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### 3rd ecdn General Assembly and Conference 20-22 October 2009 in Vienna



*General Assembly in Vienna*

ecdn's 3rd General Assembly will take place on the 20th of October 2009 in Vienna, Austria. The GA will be linked to a conference on "Reference Budgets for Social Inclusion" on 21/22 October, which will present and discuss the findings and results of the transnational EU project: Standard Budgets.

*A detailed programme of the conference and the GA will be available upon request: [office@ecdn.eu](mailto:office@ecdn.eu)*

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#### New Issues of Money Matters

Two new issues of ecdn's publication series **Money Matters** are now available for download (see ecdn's website). "Money Matters" 6 deals with "Reference Budgets for Social Inclusion". Number 7 contains a summary of ten European countries concerning "Over-indebtedness and Data Collection".



**Reference Budgets for Social Inclusion:** Reference budgets have been developed in various countries across Europe in the past years. They have been in use for a variety of aims and have proved to be an effective instrument with regards to promoting social inclusion. Based on the household composition, the disposable income and some other characteristics, an expenditure pattern is given that suits the situation of the household. Reference

budgets can be based on empirical data (e.g. budget enquiries) or constructed by budget experts. **Money Matters 6** presents an ecdn project on developing reference budgets in Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria and Spain and reports about the use of reference budgets in Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK.



**Over-indebtedness and Data Collection:** The current financial and economic crisis will dramatically increase the number of unemployed people. In this process, the number of over-indebted people will increase as well. It is therefore important to take a closer look on the situation concerning over-indebtedness in Europe. **Money Matters 7** provides data and insights into the situation in Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden and the United Kingdom and gives a short overview of recent developments in the fight against over-indebtedness at EU level.

All issues can be downloaded from the [Money Matters section](#) of ecdn's website. Printed examples can be ordered at [office@ecd.nu](mailto:office@ecd.nu) (against coverage of postage costs).

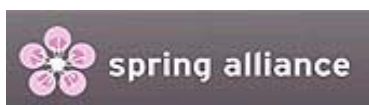


**"A Policy Framework for Addressing Over-indebtedness": Study on Over-indebtedness by Irish Combat Poverty Agency (2009) by Stuart Stamp**

Ireland is facing a growing household debt crisis. While certain initiatives have been put in place, there is no strategic or comprehensive response for tackling the issue of consumer debt. Over the last two decades, Ireland has developed an innovative approach to dealing with the problem of consumer over-indebtedness. This approach is based primarily on a network of government-funded Money Advice and Budgeting Services (MABS).

This paper (45 pages) draws lessons from the experiences of other European countries and applies these to an Irish context. It concentrates on how the problem may be most appropriately measured and dealt with in Ireland. The study focuses on three main issues: defining and measuring over-indebtedness, the characteristics, nature and causes of over-indebtedness, and policy interventions for preventing and dealing with over-indebtedness.

[Download the study](#) (pdf)



**Sign the Spring Alliance Manifesto:  
For a European Union that puts people and the planet first**

Economic, political and social challenges have been growing over the past years, and finding answers has become more urgent with the current financial and economic crisis. European Trade Unions, environment, social and development organisations have recently endorsed a joint manifesto to give guidance to the new European institutions and all political decision makers.

The main proposals of the Spring Alliance Manifesto are to establish an economic and governance strategy that serves people and planet; to preserve and restore ecosystems; to establish inclusive societies; to promote green and quality jobs; to assume global responsibility and to improve democracy.

Their joint campaign now moves into its lobbying phase, organising a high-level conference at the European Economic and Social Committee in Brussels at the 28th of September. Speakers will include José Manuel Barroso (President of European Commission).

All organisations aiming at putting people and planet first are called to support the Manifest by **signing it now**.

[Spring Alliance Manifesto](#) (pdf, full text)

[Online form to sign the Manifesto](#)

[Information on the conference](#)

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## People Experiencing Poverty Discuss Financial Exclusion



*One of the Austrian delegates*

Financial exclusion was one of the main issues raised at the 8th European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty (Brussels, 15-16 May), organised by the Czech EU Presidency with support of the European Anti Poverty Network EAPN. 132 delegates from 28 countries as well as 77 guests from National Ministries, EU Institutions, NGOs, academics, and Trade Unions and some 60 journalists took part in the meeting. The title of this year's meeting was "Where we live, what we need" and it addressed in particular the areas of housing, financial inclusion and basic services (energy, water, public transport etc.). The delegates to the 8th EU meeting demonstrated that they want more Europe, but only if it is a more social Europe, close to the citizens. They also stressed that it was hard to see that the fight against poverty and social exclusion was a major priority for the EU and that in many cases the impact and responses to the economic crisis are putting unbearable pressure on people who were already suffering from the burden of poverty and social exclusion.

**2010, the EU Year of the fight against poverty and social exclusion**, has to be a strong year where people experiencing poverty are listened to and their views taken seriously.

