

European Parliament Intergroup "Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, Fourth World Committee" welcomes the principal of the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived

The Intergroup "Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, Fourth World Committee" welcomes the European Commission's efforts to address poverty and social exclusion in the European Union in its proposal of the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived, especially at this time of increased poverty and precarity as a result of the social and economic crisis.

It is deeply regrettable that in 2010 when the EU2020 strategy was drawn up there were already 80 million Europeans at risk of poverty and that this figure now stands at 116 million, with 40 million suffering from material deprivation. The current social and economic climate means that it is essential to develop an efficient replacement to the long-standing and highly successful Food Distribution Programme for Europe's Most Deprived People which provides essential aid to organisations in many Member States working directly with Europe's most deprived to provide them with food, but which will come to an end at the end of 2013.

A more flexible format, allowing greater input and control from those who work directly with Europe's most deprived persons and best understand their needs is desirable and welcomed. A rigorous control of public money is of course required, but this programme must also be as administratively simple as possible.

Placing this new fund under the cohesion heading makes sense, but the intergroup is greatly concerned about the reduction in the proposed budget compared to the current system: 357 million euros per year rather than 500 million euros currently. When Europe's citizens need greater help the proposal is once again '*do more with less*'. On this particular issue that is not possible. As figures from the WHO indicate that an increasing percentage of the EU's population cannot fulfil its basic need of a meal with meat, chicken or fish (or vegetarian equivalent) once every 2 days, and NGOs report increased numbers requesting food, this is the time for the European Union to act to support its most deprived and vulnerable citizens, with a comprehensive programme and budget to fulfil its aims and to contribute to improving the lives of those most in need.

The Intergroup supports the principal of focusing the aid on those who are most deprived and children, as well as not merely providing food but also being able to contribute to clothing and other essential goods and assistance to help Europe's most deprived to participate in activities to help with social integration. However it seriously questions how this can be realised with an annual budget smaller than the current one, and when even demands just for food aid are increasing? The principal is solid, the EU needs to help its most vulnerable inhabitants, but this can only be done with a programme which has adequate means to achieve its goals.

Intergroup "Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, Fourth World Committee"
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