

Academics Stand Against Poverty launches its first Eastern European Chapter in Romania

In a world where the inequality gap is extremely disproportionate, where 67 individuals own a fortune equivalent with 3.5 billion (half the planet's population) poorest people, where famine and poverty related diseases are killing more than 18 million people a year and where the global institutions, through policies, have the capacity and the moral obligation to eradicate poverty worldwide and offer universal respect for human rights, a group of prominent academics have united to find the policies that can adjust to solving the current problems.



ASAP Romania, May 25th, 2015

Academics Stand Against Poverty (ASAP) is a global organization focused on utilizing scholarship to influence policy and public attitudes to poverty. More than 150 academics, experts and researchers worldwide, are constantly working on a global institutional formula that can rapidly and through clear measures is designed to end world poverty. Because the status quo of the world institutions consists in policies that are rather pursuing the interests of the most affluent, the ASAP members are doing rigorous research to tackle the causes and give recommendations suitable for a just global society.

So far, many academics were debating essential global issues within conferences and in niche articles, with no actual success in reaching the ears of the policy makers, the civil society, or the general public, even though their research and possible solutions were very well thought. As a consequence, the global discourse on poverty was only sold to the public by the global institutions which were responsible to end poverty. Thus, the data on progress offered to the public by the UN or the World Bank was not really put under the question mark.

ASAP has been developed as an international platform that facilitates contact between North-South poverty focused academics and that helps academics pursue applied research and intervention projects, as well as campaigns on specific issues. In the five years of existence, it has extended in over 18 chapters in different corners of the world. ASAP Romania is one of the newest, representing the first Eastern-European chapter.

The launch of ASAP Romania took place on May 25th, 2015 at the Romanian Diplomatic Institute in Bucharest, with the financial and logistical support of the Centre for International Cooperation

and Development Studies (IDC) of the Faculty of Political Science, University of Bucharest. The event gathered over 100 academics, government officials, NGO representatives, development workers, students and other civil society actors to discuss current and urgent issues of international development, with a focus on systemic poverty.

The ASAP Romania launch was marked by the **Kapuscinski Development Lecture** held by **Thomas Pogge, Leitner Professor of International Affairs at Yale University and President of Academics Stand Against Poverty**, 'Development Goals - Brilliant Propaganda?' during which he emphasized the flaws within the Millennium Development Goals and how we should address them in the post-2015 development agenda.



speaking at the Kapuscinsky Development Lectures, May 25th, 2015

According to **Professor Pogge**, the main issue is that the development goals are merely a 'wishlist' that doesn't specify who is accountable for what, while too much effort is invested in trying to make us more successful than we really are in implementing the development goals.

With this occasion, Thomas Pogge has recommended to the responsible experts **three immediate actions necessary to improve the SDGs framework:**

We should sharpen and specify the responsibilities of capable agents. Who are the agents that are undertaking this effort together and what is the division of labor among them? Who is supposed to do what?

We need a clearer outside independent measurement of success. So we need to have independent agents and agencies that monitor progress in particular dimensions and report independently to the world as to how we are doing.

We need to pay more attention to the systemic factors. Why is it that poverty persists? Why is it that inequality is rising in most countries? We have to change these mechanisms in order to stop increasing inequalities at the source, rather than counteracting them through development assistance.

The second session of the launching event was the workshop called **Combating Poverty and Inequalities: New Perspectives for Romanian Academics & Practitioners** where Romanian and international experts have presented their theoretical and empirical work on issues of poverty. Speakers such as Ciprian Necula (Ministry of European Funds), Leslie Hawke (OvidiuRO), Cătălin Berescu, Grațian Mihăilescu, Dani Sandu, Doina Doroftei (MFA Romania) or Alexandru Ciorobea (**Together for Development**) have discussed issues of child poverty, youth poverty, living conditions in extreme poverty in Romania and Europe and its link to racial segregation, the problem of communities of Roma that have no identity cards or other official papers, therefore considered invisible and showed examples of successful actions that managed to ameliorate or even eradicate the extreme poverty in several communities. The discussions raised a high interest on behalf of the participants, who took the chance to ask insightful questions regarding the methodologies used in studies or the ground-experiences of the speakers.



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Besides putting an urgent global debate on the table of the Romanian experts and academics, the innovative aspect of the launch of ASAP Romania consists in giving those who work on poverty-related issues the opportunity to increase their impact through ASAP's international network which encourages them to collaborate with other academics, enables them to effectively outreach to policy-makers and broader public audiences and helps them to pursue applied research and intervention projects.

The event was also an online success online. The lecture of Professor Thomas Pogge had a rating equivalent to that of a prime time news journal in Romania, one of the European countries with the highest number of TV viewers. In total, the Kapuscinski lecture reached more than 200.000 people from over 60 countries.

Needless to say, the whole event was an opportunity to get engaged with global debates, issues and solutions, meet new people, create new partnerships, but also to reconnect with fellow colleagues in a pleasant and constructive atmosphere.

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In order to find out more about **Academics Stand Against Poverty (ASAP) & ASAP Romania** and their activities, visit:

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