



IP/10/XX

Brussels, 21 January 2010

## EU launches 2010 European Year: Stop poverty now!

***The European Commission and the Spanish Presidency of the EU have today launched the 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. Under the slogan “Stop Poverty Now!”, the campaign aims to put the fight against poverty – which directly affects one in six Europeans – centre stage across the EU during 2010. European Commission President José Manuel Barroso and Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Zapatero inaugurated the Year at a launch event held today in Madrid.***

Vladimír Špidla, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities said: “One in six people in Europe face a daily struggle to make ends meet, but poverty can also affect the rest of us – and our societies as a whole. While most of the tools for tackling poverty are at national level, three quarters of Europeans also expect the EU to help. The European Year puts this issue at the top of the agenda so that Europe as a whole can join forces to fight poverty and social exclusion.”

Almost 80 million Europeans – or 16% of people across the EU – currently live below the poverty threshold. This alarming fact has found a strong echo in public opinion, according to a recent Eurobarometer survey on attitudes to poverty (see also [IP/09/1585](#)). The vast majority of Europeans (73%) consider poverty to be a widespread problem in their country, with 89% calling for urgent action by their government to tackle the problem. While most people consider their national government as primarily responsible, 74% also expect the EU to play an important role.

The 2010 European Year aims to raise greater awareness of the causes and consequences of poverty in Europe, both among key players such as governments and social partners and among the public at large. It also aims to mobilise these different partners in the fight against poverty; promote social integration and inclusion; and encourage clear commitments on drawing up EU and national policies to tackle poverty and social exclusion.



The Year's activities will be largely decentralised, with national programmes drawn up by each of the 29 countries taking part (the 27 EU countries plus Norway and Iceland). A €17 million budget will support awareness-raising campaigns at European and national levels and hundreds of national projects linked to the different national priorities.

The European Year communication campaign will include a journalists' competition, an art initiative and two 'focus weeks', when various national events around the EU will be concentrated over two weeks in May and in October. The Year will end with a closing conference on 17 December in Brussels, under the Belgian Presidency of the EU.

The campaign website (<http://www.2010againstopoverty.eu>) includes a partners' platform to stimulate networking and joint initiatives among key actors, such as civil society organisations, local and regional authorities. The website will also showcase events held in each of the participating countries.

#### **Further information**

European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion 2010

<http://2010againstopoverty.eu>

Eurobarometer survey on attitudes to poverty and social exclusion – summary report

[http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_321\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_321_en.pdf)

Eurobarometer survey on attitudes to poverty and social exclusion – full report and country factsheets

[http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm)