



2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion

Since 1983, the European Union has focused on a different central theme each year in order to put the spotlight on important political and social issues. 2010 is the *European Year for combating poverty and social exclusion*. All Member States will recognize this by organizing a number of activities, campaigns and projects. The Swedish ESF Council has been appointed by the Swedish Government to administrate the thematic year in Sweden.

This **ANNUAL THEME** aims to confirm and strengthen the political pledge, made by the EU in connection with the launch of the Lisbon Strategy for growth and employment, to “make a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty”. The current international economic and financial crisis has further emphasized the relevance and importance of this theme. The crisis can have long-term consequences for growth and employment in the EU and excluded people run the greatest risk of being hit the hardest.

THE SWEDISH PROGRAMME for the European year for combating poverty and social exclusion has the following *three objectives*:

INCREASE KNOWLEDGE AND STRENGTHEN ADVOCACY in order to raise awareness among the general population, politicians and decision makers, both locally and nationally, about poverty and social exclusion.

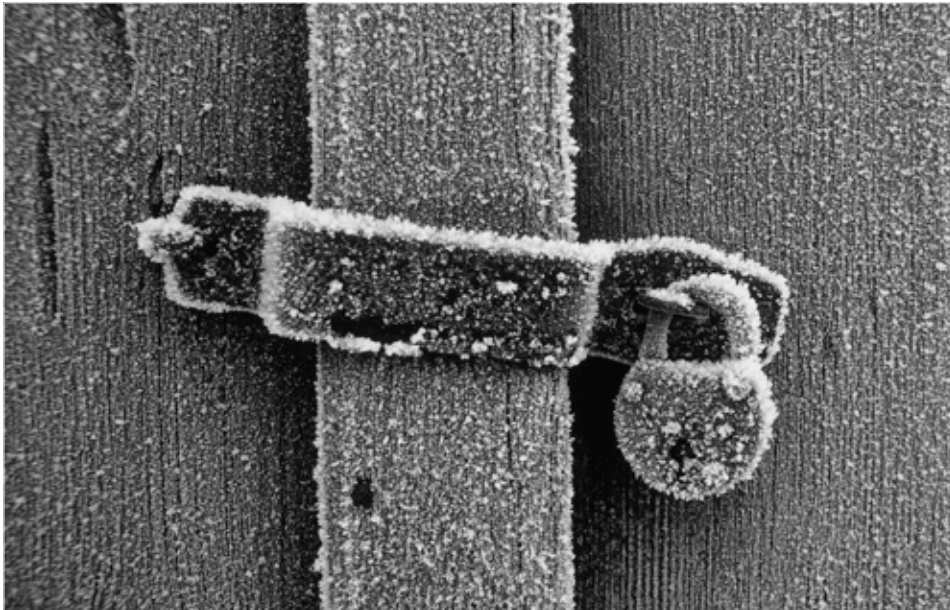
Through a nation-wide consultation and collaboration process, those affected by poverty and social exclusion will be given the opportunity to tell their story, express their demands and proposals to politicians, decision makers, representatives of the private, public and NGO sectors and to the media and researchers. By involving Community Centres (Folkets Hus) and virtual meeting places (Digital Houses) a campaign which includes films, seminars and artistic expressions, will help reach the general population and media.

MOBILISATION OF, AND SUPPORT TO, voluntary organizations in civil society in the battle against poverty and social exclusion, thereby underscoring the collective's and individual's responsibility in this pressing social issue. By opening the doors to a dialogue between the voluntary, public and private sectors, everybody's responsibility to combat poverty and social exclusion is underlined and various actors' efforts in this field, including best practices, are given wider attention. With regards to child poverty, the human rights perspective will receive special focus. Differences between the material living standards of children living in different family constellations and of different ethnic backgrounds will be highlighted. In connection with a special campaign activity, suggestions and clear demands will be lifted up for discussion with responsible politicians and decision makers.

A rights perspective will also be underscored for people belonging to other socially excluded groups. There are large differences when it comes to health care (resulting in poorer health for some) and structural discrimination which excludes certain groups from the labour, housing and education markets. Factors which exclude people from political participation will also be highlighted.

GIVE PEOPLE WHO ARE AFFECTED A VOICE AND THE POSSIBILITY to leave poverty and social exclusion behind them. In Sweden there are a growing number of social exclusion areas that are characterized by housing segregation. The voices of those living in these areas will be heard; meetings between the majority and minority populations will be encouraged which leads to co-operation projects and neighborhood efforts aiming to promote social cohesion at local level.

