

QUALITY OF WORK AND EMPLOYMENT IN THE EU



EAPN EXPLAINER #5

2014



EUROPEAN ANTI POVERTY NETWORK



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This EAPN Explainer on *Quality of Work and Employment in the EU* is the 5th in a series of EAPN Explainers, tackling key issues and debates, which are also priorities within the EU poverty discourse, in understandable, everyday language. They are aimed primarily at people working in civil-society organisations, but also at anybody who is concerned with how to make progress on reducing poverty and social exclusion in the EU.

The booklet is equally intended as a tool for other civil society organisations, trade unions, academics, the media and other stakeholders, including public opinion, to understand and better militate for the quality of work and employment, as a fundamental prerequisite for quality of life.

EAPN has already issued a series of 4 explainers:

- *Poverty and Inequality in the EU (2009)*,
- *Adequacy of Minimum Income in the EU (2010)*,
- *Wealth, Inequality and Social Polarisation in the EU (2011)*
- *Towards Children's Well-being in Europe – Explainer on Child Poverty in the EU (2013)*, jointly with Eurochild.

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* EVA vzw is a developer of social solidarity economy. EVA creates local jobs by offering answers to real needs and requirements of people living in Brussels' disadvantaged neighbourhoods. The residents, clients and employees are actively involved in the development process. EVA initiatives are active in handy jobs and putting energy-saving measures in place, babies and toddler-care, the welfare and living conditions of older people, after-school care and the provision of catering. Through the development of quality initiatives in the solidarity economy EVA increases the opportunities and choices of employees, clients and residents. To ensure the accessibility of services for both users and staff, EVA stands resolutely for gender and diversity. <http://www.vzweva.be/>. Photographer Catherine Antoine captured images of their initiatives in a photo project.

** <http://www.eapn.eu/en/resources/eapn-s-voices/pathways-to-work-unlocking-a-door-to-active-inclusion>

INTRODUCTION	9
What are we talking about?	9
What this explainer will tell you	10
How this booklet was developed	12
DEFINING QUALITY OF WORK.....	13
National governments	13
Social partners	14
The European Union	17
Other international organisations	21
EAPN's 10 principles on quality work.....	23
DEFINING QUALITY OF EMPLOYMENT.....	25
Introducing inclusive labour markets	25
The 3 pillars of Active Inclusion:.....	26
Positive versus negative activation	30
Combating discrimination	31
Is a "suitable job" a quality job?	33
What is quality of employment to people experiencing poverty?.....	34
THE LINK BETWEEN QUALITY WORK AND EMPLOYMENT AND POVERTY	37
Insufficient wages and in-work poverty	37
Unstable, insecure employment	41
Implications for social security.....	42
Long-term impact of low-quality work	44
The economic crisis and austerity measures.....	45
What do people want?	47
SOME WAYS FORWARD.....	49
The role of the European Union	49
The role of Member States	51
The role of NGOs and social partners	52
A coherent agenda for the future	55
KEY SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND DATA	57
EAPN documents, positions, videos	57
Other sources	58

INTRODUCTION



All our efforts are now geared towards leaving this crisis behind and setting foot on a path of growth with quality jobs and decent social conditions for all. [...] Segmentation of the labour market, wage polarisation and low wages feeding the phenomenon of “in-work poverty” are further driving factors of inequality in our workforce. 8.4% of employed people in the EU today fall below the poverty line. This worsening of labour market conditions has badly hit the income of many Europeans. [...] It is necessary to continue promoting coherence between social, economic, financial, environmental and all other policies at national and international level, so that they are efficient and have an impact on quality employment and social cohesion.

László Andor, European Commissioner responsible for employment, social affairs and inclusion¹

What are we talking about?

Employment is a concept that holds a double value in our societies. On the one hand, it is an **economic resource**, providing the economy with a capable and sustainable workforce and, on the other hand, it is a **vehicle for inclusion and integration**, for breaking isolation and fulfilling people's need to contribute and be relevant in the

world. We focus in this explainer mainly on this second dimension, and how employment can best respond to this human and social right to dignified lives, free of poverty and exclusion.

In recent years, decision-makers at both the EU and the national levels seemed to have embraced a mantra that “employment is the best route out of poverty.” However, evidence has repeatedly shown that this is far from being true for any kind of employment.

A job which is low paid, in precarious conditions, without rights, and which does not ensure satisfaction and a sense of meaningful contribution actually condemns people to poverty and undermines well-being. For it to fulfill its mission of being an inclusion vehicle and guarantee of quality of life, a job clearly needs to comply with certain minimum standards in that respect.

Countries tend to quantify the labour market situation by strictly numerical indicators, which show only how many people are considered to be employed, but without regards to what kind of jobs we are talking about, and whether it makes people's lives better, or worse.

Ensuring that there is a sufficient supply of work is very important, because everyone who is able and willing to work should have the opportunity to do so. However, the **distinction between quantity and quality is**

1. László Andor, *Youth unemployment – our shared concern*, Opening of the EU-LAC Social Cohesion Forum / Buenos Aires, 15 October 2012.

central to the discussion about the kind of labour market we have. The fact that a community or society has a sufficient amount of jobs for the resources available (that is, full employment) does not imply that those are quality jobs. Many people find themselves in a situation that obliges them to take any job, because they need to make ends meet, they have children to care for, and other non-working members in their household to provide for.

The quantity of jobs alone is not enough. The way in which people find jobs and interact with employers and with the State in employment matters, is also a crucial factor in ensuring well-being in connection to holding a job. An **inclusive labour market** is one where job seekers are supported through holistic services and pathway approaches to access sustainable jobs, which best fit their capabilities, personal situation, and interests. This includes concepts such as adequate employment legislation and social protection systems, job creation efforts, availability of information about jobs, provision of necessary flanking services to enable a person to access the right job, and pathway approaches to people's engagement with the labour market in general, throughout the lifecycle.

Although most EU Member States have already been implementing various measures to achieve full employment, the situation has deteriorated considerably since the beginning of the financial crisis, with the unemployment rate reaching historically high values. As a result, some might argue that fighting unemployment should now be the main concern of the EU. In fact, as EAPN national networks have reported, it seems that getting people into jobs is the main priority, even if the low quality of these jobs cannot free the workers from poverty and social exclusion.

For the purpose of this explainer, the authors use the concept of **quality work** as meaning the intrinsic characteristics that render a specific job an **effective tool to ensure decent living standards**, as well as **well-being and quality of life for the worker**.

Quality employment is used to refer to the **engagement of a person with the labour market throughout their life**, and how adequately transitions are supported – between education and employment, in between jobs, when receiving unemployment benefit and other forms of social protection, and between employment and retirement – to ensure absence of poverty and social exclusion.

What this explainer will tell you

Under the pressure of the current context, the framework for the promotion of quality employment and jobs may have lost its momentum. This perspective is not shared by EAPN, as we consider that the current crisis is the ideal time to clarify such issues of strategic relevance as the quality dimension of employment and work.

To take just one example, supporting access to jobs that provide adequate/living wages and more stable contracts, which can help families increase their income, is key to increasing purchasing power and re-launching economies, as well as to the broadening of the tax base. Last but not least, it effectively shields people from hardship and exclusion.

