



2010, the European Year for combating poverty and social exclusion

Combating poverty and social exclusion ranks among the main objectives of the European Union and its Member States.

In March 2000, at the launching of the Lisbon strategy, the Heads of State and Government pledged themselves to "making a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty" by the year 2010. Despite the efforts deployed, a significant proportion of the European population still lives in destitution and has no access to basic services such as health care.

This state of affairs conflicts with the European Union's common values of solidarity and social justice.

Some figures

Our social protection systems are among the most highly-developed in the world and yet, today, too many Europeans still live in poverty. The forms this takes are complex, but certain figures speak for themselves:

- 78 million people live below the poverty line (set at 60% of their country's median income). That represents 16% of Europe's population.
- One European in ten lives in a household where nobody works. Even so, work does not always guard effectively against the risk of poverty.
- For 8% of Europeans, having a job is not enough to work one's way out of poverty.
- In most Member States, children are more exposed to this scourge than the rest of the population: 19% of children live under the threat of poverty; 19 million children are affected.

Why the 2010 European Year?

Poverty and exclusion do not only strike at the well-being of individuals, their ability to take an active part in the life of society; they also impair economic development. The Union wishes to reaffirm the importance of collective responsibility in combating poverty; this doubtless involves the decision-makers, but it also calls for a response from the actors in the public and private sectors. Among its aims, the European Year will seek to give a voice to those who daily experience poverty and social exclusion.

Each year since 1983, Europe has initiated a "European Year" awareness campaign designed to inform the citizens of Europe and dialogue with them to work for change in mentalities and behaviour. These European years also provide opportunities for drawing the attention of national governments to societal themes. In 2008, the Union celebrated the the European Year of multicultural dialogue, in 2007 equality of opportunity was to the fore and in 2006, workers' mobility.



■ The objectives

Four cross-disciplinary objectives will lie at the heart of this European Year:

- **Recognition:** recognise the fundamental right of persons experiencing poverty and social exclusion to live in dignity and to take an active part in society;
- **Shared responsibility and participation:** promote public support for social inclusion policies, emphasising collective and individual responsibility in combating poverty and social exclusion, and fostering commitment by all public and private actors;
- **Cohesion:** promote a more cohesive society, where no one doubts that society as a whole benefits from the eradication of poverty;
- **Commitment and practical action:** renew the pledge of the EU and its Member States to combat poverty and social exclusion, and involve all levels of authority in the pursuit of that aim.

■ The method of operation

Decentralisation and coordination will be the underpinning principles for the European Year 2010. A varied multiplicity of activities will be proposed: awareness campaigns, innovative initiatives, creative solidarity schemes, meetings, discussions and conferences, and the organisation of competitions highlighting achievements and successful experiments of relevance to the theme for the Year.

The participation of civil society and the commitment of all involved parties will be essential. The conception and implementation of the European Year will involve a wide range of actors, including organisations in civil society and those defending the interests of persons living in poverty, as well as the social partners, local and regional authorities.

At national level, a programme will be developed for adapting the joint policy guidelines framed at European level to the issues and specific characteristics of each country. The activities will be identified and implemented by a national implementing organisation appointed by the participating countries.

At the European level, a committee of representatives from the Member States will assist the Commission in supervising and implementing the European Year activities. A vast information and public-awareness campaign will be set up. The European Commission will publish a series of surveys and studies, to inform discussion at European level and in the participating countries. A dedicated website will also be set up to cover the event.

■ The budget

The 2010 European Year has been given a budget of at least 26 million euros, of which 17 million euros provided by European Union. This may be supplemented by funding from private sources.

For further information:

<http://2010againstpoverty.europa.eu>