[EAPN PEP](#)

[www.2010againstopoverty.europa.eu](http://www.2010againstopoverty.europa.eu)

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## Commission Pushes for 'Responsible Lending' and 'Credit Histories'

The European Commission launched a consultation on **responsible lending and borrowing**, in an attempt to tackle credit market risks that were at the the root of the current financial crisis. The consultation covers, amongst other things, the

advertising and marketing of credit products, the pre-contractual information provided, ways to assess product suitability and borrower creditworthiness, advice standards, responsible borrowing and issues relating to the framework for credit intermediaries (e.g. disclosure, registration, licensing and supervision). Relevant stakeholders were invited to make known their views by the end of August. A joint response was submitted by ecdn, the European Micro Finance Network, the European Anti Poverty Network (EAPN) and many others on the initiative of ecdn member Réseau financement alternatif. The response includes the recommendation to offer on each national market a range of labelled financial products that meet the needs of the majority of the low and average income people.

A second consultation has been launched by the Commission on the report of the expert group on **credit histories**. ecdn's response on that consultation stresses the right of borrowers on their own credit history and recommends to further analyze the data protection necessities and practices as well as the use of exchange of credit data in more detail

For ecdn's responses to both consultations and further information see [www.ecdn.eu](http://www.ecdn.eu).

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### ecdn's Response to EU Consultations on Access to a Basic Bank Account

Early this year the European Commission launched a public consultation on "Financial Inclusion: Ensuring Access to a Basic Bank Account". ecdn and many other institutions responded the consultation. ecdn – amongst others – stressed that providing access to a basic bank account (BBA) has to be regarded as a service of general interest and should best be available with all providers. BBA don't need to be free of charge, ideally they would be provided for a standardized low cost price, including a certain number of basic services. In order to achieve effective and full financial inclusion, access to other financial services like credits and insurance services has to be safeguarded.

[ecdn response](#) (pdf)

Other responses:

- [iff response](#)

- [EAPN response](#) (pdf): According to EAPN, a basic bank account should cover a number of key services and be accompanied by accessible, affordable, quality services. However, tackling financial exclusion implies looking much beyond access to a bank account. As EAPN underlines, urgent action is also needed to ensure fairer credit and lending practices, and tackle over-indebtedness.

- [EMN response](#) (pdf)

- [Réseau Financement Alternatif \(RFA\)](#) (pdf): The document has been co-signed by 36 institutions.



COUNCIL OF EUROPE    CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE    **Council of Europe stresses social responsibility of regions to fight over-indebtedness**

A draft report on the social responsibility of regions towards households at risk of over-indebtedness and usury has been presented at a recent meeting of the Council of Europe's Committee of Social Cohesion of the Congress of Local and Regional Powers (28/29 April in Linz, Austria).

Regional decision makers are called to make lenders/credit intermediaries aware of their responsibilities, to create and support effective debt advice services, to support preventive programmes, to encourage access to responsible financial products, to combat usury on the ground and to collect and evaluate relevant data. These and further recommendations will be discussed over the coming months.

A final version of the resolution and recommendations is to be adopted by the Committee, to be discussed during the 17th Plenary Session of the Congress, in October 2009.



### ecdN is now a Member of EAPN and of the Social Platform

In spring 2009, ecdN was accepted as a member of two important European networks: the Social Platform and EAPN.

The **Platform of European Social NGOs** (the Social Platform) is the alliance of representative European federations and networks of non-governmental organisations active in the social sector, promoting social justice and participatory democracy by voicing the concerns of its member organisations. The Social Platform and its members are committed to the advancement of the principles of equality, solidarity, non discrimination and the promotion and respect of fundamental rights for all, within Europe and in particular the European Union. Since 1990, the **European Anti Poverty Network** (EAPN) has been an independent network of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and groups involved in the fight against poverty and social exclusion in the Member States of the European Union. The membership of EAPN is involved in a variety of activities aimed at combating poverty and social exclusion including, education and training activities, service provision and activities aimed at the participation and empowerment of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion. EAPN has consultative status with the Council of Europe.

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### ecdN: Growing Membership



*Some ecdN members at the 2nd General Assembly in Madrid, October 2009*

Founded in 2007 by eight institutions, ecdN has currently 36 organisation members and three individual members in 19 countries. In November 2008, five new member organisations joined the network:

- \* **ADICAE** - Madrid Asociación de Usuarios de Bancos, Cajas y Seguros (Spain)
- \* **dgh** - Deutsche Gesellschaft für Hauswirtschaft e.V. (Germany)
- \* **Konsumentverket** (Sweden)
- \* **Poradna** - Debt Advice Center – Counselling in Stringency (Czech Republic)
- \* **STOB** - Association for Financial Security of the Citizens of the Polish Republic (Poland)

Help us to make ecdn an even stronger network! If each existing member gets one other organisation to join ecdn, we will double the number of members. Applications should be submitted by the 20th of September to ensure that new members can be accepted at the General Assembly in Vienna (20th of October).



**Join the Network Now!**

Increasing the strength and influence of the network will depend on the number, the commitment and the activities of its members from across Europe. All interested actors active in the fight against over-indebtedness and financial exclusion are invited to become members!

If you are interested in further information or in becoming a member, please write to: [office@ecd n.eu](mailto:office@ecd n.eu) or visit [www.ecd n.eu](http://www.ecd n.eu)



**Join the ecdn E-Group!**

In order to make communication among us as easy as possible, an ecdn e-group has been established. If you are not already part of it, join NOW by sending a blank (empty!) e-mail to: [ecd n-forum-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:ecd n-forum-subscribe@yahoogroups.com). Once you have been included as a member of the e-group you will be able to reach all other members with sending your messages to just one – the e-group's – address.

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