Without access to employment, the risks of poverty, social exclusion, ill health (including mental issues e.g. depression) and other risks are high. Good social protection systems can counter these tendencies, but it remains the case that paid employment will continue to play a key role in the fight against poverty and issues connected to it. But for employment to effectively act as a safeguard, it needs to satisfy quality criteria, in order not to achieve the opposite result, i.e., generating more deprivation and hardship.

The economic crisis and the subsequent recovery packages, where governments have prioritized harsh austerity measures and increases in competitiveness, **have had a heavy impact on the quality of jobs and employment**. Wages have been cut, contracts have become more precarious and unstable, employment rights have shrunk, and working conditions have worsened, while many jobs have disappeared altogether. In a time when re-launching the economy and tightening national spending is governments' main concern, the social inclusion and anti-poverty dimension of employment seems to be forgotten, or treated as secondary. **A debate on what constitutes quality work and employment, and how to implement it in order to ensure quality of life for societies, is needed now more than ever.**

This explainer will look at **how (and whether) quality of work / jobs is defined** in different countries across the EU, by governments, the social partners (trade unions and employers' organisations), people experiencing poverty, and international organisations, including the European Union. We will also present EAPN's own list of criteria, based on the input of EAPN's national networks.

We will further explore **what quality of employment is** and introduce the concept of inclusive labour markets. The section will examine how activation is happening on the ground, whether discrimination in accessing employment is adequately tackled, the key role of adequate social protection systems, and what the implications for inclusive labour markets and the quality of the jobs proposed are.

Another section looks at **what people want** with regards to their involvement with the labour market across the lifecycle. The explainer will then take a closer look at the **impact of poor quality of work and employment on poverty and social exclusion**, and what the consequences of bad quality jobs and labour markets for the society as a whole are. Low wages, precarious employment, in-work poverty, denial of rights are eroding factors of both overall social and economic cohesion, as well as individual quality of life, including for our children.

Finally, we outline some **ways forward**, in both EU and national policy making, to ensure that quality of work and employment is taken into account, adequately defined, and properly enforced, so that employment can fully contribute to the progressive eradication of poverty and social exclusion, as well as to the achievement of well-being and quality of life for all in Europe.

How this booklet was developed

This explainer was born out of the wish and need of EAPN members to develop **consensual standards and a common position on what constitutes quality work and employment**.

As this is a topic extremely present in EAPN's work, both at the EU and national levels, it became imperative to codify what our understanding of the subject is, so that the organisation could draw on the present findings and definitions in its lobbying for quality work and employment, **towards national and European decision-makers**.

The booklet builds on the specific work carried out and questionnaires completed by EAPN's Employment Working Group in 2011, subsequently enriched by the work of the members of EAPN's EU Inclusion Strategies Group in 2012 and 2013.

The main source of information is the direct experience on the ground of EAPN's national membership in 29 European countries, as well as 18 European Organisations.

This data collection exercise has allowed for the **concrete national examples** from EAPN's national networks. Additional country examples have been gathered in the two EAPN reports on the social impact of the crisis (2010, 2011), three EAPN reports assessing the National Reform Programmes (NRP) (2011, 2012, 2013), and two EAPN publications on the Country Specific Recommendations (CSR) (2012, 2013).

All **direct quotes** in this explainer come from people experiencing poverty in different European countries. The quotes have been taken from the report and video of the 10th European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty (2011), from EAPN publications (Voices from the Poverty Line - 2007, Active Inclusion – Making It Happen – 2010), and the EAPN Video Pathways to Work. To preserve anonymity, names have been omitted.

Quotes of decision-makers or international organisations are referenced, as well as in footnotes throughout the text.

Key sources of information and data can be found at the end of this explainer.

This explainer was drafted by **Hélder Ferreira** (EAPN Portugal) and **Amana Ferro** (EAPN Secretariat, Brussels). The authors wish to particularly thank Sian Jones (EAPN Secretariat), Ryszard Szarfenberg (EAPN Poland), and Peter Kelly and Katherine Duffy (EAPN UK), among others, for their extensive and very useful feedback and comments, as well as Rebecca Lee and Nellie Epinat (EAPN Secretariat), for proof-reading the final text and coordinating the layout and photographs.

DEFINING QUALITY OF WORK

National governments

Most EAPN national networks indicate that quality work is not a clearly defined official concept or an important policy goal for national governments.

Many governments attempt to define some aspects of quality in the Labour Code or specific national employment legislation, through agreements with the social

partners, or by having ratified international conventions on the subject.

Also, out of 28 Member States, only 7 do not have any minimum wage provisions in place – Denmark, Germany, Italy, Cyprus, Austria, Finland, Sweden.² Some positive examples are detailed below:

- **EAPN Czech Republic** – The Labour Code speaks of duration of contracts, minimum wages, employment protection, decent working conditions, collective bargaining, non-discrimination, access to training and personal development. A number of reforms try to address reconciliation of private and professional life.
- **EAPN Belgium** – The Flemish social partners and the Flemish government's concept 'Werkbaarwerk', meaning 'workable work', underpinned by four questions: 1) Are you motivated by your job? 2) Do you get learning opportunities? 3) Are you under problematic stress because of your job? 4) Do you have a good work-life (private) balance?
- **EAPN Austria** – The National Reform Programme defines quality work as personal well-being, adequate payment and working conditions, which make it easier to combine work with family life.

However, these are piecemeal approaches, like puzzle pieces scattered across different legal documents. No consistent, comprehensive framework for quality seems to have been developed independently at national level, and, most importantly, such a framework is not applied uniformly and systematically to employment policies. EAPN has been monitoring this aspect as part of our assessment of the National Reform Programmes, in the framework of Europe 2020.³

2. Eurostat, May 2013

3. Europe 2020 is the European Union's strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, launched in 2010 and valid until 2020. It features 5 headline targets, including one on employment (to achieve 75% employment in the European Union by 2020) and one on poverty-reduction (to reduce the number of people experiencing poverty by 20 million, by 2020). In the framework of the Strategy, Member States need to submit annual National Reform Programmes (NRPs), detailing national efforts and policies towards achieving the headline targets, including those on employment and poverty reduction. EAPN national networks have been conducting yearly in-depth assessments of the NRPs, and the complete findings have been published in reports available on the EAPN website (www.eapn.eu).

The results are disheartening:

- In 2011, the vast majority of the NRPs reviewed by our members were not reported to take into account in any way the quality of employment proposed, and whether it will ensure poverty-free, dignified lives. Most members highlight missing links between employment and poverty.
- In 2012, the situation does not seem to have improved: most EAPN national networks report that the quality aspect is not taken into account at all.
- In 2013, no less than 67% respondents to the EAPN questionnaire indicated that wages were being pushed down in their countries, and 75% found that employment rights were being reduced, while working conditions were worsening.



Berkeley University has recently issued a report⁴ that looks at wages in the fast-food sector, where most workers are facing poverty. The study found that nearly 7 billion USD a year are spent in public assistance to support these families. Professor Wayne F. Cascio, in an article in the Harvard Business Review⁵, makes the same observation “when it comes to wages and benefits, a cost-leadership strategy need not be a race to the bottom.”

