

# Network news



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Editorial

## It is time to put the social back at the centre of the migration agenda!

**M**igration is now the subject of growing political debate in many European countries. It is estimated that 2 million migrants arrive in Europe from other parts of the world each year. Immediately after the 2004 enlargement of the EU, Ireland and the UK saw the largest inward migration ever recorded in each state. Spain's inward migration has risen by 400% in the last ten years.

By and large the economies of Member States require this additional labour in order to prosper in the context of their own ageing populations and falling unemployment levels. Migrants have however generally been allocated low paid and often undesirable work, the 3 Ds – Dirty, Dangerous and Difficult. Many have been treated unfairly and do not enjoy the same labour standards as their resident counterparts. The discrimination often faced by migrants is integral to their experience of poverty; discrimination causes exclusion and poverty, while poverty in turn compounds experiences of discrimination. These dynamics are particularly sinister in the context of economic downturn and recession.

It is incumbent on us all to support and engage with the fight against racism within the EU Member States. All forms of racism, xenophobia, and religious discrimination must be consistently challenged if we are to promote and achieve equality of treatment among EU citizens and third country nationals. In EAPN we are specifically concerned to work with, and in solidarity with, migrants as part of the fight against poverty and social exclusion.

*Patrick Burke*

*Chair of the EAPN working group on discrimination and poverty*

## FOCUS ON IMMIGRATION IN THE EU

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## THE COMMON BASIC PRINCIPLES ON INTEGRATION IN FOCUS

Immigration now accounts for some 20 million people in the EU. Immigration and integration are therefore issues of extreme importance. Common Basic Principles on Integration were agreed by the EU Council in 2004. There are 11 principles in all. They aim to assist Member States in formulating integration policies:

1. Integration is a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States.
2. Integration implies respect for the basic values of the EU.
3. Employment is a key part of the integration process [...].
4. Basic knowledge of the host society's language, history, and institutions is indispensable to integration [...].
5. Efforts in education are critical to preparing immigrants, and particularly their descendants, to be more successful and more active participants in society.
6. Access for immigrants to institutions, as well as to public and private goods and services, on a basis equal to national citizens [...] is a critical foundation for better integration.
7. Frequent interaction between immigrants and Member State citizens is a fundamental mechanism for integration [...].
8. The practice of diverse cultures and religions is guaranteed under the Charter of Fundamental Rights and must be safeguarded [...].
9. The participation of immigrants in the democratic process and in the formulation of integration policies and measures, especially at the local level, supports their integration.
10. Mainstreaming integration policies and measures in all relevant policy portfolios and levels of government and public services is an important consideration [...].
11. Developing clear goals, indicators and evaluation mechanisms are necessary to adjust policy, evaluate progress on integration [...].

## A social Europe: but for which migrants?

If migration has featured high on the EU agenda over the last decade, it is only recently that migrants' social rights and access to employment became a priority for national and EU decision makers... But what social rights are we talking about? And should we understand that the EU is paving the way to a social Europe for all migrants, or only some of them?

### A difficult access to social rights

Although not all migrants are at risk of poverty, the daily reality of third country nationals in the EU is often one of poverty and social exclusion, a problem that is exacerbated by the obstacles migrants face to exercise their social rights.

Disadvantages in the labour market: The distinction between the right to reside and the right to seek employment forms a barrier in accessing the labour market for legal migrants in many countries: most countries apply specific schemes which are becoming increasingly restrictive. A high number of migrants can only find atypical employment which is poorly paid and makes them vulnerable to discrimination, exploitation and poverty in old age. This is not only true for those who lack an 'adequate' education and skills, but also – due to non-recognition of educational qualifications as well as discrimination – for highly educated and skilled migrants.

Insufficient access to health care provisions: Given the close interdependence between poverty and bad health, it is not surprising that migrants also face a higher risk of health problems, often due to exploitive working conditions, poor nutrition and inadequate housing as well as lack of access to other services. Legal status can often present formal barriers in accessing health care, even emergency health care, which can be compounded in the case of undocumented migrants by a fear of making themselves known to officials.

Lack of adequate housing: A great number of migrants are exposed to legal barriers and discrimination in accessing adequate and affordable housing, forcing them into poor housing conditions. Refugees are also facing specific problems, conditions in reception centres for refugees being

poor in many countries. Such obstacles result in migrants facing a disproportionately high risk of homelessness in most European countries.

