



2008 EAPN ČR ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT

*„EAPN wants to see a coherent strategy centred
on the rights of people –
not just businesses and banks.“
Fintan Farrell*

The mission of EAPN ČR, a civic association:

Together with the EAPN to support social inclusion and the fight against poverty in the Czech Republic.

Goals:

- Support and develop activities aimed at social inclusion
- Associate organizations and individuals active in the fight against poverty and social inclusion
- Transfer tested work methods into the EU arena, make use of other countries' experience and take part in the creation of policies in the area of social inclusion

Word from the Chairwoman

Dear Friends,

2008 – everywhere mentioned as the “octal” year“ – did not bring powerful good, nor fatal evil. However, the ongoing economic crisis has awoken all of those who believed in the never-ending spiral of economic growth, consumption and wealth. In relation to the fight against poverty and social exclusion, new phenomena in need of rescue have appeared. The goals that were set earlier, such as the acceleration of the process of social inclusion of excluded groups through social services provided to children, adults and families in danger of social exclusion or the inclusion of social partners into the solution of poverty and discrimination, have become more acute, but, on the other hand, they have become somewhat more distant. That is because the crisis has in one way or another had an impact on all layers of the society and the priorities have become rather unfocused.

However, as the European chairmanship of the Czech Republic moved closer, it functioned as a catalyst and among the prepared events there started to appear ones that were also moving the problem of the fight against poverty and social exclusion into the light. The coming to the fore of social exclusion specifically manifested itself in the moment of excessive indebtedness. Not only NGOs, but also concerned Ministries started to realize the crisis, caused by insufficient protection of the consumer, and the threats to the state and its finances caused by bad financial literacy of the population. The problem of insufficiently prepared social workers working as consultants and inexperienced graduates of economics

schools, government workers, and clerks of the central government agencies uncovered itself.

The most important moment of 2008 was, from the point of view of poverty and those experiencing it, probably the endeavour to combine the strengths of the government and the non-government sector and a higher perception of the principle of participation.

That is truly not something small.

Milena Černá

The most important events of 2008

At the beginning of the year a collective volume concerning the conference “**Social Inclusion Mainstreaming** – an effective change in government policies, strategic planning and the approach to the public” which took place between the 4th and 5th October 2007 in Opava was published. Reprint and distribution of a brochure entitled “What is Social Inclusion Mainstreaming”.

In January, the EAPN ČR Executive Board met in the Deaconry Institute in Ostrava and among other things acquainted itself with the popular project Stodolní, which was executed thanks to the financial support of EU structural funds. **Preparation for the 7th Brussels meeting of individuals living in poverty 16. – 17. 5. 2008** took place (R. Turoňová in charge); presentation in a „market“ form, a meeting of delegates – long-term unemployed individuals – took place, and after returning, a seminar, press conference, etc. A meeting of individuals living in poverty was organized by employees and clients of the Kofoed school.

In March 2009, M. Černá took part in an NGO debate at the French embassy when meeting with Martin Hirsch, French government High Commissioner for active inclusion. **M. Hirsch's field** is the education of poor children, housing problems, various methods of home childcare, access to banking services and the prevention of excessive indebtedness.

In April, EAPN ČR representatives M. Černá, K. Klamková and K. Novák took part in a day-long meeting of the **Commission for Social Inclusion of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs**. The topic was discussing and commenting on NAPSI 2008 – 2010.

K. Klamková drafted an **EAPN ČR work plan for 2008** that consists of monitoring legislative and other changes and providing immediate feedback concerning possible systemic corrections to avoid possible unfavourable effects of these changes on the lives of people in danger of social exclusion. EAPN ČR took part in the commenting on the amendment to the law on social services. I. Šniegoňová prepared some material reflecting the effect of cost saving measures in healthcare on the living standards of seniors in the care of the Silesian deaconry. In line with the intention of this plan, Awareness Raising, an EAPN ČR website of higher quality has been successfully launched. (M. Junová in charge.) As a part of the preparation for the European Year Combating Poverty, an agreement was made with the program director of the International Karlovy Vary Film Festival on the screening of two panels of documentary films on poverty (Czech Republic and Europe) in 2010 (M. Černá). Concerning the topic of participation, a group of long-term unemployed individuals was sent to the 7th Brussels conference of individuals experiencing poverty.

As a part of the EQUAL project, in June I. Šniegoňová presented an example of inclusion of the homeless in the Czech Republic within the **Active Inclusion Seminar** in Paris at the “Access to Services” workshop. K. Klamková took part of the **EAPN meeting in Paris**, where she brought information of the European Commission for the announcement of the transformation concept of active inclusion (3 pillars: minimal income, access to services and employment). The National Reform Program follows mainly four priorities: investing into knowledge and innovation, accessible potential of entrepreneurship, investing into people, and the modernization of the labour market. Furthermore, exert pressure on the improvement of governance. Answers to the questions that this Brussels clique supports were sent on 15th October 2008. The annual progress report was sent on 12th December.

In July, M. Černá took part in the **world ICSW conference in Tours** and made a speech on NGOs and their contribution to social inclusion in the Czech Republic.

