

## *European Association for Education of Adults:* EAEA Newsletter<sup>1</sup>

**EAEA Newsletter, June 2010**

### **PROPOSALS FOR A MID TERM STRATEGY**

The Board of the EAEA has prepared a strategic paper to present to the next General Assembly of the EAEA, which will take place in Armenia in June 2010. The paper includes proposals for general objectives and specific aims for the work of the organisation for the next four years. Members of the Board participated in a SWOT analysis considering the organisational strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats at a time of economic and structural change in Europe and beyond.

We have located our central belief that adult education and learning can make an important contribution to empowering people during periods of change at the heart of the strategy, and then considered what the objectives and aims of the EAEA should be. We have also taken on board the final recommendations of CONFINTEA V1, the proposals from the European Caucus that met at the Civil Society Meeting in Belem, and considered the EU context, where policy, budget and programme changes are being prepared for the next period.

The strategic objectives proposed include:

- a legislative and financial framework for better access to adult education for all.
- better governance for adult education, to include civil society.
- effective advocacy by the EAEA at a European level.
- building a strong and active EAEA membership.

The specific aims identify the areas of work, policies, research, projects, communications, audiences, partnerships and themes where we propose to take

---

<sup>1</sup> Uz dozvolu Evropske asocijacije za obrazovanje odraslih – EAEA, časopis donosi izbor tekstova iz „EAEA Newsletter“.

action. Now we want to consult with the members and ask for their views on the proposed strategic framework, its aims and objectives. Please let us know your views and ideas either at the GA or by post and email. The draft mid term strategy paper can be obtained by sending an e-mail to [gina.ebner@eaea.org](mailto:gina.ebner@eaea.org). All EAEA members have also received the strategy paper via email.

**EAEA Newsletter, June 2010**  
**MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION,**  
**ANDROULLA VASSILIOU, EDUCATION, CULTURE,**  
**MULTILINGUALISM AND YOUTH**

For the term 2010-2014 the Commissioner charged with Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth will be Androulla Vassiliou, from Cyprus, who has always been deeply engaged in cultural issues both at a national and a transnational level.

The main commitment of the Commissioner is to contribute to the development of strategies in order to achieve the ambitious goals established by the "EU2020 strategy". The strategic priorities of the new Commissioner concern the enhancement of education and training, learning mobility, opportunities for young people, cultural expression and creativity.

The Commissioner will focus on four main issues: education, culture, multilingualism and sport. As far as education is concerned the purpose of Ms Vassiliou concentrates on increasing European competitiveness, which involves a necessary commitment on teacher training, assumed as the principal instrument of education. Other priorities regard the reduction of school leaving and the improvement of policies on employability, learning mobility, language learning, innovation and research, via the reinforcement of already existing European programmes, like for instance the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP).

A particular relevance is also given to the cultural commitment, which will be strengthened thanks to diverse actions directly addressed to the increase of member States involvement on creativity, innovation and cultural expression.

Multilingualism and sport also play relevant roles for the new Commissioner, who supports the promotion of foreign language learning, the protection and support for the languages of minorities, and the implementation of sport activities.

On February 15 2010 the Commissioner gave a speech on education and training priorities, according to the 2020 strategy. She affirmed the importance of knowledge as an active instrument to build a prosperous world and to fight the

economic crisis for the creation of a sustainable social market economy. Education, creativity, research and innovation provides a definite and necessary contribution in this. The strategy is based on the principle of combining excellence and equity: the necessity to deepen the economic knowledge of European society is combined with the opportunity to increase lifelong learning and transnational mobility of youngsters and adults, of students and teachers.

During the Informal Ministerial Meeting on Culture of the last 31 March 2010, the Commissioner Vassiliou focused on many important themes involving the cultural and educational opportunities existing within the European Union and the necessity of their exploitation.

Through this speech, made just before the publication of the “Green Paper on unlocking the potential of cultural and creative industries”, she wanted to highlight the importance of the European cultural potential, in particular the role played by cultural industries and the necessity to improve their access to funding. Furthermore, she showed the need for a more active cooperation and awareness of European regions and cities in the promotion of cultural activities, via the promotion of the territorial dimension.

### **EAEA Newsletter, June 2010**

## **2010: THE EUROPEAN YEAR FOR COMBATING POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION**

As many of you are already no doubt aware, the European Union has joined forces with its member states plus Norway and Iceland this year to make 2010 the European Year For Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion, which was officially launched in a major conference in Madrid on January the 21st 2010. It's a frightening thought that almost 85 million Europeans are currently living at risk of poverty, and facing insecurities such as lack of food, fuel or housing which many of us take for granted. Although the topic was chosen for attention long before the financial insecurities of recent times, the increasing financial pressures which are affecting the global markets only highlight how topical and important this issue is for many in Europe today.

