services, as well as specialised services such as those for people with disabilities, for example, is crucial if social cohesion is to be maintained in Europe and if quality of life is to become a reality for greater numbers of people, rather than just a nice principle.

How can we tackle the link between poverty and disability as living in poverty increases the likelihood of injury, impairment and disability and at the same time persons with disabilities face a particular risk of poverty?

We recommend:

- ★ that all stakeholders, including civil society, social services and above all people experiencing poverty are engaged in the debate. This will be essential in making the EU2020 strategy not only successful but also relevant: we cannot propose adequate solutions to poverty reduction if we do not have a clear understanding of what this means in reality– if we are serious about this we will engage in a dialogue with people experiencing poverty and social exclusion, rather than artificially try to answer their needs from our point of view.
- ★ that data on disabled people living in poverty is collected as it is **crucial for understanding the multi-dimensional nature of poverty** which demands us to work from several different angles.
- ★ that the **gender perspective** is taken into account. Women and young girls face a particular risk of poverty and social exclusion.

- ★ that Service providers and authorities focus less on the technical aspects and in addition bring in a focus that recognizes the importance of the emotional wellbeing of the individual. One part of this is to **facilitate self-determination and independence**, which means control over one's own money and at the same time deal with the risks that this brings along.
- ★ that service providers offer **personalized care** by putting the users at the very centre and providing a high level of "secure independency".
- ★ that service providers **"learn the language of those we want to support"**. One part of this is to involve the people we want to support in the policy- and development processes in a structural and well-organized way.
- ★ that the European Commission **uses the structural funds and the research framework programme** to better understand and more effectively tackle the complex needs of persons with disabilities living in poverty.

Relevant links:

European Anti-Poverty Network: <http://www.eapn.org/>

European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion website: <http://www.2010againstopoverty.eu>

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights: <http://www.ohchr.org>

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Contact the EASPD office at charlotte.boetticher@easpd.eu or Oudergemselaan / Av d'Auderghem 63 B-1040 Brussels ★ T +32 2 282 46 10

- ★ Visit the policy section of the EASPD website at www.easpd.eu.
- ★ Become a member of EASPD's Policy Impact Group

Feedback and comments on this newsletter are welcome and should be sent to charlotte.boetticher@easpd.eu.