4. Sylvia Allegretto, Marc Doussard, Dave Graham-Squire, Ken Jacobs, Dan Thompson and Jeremy Thompson, Berkeley University Labour Center, *Fast Food, Poverty Wages: The public cost of low-wage jobs in the fast-food industry*, 15 October 2013, available here: http://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/public-costs/fast_food_poverty_wages.pdf

5. Wayne F. Cascio, *The High Cost of Low Wages*, in Harvard Business Review, December 2006, available here: <http://hbr.org/2006/12/the-high-cost-of-low-wages/ar/1>

Ensuring quality jobs for all workers is neither easy nor cheap. It requires political will, social mobilization, intensive and coherent policy and law-making, as well as effective implementation.

But the very first step in the right direction is defining what quality means, and making it an equally or a more important policy goal than quantity of jobs.

It is important to note that labour and social security laws are not enough for a quality-ensuring framework, because implementation and regular practices in enterprises, social agencies, tribunals and courts etc. are equally important.

Social partners

At national level, it seems that few social partners, which bring together representatives of workers (trade unions) and employers, have reached a common definition of the concept of quality work. Where some attempts at definitions do exist, they often do not include all relevant dimensions, such as, for instance, the crucial issue of low pay, which does not take people out of poverty.



- **EAPN France** – The national inter-professional agreement of January 11th, 2007 indicates some criteria: open-ended work contracts, relevant professional placement, and skills development, amongst others.
- **EAPN Denmark** – Trade unions have prioritized job quality as part of the flexicurity system.
- **EAPN Germany** – The Confederation of German Trade Unions (DGB) has developed an Index on Good Work (Index Gute Arbeit), which incorporates feedback from employees in measuring quality of work.
- **EAPN Ireland** – The agreement of the social partners “Towards 2016” contains a reference to developing a first-class work environment, which highlights the following elements: employee advancement, improved job security, promoted equal opportunities, increased training, productivity, flexibility and good working conditions which benefit everyone involved in the work process.

However, even in the absence of a formal definition, national trade unions often speak out against cuts in wages, deterioration of contractual arrangements, erosion of employment rights, as well as attacks on collective bargaining. At the European level, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) has consistently advocated for quality jobs, underlining many times that the current global economic circumstances should not be used as excuses to offer lower job quality and justify social dumping.

The solution to poverty is employment [...] That means a job that is paid adequately and has good working conditions, in terms of organisation, proper health and working conditions. [...] What do these [precarious jobs] mean? It means no vocational training, no career prospects within these jobs, not enough income to live a dignified life, and, what's more, the job is unstable.

Estelle Ceulemans, ETUC, 10th European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty⁶

6. Hungarian EU Presidency 2011, 10th EU meeting of People Experiencing Poverty: Employment, Work, Jobs, Brussels, 13-14 May 2011.

In 2007, the **ETUC outlined 5 principles which underpin their concept of “decent work”** (covering rather quality of employment than quality of jobs, as defined by this explainer):

- *An end to precarious jobs, which are not only bad for workers but also damage the labour market and the economy. They undermine working conditions and health and safety, generate poverty wages and damage social cohesion;*
- *Better work organisation, to create environments where workers are fully informed and consulted, able to balance the demands of work and home life, and have opportunities for life-long learning to boost skills and qualifications;*
- *Strong employment protection legislation, which far from being an obstacle to a dynamic labour market can foster investment in human capital and innovation;*
- *Social welfare systems that offer security to the 14 million Europeans who change jobs each year;*
- *Social dialogue and collective bargaining, and the full involvement of the social partners in decisions on labour market reform.⁷*

7. European Trade Union Confederation, *Decent Work Fact Sheet*, February 2007, available at <http://www.etuc.org/a/4311>

The **European Trade Union Institute, the independent research centre of the ETUC**, developed a “**European Job Quality Index**” in 2008, capturing several dimensions considered fundamental for a quality job: wages, non-standard form of employment, work-life balance and working time, working conditions and job security, access to training and career advancement, and collective interest representation and participation.⁸ The Index was revised in 2012, in light of new developments brought about by the crisis, noting a deterioration of job quality, as well as its monitoring, across Europe.⁹

The **European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU)**, another social partner recognised at European level, does not have any official definition of quality work, agreed as such. However, decent work has been on the agenda of collective bargaining conferences over the past years, and the organisation has taken a stand on low pay and on increased insecurity and flexibilisation of the labour market.¹⁰

Regarding **employers**, the concept seems to be given much less priority. This highlights the short-termism of the approach to the current labour market, based on increasing competitiveness through punitive actions against job quality, rather than investment in sustainable employment, which can reap benefits for the firm, as well as the employees, and the economy.

8. European Trade Union Institute, Janine Leschke & Andrew Watt, Putting a number on job quality?, March 2008 (which defines how the Quality Job Index was put together), and European Trade Union Institute, Janine Leschke & Andrew Watt, Job Quality in Europe, August 2008 (which presents initial findings after applying the Index).

9. European Trade Union Institute, Janine Leschke, Andrew Watt & Mairéad Finn, Job quality in the crisis – an update of the Job Quality Index (JQI), July 2012.

10. EPSU Collective Bargaining and Social Dialogue Conference 2010: Emerging from the crisis – fair pay and employment in the public services. Briefing on the Workshops, 7-8 December 2010.

→ **Confederation of British Industry (CBI)** – The CBI does not define job quality, nor have guidelines. In a recent written exchange with EAPN, however, they underlined that they saw job quality as an inherently subjective term. “At this stage of the economic cycle in particular, we’re rather more concerned with finding any jobs that the economy can generate. Lots of issues that people associate with quality jobs – such as training and employee engagement – are of course very important, and we will be picking them up.”

→ **VNO-NCW and MKB-Nederland** (the biggest employer union in the Netherlands) define quality job, according to EAPN NL, as one with working conditions in accordance with national law and international definitions (such as the ILO core labour standards).

At the European level, **BusinessEurope, the umbrella representation for employers’ organisations**, does not have an operational definition of either quality work or employment. However, their position regarding the need or usefulness of the quality debate when it comes to work and employment has been expressed quite unequivocally:

*Examples of such initiatives [which could undermine growth and jobs] concern in particular the legislative reviews regarding health and safety, information and consultation of workers and part-time and fixed-term work, as well as the re-opening of the debate on quality work and working conditions. Not only are such initiatives ill-timed; depending on the issue, they are also neither desirable, nor necessary [...] BusinessEurope therefore strongly disagrees with the Commission’s assessment of job quality and working conditions in Europe over the past decade. Moreover, employers do not see the need to undertake a review with a view to streamlining the policy concept of quality work.*¹¹

11. **BusinessEurope**, An Agenda for New Skills and Jobs, position paper, 16 February 2011.