Lack of access to social services: In general migrants experience greater difficulties than other social groups in accessing services and hence in exercising their rights. Obstacles in access to counselling, legal advice, child care and other services can be explained by different reasons, ranging from the straight-forward denial of rights to a lack of information or understanding about

the availability and functioning of the social services. Besides, undocumented migrants in many countries have no access to social services at all or are afraid to make themselves known to service providers.

The daily reality of third country nationals in the EU is often one of poverty and social exclusion

Discrimination through (limited access to) education: Disadvantages within educational processes usually start at early school age and are continued when it comes to accessing and benefiting from labour market training programmes that often ignore the linguistic needs, as well as previous knowledge and qualifications, of migrants. In some countries undocumented children are denied access to schools.

Lack of consideration within social inclusion strategies: Social inclusion strategies in many countries give comparatively little consideration to preventing and fighting (the risk of) poverty among migrants. This is especially evident when it comes to undocumented migrants and asylum seekers, where most national plans lack appropriate strategies and measures.

### EU approach: the high skilled first?

Migration policies, social rights and migrants' integration remain mostly Member States competences. Yet, the last decades were marked by the

emergence of common policies, as a way to tackle similar challenges, help the Member States face their own demographic challenges and allegedly “share the burden” of managing migration flows.

The so-called Tampere (2000-2005) and Hague (2005-2010) programmes set the stage for a common immigration policy, focusing on some priority areas including:

- Migration and economic migration – building on the 2005 Policy Plan on Legal migration, which aims primarily to encourage labour migration from high skilled workers;
- Fight against illegal immigration and return – through an increasingly security oriented approach, which culminated with the proposal for the “return” directive harmonizing procedures among Member States;
- Asylum – through the progressive development of a Common European Asylum system including common procedures and standards;
- Integration – following the adoption of Common Basic Principles on Integration and of a Common Agenda for Integration in 2005, to be implemented at both EU and national level.



If the development of a common policy could be a lever to strengthen migrants’ situation through a “positive” harmonization, it mostly took the form of an utilitarian approach based on host countries’ economic needs and security agenda, resulting in undermining rather than strengthening migrants’ fundamental and social rights. It was also characterized by a lack of policy coherence and strong divergence of views between its main actors (i.e. “justice, freedom and security” vs “employment and social affairs”).

However, in a context of demographic changes and labour market shortages, the EU discourse is evolving to put a stronger focus on migrants’ social integration and access to employment (an important lever to reach the 2010 Lisbon targets). Two major proposals are currently under discussion in this view, namely the so-called “Blue Card” directive aiming at facilitating entry and residency of highly skilled migrants, and the directive on

establishing basic social and economic rights for third country workers.

But if these two proposals could be seen as steps forward in the development of a social Europe for migrants, we should remember that they concern specific categories (highly qualified workers, students...), while the most at risk of poverty (in particular undocumented migrants, asylum seekers...) see their own prospects, working and living conditions drastically threatened.

In this context, the question rather becomes: a social Europe, yes, but for which migrants?

### **Time to put the social back at the centre of the migration agenda**

With the Hague programme coming to an end, the next two years will be crucial to reflect on the vision underlying EU migration policies. The European Commission has already published a Communication “Towards a Common Immigration Policy” and the Council set up its “Futures Group” on the issue. On the shorter term, the French Presidency has made migration one of its key priorities, making proposals for a Migration Pact that should set a new political agenda for the next presidencies.

The months ahead will be essential to put the question of access to social and fundamental rights at the heart of the EU migration agenda. Yet this will not happen without stronger coordination and alliance building between all key actors involved: decision-makers and media of course, but also NGOs themselves, which are essential to build bridges between the development, human rights, anti-racist and social inclusion movements and shape a positive migration framework based on human dignity and fundamental rights.

*Elodie Fazi  
EAPN Policy officer*

## **“THE EU-25’S POLICIES ON INTEGRATION SCORE ONLY HALFWAY TO BEST PRACTICE”**

The opportunities for social, cultural and political participation afforded to migrants entering the European Union vary widely – this according to the “Migrant Integration Policy Index” (MIPEX), a survey released at the end of 2007 under the auspices of the Migration Policy Group and the British Council.

According to the survey, the EU-25’s policies on integration score only halfway to best practice. Sweden ranked No. 1 on the index, its integration policy having being awarded the overall rating of “integration-friendly”. Of the 28 countries surveyed (25 within the EU and 3 outside), the ones with the highest rates of immigration were also among the top scorers (Great Britain, Spain, Germany, Italy and France).

