

Poverty and social exclusion Intergroup¹

There is a group of Europeans, made up of more than 80 million people, the equivalent size of the population of Germany, who are at living in poverty or are socially excluded. Their voice is rarely heard in the European institutions. That is why the Intergroup works to draw policy makers' attention to the importance and urgency of this struggle.

The Intergroup considers **poverty to be an attack on human dignity and on fundamental rights** and believes that **the best way of guaranteeing that European policies live up to the expectations of Europe's most deprived is to consult them**. They have things to say. It is by creating permanent structures to enable dialogue and consultation, in order to redirect policies, that each European can find their place. The objective of the Intergroup is to introduce these concerns into the work of the European Parliament and to analyse the legislative proposals with these concerns in mind.

An important element of the intergroup's work is to **organise events to facilitate discussion about the devastating effects of poverty**. Every year an event is organised on 17 October to mark the World Day for the Eradication of Poverty. In 2013, the event was centred around the theme of discrimination and brought together several figures, including Mrs Androulla Vassiliou, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth. In 2012 the event welcomed Abhijit Banerjee from MIT , co-author with Esther Duflo of "Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty". Other events include a meeting with Magdalena Sepúlveda, United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, and also a session about the future of the European fund for the most deprived people. Events are organised depending on the legislative proposals made or social issues which arise.

In March 2014 ATD Fourth World organised their 'peoples' university' in the European Parliament, with the support of the intergroup, which was the final stage of a year's work to produce a document detailing **what Europe's most deprived citizens consider is needed in order to "design and build a Europe without poverty and exclusion"** (http://www.atd-fourthworld.org/IMG/pdf/8_p_EN_sans_adresse.pdf). This event brought together 250 people from 10 countries. It shows that they can be more active and creative than some people think.

Another component of the intergroup's work is to actively **contribute to legislative proposals, aiming to protect the dignity of the most deprived people and to improve their lives concretely**, through putting pressure on the Commission and tabling amendments. Submitted by members of different political groups, these carry more weight when they are discussed by the appropriate committee. A concrete example of this concerns the EU regulation recognising access to a basic bank account. The intergroup also writes written questions to the Commission and the Council asking for clarification on issues or drawing attention to them.

The **intergroup is non-partisan and brings together MEPs from different groups who wish to work together to fight against poverty and social exclusion**. The intergroup is chaired by Sylvie Goulard (ALDE) and the bureau includes (at this stage) Silvia Costa (S&D), IT, Jean Lambert (Greens), UK and Verónica Lope Fontagné (PPE), ES. Since the departure of Jürgen Klute from the Parliament we would like to welcome a

¹ Intergroup "Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, Fourth World Committee"

new member from the GUE, as well as the ECR, to the bureau. Support is provided by the International Movement ATD Fourth World.

In this new mandate the first challenge is to ensure that the intergroup is supported by the different political groups and once again becomes an official EP intergroup. In order for this to be achieved, it must be insured that at least three political groups support² the creation of the intergroup. This means that it is essential for a member of each group to propose that their group supports the intergroup and to work with like-minded colleagues in their group to ensure that one of the available signatures is assigned to the intergroup.

Once that has been achieved then our first event will take place in October for the World Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

Details concerning previous events organised by the intergroup can be found on Sylvie Goulard's website: http://www.sylvie-goulard.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=735&Itemid=735

For any further information, or **if you wish to join the intergroup please contact Sylvie Goulard** (sylvie.goulard@ep.europa.eu)

² Each political group will have a set number of signatures, dependant on the size of the group, which it can use to illustrate support for an intergroup. An intergroup requires at least three political groups to assign their signature to the proposal in order to be accepted as an official EP intergroup.