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Germany's targets for combating poverty remain insufficient

Berlin, 13.04.2012 – The Association of German Family Organisations (AGF) e.V. criticizes the German National Reform Programme for setting insufficient targets for the reduction of poverty in Germany. The AGF demands adequate and serious measures from the government in the combating of poverty and social exclusion.

The current National Reform Programme (NRP 2012), which will be communicated to the European Commission today, states the national contribution to the EU Strategy 2020. It describes how the Government intends to implement the five European objectives, among them the reduction of poverty.

„It is disappointing that the Government again focuses exclusively on long-term unemployment. In total, there are 16 Million people in Germany living in risk of poverty and social exclusion. They are not just composed of permanently unemployed persons, but also mainly children, single parents, large families, immigrants, seniors and physically and/or mentally disabled people. Within this context, the measures of the government are completely insufficient“, states AGF's Chairwoman Bettina Müller-Sidibé.

In its NRP, the Government obscures the international established concept of relative poverty as well as almost all common indicators for poverty and instead exclusively focuses on the indicator of "People living in households with very low labour intensity" and reduces this to "long-term unemployment" (i.e. longer than 12 months without a job). The Government's target is to reduce the number of long-term unemployed by 20% when compared to 2008 (that equals approx. 330.000 people). Assuming that at least two people are living together in each of those unemployed-households, the Government concludes that in total 640.000 people would finally be protected from poverty and social exclusion. By definition, a person shall no longer be categorised as "unemployed", as long as he/she works more than one hour per week. Thus, for the Government it would be sufficient to place a person in work for merely one hour a week in order to designate two people as no longer being at risk of poverty. By this the Government swiftly reaches, at least on paper, its own targets, which have been set far too low anyway.

„The Government's calculation is truly grotesque. It does not bear relation to serious poverty reduction, it merely contains statistical ruses“, criticizes AGF-Chairwoman Müller-Sidibé. "Even if the European Platform against poverty provides the opportunity to really deal with the problems, the NRP is a shameful indictment of the Government."

The family organizations demand the recognition of the manifold reasons for poverty and social exclusion and a reaction with coordinated measures, which respond adequately to the living conditions of the particularly vulnerable groups. This includes, but is not limited to secure wages, equal educational opportunities, adequate possibilities of participation in society as well as adequate social services.