Five countries have integration policies that, overall, are at least partially unfavorable (Latvia, Cyprus, Greece, Slovakia, Austria). The countries with the ten lowest scores are the Baltic Republics, the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean and Central Europe, and Denmark.

The EU-25 received its highest score on long-term residence policies, although anti-discrimination, family reunion, and labour market access are not far behind. In the countries of Western Europe, anti-discrimination laws are the greatest area of strength for promoting integration.

The EU-25 score worst on access to nationality and policies for political participation. On access to nationality and long-term residence, not even the highest scores can be deemed ‘favourable’. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe score worst on political participation, where policies are, on average, unfavourable.

However, the survey also showed that much remains to be done in order to achieve a uniform set of standards for the whole of Europe.

**For more information on MIPEX:**  
<http://www.integrationindex.eu/>

## TOWARDS A EUROPEAN PACT ON MIGRATION: WHICH VISION FOR THE FRENCH PRESIDENCY?

The European Pact on Migration and Asylum might be the most awaited, but also controversial, initiative of the French Presidency. Expected to be adopted during the 15th October European Council, the Pact is above all a political document, which should serve as a basis for the new action plan the EU will set itself after the Hague Programme.

Although the detail of the initiative is not known yet, the Pact should revolve around 6 major themes:

- Organising legal immigration based on Member States' needs and capacity to welcome migrants. A central aspect in this pillar should be the proposal for a Blue Card Directive;
- Combating irregular immigration. This should include strengthened cooperation between the Member States;
- Improving the effectiveness of border controls (in particular by strengthening FRONTEX, the agency of European police for external borders);
- Developing an asylum system for Europe (among others by putting in place common guarantees on asylum and a uniform refugee status by 2010).
- Establishing a framework for the integration of migrants;
- Developing a partnership with countries of origin and transit: responding to concerns over the "brain drain" of third countries, the presidency put a specific focus on "circular migration" (facilitating return of the country of origin), investment in third countries and bilateral agreements.

While a broad-ranging pact could lead to a more coherent, rights-based and integrated approach, EAPN is concerned that the primary focus will be on combating irregular migration, rather than strengthening the fundamental rights of all migrants, in particular undocumented ones.

*Elodie Fazi*

## European policies on immigration and poverty: What tops the agenda? Interview with Martine Roure, MEP

Martine Roure is a French Socialist MEP and Vice-President of the European Parliament. She sits on the Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee, and was also President of the Fourth World European Committee Intergroup (tackling poverty).

**E**

**APN: What has the EU done about poverty among migrants?**

**Martine Roure:** Unfortunately, the current institutional set up and pillar system of the EU mean that the immigration and anti-poverty policies are still too often not joined up.

But we wanted to tackle the issue of migrant poverty through the European funds. So the European Parliament significantly increased the Integration Fund budget, so that front-line action can be taken on migrant poverty.

We are also working to push through a Directive to introduce penalties for employers who use undeclared workers. That should enable action against all forms of exploitation, ensure that people get properly paid for their labour, and guarantee dignity for all.

**EAPN: Can the Immigration Pact make good existing failings?**

**M.R.:** I fear that if it is adopted as is, the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum is unfortunately unlikely to make any concrete improvement in tackling migrant poverty. The Pact at present is focused mainly on the enforcement aspects of immigration policy, chiefly strengthening external borders and the work of Frontex, return policy, and concluding readmission agreements with third countries. It is not proposing any substantive policy improvements for legal immigration.

But if we are to tackle insecurity and poverty among migrants, we must first guarantee them

a decent entry into Europe. The Pact also makes no specific proposals on a European policy on integration.

My fear is that the French Presidency's proposal to "regulate" family immigration may push migrants more deeply into social exclusion. Migrants must have access to the same rights to a family life, decent housing, and so on...

**EAPN: What is the renewal of the institutions in 2009 likely to bring?**

**M.R.:** The Commission and European Parliament will be able to tackle this issue during their next term of office in the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. I hope it will also put poverty and exclusion of migrants in Europe on the agenda so that the institutions can identify where the European Union needs to step up its action to tackle the problem.

*Interview: Elodie Fazi*



## Current EU trends on labour migration: Towards a utilitarian vision of migration

**L**abour migration is currently high on the EU agenda. The EU recognises that larger migration flows may be needed in the future, and policy proposals have been brought forward to enable entry and residence of highly skilled workers, the so called 'Blue Card' Directive, and to establish certain basic social and economic rights for third country national workers. In bringing forward such measures the European Commission recognises that the role of economic immigration assumes even more significance in the context of demographic ageing which European countries are already experiencing and are expected to face in the next decades.