The European Union

The European Union has committed through its Treaty to combating social exclusion and discrimination and to promoting social justice and protection, as well as economic, social, and territorial cohesion and solidarity (Article 3).¹²

Equally, it has committed to the Charter of Fundamental Rights, to which it has given equal legal value as the Treaty (Article 6). This Charter clearly identifies employment as a right (Article 15) and recognizes a number of rights underpinning the concept of quality work and employment:

- the right to workers’ consultation and information (Article 27);
- the right to collective bargaining and action (Article 28);
- the right of access to placement services (Article 29);
- the right to protection in the event of unjustified dismissal (Article 30);
- the right to fair and just working conditions (Article 31);
- the right to protection at work for young people (Article 32);
- the right to reconciliation between private and professional life (Article 33);
- the right to social security and social assistance (Article 34).¹³

In **2001**, the **Stockholm European Council** agreed the development of a set of indicators for job quality, which was adopted in the same year, by the **European Council of Laeken**. The indicators cover the two broad dimensions: quality work (“Characteristics of the job itself”) and quality employment (“The Work and Wider Labour Market Context.”)

12. Consolidated Version of the Treaty of the European Union, in the Official Journal of the European Union, 30 March 2010

13. Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2010/C 83/02), in the Official Journal of the European Union, 30 March 2010.





European Union Laeken Indicators for Job Quality

Characteristics of the job itself:

- Intrinsic job quality
- Lifelong learning and career development

The Work and Wider Labour Market Context

- Gender equality
- Health and safety at work
- Flexibility and security
- Inclusion and access to the labour market
- Work organisation and the work-life balance
- Social dialogue and workers' involvement
- Diversity and non-discrimination
- Overall economic performance and productivity¹⁴

While the **Laeken indicators** above indicate strong progress and commitment to the quality dimension, and remain the most important attempt to date by the European institutions in this direction, it is striking that the crucial element of wages is not included anywhere, nor the issue of in-work poverty. Equally, the framework, although a positive step despite its omissions, was never systematically implemented and mainstreamed through the European Employment Strategy.

14. **European Parliament**, Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department A: Economic and scientific policy / Employment and social affairs - Indicators of job quality in the European Union, IP/A/EMPL/ST/2008-09, October 2009

In **2011**, no less than ten years after Laeken, the European Commission launched a **revision process of the concept of quality work**, which is to be accompanied by a new set of indicators. While the new framework will build on the Laeken criteria, the aim is to render them more operational, and to subsequently use it for the evaluation and benchmarking of Member States. The Indicators Group of the Employment Committee (EMCO)¹⁵ is currently discussing a proposal in this regard, with the involvement of social partners. Unfortunately, civil society is not invited to these discussions.

The **Europe 2020 Strategy** includes a **headline target on employment**, which seeks to have 75% of the population in paid work, by 2020. However, the measurement of this target is underpinned by a very narrow definition, which not only does not take into account the quality aspect, but is phrased in a way that undermines it: for Eurostat data collecting purposes, "Employed population consists of those persons who, during the reference week, did any work for pay or profit for at least one hour, or were not working but had jobs from which they were temporarily absent."

In the Employment Guidelines numbers 7 and 8, which underpin achievement of the employment target, explicit mention is made of job quality, without defining it.

15. The Employment Committee (EMCO) and the Social Protection Committee (SPC) are expert bodies composed of representatives of national governments, which assist the European Commission (and, specifically, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion) in the design and monitoring of relevant policies.



Guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States

Guideline 7: Increasing labour market participation and reducing structural unemployment.

The quality of jobs and employment conditions should be addressed by fighting low wages and by ensuring adequate social security also for those on fixed contracts and the self-employed. Employment services should be strengthened and open to all, including young people and those threatened by unemployment with personalised services targeting those furthest away from the labour market.

Guideline 8: Developing a skilled workforce responding to labour market needs, promoting job quality and lifelong learning

Employment and anti-poverty policies more broadly are equally assessed in the framework of the Europe 2020 Strategy, based on submissions made by national governments in the annual National Reform Programmes of Member States mentioned above, and focusing on the implementation of the Employment Guidelines. The Employment Committee, the Social Protection Committee, and the European Commission employ for this purpose a Joint Assessment Framework (JAF) which includes an Employment Performance Monitor – a quick overview of the JAF findings regarding employment, identify some key challenges and potential risk areas. The proposed indicators, while they do capture some useful elements

(vulnerable groups, working conditions, lifelong learning, in-work poverty), fail to provide a coherent, complete framework to measure qualitative aspects.¹⁶

On the basis of the Employment Performance Monitor, as explained above, the European Commission issues Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs), drawing the attention of Member States to priority areas or actions they should implement and report on by the time the following National Reform Programme comes along. This is the main channel through which the JAF indicators are being used, and they sometimes fuel positive CSRs regarding job quality, but more often, they fuel negative ones. Since 2012, together with its members, EAPN also monitors the Country Specific Recommendations¹⁷, and proposes alternative recommendations of its own, based on our own analysis of the National Reform Programmes.

15 of 18 EAPN networks who made shadow recommendations in 2013 featured quality of work and employment prominently – underlining, once again, how this dimension seems to be completely forgotten on the ground, while it is essential for the development and well-being of both the economy as well as society and individuals.

Meanwhile only a few CSRs proposed by the European institutions touch upon isolated elements of quality employment, the most notable being Poland receiving a CSR to tackle in-work poverty. However, our members point out that even positive steps are

16. **European Commission, Employment Committee, Social Protection Committee, Foundations and structures for a Joint Assessment Framework (JAF), including an Employment Performance Monitor (EPM) to monitor the Employment Guidelines under Europe 2020**, as adopted by the EPSCO Council on 6-7 December 2010. The complete list of proposed indicators can be consulted in the Annex at the end of the document.

17. EAPN's 2012 and 2013 analyses of the CSRs and proposals for shadow recommendations have been published and are available EAPN website (www.eapn.eu), and are fully referenced at the end of this document.

undermined by the overarching mantra of budget and fiscal consolidation, while many CSRs call for the deregulation of the labour market, cuts in wages, diminishing of bargaining and indexing, and other damaging measures for the quality of work and employment.

Still in the framework of Europe 2020, the so-called Flagship Initiative A European Agenda for New Skills and Jobs, includes “better job quality and working conditions” as one of its 4 overarching priorities. EAPN regrets, however, that the dimension is not addressed as a contributing factor to inclusion, but, rather, in order to promote productivity and competitiveness, leaving out essential aspects such as wages and contract duration¹⁸

The main statistical sources for measuring quality of work and employment in the European Union are the Labour Force Survey (LFS), the Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC), and the European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) by Eurofound. While all are useful and present a wealth of data, issues still remain regarding consistency between sources and comparability across countries, and there is a lack of concrete, harmonised indicators and measurement practices.

Overview of measurements¹⁹

	LFS	SILC	EWCS
1. Safety and ethics of employment	•		•
2. Income and benefits from employment		•	•
3. Working hours/balancing work & non-working life	•	•	•
4. Security of employment and social protection	•		•
5. Social dialogue			•
6. Skills development and training	•		•
7. Workplace relationships and work motivation			•

18. For more details, consult **EAPN**, Response to the Flagship Initiative An Agenda for New Skills and Jobs, 20 April 2011, available on the EAPN website (www.eapn.eu)

19. **Johan van der Valk**, Eurostat, *Quality employment in the EU*, presentation at the UNECE Meeting on Measuring Quality of Employment, 31 October - 02 November 2011, Geneva

Other international organisations

International bodies and national governments have been defining minimum standards for quality in work for many decades, under strong influence of trade unions and working class movements, sometimes with the support of the employers. Those minimum standards are written in international and national labour law and social security

law, and are present in collective bargaining agreements at European and national levels.