### *Challenging stereotypes*

With this in mind it is with anticipation that we look towards the events and outcomes of the year as it unfolds, which aims to increase awareness of these issues and renew the political commitments of the EU and its member states

to continue to combat poverty and social exclusion. However, as the European Commission points out on the 2010 European Year official site, this isn't only about financial poverty in its simplest form, as they say: "This Year also aims to challenge stereotypes and collective perceptions of poverty. By harnessing the EU's principles of solidarity and partnership, 2010 represents a clarion call to tackle the causes of poverty head-on in a bid to ensure everyone can play a full and active role in society"

This year, therefore, is also about highlighting the fact that poverty is multifaceted and almost every one of us may be at risk of poverty or social exclusion at some point in our lives. Social exclusion is here seen as the other side of the poverty coin, once you are not participating fully in active society (by being unemployed or homeless for instance) then it is much more difficult to get back on track financially and the cycle tends to repeat itself. One of the main outcomes emerging from this year will therefore be a framework, developed by the EU, to give member states the opportunity to develop their own strategies and identify their own priorities for stopping this cycle before it takes hold. This will work hand in hand with a common set of indicators which member states are already using to better understand what it means to be poor in today's society and give a more unified idea of how to work in the future.

### *Ambassadors*

As usual for European Years, there have also been appointed ambassadors in each participating country who will be working to raise the profile of the year and to encourage others to join in and focus their events on this important European issue. These ambassadors also lend a more personal and human face to the directives which inevitably back such a political subject, as ambassador in the Czech Republic Milena Cerná points out, "After long time we have a chance to say that people experiencing poverty and social exclusion have right to say what they feel, what they are missing and what can help them ... and especially we have a chance to listen to them thanks to the European Year 2010".

Although less than half way through the year, there are already many events which are now listening to an often diverse range of people who are finding themselves subject to poverty or exclusion for one reason or another. This is no more evident than with the Roma people, and highlighting their continuing social difficulties throughout Europe has become one of the key thematic priorities for the 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion.

### *The Roma people*

With a population of between 10 and 12 million people currently spread throughout Europe, the Roma represent one of Europe's largest ethnic communities. However, reports from recent years suggest that the Roma people are still facing deeply entrenched social exclusion and discrimination, and are often at a high risk of poverty, poor health and high levels of unemployment. An inaugural Roma summit in 2008 already began the process of trying to find a framework to improve the situation for the Roma community, and began a platform for Roma inclusion. This platform is manifesting in a number of ways, including "explicit but not exclusive targeting" which aims to improve the environment for all who have to cope with such conditions, without singling the Roma out as a distinct group (and thus again increasing the social division).

The Roma story is one heard by many different communities and individuals in Europe currently, and highlights this 'cycle of deprivation', where social exclusion leads to poverty, which in turn increases the social exclusion. However, there are many other events and groups which are actively participating in the 2010 Year which demonstrate the diversity of problems faced by people today.

### *INCLUSage*

One of which is INCLUSage, a project designed to boost social inclusion of elderly people in seven EU countries; Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Poland, Finland, Germany, Italy and the Slovak Republic. These countries are all now collecting information about the situation facing many of their elderly citizens, who often feel that they are no longer able to participate in local policy or decision making and therefore can become more isolated from their own communities. The expected outcome will be to establish a permanent consultation process on these issues with policy-makers at all levels, as well as a methodology, led by the Polish team, to help older people develop bodies in order to regain their voice in social policy.

### *A flow of seminars*

Participants across Europe are also holding seminars and conferences throughout the year to discuss and highlight issues surrounding poverty. Brussels (Belgium) will host 'Mental Health Europe Conference "Challenging Poverty – Creating Hope. Breaking the Cycle of Poverty and Mental Health' in October where experts will present and exchange their experiences and good practices of how to overcome the vicious cycle of poverty and mental health. In Newcastle (England)

in September the main focus will be the issue of child poverty, with 'EUROCITIES European Year 2010'. Here the themes of the contribution of cities; the roles of local partners and the role of national and international leadership legislation will take centre stage in this two day conference which will bring together a variety of stakeholders, academics, practitioners and experts. One conference which has already successfully taken place was entitled 'Tackling poverty and Social Exclusion in Europe through Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education in Adult Learning', and held in Glasgow (Scotland) in March. Organised by DARE (Democracy and Human Rights Education in Adult Learning) and BEMIS (Black and Ethnic Minorities Infrastructure in Scotland), this conference provided a forum for more than 170 stakeholders in field of Human Rights Education and Education for Democratic Citizenship, including practitioners in formal and non-formal education, NGO activists, educational experts, political scientists and policy makers.

