

European and External Affairs Committee

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Scoping Paper: European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion

Summary

This scoping paper provides background information on the 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion, suggested terms of reference for a short inquiry to look at how the Welsh government and other Welsh stakeholders propose to maximise the benefits to Wales from this European Year, as well as looking at the broader question of Welsh engagement in European Years generally. It suggests a number of witnesses the Committee may wish to invite to give evidence.

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1. Introduction

At its informal meeting on 2 June 2009 the Committee agreed in principle to look at the 2010 European Year of Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion (EY2010), in particular in terms of the participation of Wales and Welsh organisations in the European Year.

This paper provides background information on this European Year, its relevance to Wales, potential terms of reference, and identifies a number of witnesses that could be called to give evidence to the Committee.

2. Policy context: Wales and poverty agenda

Poverty and social exclusion are both issues that have been high on the political agenda in Wales for a number of years, reflected in the policy commitments of the Welsh Government and in the work of the Assembly's Committees.

Annex 1 provides a short overview of this policy context in Wales, as well as summarising the most relevant inquiries and debates that have taken place during the current Assembly (including issues such as child poverty, rural poverty, fuel poverty, pensioners, and homelessness).

3. Background to the "European Years"¹

Each year since 1983, the European Union has chosen a theme for a campaign – branded as a "European Year" – aimed at raising public awareness of and drawing national governments' attention to a specific issue. The themes are many and varied (a full list is available in **Annex 2**).

For each European Year a range of activities is organised to raise awareness around the chosen theme, some of these are organised at EU level, managed by the European Commission (through a lead Directorate-General), others at the local, regional and national level, and co-ordinated by Member States and regional/local authorities.

4. EY2010 for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion

2010 has been designated as the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Inclusion. The legal text was adopted on 22 October 2008², setting out the aims and objectives of the year, the types of activities to be supported, the budget to be allocated, and the structure for implementing the year across the EU.

The lead Directorate-General for the EY2010 is DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities³.

2010 is a symbolic date as it represents the 10-year anniversary of the commitment by Member States to make a "decisive impact on the eradication of poverty" as part of the Lisbon Strategy.

¹ Source: [European Parliament web-site](#)

² See: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2008:298:0020:0029:EN:PDF>

³ See <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=637>

However, figures published by the Commission in 2008 show that poverty remains a significant problem for the EU⁴:

- 78 million people or 16% of the EU population live below the poverty line (set at 60% of their country's average income)
- 19% of children live under the threat of poverty - 19 million children are affected
- 1 in 10 European citizens live in households where nobody works

There are four overarching EU-level objectives for EY2010:

- **Recognition:** recognising the right of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion to live in dignity and take an active part in society
- **Shared responsibility and participation:** promoting public 'ownership' of social inclusion policies and actions, emphasising collective and individual responsibility in combating poverty and social exclusion and fostering commitment and partnerships of public and private actors
- **Cohesion:** promoting a more cohesive society by raising public awareness of the benefits for all. Includes quality of skills and employment, social well-being, equal opportunities, sustainable development and solidarity between generations
- **Commitment and concrete action:** strengthening political commitment, mobilising all interested parties, and giving further impetus to actions in this field from EU and Member States

A budget of **€26 million** has been allocated, of which €17 million will be provided by the EU, which will finance actions at the EU and national levels:

- **€8 million:** for Europe-wide activities such as information and communication campaigns, providing tools for the implementation of the Year, hosting European events
- **€19 million:** to be allocated between Member States to support actions at the local, regional and national level, which are defined in a **National Programme** in each Member State. 50% of this money will come from the EU central pot, which will be matched 50% by co-financing from Member States. It is estimated that the UK will have an overall budget of up to €1.5 million⁵.

