

# GERMANY

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## POVERTY DOES NOT EXIST

Although about 9% of the German population can be considered to be poor under the definition of the European Union (income less than half of the net household income in the respective country – relative poverty), the German government refuses to admit that there is poverty in Germany.

With reductions in social security and social standards in order to meet the Maastricht criteria for joining the European Monetary Union, and, at the same time, a widening of the gap between poor and rich in the country, poverty increasingly becomes a subject of public debate. There is also mounting criticism on the part of NGOs because of so-called legislative «reforms» which mostly imply reductions in social expenditure.

The NGO Forum organized a conference to develop and propose criteria for a national report on poverty to be issued regularly by the German government on February 29, 1996 in Bonn at the Friedrich Ebert-Stiftung. We reiterated our demands on the occasion of a forum in June 1996 where examples of poverty reporting

from other EU countries were presented. To no avail.

On the contrary, the German government together with the UK was instrumental in preventing a 4th. EU Programme against poverty to be implemented as well as one for the elderly. The action programme for women was reduced by half.

Several German cities have issued ordinances to prohibit begging.

Joblessness is at more than 10% and there are an estimated one million homeless.

Data on poverty are almost unavailable in this country, therefore, this is not a very systematic report.

- The German NGO-Forum is a co-ordination of over 50 German NGOs created in 1994 in order to contribute to the WSSD negotiations.