### *The connection between education and poverty*

The idea which underpinned the conference was summed up by David Martin, MEP (Committees: International Trade, Human Rights) in his opening speech when he said: "I am convinced that there is an absolute connection between lack of education, democracy and human rights and an increase in poverty and social exclusion...if you increase education, democratic participation and respect for human rights, you will decrease poverty".

The outcome was a document of policy recommendations on tackling poverty and social exclusion, which as now published through the European Wergeland Centre. Aside from large conferences there has also been direct action and raising awareness this year on a more practical level. The Delegation of the European Commission in Eritrea has been active in highlighting the exclusion and high risk of poverty of women in its nation, through carrying out a symbolic action with the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW) under the title: "Operation – Donkey". The aim of the initiative was to empower poor women in rural areas and improve their living standards by providing donkeys to fetch water and engage in income generating activities. Although seen in different degrees in different countries, the fact remains that women are usually at greater risk of poverty and social exclusion in all categories, be it the elderly, disabled people, immigrants or other at risk groups. This statistic adds an extra level of significance to the activities in Eritrea, as it can serve as a reminder that this is a wide concern, whether in a large scale or in small ways, and an underlying part of the problem of poverty today.

For the 2010 Year, we can all now look forward to an action packed programme of debates, seminars, workshops and conferences, and then equally look forward to the concrete outcomes which will help to shape the way we tackle poverty in years to come.

Poverty and social inclusion, as we have already seen, come in a number of guises, which the 2010 Year is aiming to highlight. However, above all else perhaps what the 2010 Year can best achieve is that we can remember the people behind the politics, and begin (as Milena Cerná has already pointed out) to listen as well talk.

### **EAEA Newsletter, June 2010**

#### **2010: EAEA AND THE COALITION TO END POVERTY**

Among a host of members from across Europe, the EAEA is part of the European Year NGO Coalition, which is being coordinated by the EAPN (European Anti Poverty Network) itself a network of anti-poverty NGOs and grassroots groups mainly active of poverty and social exclusion. This coalition of varied and diverse European NGO networks has come together for 2010 to ensure an active participation of social NGOs in the year and to advocate for a strong political legacy.

#### *The possibility of change*

The Coalition fundamentally works from the belief that 2010 – as the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion – represents a real opportunity to make policy changes that will have a lasting impact on fighting inequalities and create a Europe free of poverty in the long term. However to do this we collectively have realised that there needs to be a call for a wide mobilisation at local, national, and European level and so the members of the NGO coalition are calling for a series of actions. Firstly, a public debate on the causes of poverty and social exclusion. Secondly, an enhanced dialogue with people in poverty and anti-poverty NGOs. Thirdly, a strong political legacy from 2010; and lastly funding to match the EU Commitments to fight poverty and social exclusion. These actions aim to make this year the the beginning of a real change beginning with increasing awareness and starting a dialogue with those on the ground, but also making tangible changes. To this end there are a number of tangible actions which the Coalition are calling for, including a new overarching social and sustainable EU strategy, based on fundamental rights, which puts people and the planet first and

makes progress on eradicating poverty and inequality a pre-requisite in the development of all EU policies.

Aside from this the Coalition proposes an EU poverty programme: a new programme which could build on the social inclusion section of the existing EU programme (PROGRESS) and provide additional support for activities within Member States. This programme would then 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. Although only a small selection of the full proposals, full details of which can be found at the Coalition's website, these actions demonstrate the real ways that policy and practices could be changed to ensure the legacy of the intentions of 2010.

### *The role of education*

The question of adult education and the role it can play in combating poverty in this way comes through with the Coalition's belief that poverty is not just about money. Poverty here is not simply the lack of financial resources and income, whether through employment or social benefits, but also encompasses the notion of vulnerability, precariousness, lack of opportunities, injustice and denial of rights. These rights include access to health, housing, employment, services and infrastructure, as well as access to information, culture and political participation. Education plays a key role in the provision of these rights, as provision of education or skills can be a powerful way to allow someone to get themselves out of a downward spiral which so often ends in social exclusion and poverty. The members of the coalition all work from the belief that part of the necessary response to the crisis of poverty in Europe is the renewal of a common vision for the type of society we want to create; and to do that we must also be thinking about how this society can be created.

### *No national issue*

Looked at from this perspective, it is clear that poverty cannot be seen as purely a national issue, as the 2010 EY is already proving. However, the European dimension of the fight against poverty and social exclusion also cannot be dissociated from global challenges linked to demographic change, migration, climate change, and decent work. The structural causes generating poverty are inevitably linked, and increased solidarity between the different struggles to end poverty across the globe is therefore needed.