The concept of quality jobs is supported by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in its Decent Work agenda. The ILO definition emphasizes fundamental human values, along with economic dimensions.



ILO definition of Decent Work

Decent work [...] involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income; provides security in the workplace and social protection for workers and their families; offers better prospects for personal development and encourages social integration; gives people the freedom to express their concerns, to organize and to participate in decisions that affect their lives; and guarantees equal opportunities and equal treatment for all women and men.²⁰

The ILO Decent Work Agenda rests on 4 broad principles: job creation and sustainable livelihoods; guaranteeing recognition and respect for the rights of workers, in particular those from vulnerable groups;

adequate social protection, including good working conditions, reconciliation with private life, employment rights; promoting social dialogue.²¹

The Council of Europe put forward the European Social Charter (adopted in 1961, revised and ratified in 1996), aimed at complementing the European Convention on Human Rights, which enshrines principles related to civil and political rights. The Charter contains a significant number of important provisions regarding quality of work and employment, as listed below.

20. International Labour Organisation, Decent Work Agenda, available on <http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/decent-work/>.

21. See also International Labour Office, Measurement of Decent Work, Discussion paper for the Tripartite Meeting of Experts on the Measurement of Decent Work, Geneva, 8-10 September 2010.



European Social Charter – Council of Europe

- Article 1 – The right to work
- Article 2 – The right to just conditions of work
- Article 3 – The right to safe and healthy working conditions
- Article 4 – The right to a fair remuneration
- Article 5 – The right to organise
- Article 6 – The right to bargain collectively
- Article 8 – The right of employed women to protection of maternity
- Article 9 – The right to vocational guidance
- Article 10 – The right to vocational training
- Article 19 – The right of migrant workers and their families to protection and assistance
- Article 20 – The right to equal opportunities and equal treatment in matters of employment and occupation without discrimination on the grounds of sex
- Article 21 – The right to information and consultation
- Article 22 – The right to take part in the determination and improvement of the working conditions and working environment
- Article 24 – The right to protection in cases of termination of employment
- Article 26 – The right to dignity at work
- Article 27 – The right of workers with family responsibilities to equal opportunities and equal treatment
- Article 28 – The right of workers' representatives to protection in the undertaking and facilities to be accorded to them
- Article 29 – The right to information and consultation in collective redundancy procedures
- Article 30 – The right to protection against poverty and social exclusion²²

22. Council of Europe, European Social Charter (revised), Strasbourg, 3 May 1996.



three people with a disability working in the computer room. In their advanced condition, they work independently.

The United Nations' Economic and Social Council explicitly supports the implementation of Article 7 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,²³ which stipulates that: "The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to the enjoyment of just and favourable conditions of work which ensure, in particular:

- *Remuneration which provides all workers, as a minimum, with:*
 - *Fair wages and equal remuneration for work of equal value without distinction of any kind, in particular women being guaranteed conditions of work not inferior to those enjoyed by men, with equal pay for equal work;*
 - *A decent living for themselves and their families in accordance with the provisions of the present Covenant;*
- *Safe and healthy working conditions;*
- *Equal opportunity for everyone to be promoted in his employment to an appropriate higher level, subject to no considerations other than those of seniority and competence;*
- *Rest, leisure and reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay, as well as remuneration for public holidays."*

The Covenant has been ratified by all EU Member States.

Another UN body, namely the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) has also carried out important work in the field of quality of jobs and employment. The organisation set up a Task Force and an Expert Group for measuring quality of employment, which holds annual meetings, and has produced comprehensive publications in an attempt to codify appropriate measurements for the quality of employment.²⁴

23. United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 3 January 1976.

24. UNECE, Measuring Quality Employment, Country Pilot Reports, December 2010.

Since 2008, the International Trade Union Confederation has been organising the World Day for Decent Work (WDDW) on 7 October. It is a day for mobilisation for all trade unions across the globe. You can find more details here: <http://2013.wddw.org/>



The Decent Work, Decent Life Campaign



This campaign was launched in 2007 at the World Social Forum, by five organisations: Solidar, the International Trade Union Confederation, the European Trade Union Confederation, Social Alert International, and the Global Progressive Forum. It is aimed at raising awareness of the necessity of decent work as a route out of poverty, and the only sustainable path to democracy and social cohesion.

EAPN's 10 principles on quality work

If the question is what we mean by quality work, there is no simple answer. Quality is multidimensional and it is hard to define and to measure without a full set of indicators. EAPN has attempted to put together 10 principles, which cover the main aspects to be taken into account to ensure that quality work provides quality of life.

EAPN's 10 Principles on Quality Work

EAPN believes that people have the right to a job which:

1. **Provides adequate / living wages.** This needs to build on a positive hierarchy, which includes adequate minimum income as a reference point (at least at the level of the poverty line). Poverty traps must be avoided and transitions supported.
2. **Provides a sustainable contract and adequate employment rights,** ensuring protection against arbitrary dismissal and adequate severance pay, so as to fight the increased precariousness and segmentation of the labour market.
3. **Entitles the worker to appropriate social security protection,** such as health insurance, paid holidays, unemployment benefits, pension rights etc, and provides for the cross-border portability of these rights.
4. **Ensures quality working conditions and working environment.** This includes the implementation of health and safety provisions, adapted working environments for key groups, reasonable working time and shift arrangements - particularly regarding low-skilled jobs.
5. **Allows for the reconciliation of private and professional life,** including by providing opportunities for flexible working time arrangements.
6. **Respects the right to participate in collective bargaining and social dialogue,** for workers to have a say in changes of policy and practice that affect them, and to ensure meaningful participation and transparency in governance.
7. **Protects the worker against discrimination on all grounds,** both in obtaining a job as well as at the work place, fighting against the ethnic and gender pay gap and other inequalities.
8. **Guarantees access to training and personal development,** building upon and valorising existing skills, and providing workers with opportunities to further develop their personal and professional competences, as well as soft skills.
9. **Allows for progression in work** and features opportunities for advancement.
10. **Nurtures job satisfaction** as an essential component of people's well-being.

EAPN holds these principles as valid for any kind of job, regardless of the type of contractual arrangement, as well as for protected or intermediate labour market workshops, social economy and work integration social enterprises (WISEs), and for all sectors of activity.

DEFINING QUALITY OF EMPLOYMENT

The "labour market" is an abstract economic term, referring to the coordination mechanism by which supply of work (people willing to work) and demand for it (people who would like to hire employees) meet across various branches of economy.

When there is an excess of supply over demand, it is called unemployment, which means that some people willing to work could not find a job. If the reverse occurs and supply is lower than demand, the consequence is that some job vacancies aren't fulfilled.

Full employment is a concept that means that all those able and willing to work can find it in a relatively short period of time. Nevertheless, full employment per se does not constitute a positive notion in itself, as not every job is of quality. The quantitative ambition of providing work for all should be complemented with clear standards about the quality of jobs.