This presents a clear recognition that not only will inward migration continue, it will become increasingly necessary for the well being of all within Europe and for economic growth. However, too often the dialogue focuses only on this aspect, with the result that migration is seen as a utilitarian and short-term solution to demographic change whereby migrants will come to Europe for a few years, contribute to the economy, and leave before they become a 'burden'. This approach, which treats migrants as economic units and not as human beings, is not consistent with European values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities.

On the other hand, the lack of recognition and value placed on the contribution that can and is made to Europe's economy, society and culture by migrants is a key feature of the debate for both 'highly skilled' migrants and those defined as 'unskilled'. The utilitarian approach recognises the economic necessity of highly skilled migration, but lacks recognition of the broader contribution to European society. Those not defined as 'highly skilled' are excluded even from recognition of

the economic value of migration, excluding recognition of their economic, social and cultural importance to European society. The denial of rights to many migrants, including asylum seekers, undocumented migrants and others, not only has a negative effect on the individuals concerned, but also denies society the fruits of their participation in civic, political, social, cultural and economic life.

In addition, the coexistence of the European Commission's proposals aiming to facilitate 'legal migration' (including the 'blue card' proposal) with a number of new initiatives relating to the control of so-called 'illegal immigration' presents

some concerns. There is a focus on measures to combat irregular migration through border control and return policies, and very little exists in the view of the human rights and social protection of irregular and undocumented migrants. This approach risks adversely affecting the success of

integration and social inclusion policies aimed at migrants, including 'legally resident' third country nationals and ethnic and religious minorities who are EU citizens.

The Commission's approach does not take into account the fact that migration policies must address the wide-range of migrant situations: long-term and short-term workers; students; asylum-seekers and refugees; spousal and family dependants; and undocumented migrants. By focusing on highly skilled migration and denying access and rights to other categories of migrants, the Commission is not only creating disparities in the rights enjoyed by different migrant workers, leading to an unacceptable situation of discrimination, but also jeopardises its efforts in the fields of integration, social inclusion and anti-discrimination.

*Georgina Siklossy - Communication and Press Officer - ENAR,  
European Network Against Racism*

## GERMANY: "INTEGRATION OF MIGRANTS SHOULD BE A TWO-WAY PROCESS WITH EFFORTS MADE ON BOTH SIDES"

The basis for facilitating social integration of migrants in Germany is the Immigration Act which contains various measures which were created for linguistic encouragement, advice and integration into society and employment.

The latest data taken from the third national wealth and poverty report shows however that living as a migrant in Germany carries a risk of poverty.

Migrants' incomes are at approximately 78.8% of the average value for the overall population and their risk of poverty is 28% compared to 15% for the population as a whole. The exposure of children and young people to poverty from immigrant families is alarming. They have a 32.6% risk of poverty (13.7% for children without a background of migration).

This devastating picture of how one fifth of Germany's population lives shows the inability of our welfare state to lay proper foundations so that 15 million people can lead successful lives in our country.

Integration should be a two-way process with efforts made on both sides. What is needed is a learning process for the education system, social structures and businesses with the purpose of allowing immigrants to have their skills recognised and the creation of the conditions for social cohesion, equal opportunities and a successful life for every "five fifths" of our immigration society.

Opening up to other cultures and intercultural on-the-job training is needed for staff in businesses, authorities and services as well as an increase in projects for promoting social cohesion.

The risk of poverty is so high for migrants because they are migrants. It is up to politicians to break down this association.

*Wolfgang Barth / Anita Morhard,  
AWO Federal association e.V.*

## IMMIGRATION POLICIES IN SPAIN: STATE OF PLAY

After a decade of growth in which the country added more than 5 million immigrants, Spain now faces both an economic crisis and a concerning rise in unemployment.

The jobless toll is particularly high among unskilled foreign workers, which has focused the political debate on what is considered to be the excessive number of immigrants on the dole. But it has not sparked criticism of our shaky economic model, which is based on the existence of large numbers of second-class jobs often held by people unable to compete on the job market. In the last two months, the number of people experiencing poverty has risen to 9 million, most of them foreigners. Recent studies reveal that poverty is becoming "foreign", with the African origin community most affected.

And what is the government doing about it? The talk is getting tougher, reflected in conflicting messages.