The EU intends activities to focus on a limited number of priority areas, and Member States are expected to adapt these to reflect their national, regional and local situations and challenges:

- integrated strategies to prevent and reduce poverty
- fighting child poverty
- promoting inclusive labour markets

⁴ [DG Employment MEMO/08/625 Brussels](#), 16 October 2008

⁵ See <http://www.tsen.org.uk/applying.asp>

- eradicating disadvantages in education and training, including digital literacy, and the specific needs of disabled people
- Tackling the gender and age dimensions of poverty
- ensuring equal access to adequate resources and services, including accommodation, health and social protection
- access to culture and leisure opportunities
- overcoming discrimination and promoting social inclusion of immigrants and ethnic minorities
- promoting integrated approaches to active inclusion
- addressing the needs of people with disabilities, homeless people, and others in vulnerable situations.

The types of activities supported will include: awareness-raising campaigns; studies; innovative schemes to promote social inclusion; conferences; and competitions to identify success stories.

Annex 3 contains a roadmap for implementation of EY2010 across the EU.

5. Implementation in the UK and Wales

Each Member State is required to appoint a “**National Implementing Body**” (**NIB**) that is responsible for (i) drawing up a **National Programme** including priorities for the European Year and (ii) for **selecting the individual actions** to be proposed for community funding.

The UK NIB is comprised of officials from the European Social Inclusion Team at the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), the European Social Fund Division and the Devolved Administrations. It is chaired by Hugh Allen, Policy Adviser within the European Social Inclusion Team in DWP, who is the UK National Co-ordinator for the European Year. The Welsh members are: Callum MacInnes (Callum.MacInnes@Wales.gsi.gov.uk) and Del Burton (Del.Burton@wales.gsi.gov.uk) who are both officials within the Communities Division in the Welsh Government.

The UK NIB also proposes to consult with a '**stakeholder group**' bringing together government, local government, voluntary and community sector, people experiencing poverty and social exclusion and the groups that represent them. Details are not yet available as to how this group is to be formed and which organisations from Wales will participate.

The **UK National Programme** (available on the UK EY2010 web-site⁶) has three main aims:

- To raise awareness of the causes, prevalence and consequences of poverty and social exclusion, and of the policies that aim to tackle these issues

⁶ See www.dwp.gov.uk/european%2Dyear%2D2010/

- To promote and facilitate the engagement and participation of a broad range of people, including among others businesses, voluntary organizations, social enterprises at the local, regional, and national level
- To ensure a lasting legacy - including finding and sharing good practice and setting up ongoing contacts

The **UK National Programme** will be implemented through a mixture of activities at local and national levels, with supporting finance from the £1.2m budget available for UK EY2010. Calls for Proposals were launched during the summer for the following activities (full details available on the UK EY2010 web-site):

- Regional Activities (up to £30k in each English Government Office Region and Devolved Administration)
- Four UK-wide thematic programmes of activity, to be delivered at a local/grassroots level (up to £125k per programme)
- Technical assistance (up to £60k).

The UK NIB has given particular emphasis on activities that address child poverty, multiple deprivation, overcoming barriers to the labour market, older people and poverty and social exclusion. Proposals will be expected to recognise the need for inter-generational approaches. Proposals will be invited from national organisations, or from consortia of organisations working in partnership. These activities might include a further distribution of funds from a successful organisation/partnership to smaller organisations.

In addition to this the UK NIB is working with the DWP's Communications department to develop and implement the Communications Strategy for EY2010, which will include:

- Four launch events (one in each country of the UK)
- A dedicated EY2010 website
- A media campaign, focussed on dispelling myths about poverty and social exclusion and raising awareness of the causes and consequences of poverty
- A high-profile closing event

The UK EY2010 will also provide organisations with an opportunity to 'brand' and 'badge' their activities as part of the European Year, with an application available on the EY2010 web-site.

A series of 'roadshow' style events are being planned across the UK during the autumn, with the intention of raising awareness of EY2010 and initiating debate about the issues. This is being co-ordinated by DWP.

A new project manager was appointed within the DWP social inclusion team in June 2009, Elspeth Darby (Elspeth.Darby@dwp.gsi.gov.uk), to manage the day to day activity of UK EY2010.

