

Brussels, 12 June 2015

Re: EMPL vote on the Guidelines for the Employment Policies of the Member States

Dear Member of the Employment and Social Affairs Committee of the European Parliament,

On the 16th of June, you will be asked to vote on the report on Guidelines for the Employment Policies of the Member States. The European Anti-Poverty Network, an umbrella organization representing over 6.000 social and anti-poverty NGOs in the European Union and beyond, would like to take this opportunity to underline the importance of the Guidelines in framing an inclusive, cohesive and social Europe 2020 Strategy, which takes its poverty reduction target seriously, and which promotes meaningful civil society stakeholder engagement in the European Semester and Europe 2020 processes. We would, hence, like to draw your attention to the following important points:

1. Support strong wording on the fight against all forms of poverty and social exclusion

EAPN welcomes a number of amendments proposed that mainstream the fight against poverty as an explicit objective and priority for the European Union in the framework of Europe 2020 and the European Semester, as well as amendments underlining the importance of the poverty reduction target within the Strategy (as highlighted by the results of the Mid-Term Review public consultation). EAPN is committed to fighting all forms of poverty, social exclusion and inequality, believing that poverty should not only be measured in terms of severe material deprivation, but in terms of lacking sufficient resources to participate equally in the society in which people live¹, as reflected by the Europe 2020 composite indicators underpinning the poverty target². In line with Article 9 TFEU, the challenge in the EU is to ensure that the whole population share in the benefits of high average prosperity, and not just reach basic standards of living.

For these reasons, we ask you to vote in favour of Amendments 42, 43, 44, 66, 69, 78, 90, and 171.

¹ EAPN (2014), *Poverty and Inequality in the EU* – p. 14, quote European Commission, Joint Report on Social Inclusion 2014.

² At risk of poverty and/or exclusion (AROPE), based on aggregate of 3 indicators: at risk of poverty, severe material deprivation, and low work intensity.

2. Support an ambitious Guideline 8 on combatting poverty and social exclusion for all

The poverty reduction target of Europe 2020 is currently the only one where no progress has been made since the inception of the Strategy – rather, the situation has worsened significantly for the people of the European Union, where one in four is currently at risk of poverty and social exclusion. This calls for an ambitious Guideline 8, stepping up efforts to fight poverty and social exclusion, and to explicitly prioritise and resource this fight. As pointed out by the Social Protection Committee in their Assessment of the Commission 2015 proposals for a revised set of Integrated Guidelines, what is needed are preventive and integrated strategies, rooted in holistic Active Inclusion approaches (adequate income support, accessible quality services and inclusive labour markets), tackling poverty (including in-work poverty) throughout the lifecycle and for all groups.

For these reasons, we ask you to vote in favour of amendments 214, 218, 219, 224, 225, 231, 240, 241, 242, 243, 245, and 246.

3. Support pathway approaches to quality jobs and inclusive labour markets

The economic and financial crisis, as well as subsequent austerity measures, have led to a decrease in both the quantity and quality of jobs across the European Union. EAPN is convinced that investment in sustainable, quality job creation, as well as inclusive labour markets, is the way forward. We denounce current trends of compulsive, punitive activation, as well as increased precariousness and segmentation of labour markets, downward pressure on wages, and erosion of working conditions and employment rights. Supporting people through holistic, pathway approaches, into quality and sustainable jobs must be a priority, if the employment and poverty reduction targets of Europe 2020 are to be reached.

For these reasons, we ask you to vote in favour of amendments 101, 102, 103, 106, 108, 110, 115, 121, 122, 129, 131, 134, 142, 143, 145, 160, 172, 173, 178, 179, 181, 183, and 184.

4. Support meaningful stakeholder participation, including of civil society organisations

In a context where trust in both European institutions as well as national governments is decreasing, building transparent governance and dialogue, and ensuring the meaningful involvement of all stakeholders, including people experiencing poverty and their civil society organisations, is a key priority. EAPN regrets that the wording of the Recital 9 of the Integrated Guidelines reflects a weakening of the previous Recital 16, and therefore calls for it to be strengthened, confirming the role of non-governmental organizations in the design, implementation, and monitoring of policies.

For these reasons, we encourage you to vote in favour of Amendments 94, 190, 191, 192, 193, and 194.



EUROPEAN ANTI POVERTY NETWORK

EAPN thanks you in advance for your commitment and support to a more social, more cohesive, more inclusive Europe, free from poverty and social exclusion, where everybody can access their rights and participate in our communities and contribute to decision-making processes. We remain at your disposal and would welcome the opportunity to further discuss any of the issues above.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Sérgio Aires'.

Sérgio Aires,
President

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Barbara Helfferich'.

Barbara Helfferich,
Director