On one side, there is backing for a European directive that no-one would have supported ten years ago, the attempt to narrow the definition of "family reunification" and the discussion on the executive order to make it easier to send migrants back. But then there are the improvements in welfare policies (minimum wage and pension, application of the law on welfare and health care provision for dependant persons, etc.) and the policy on international agreements on repatriation, assistance to countries of origin, and private bill to give migrants the right to vote in municipal elections.

*Carlos Susias*  
President, EAPN Spain

## Which challenges and policy responses concerning the social rights of undocumented migrants?

**U**ndocumented migrants are those without a residence permit authorising them to regularly stay in their country of destination. It is PICUM's experience that the majority of undocumented migrants entered Europe legally but after a period of time, experienced difficulties and found themselves without the relevant permit for residence or employment. Once in this unregulated status, migrants are systematically denied those elements which constitute a basic standard of living and face a de facto violation of their fundamental rights. They lack health care, are denied education, deprived of labour protections and occupy the worst housing conditions in Europe. Living in abject deprivation, the precarious administrative status of undocumented migrants makes them highly susceptible to systematic abuse within both public and private domains.



While it has been estimated that there may be from 5 to 8 million undocumented migrants in Europe, the latter largely remain invisible in the eyes of policy makers. This situation puts enormous strain on local actors such as NGOs, health care and educational professionals, religious communities, and local authorities, who often work with limited resources to defend undocumented migrants' fundamental rights, including the right to health care, education and training, fair working conditions, and housing. These local actors are confronted on a daily basis with situations in which they witness that irregular legal status is an obstacle for a sizeable part of the population in accessing basic social services. Professional groups experience clashes between what their professional ethics tell them to do and the incriminatory discourse regarding undocumented migrants.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights stresses the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of human rights, confirming that these entitlements are 'without distinction of any kind', including

'status'. Yet in the current European political context, immigration control policies frequently take premise to the protection and respect of fundamental rights. European Union member states increasingly resort to inhumane practices, such as forcing entire families into a state of abject poverty, in an attempt to drive undocumented migrants out of the country. The argument that undocumented migrants do not merit fundamental protections is increasing among state discourses and embodies the most ardent threat to migrant and nomadic communities since the foundation of the human rights regime in post-Holocaust Europe.

The EU Social Protection and Social Inclusion Process has the potential for challenging the notion that certain segments of the population due to their irregular status are undeserving of basic social protections. Since the first set of National Action Plans (NAPs) on social inclusion in 2001, EU member states have been constantly requested by the European Commission to adopt specific and effective measures towards the eradication of poverty and social exclusion, as it was agreed in the Lisbon Summit in 2000. Yet even if undocumented migrants are one of the groups facing the greatest risks of poverty and social exclusion in Europe today, almost no mention of their presence and marginalization has been made in the different NAPs on social inclusion so far. Inclusion of undocumented migrants as a specific target group in the Social Protection and Social Inclusion Process and in the NAPs would be a welcome step towards fighting the marginalization and exclusion of a very vulnerable segment of the population in contemporary Europe.

*Michele LeVoy,*  
Director, PICUM (Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants)

## EAPN Poland involved in preparing National Homelessness Reduction Strategy

**T**he Ministry of Labour and Social Policy has asked several EAPN Poland member organizations (including Monar, the Barka Foundation,

the Kielce branch of Caritas, and St. Brother Albert's Aid Society) to give input to the National Strategy for Reducing Homelessness. Work on this project is an element of the National Action Plan for Social Integration 2008-2010. The working groups have met several times to draft a strategy outline and split the topic into separate task forces that will be supervised by organizations with relevant experience. The areas of activity that the strategy will cover are:

### I) Diagnosis and analysis of homelessness

1. Homelessness in Poland – scale, number of night and homeless shelters, and service-providing agencies.
2. Legal solutions for the homeless – rights and obligations when using assistance.
3. Methods of help and pathways out of homelessness.

### II) Priorities for social workers

1. Every municipality to be proactive in preventing homelessness.
2. Standard of services in night shelters, homeless shelters and homes for the homeless
3. Standard of action towards the homeless for social workers.

### III) Priorities for welfare housing

1. Criteria for newly-built welfare flats, sheltered flats, night shelters and homes for the homeless;
2. Programmes to help the homeless back into work and society in welfare districts;
3. Promoting the organization of Municipal Community (Welfare) Districts and using welfare work methods towards the homeless and those at risk of homelessness;

### IV) Education and employment (including Social Integration Clubs and Social Integration Centres)

#### Education

- 1.1. Integration Club with self-educating group programmes
- 1.2. Educating Social Economy Leaders
- 1.3. Social Integration Centre – plays an important role in overcoming the passive and demanding attitudes of people from excluded groups, e.g. the homeless, the unemployed, substance abusers and released prisoners.