Achieving full employment is a long-standing political ambition, of both the Member States and the European Union. To this effect, governments enact what is referred to as Active Labour Market Policies (ALMP), which are aimed at ensuring the smooth matching of supply and demand.

However, the task is not always easy, especially when it comes to key groups facing various obstacles in their path to work, such

as people experiencing poverty and deprivation, the low-skilled, the long-term unemployed, people with a disability, migrants and ethnic minorities, especially the Roma, single parents, younger and older workers, single parents and others.

As explained above, quality of employment refers to the quality of a person's engagement with the labour market throughout the life cycle, and the extent to which transitions (from education to employment, between jobs, including adequacy of social protection schemes, and from employment to retirement) are supported and avoid poverty traps. The concept of Inclusive Labour Markets, in our view, is an adequate embodiment of quality of employment.

Introducing inclusive labour markets

In 2008, the European Commission proposed a strategy called Active Inclusion;²⁵ which aims at providing support towards employment for those who can work, and towards social participation for those who cannot. In this context, the concept of Inclusive Labour Markets is one of the three fundamental pillars underpinning the strategy:

25. Commission Recommendation of 3 October 2008 on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market (notified under document number C(2008) 5737). Official Journal L 307, 18/11/2008 P. 0011 - 0014

The 3 pillars of Active Inclusion:



- 1. Adequate income support:** Recognise the individual's basic right to resources and social assistance sufficient to lead a life that is compatible with human dignity as part of a comprehensive, consistent drive to combat social exclusion.
- 2. Inclusive labour markets:** Adopt arrangements covering persons whose condition renders them fit for work to ensure they receive effective help to enter or re-enter and stay in employment that corresponds to their work capacity.
- 3. Access to quality services:** Take every measure to enable those concerned, in accordance with the relevant national provisions, to receive appropriate social support through access to quality services.



The Active Inclusion Strategy defines inclusive labour markets as policies which:

- address the needs of people excluded from the labour market in order to facilitate their progressive reintegration into society and into the labour market and to enhance their employability,
- take the necessary measures to promote inclusive labour markets in order to ensure access to employment is an opportunity open for all,
- promote quality jobs, including pay and benefits, working conditions, health and safety, access to lifelong learning and career prospects, in particular with a view to preventing in-work poverty,
- tackle labour market segmentation by promoting job retention and advancement.

The above explicitly highlight that quality employment and jobs is a vital part of an inclusive labour market policy. The practical guidelines for implementation emphasize, among others, "tailored, personalised, responsive services and support involving early identification of needs, job-search assistance, guidance and training, and motivation to seek a job actively," and as equally important, "provide support for the social economy and sheltered employment as a vital source of entry jobs for disadvantaged people."

Therefore, an inclusive labour market at EU level is a goal that requires an all-level active engagement of the relevant stakeholders – governments, workers, employers, job seekers, people experiencing poverty and their civil-society organisations, and others.



In the European Union, inclusive labour markets are supported by:

- *The European Commission in Commission Recommendation of 3 October 2008 on the Active Inclusion of People Excluded from the Labour Market (2008/867/EC).*
- *The European Parliament in resolution of 6 May 2009 on the Active Inclusion of People Excluded from the Labour Market.*
- *The European Council in Council Conclusions of 30 November 2009 "Promoting labour market inclusion - Recovering from the crisis and preparing for the post-2010 Lisbon Agenda."*
- *The European Social Fund Regulation (art. 3.1.e) (1081/2006/EC)*
- *European Social Partners in the intersectoral26 autonomous Framework Agreement on Inclusive Labour Markets of 25 March 2010.*
- *The Social Investment Package, released by the European Commission on 2 February 2013.*²⁷

EAPN Principles on Decent Work and Full Participation in Society

In an effort to further clarify and explain its position on inclusive labour markets and the way they can be realistically put into practice, EAPN members have endorsed, in 2008, a series of principles:²⁸

1. Positive social activation, based on human rights
2. Individualised, tailored and multidimensional approaches
3. Long-term support to sustainable, quality employment
4. Sustainable and adapted work respectful of people's needs
5. Supporting life-long learning for life and not just work
6. Joined-up integrated, non-discriminatory delivery based on partnership

The EU Network of Independent Experts on Social Inclusion supports multidimensional policies for inclusive labour markets, aiming at:

- *reforming social security systems to ensure that benefits provide adequate income support but at the same time sufficient incentive for people to take up or remain in employment;*
- *encouraging and enabling older people to remain in paid employment for longer;*
- *easing the transition of young people from education into employment by providing advice and support to help them find work;*
- *providing access to continuing training to maintain employability, encourage progression and ensure that people can adapt to changing labour market needs;*
- *facilitating the participation of women in employment, especially women with children;*
- *encouraging and supporting the entry of disadvantaged groups (migrants, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and those with low education levels) into the labour market and employment.*²⁹

However, inclusive labour markets seem to remain a distant reality on the ground, as reflected in the assessment by EAPN members, of the National Reform Programmes:

- *In 2011, most EAPN networks state that the concept is either missing from the NRPs, or completely misunderstood as narrow, negative activation approaches;*
- *In 2012, the same picture is reported: cuts in services and benefits undermine inclusive labour markets, while the approach remains punitive rather than supportive;*
- *In 2013, no less than 92% respondents to the EAPN questionnaire felt that Inclusive Labour Markets are missing from the NRP, while 75% of the respondents felt that their governments were pursuing negative activation, and that these measures will not improve access to employment.*

The Country Specific Recommendations, whose key role has been explained and explored in the previous section, could lend much support to quality of employment, or inclusive labour markets, as strongly called for by EAPN members in their 2013 assessment and shadow recommendations.

26. The signatory parties included the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), the European Centre of Enterprises with Public Participation and of Enterprises of General Economic Interest (Centre européen des entreprises à participation publique et des entreprises d'intérêt économique général, CEEP), the employer organisation BusinessEurope and the European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (Union Européenne de l'artisanat et des petites et moyennes entreprises, UEAPME).

27. Support for inclusive labour markets is explicit in 3 of the 9 documents composing the Social Investment Package, namely the main communication (Towards Social Investment for Growth and Cohesion), and the accompanying documents Follow-up on the implementation by the Member States of the 2008 European Commission recommendation on active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market, and Social investment through the European Social Fund.

28. These principles are fully developed in EAPN's book Active Inclusion – Making It Happen (Chapter 4 – Employment: Supporting people into decent jobs), 2010, available on the EAPN website (www.eapn.eu).

29. EU Network of Independent Experts on Social Inclusion, on behalf of the European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Policy solutions for fostering inclusive labour markets and for combating child poverty and social exclusion, July 2011.



Positive versus negative activation

People who work to help people look for employment have too much work to do. They can't really follow-up on people's cases. I feel disappointed, abandoned, because I am pro-active, but I need to be supported. On my own, I can't make it. (Belgium)

Engagement with the labour market begins with the search for a job, which typically passes through registering with the public employment service. In most of the EU Member States, it is the job seeker's responsibility to be actively looking for a job and to prove he/she is doing so. Subsequently, the quality of employment largely depends on the quality of the services offered to the unemployed in assisting them to find quality and sustainable jobs.