6. House of Commons Select Committee Inquiry

The House of Commons Select Committee on European Scrutiny in its [Ninth Report](#), published on 23 January 2008, took a rather critical view of the EU proposals for the 2010 European Year

3.16 We note, however, the very wide scope of the objectives set out in Article 2 of the draft Decision. They appear to extend well beyond the causes and effects of poverty...

3.17 The EC designated 2007 as the European Year of Equal Opportunities for all. So we question the need to refer to equal opportunities in the objectives for the European Year on Poverty. We also question the inclusion in the objectives of "solidarity between and within the generations"; the connection between poverty and intergenerational solidarity is not readily apparent; nor is the connection with sustainable development.

3.18 Moreover, the draft Decision and the Commission's supporting papers appear sometimes to treat poverty and social exclusion as synonyms and sometimes as distinct. Social exclusion can cause poverty and vice versa. But some materially poor people — such as men and women who have taken a religious vow of poverty — are well integrated in society and not all people who are socially excluded are poor.

3.19 We question, therefore, whether the draft Decision is sufficiently focussed on the aim set by the European Council in March 2000 — to make a decisive impact on poverty. We also draw attention to the apparent inconsistency between the very broad objectives proposed in Article 2 and the limited priorities specified in Section IV of the Annex.

3.20 The Commission proposes that:

- each Member State should establish a National Implementation Body;
- each Member State should also establish a National Advisory Group and must appoint to it representatives of its national parliament;
- each Member State should produce a National Programme of activities for the Year; and
- the National Plan should be consistent with the Commission's Strategic Framework Document.

We question why such an elaborate mechanism is necessary and why EC legislation should prescribe Member States' arrangements for taking part in the Year. In particular, we find it wholly inappropriate for EC legislation to require the appointment of representatives of national parliaments to the National Advisory Groups; that proposal is, in our view, clearly inconsistent both with the principle of subsidiarity and the right of parliaments (in particular the Westminster Parliament) to regulate their own affairs.

7. European Anti-Poverty Network⁷

The European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) has been active in lobbying for the 2010 Year. It has adopted a Declaration entitled "Ensuring a lasting legacy from 2010", which calls for the EU to establish ambitious targets to eradicate poverty in the EU by 2020, monitoring this through an annual 'scoreboard'. It also suggests the setting up of a "Social Progress Pact" to put social cohesion and the fight against poverty at the top of the EU agenda, and calls for the development of a new EU "Poverty and Social Inclusion Programme" capable of supporting an EU inclusion strategy.

EAPN's national networks are preparing for the Year, and the EAPN is coordinating a coalition of NGOs at European level with the aim of promoting dialogue with the EU institutions and ensuring that the Year results in concrete actions and efficient policies. A website is due to be launched in September 2009.

⁷ See <http://www.eapn.eu/content/view/full/65/34/lang.en/>

8. Terms of reference and key issues to be addressed

To understand the relevance to Wales of the 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion

To ascertain how the Welsh Government proposes to engage with the European Year, including its involvement in the UK NIB, details of any events or campaigns it proposes to organise and any additional funding it proposes to make available to the third sector to support activities across Wales during the year

To understand what (if any) strategy the Welsh Government has towards “European Years” in general, to ensure Wales is engaging as effectively as possible from the opportunities these present

To explore how the National Assembly for Wales can support initiatives such as the 2010 European Year and future European Years

To hear from Welsh and European stakeholders about actions they have planned to maximise the opportunities presented by the 2010 European Year

9. Potential witnesses

The Committee may wish to consider taking evidence from a selection of the following types of organisations/individuals:

Wales and UK level

- Welsh Assembly Government Ministers and the officials from the Communities Division in WAG that are involved in the UK NIB
- Department for Work and Pensions – UK National Co-ordinator and EY2010 Project Manager within the European Social Inclusion Team; Communications Team within DWP
- Stakeholders in Wales (e.g. Anti-Poverty Network Cymru, Welsh Council for Voluntary Action, Children in Need Wales, Welsh Local Government Association, Welsh media – such as BBC Wales and S4C)

