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Stepping up efforts to address the urban dimension of poverty



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LONG-TERM INVESTMENTS, STRONG POLITICAL COMMITMENT AND AN INTEGRATED approach are needed to reduce the concentration of poverty found in Europe's cities. These are among some of the key recommendations stemming from the EURO CITIES 'Inclusive Cities for Europe' campaign for the European Year 2010 combating poverty and social exclusion.

Speaking about the campaign results in Brussels on Monday, Paul Tilsley, Deputy Leader of Birmingham City Council and Chairman of EURO CITIES Social Affairs Forum, said:

"With 75% of Europe's population residing in cities, poverty and exclusion are predominantly urban phenomena. Our findings show that there are extreme pockets of deprivation even in Europe's most prosperous cities. We want to prevent the gap widening between urban rich and poor. But for that, local governments need greater power and more support both from national governments and the EU."

Part of the 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion, the EURO CITIES campaign visited eight European cities, involving over 600 local politicians and practitioners. The events provided on-the-ground insights into the urban dimension of poverty, both its causes and consequences. The campaign's conclusions for the EU strategy for poverty reduction include:

1. The best approach to tackling poverty is an integrated one that joins up social, environmental and economic actions with a focus on people and place;
2. Integrated approaches must be better supported by EU policy and funding;
3. Better coordination is needed between different government levels and it should be mandatory that local government is consulted on National Reform Programmes and National Action Plans, for instance;
4. City practice needs to be reflected in key EU and national policies since they offer evidence on how policy operates on the ground;
5. Fighting poverty must be treated as an investment in human capital that promotes social cohesion and economic growth, saving public spending longer term;
6. Actions to fight social exclusion need political commitment at all government levels, including the EU.

EUROCITIES' recommendations were presented to over 100 delegates attending the European Cities against poverty and social exclusion conference held today with the EU Belgian Presidency, in the context of the European Year 2010. Later on this year, the European Commission will present its Flagship Initiative "European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion", which aims at ensuring economic, social and territorial cohesion and at strengthening partnerships and integrated approaches. The recommendations will go to social and employment ministers at their council meeting in December 2010.

- ENDS -

- Note to Editors

- EURO CITIES is the network of major European cities. We bring together local governments from 140 large cities in over 30 countries. Visit: www.eurocities.eu
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Please note that this event is being organised by one of the European Commission's partners for the campaign. The views expressed during the event do not necessarily reflect those of the European Commission.



Background: the need for combating poverty and social exclusion

Each year, the European Union selects a theme of general interest aimed at raising public awareness and drawing national governments' attention to the related issues. Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion was chosen as the focus of the 2010 European Year to mark the 10-year Anniversary of the Lisbon Council when Heads of State and government committed to taking steps to make a decisive impact on the levels of poverty.

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

- More than 84 million people live below the poverty line (set at 60% of their country's median income). This figure represents 17% of Europe's population.
- One European in ten lives in a household where nobody works.
- For 8% of Europeans, having a job is not enough to avoid poverty.
- Some 19 million children live under the threat of poverty and are disproportionately affected.

Objectives of the European Year:

- To recognise the fundamental right of people affected by poverty and social exclusion and to allow them to live in dignity and to take an active part in society;
- To promote public support for social inclusion policies and foster commitment by all public and private actors;
- To promote a more cohesive society, where it is recognised that society as a whole benefits from combating poverty;
- To renew the pledge of the EU and its Member States to combat poverty and social exclusion, and to involve all stakeholders in the pursuit of that aim.

Actions:

Throughout 2010, several hundred activities are being organised, including awareness campaigns, innovative actions, creative solidarity schemes, discussions, conferences, and competitions, which highlight achievements and promote stories related to poverty and social exclusion. In addition, partnerships have been concluded with major event organisers in Europe, such as the Edinburgh International Festival, the Frankfurt Book Fair and the Perugia International Journalism Festival, to highlight just a few.

These European events involve a wide range of actors, including civil society organisations and those defending the interests of persons living in poverty, as well as social partners, and local and regional authorities.

At national level, programmes have been developed for adapting the policy guidelines defined at European level to the issues and specific characteristics of each country and carried out locally. These national programmes are published on the EY2010 website.

For further information please visit www.2010againstpoverty.eu