Positive activation is understood by the authors of this explainer as a process which is deeply rooted in respect for the person and of their specific circumstances; which provides adequate and comprehensive support and creates real pathways for inclusion in the labour market, and in society. Such a process entails that a person is holistically supported, through flanking services, access to education and training, and personalized job counseling, towards a quality and sustainable job.

In contrast, **negative activation** is understood to mean that people are treated as units in a numbers' game, where almost any job, of any quality, is considered to be "suitable," and refusing a job means a curtailing of rights and access to resources. This punitive approach, complete with conditionality and sanctions, is designed to at any cost push people into employment that is often unsustainable and low paid.

As it is the person's responsibility to prove they are actively job seeking, sanctions exist for those who do not comply. These sanctions can vary in each EU Member State, ranging from registering out of the public employment services (and losing its support in the job seeking process) to loss of the unemployment benefit or, in some cases, other social security benefits. This can easily create a lose-lose situation, where low quality, unsustainable jobs are proposed – people are either forced to take them, or face losing support, income, and security.

I was really keen to find work. I had applied for over 50 jobs in the previous few months. I had always applied for the jobs which the job centre asked me to. I also applied for jobs which I found advertised in the local newspapers. Then I forgot to apply for just one job, and was punished at Christmas with 9 weeks without money. (United Kingdom)

If you are unemployed you have to take any job that is proposed, as otherwise you will lose your social supports. (Slovenia)



Sustainability and quality of employment once in work are crucial factors. Employment contracts, which set out the level of pay, duration, working conditions, work/life balance, employment rights and other important elements define one's experience in the world of work. In the absence of comprehensive national frameworks on quality jobs, and, moreover, in times where flexibilisation of labour markets and erosion of rights are widespread, quality of employment suffers dramatically.

More inclusive approaches and the emphasis on the quality dimension are prerequisites to keep people close to the labour market, to ensure that they are productive in the economy, and, last but not least, to ensure dignified lives, free of poverty and social exclusion.



- Employment services must be supportive and not force people into unsuitable training or jobs.
- Employment policies and services need to be informed by people experiencing poverty who need to be valued as experts.
- Provide support to social NGOs and the social enterprises which support access to jobs for excluded groups.

Messages from the delegates of the 10th European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty towards public employment services

Combating discrimination

Discrimination in accessing a job is still widespread. A quality, inclusive labour market should strive to ensure that every individual who is able to work receives personalized guidance, free from discrimination, and taking into account specific circumstances (such as disability, parenthood, belonging to a minority group etc.), which often act as obstacles to finding decent employment.

Social inclusion is difficult but possible, job inclusion is impossible for Roma: this is a racial issue. (Czech Republic)

If you are a Roma woman, once you have children it is impossible to find work. (Hungary)

Employers do not want to employ people with a disability, as they may think it would take longer to train them in or to do the job than it would for a 'normal' person. [...] I have applied for so many jobs and been to interviews but still get rejected by employers. I feel that employers do not want to employ me because of my hearing disability. This is not right. We can do the job as well as anyone else. What I am earning at the moment is not enough to have a decent standard of living. (Ireland)

I keep looking for work, but I find no understanding from employers, the state and social services, because of my disability. For six years now, the Employment Office hasn't offered me any adequate employment possibility, particularly because I have a disability. Employers turn down my application, because there are no programmes to support people with health problems like us. (Bulgaria)

I registered with several temping agencies. Several times, whether for training or for working, when the schedules were not feasible, I would say – I am a single mother, I can't be there at this or that time, or I can't go work till that time and then go pick up my children, it is not possible for me. They told me – we don't care. Look, we also have kids, yet we make it work. Unfortunately, it is not possible for everybody to "make it work." (Belgium)

In our members' analysis, effectively tackling discrimination does not seem to be a priority for governments, as reflected in their National Reform Programmes. While presumably striving to ensure inclusive labour markets, governments do not seem to feel that fighting discrimination and ensuring better participation and inclusion plays a key role.

→ **EAPN Netherlands** – Sheltered work for people with a disability and working capacity of more than 30% will disappear in 2015, together with the Wajong, a benefit for people who suffer a disability since their youth. These people will have to work for regular / mainstream business for a lower income, which generates more poverty.

What is needed is appropriate training and equality frameworks, for public employment services and employers alike. While the absence of discrimination in the process of finding a job is essential, it is equally important to ensure discrimination-free working environments, including adapted workplaces for workers who need them.



→ Stop stigmatisation and discrimination with strong discrimination legislation which is implemented

→ Tailor personalised support services to address the specific needs and obstacles of different groups

→ Make measures to address discrimination against people with disabilities which address the needs of people with mental health problems

→ Invest in schools and do not abandon young people to themselves when they stop schooling

→ End education cuts to save future workers, and invest in lifelong learning

Messages from the delegates of the 10th European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty

Is a "suitable job" a quality job?

Public employment services in many Member States do have an operational definition of what constitutes a so-called "suitable" job, which includes dispositions regarding the beneficiary profile and qualification levels (compared to what the job offers ask for), wages (comparison between the last wage and the wage proposed by the job offer), health (the job offer must not endanger health), distance between workplace and home, adequacy to physical abilities, and moral adequacy to the beneficiary profile, to list some.

Nevertheless, it is clear that the dispositions regarding the definition of a "suitable job" in the different EU Member States are not necessarily aligned with the principles of quality employment.

→ **EAPN Poland** – A "suitable job" is a job that can imply commuting for 3 hours (back and forth), we can doubt if the reconciliation of professional and personal life is possible in these circumstances. If a parent has to start working at 08:30, it is necessary to wake up around 05:30, prepare the children for school and leave them there at 07:00, in order to arrive at work on time. This daily routine can result in consequences on the physical and mental health of every element of the family, and probably would not be feasible, as leaving children at school at 07:00 is probably not possible.

The definition of a "suitable job" is also prone to subjective interpretation by the services and beneficiaries. The conflict arising from a different interpretation can result in negative consequences for the job seeker – either (s) he is pushed to accept any job, or sanctions for refusing a job offer can be imposed. If the application of sanctions can be expected, the underlying conditions must guarantee that a real opportunity is proposed to the job seeker, underpinned by solid quality frameworks, rooted in respect for the individual and the ambition to provide a dignified living.

I want to be respected as a man and not be plundered or exploited like a mobile phone that only lasts 3 years and then gets discarded. (Austria)

Employers do not respect us and our rights. We are expected to take any work which is not enough for us or our family's needs. (Poland)

The Labour Office only offers employment in Kazlų Rūda, which is 100 km away. It is impossible to go so far to work. It is very expensive. (Lithuania)




now, the Labour Office hasn't offered me any other possibility, particularly because I have a d




which is about 100 km away, but it is impossible to go so far to work. It is very expensive.

The matching process is therefore crucial and, although its importance is recognized³⁰, most of the public employment services are understaffed, which means bigger case loads and less attention to each jobseeker. Different persons, in different cycles of life, demand flexible services focused on individual needs and on good integration opportunities.