#### Employment

- 2.1. Social enterprises
- 2.2. Companies and commercial enterprises
- 2.3. Job centres



### V) Access to healthcare

It was agreed at the conference that the draft National Strategy would be ready by this September. It will then be sent to interested social care units and any non-governmental organizations involved in homelessness. Another conference to review the outcomes of a public consultation on the document is planned for September-October this year. The final version of the National Strategy project, with the relevant expert input, will be produced once all the feedback is in.

The Secretary for Labour and Social Policy is expected to lay the National Strategy project before the Parliamentary Committee on Social and Family Policy towards year-end. EAPN Poland member organizations believe that the strategy adopted will be good for Poland's homeless population, and is an essential policy measure.

*Father Stanisław Slowik  
Director of Caritas in Kielce*

## SPOTLIGHT ON EAPN POLAND

The Polish Committee of the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN Poland) was founded on 1 February 2007 as an unregistered body operating with WRZOS (the Working Community of Associations of Social NGOs). Along with WRZOS, it includes such organizations as Caritas Poland, the Federation of Polish Food Banks, MONAR, St. Brother Albert's Aid Society, the Association of Friends of International Movement ATD Fourth World, plus smaller local and regional organizations like St. Hedwig of Andechs Association for Social Integration, the 'Bliisko dziacka' children and young persons' welfare association, the 'Hope Against Poverty and Unemployment' Association, and the Citizen Projects Centre. In all, the Committee links together 20 organizations.

EAPN Poland sets out to monitor and review national activities against poverty and social exclusion, and to shape Polish and European social policy on them.

It works with national government agencies, local government and other players operating in the field of social welfare, education and employment. It also aims to bring together and organise anti-poverty and -exclusion activists, especially through the creation of local, regional and international cooperative networks of social welfare and governmental organizations.

WRZOS has received a grant-funding to further develop EAPN Poland. The plans are to mount policy debates, stage meetings and seminars attended by representatives of general government and the scientific community, and publish newsletters on Polish and European social policy.

*Contact person: Kamila Płowiec  
(kamila.p@wrzos.org.pl)*

## Social policy in Poland: Activation measures urgently needed!

Since 1989, social policy has largely acted as a 'safety-valve' for economic reforms, with a protective focus. What are needed now are more programmes to get beneficiaries of support into work.

**L** The main challenge facing social policy in the broad sense is the worsening dependency ratio (economically active to inactive population). The retired population (men over 65 and women over 60) has risen to 15.9% (from 15% in 2000), while the population of children and young people has dropped sharply from 24.4% in 2000 to 20% in 2007.

The second big problem is that Poland has the lowest economic activity rate in the EU. After levelling off in 2005, the participation rate is now falling again. In 2007, it stood below the EU average at 63.2% for the population aged 15-64, although unemployment was at its lowest level since the start of economic reform, standing at 9.6%. The drop in unemployment was mainly down to labour migration. In 2007, an estimated 900 to 1100 people left the country legally to work abroad. The brain drain and job mismatch with many emigrants overqualified for the jobs they do is harming society.

Another issue in Poland is the all-population at-risk-of-poverty rate, calculated at 60% of the national median equivalised disposable income. In 2005 it was 19%. In 2005, those in the under-17 age group were at most risk of poverty, and 26% of these were below the poverty line. Persons aged 65 and over were relatively better-off financially, with an at-risk-of-poverty rate of 8%. There is an alarmingly high rate of working poor - the proportion of all employed people over 18 living in poverty in Poland was 13% in 2005.

Social policy, which is a major area of public spending, is not a complete safety net against poverty or exclusion for some groups in society. Analysis shows that income support for families with children needs to be stepped up, and that

complex measures are required to help the unemployed into work. A big part of this should be achieved through education reform to create a better bridge from education to employment. Pensions reform is needed to reduce the scope for early retirement - the cause of an early labour market exit for many segments of the population. The forecast population aging means that protective services must be developed for older people. Some measures successfully taken in the EU can be applied in Poland. They include so-called flexicurity, the development of social enterprise, making family policy instruments more common and accessible to enable parents to balance family life and work, or longer working careers.

Social policy is not a complete safety net against poverty or exclusion for some groups in society.

*Kamila Płowiec*

*International Cooperation Manager at WRZOS / Secretary of EAPN Poland*

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