European Level

- DG Employment, Social Affairs & Equal Opportunities or European Commission Representation to Wales (Andy Klom)
- UK Office of the European Parliament, Welsh MEPs
- European Anti-Poverty Network



10. Duration/structure of the inquiry

It is proposed that the Committee carries out a short inquiry, which is aimed at raising awareness and understanding of the 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Inclusion, as well as encouraging active participation in the European Year by organisations across Wales.

The inquiry should be carried out over a maximum of two evidence sessions with recommendations presented in a short report to the Welsh Government.

Annex 1: Policy context in Wales and work in the National Assembly's Committees

This annex provides a short overview of the policy context in Wales, as well as the work on poverty and social inclusion that has been undertaken in the Assembly's Committees.

One Wales makes a number of commitments to address poverty and social exclusion in Wales.

One of the most significant commitments was to seek further powers for the Assembly to legislate on issues related to child poverty. This promise was met following the successful passage of the Vulnerable Children and Child Poverty Legislative Competence Order through the legislative process. The Welsh Government subsequently introduced the proposed Children and Families (Wales) Measure in March 2009. If the proposed Measure becomes law, it will require Welsh authorities (which includes the Welsh Ministers, local authorities, NHS bodies and others) to make and demonstrate their commitment to eradicating child poverty.

The Welsh Government's flagship regeneration programme, **Communities First**, which is targeted at some of the most deprived areas of Wales, entered a new phase in 2009 following a consultation in 2008. The Deputy Minister for Regeneration announced that the 10 year programme that began in 2001 would in future have a clearer focus on practical regeneration initiatives and on tackling poverty.⁸

In spring 2009, the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government announced that the Welsh Government would continue to fund the Council Tax Benefit and Housing Benefit Take-up Campaign as part of its broader commitment to eliminate child poverty.⁹

The Welsh Government has recently consulted on its National Energy Efficiency and Savings Plan, which included proposals for **tackling fuel poverty** (which is where a household would have to spend more than 10 per cent of its income on heating costs to maintain a comfortable temperature in the home) and suggested changes to the Home Energy Efficiency Scheme (HEES) that would more effectively target help towards the fuel poor. A revised Fuel Poverty Strategy is to be issued shortly, as well as a consultation on new HEES regulations.

The *One Wales* commitment to establish **credit unions** in all parts of Wales was met in 2008.¹⁰ Credit unions also feature prominently in the recently published Financial Inclusion Strategy for Wales.¹¹

Social exclusion can be caused by many interrelated factors that contribute towards multiple deprivation. This can include not only experience of poverty, but also poor housing, poor health, unemployment and physical isolation. Some groups particularly affected by a number of these issues are the homeless, elderly, unemployed and carers.

⁸ Welsh Government, Leighton Andrews AM, [Communities Next](#), 17 June 2008 (accessed 15 September 2009)

⁹ Welsh Government, Dr Brian Gibbons AM, [Update on Council Tax Benefit and Housing Benefit Take-up Campaign and announcement of continuing funding for the remaining two years of the scheme](#), Cabinet (Written) Statement, 26 March 2009 (accessed 15 September 2009)

¹⁰ Welsh Government website, [Minister Announces Credit Union Coverage in all Parts of Wales](#), 16 October 2008 (accessed 15 September 2009)

¹¹ Welsh Government, [Financial Inclusion Strategy for Wales](#), July 2009 (accessed 15 September 2009)

A new **10-year Homelessness Plan**¹² was launched by the Welsh Government in July 2009 and the second phase of the **Strategy for Older People in Wales** has just started. This phase runs from 2008 to 2011 and will focus on economic status, well-being and independence.¹³

Unemployment is a major contributing factor not just to poverty, but also to social exclusion. July 2008 saw the launch of **Skills That Work for Wales**, the Welsh Government's strategy to meet its One Wales ambition of a highly-educated, highly-skilled and high-employment Wales.¹⁴ The strategy notes that Wales has a relatively high proportion of young people who are classed as Not in Education, Employment or Training (known as NEETS).