EAPN ČR members worked in **EAPN groups** as follows:

- structural funds – I. Šniegoňová
- social inclusion – K. Klamková
- employment – S. Kotibová (during the year she replaced M. Lipus)
- NAPSÍ – K. Klamková
- meeting of individuals living in poverty and communication – D. Kocmánková
- social services – K. Schwarz.
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In September, a meeting of the minister of labour and social affairs and F. Farrell, the director of EAPN, was held at the **Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs** concerning conditions for organizing the 8th Brussels conference – a meeting of individuals experiencing poverty and the participation of the Czech Republic within the European Chairmanship.

At the beginning of October the ministers of labour and social affairs of 19 EU countries and representatives from eight other countries met for the first time ever, in **Marseille**. The EAPN informed them that the ministries must take part in the events of EAPN national networks even more, because the EAPN Europe continually informs and supports the national networks for the good of the European Commission. Even though national networks vary widely the activity of national networks is coordinated from Brussels.

On 13th October M. Černá attended a press conference marking the beginning of the week against poverty in Ostrava and visited the Salvation Army and Charity Ostrava.

On the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (17th October), a **national Round Table on Excessive Debt** took place at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the outcome of which was, after the second meeting on 8th December 2008, the Discussion Forum under the auspices of EAPN ČR.

Press report

The declaration of EAPN Czech Republic concerning The International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

On 17th October 2008 a national Round Table on poverty, indebtedness and usury took place with the attendance of the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Deputy Marián Hošek, and the Ombudsman Attorney, Jitka Seitlová. Participating were representatives of NGOs that provide services to individuals in difficult life situations.

The number of people who are in distress because of excessive debt is growing. This economic crisis is strengthening the trend. Excessive debt is not only a question of the debtors. Unethical practices raise the profits of credit providers, but they also lead to social exclusion, criminality and in the end to rises in costs to public budgets.

Round Table participants pointed to insufficient warnings given to people and imperfect legal norms that are largely responsible for creating the risk of excessive debt. They appealed to the credit providers to be more responsible, mainly when offering loans to individuals with lower incomes.

Participants are asking the government to be concerned with preventive measures against excessive debt-caused poverty.

Emergency Resolution

**19th General Assembly of EAPN
25-27 November 2008 Albena, Bulgaria**



The delegates of the 19th EAPN general meeting in discussion by the EAPN ČR board. On the left, Fintan Farrell

The delegates to the 19th EAPN General Assembly are dismayed that less than three months after the Commission made the commitment in the revised social agenda (presented on 2 July), to produce **a balanced set of Recommendations on Active Inclusion** covering the pillars of adequacy of incomes, access to services and access to employment, that they now appear to be ready to abandon this commitment. This is the more surprising given that this commitment received the support of the Member States (via the Social Protection Committee) and of the European Parliament.

The EAPN members are very concerned because if the Commission reneges on this

commitment and just produces another Communication, it will have the impact of further undermining the EU Inclusion Strategy (the Social OMC), as this was one of the most important commitments made in the revised social agenda to strengthen this strategy.

The delegates to the General Assembly asked that their grave concern about this development be communicated immediately to the college of European Commissioners. They further requested that their concern should be communicated to the Prime Ministers and Social Affairs Ministers of the Member States and to the President of the European Parliament and the members of the Parliament's Employment and Social Affairs committee with the request that they call on the Commission to fulfil their original commitment.

If the final position of the Commission is to be known before the Round Table on active inclusion (which should be held during the French EU chairmanship in Marseilles between 15th and 16th October), and if this final position will not be in accordance with the original commitment, then EAPN will appeal to other Round Table participants and will clearly show the European Commission representatives its outrage.

What has not successfully happened in 2008:

- establishing a closer partnership with other EAPN national networks
- including member organization representatives into free workgroups at the EAPN Europe level: *financing, globalization, discrimination, participation, EU - how we want it*
- by creating the fulltime job of EAPN ČR coordinator to strengthen the capacities and resources of the EAPN ČR national network
- expected financing from the project of the Czech Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
- the creation of permanent or ad hoc workgroups at the national level in primary topics that are parallel to work topics or permanent workgroups of EAPN Europe

What began in 2008:

Project within the Progress „The Development of an Informed and Participative Approach to the Understanding of the Evaluation and Creation of the Social Inclusion National Action Plan in the Czech Republic” program. Meeting concerning the project on 18th December in Brno. IQ Roma service is the main operator; the other partners are EAPN, SKOK, People in Need and the Socioclub. The project begins on 1st January 2009 and ends on 31st December 2010. Each organization finances 20%. Progress is a European program of employment and social solidarity. Its duration is from 2007 to 2013.

Basic data about EAPN ČR, a civic association.

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EAPN ČR Members:

Organization:

Salvation Army

People in Need

Deaconry of the Evangelical Church of
Czech Brethren

Deaconry in Czech Republic

Dženo

FORINT

IQ Roma Service

Kofoed school

A Christian and Labour (Kresťan a
práce)

Caritas

SKOK

Silesian Deaconry

Life Together (Vzájemné soužití)

Representatives:

Mike Stannet, major

Pavla Vopeláková

Kateřina Pražáková

Karel Novák

David Šourek

Eva Grollová

Jan Harbáček

Iveta Demeterová

Veronika Vendlová

Katarína Klamková

Radana Melková

Soňa Kotibová

Bedřich Vymětalík

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To all EAPN ČR members who with great zeal, and aside from their jobs, contributed to this public benefit activity of creating conditions for social inclusion and the removal of poverty in the Czech Republic and in Europe.

19th March 2009, Prague