Strategies for self-empowerment and social innovations/social entrepreneurship will be given special attention and linked to increasing opportunities for work and self sufficiency. Certain extremely poor groups, such as homeless people, irregular migrants/"*sans-papiers*"/hidden asylum seekers and beggars represent a partially new phenomenon in Sweden, which has an effect on social cohesion: *How will our view of one another be affected?* Organizations that work with these groups will be given a prominent role throughout the year. Through artistic expression forms, campaigns and activities, they will be given the opportunity to raise awareness among the general public, politicians and media. A rights perspective is also important.



PRELIMINARY PROJECTS DURING THE THEMATIC YEAR

The objectives will be achieved by means of approximately ten different projects/activities which will be carried out by different actors, primarily NGOs and research oriented institutions. In consultation with the Government's *Users Delegation* (Brukardelegationen) and the *National Network against Social Exclusion* (Nätverket mot utanförskap), a number of themes and activities have been selected. Additional themes and activities linked to the thematic year's different objectives can be taken onboard over the course of the year.

1. ALL VOICES EQUAL with those directly affected by poverty and social exclusion in order to hear and document their stories and help develop opinions and proposals for concerned decision makers among politicians, government agencies, the business community, and NGOs. The opening conference of the thematic year, entitled *The Summit of the Poor*, will be held alongside the launching of consultations. The consultation process will also function to strengthen *the open-coordination method for social policy*, thereby further developing an appropriate and sustainable model for consultations with those concerned/the target groups.

2. SEE THE CHILD! Many organizations have indicated that they will organize activities in connection with the thematic year in order to help raise more awareness about and combat child poverty and social exclusion. More organizations may join in.

3. "TOGETHER WE BUILD AN OPEN, NOT A WALLED, CITY" Växjö University has carried out an extensive research project by surveying and analyzing poverty, social exclusion and segregation in the Swedish city of Landskrona. The results, compiled in the fall of 2009, can be presented in connection with the thematic year and be linked to relevant activities in 2010. The sub-project is assumed to be included in co-operation with Finland.

4. POVERTY POLITICS Through a series of meetings and activities, political think tanks will present their views on poverty from various political and ideological aspects. Suitable forums include, among others, *the Almedalen Week 2010*, as well as the many seminars and gatherings that will be held in connection with consultations with the target groups/those concerned.

5. THE PEOPLE'S HOME – MYTH OR REALITY, HOME OR HOMELESS The historical Swedish term/metaphor – *Folkhemmet* – will form the backdrop for an exhibition which aims to portray the welfare system and the importance of housing in connection with poverty and social exclusion. The exhibition will be shown in connection with activities taking place in the local Community Centres (Folkets Hus) or other suitable venues. Activities organized by Public Owned Housing Associations may also be included under this heading.

6. HOW WILL OUR VIEW OF ONE ANOTHER BE AFFECTED? Many of the organizations represented in the government's *Users Delegation* and the *National Network Against Social Exclusion* have already drawn up plans to raise awareness and combat poverty and social exclusion. These activities will, when appropriate, be encompassed by the thematic year programme. Examples of these organizations include *The Stockholm City Mission* (Stadsmissionen), *the Swedish Disability Federation* (HSO) and *Verdandi* (a Swedish workers' organization for social justice).

7. OUTSIDE IN SWEDEN A growing number of people who lack a residency permit in Sweden live in various forms of informal social and economic systems in Sweden. They live under very difficult circumstances. This group also includes a large number of asylum seekers who have to get by with very meager means. These, in part new, socially excluded groups will be especially highlighted through activities by various organizations, including *No Human is Illegal*.

8. POVERTY OF THE FUTURE – THE FUTURE OF POVERTY Poverty and social exclusion are seldomly portrayed and analyzed from a future oriented perspective. *The Institute of Future Studies*, and others, can within the frame of the thematic year carry out activities and publish reports and articles that deal with the issue of poverty from a future oriented perspective. Co-operation with researchers in other Member States is also foreseen in this sub-project.

9. POVERTY FROM NORTH TO SOUTH A number of thematically oriented bilateral activities will be carried out in co-operation with Finland and, preliminarily, Germany and Spain. These activities will, when relevant, be linked to other projects.

10. FURTHER ACTIVITIES/SUB-PROJECTS will be brought onboard after consultation with the *Users Delegation* and the *National Network Against Social Exclusion*. Special attention must be given to project ideas and activities which exemplify the role of the business community at large, and individual companies in combating poverty. In addition to these, a number of other already planned activities will take place throughout the year, including conferences on poverty and social exclusion such as the Social Services Forum 2010, publication of the Social Report 2010 and reports from the Nordic Council of Minister's poverty project.

