

Academics Stand Against Poverty - Romania



What is ASAP-Romania?

ASAP Romania is an initiative of Academics Stand Against Poverty (ASAP), an international network helping scholars and students enhance their impact on global poverty. It does so by promoting collaboration amongst poverty-focused academics, by helping them reach out to broader audiences on issues of poverty, and by helping them turn their expertise into impact through specific intervention projects as well as campaigns on specific issues.



ASAP's president, **Prof. Thomas Pogge** of **Yale University**, announced the initiative of building **the Romanian Chapter** during his visit at **the 2014 Romanian Development Camp**, where he gave two lectures regarding the role of academia in combating global poverty and how to track progress against deprivations.

How is ASAP distinctive from other poverty-focused organizations?

First and foremost, among ASAP's members are internationally recognized experts who are contributing with rigorous reviews on the work on poverty, trying to bring the research and the solutions proposed at the academic levels outside the ivory tower and have a real impact. Second, its network is extended globally, including numerous universities and academics, especially promoting North-South collaboration among its members, with a strong focus on creating opportunities for those who face barriers to full participation in the global academic dialogue.

ASAP is headed by Prof. Thomas Pogge (Yale University) along with the board of directors. The advisory board includes prominent academics such as Prof. Peter Singer (Princeton), Prof. Paul Collier (Oxford), Prof. Ha-Joon Chang (Cambridge), Prof. Sabina Alkire (Oxford), Branko Milanovic (CUNY, formerly a leading economist at the World Bank) and many other experts working in the field of poverty.

Why Romania?



ASAP constantly aims to develop its network by opening chapters in parts of the world that it did not cover before. Eastern Europe represents such a region, and Romania is a country presenting two important characteristics for this choice. First, Romania is one of the European countries most affected by poverty and where action is urgently needed. Second, Romanian academics should be able to participate with their work in the global academic dialogue and increase their impact on poverty eradication.

How can Romanian scholars contribute to ASAP's mission?

The overarching aim of ASAP is to contribute to the eradication of severe poverty worldwide and to ensure that poverty policy and development efforts are guided by rigorous empirical and normative scholarship. ASAP's ultimate concern is for people, not for countries, thus it focuses on poor people from both affluent and less-affluent countries.

ASAP Romania is on the path of developing the first chapter in Eastern Europe which will be involved in ASAP's international projects as well as develop local/regional related projects. In this context, we invite Romanian academics and experts whose work is focused on poverty to get involved or to become members, and to participate in our Global Colleagues Project. ASAP's members are eager to share their expertise in public debates and policy dialogues where they have the opportunity to be heard and to work with their peers around the world.

Who else is contributing to this mission?

ASAP has Chapters launched or in development in Austria, Brazil, Cambodia, Canada, India, Italy, Germany, Mexico, Oceania, Romania, Spain, the United Kingdom, the United States and West Africa. In total, more than 1,200 ASAP members work and study in universities, research centers and NGOs worldwide.

In the context of the upcoming SDGs, how could academics enhance their positive impact on poverty? / Could you give a concrete example of ASAP's work regarding the SDGs?

In 2012 at Yale University, ASAP has launched the Institutional Reform Goals project, a research and advocacy project that aims for the reform of supranational institutional rules and practices that are worsening poverty globally.

Why should we care about systemic reform?

A systemic reform of global institutions is a focal point in the debate regarding the post-2015 development agenda. Given the time-sensitive nature of this debate and official deliberations on the subject, IRG's **short-term** focus is on the UN Sustainable Development Goals. This means our objective is to ensure that the emerging SDGs are made as good as they can realistically be. Like many other civil society organizations, we call for the inclusion of meaningful language, in the new development goals, on issues such as human rights and inequality reduction. Our focus, however, is to advocate for the strongest possible emphasis on accountability, and on systemic reforms of global institutions. We will intervene in the ongoing post-2015 debates through a variety of methods, such as producing and circulating original, research-based policy briefs articulating our objectives, and organizing awareness-raising campaigns with collaborating institutions.

Such an undertaking was already successfully carried out combining the efforts of ASAP's global network. More than 50 experts signed an open letter to Ban Ki-moon, UN's Secretary General, asking him to push for the inclusion of specific policies in the SDGs that would stop tax abuse, a

practice that severely affects developing countries and increases global poverty. The letter circulated in a petition campaign, where ASAP Romania made an important contribution toward raising the symbolic number of 2015 signatures. This shows a rising interest on behalf of Romanian citizens to have a voice in the global decision-making.

Moving into the **longer term**, we have identified ten focus areas in which the reform of global rules and practices could have a major impact on human development and poverty eradication: (1) **illicit financial flows**, (2) **international resource and borrowing privileges**, (3) **intellectual property law**, (4) **democratization and accountability**, (5) **international labor standards**, (6) **international trade**, (7) **environmental sustainability and climate change**, (8) **global migration**, (9) **the arms trade**, and (10) **debt**.

For each of our focus areas, we will:

Articulate politically feasible institutional reform **goals and illustrative targets** to be presented through research-backed policy papers.

Work to build a broad coalition of academics and civil society members to support our call for new **institutional reform goals**.

Promote these **institutional reform goals** widely (as a first step, by engaging with and intervening in the post-MDG debate).

ASAP's IRG project is ambitious and unique. While other NGOs are campaigning in many of the 10 areas we have identified, very few understand them as systematically interrelated.