Many carers, particularly young carers, can experience social isolation. The carers LCO sought to provide unpaid carers with more rights and promoting their well-being, including their social and economic well-being.

A number of Assembly committees have conducted enquiries into poverty in Wales:

- Rural Development sub-committee report on Rural Poverty and Deprivation (July 2008).¹⁵
- Sustainability Committee's report on Fuel Poverty (October 2008).¹⁶
- Children and Young People's committee carried out an inquiry scrutinising the Welsh Government's policies on tackling child poverty (November 2008).¹⁷

In addition to debates on legislation, government statements and committee reports, there have been a number of debates in the Senedd on poverty and social exclusion including:

- Liberal Democrats proposed debate on child poverty (16 April 2008)¹⁸
- Plaid Cymru led debate on homelessness and its effect on families (10 December 2008)¹⁹
- Welsh Conservatives debate on the effects of poverty on pensioners (25 February 2009)²⁰

¹² Welsh Government, [Ten Year Homelessness Plan for Wales](#), July 2009 (accessed 15 September 2009)

¹³ Welsh Government, [The Strategy for Older People in Wales 2008-2013](#) (accessed 15 September 2009)

¹⁴ Welsh Government, [One Wales](#), July 2007 (accessed 15 September 2009)

¹⁵ Rural Development Sub-Committee, [Inquiry into Poverty and Deprivation in Rural Wales](#), July 2008 (accessed 15 September 2009)

¹⁶ Sustainability Committee, [Report on the Committee's Consideration of Fuel Poverty in Wales](#), June 2008 (accessed 15 September 2009)

¹⁷ Children and Young People Committee, [Child Poverty in Wales: Eradication through Education](#), November 2008 (accessed 15 September 2009)

¹⁸ [RoP, p137-146, 16 April 2008](#)

¹⁹ [RoP, p128-137, 10 December 2008](#)

²⁰ [RoP, p63-p83, 25 February 2009](#)

Annex 2: European Years since 1983

EUROPEAN YEARS	
2010	for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion
2009	of Creativity and Innovation
2008	of Intercultural Dialogue
2007	of Equal Opportunities for All
2006	of Workers' Mobility
2005	of Citizenship through Education
2004	of Education through Sport
2003	of People with Disabilities
2001	of Languages
1999	of Action to Combat Violence Against Women
1998	of Local and Regional Democracy
1997	against Racism and Xenophobia
1996	of Lifelong Learning
1995	of Road Safety and Young Drivers
1994	of Nutrition and Health
1993	of Older People and Solidarity between Generations
1992	of Health and Safety at Work
1990	of Tourism
1989	of Information on Cancer
1988	of Cinema and Television
1987	of the Environment
1986	of Road Safety
1985	of Music
1984	for a People's Europe
1983	of SMEs and the Craft Industry

Annex 3: Roadmap for implementation of EY2010 Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion

Date	European Commission	Member States
June 2009	Approve or request amendments to national programmes (end June) Provides support to National Implementing Bodies (NIBs)	Prepare calls for proposals for activities
July/August 2009		Launch of Calls for Proposals – in the UK this will be at regional level (i.e. Devolved Administration level and English regions)
October/November 2009	Conference on "Social Exclusion and the media"	Selection of projects Preparation of NIB proposal for EU funds
December		Presentation of national applications to the Commission (10 December)
January/February 2010	Opening Conference Finalise and sign EU co-funding and delegation agreements with NIBs Pay first instalment to NIBs	National launch events – including event in Wales Launch of UK web-site for 2010 European Year
March/April 2010		Start of the activities of the 2010 European Year
November/December 2010	Closing Conference (under the Belgian Presidency of the EU) National closing events	