In order to develop special measures and innovative ways to provide tailored job offers to people experiencing poverty (particularly those groups that the services have more difficulty to work with), it is necessary to assure **two basic conditions**: reviewing the definition of a “suitable job”, by harmonizing its parameters with a clear definition of quality work principles (reducing the scope for subjective interpretation), and providing more and better trained staff, so the public employment services can improve the matching process and get more and better job placements.

 *My husband was unemployed. I was earning a low salary - little more than the national minimum wage. I just couldn't afford the things I needed. After paying the rent of €150 a month and paying for transport and food, there was almost nothing left over. Help from my family was what got me through then and gets me through now. (Portugal)*

 *I am willing to work cleaning the streets. I just want enough money to live a normal life. (Bulgaria)*

In order to enable job quality, it is necessary that a clear definition of quality employment and work acquires regulatory capacity to influence the employer organisations to adopt

the standards into their own job definitions, thus reducing the percentage of bad jobs in the labour market. Then, it is possible for the public employment services to develop good services tailored according to the individual needs, and based on effective monitoring and support.

We must emphasize that **the adoption of a definition of quality of work and employment, even in the form of minimum standards, is not sufficient to change the current situation**. Implementation is key, and it often leaves much to be desired. For instance, while in most Member States the law already includes anti-discrimination dispositions, there is empirical evidence of discriminatory practices among employers. For a person experiencing poverty the risk is substantially increased, as stereotyping and “labelling” according to their present condition or previous life path is unfortunately current.

What is quality of employment to people experiencing poverty?

EAPN national networks have taken the time to ask people experiencing poverty what their expectations in relation to quality employment are, and what the measures needed to ensure inclusive labour markets are, which are respectful of people's needs and circumstances, and support them towards sustainable, quality jobs, in the absence of any form of discrimination or coercion. This is a synthesis of the answers:

→ *Develop strategies to facilitate the insertion of people vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion in the labour market (individual paths of inclusion and work integration, mentoring, access to lifelong training, etc.);*

- *Better organisation of public employment services, adequate staffing, appropriate training, and commensurate case load, in order to meaningfully support the reintegration of the unemployed and other vulnerable groups in the labour market;*
- *The improvement of the advice and information services, for the delivery of continuous support in the context of frequent transitions that individuals currently face;*
- *Ensure that jobs offered provide access to dignified life, encompassing all dimensions mentioned in the EAPN 10 Principles;*
- *An increased coverage and quality of the provision of flanking services (including child, elderly, personal and long-term care), to support the integration into the labour market of single parents and family carers;*

- *Better access to education, which must be geared towards school attainment and the fight against early school leaving; further and continuing vocational training oriented to the development of skills and qualifications, tailored to the individual needs, articulated with the needs of the local labour markets;*
- *Social protection – strong support of an adequate minimum income guarantee, integrated with existing benefits and designed to avoid poverty traps by making it possible to be combined with income from work;*
- *Transports – development of public transports networks, in order to reduce areas with absence of coverage and optimize commuting times;*
- *Raise awareness and deconstruct stereotypes about disadvantaged groups with employers and policy makers.*

What low quality of employment means in practice: Justine's Diary

“Hello, I am 36 and currently unemployed. I am doing this blog to share my experiences and feelings, both positive and negative, in my quest to gain full-time employment. In the past I have had many jobs in factories, pubs, shops, and with cleaning agencies. I have two children, one at college and working part-time, and one at school with a paper round. I have always done voluntary work in schools and for community organisations. I left school at 14, when my parents split up, and started work in a factory when I was 15. I have no formal qualifications, but have taken up training opportunities that have been accessible to me. The jobs I have had have not been very rewarding but, up until recent times, were easier to find. Now, even rubbish jobs are scarce in this area. I become very upset when people look down on those who are unemployed and dismiss lightly the problems that we face. I hope my blog will shed light on the difficulties and the issues that unemployed workers face in 21st century Britain. People who have never had to deal with the employment services and their outsourced off-shoots do not understand what we have to go through. I hope my blog will help to give an insight.”

Read Justine's full story at: <http://justine-diaryofajobseeker.blogspot.com>

30. Some EU Member States have implemented IT processes for matching job offers and beneficiary profiles.

THE LINK BETWEEN QUALITY WORK AND EMPLOYMENT AND POVERTY



For most people, paid employment is still the main source for the necessary resources to meet their needs and lead dignified lives. However, unless the quality aspect is taken into account, people continue to live in poverty despite earning a wage, if the wage is insufficient. The reason is simple: policies are focused mainly on reaching full employment, with little consideration for the quality dimension. If all we need is jobs, even low-paid and low quality jobs are acceptable. But from the poverty perspective, low paid and low quality jobs only perpetuate or worsen a life in poverty.

The implications of poor quality employment are anchored in its main characteristics – low wages, low security, reduced ability to join social protection schemes, poor working conditions, and poor quality of life overall. The labour market is becoming more and more polarized, between good and bad jobs (with average jobs substantially reducing), with the latter becoming more common. This trend contributes to reducing the efficiency of work as the main income distribution mechanism in our societies.

Insufficient wages and in-work poverty

In-work poverty is understood as a **state of poverty experienced by a person despite their status of being active on the labour market in paid employment**.

This phenomenon currently affects **8.9% of the workforce in the EU 27 (2011 data)**, and it is determined by a number of factors, including personal circumstances, such as the number of non-working dependents. However, it is undeniable that insufficient wages, as well as precarious contracts, represent the main sources for experiencing poverty while holding a job.

In 2010, the Independent Network of Experts on Social Protection and Social Exclusion released, on behalf of the European Commission, a comprehensive report on the situation of in-work poverty in the European Union, highlighting the large extent to which we are still falling short of ensuring quality of work, as well as inclusive labour markets.³¹

31. **EU Network of Independent Experts on Social Inclusion** – Hugh Frazer and Eric Marlier, on behalf of the European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, In-Work Poverty and Labour Market Segmentation in the EU: Key Lessons, Synthesis Report, December 2010.

EAPN has also explored the issue of in-work poverty in detail, looking at definitions, causes, enabling policies, the impact of the crisis, as well as ways forward.³²

Low wages, often below the poverty line, are not enough for a person to satisfy the needs of a life in dignity. Sometimes, wages are so low that being employed just does not pay off, meaning that a significant part of the wage is destined to pay expenses related to work, like transport from home to work or childcare/adult care. Subsequently, having a job sometimes leaves a person worse-off in terms of poverty. Additionally, low wages mean low social security contributions, including towards future unemployment benefits and pension, which means that a person is condemned to poverty both in the present and in the future.

→ **EAPN Spain** – The national minimum wage is 650€ per month, a value very close to the cost of monthly house-rent.

→ **EAPN Finland** – Workers earning low wages have to apply for money from social welfare to support rent and living costs (and also food aid). As a consequence, not only debts are growing in private households, but also insecurity, increased alcoholism, drug and mental problems are observed.

→ **EAPN Netherlands** – Our legal minimum wage is eroding, while the self-employed without employees (ZZP) are sinking into poverty.

People earning a low wage may recur to overtime or second and third jobs which, in turn, has a negative effect on well-being. If a person is always working, the added income comes frequently at a heavy cost. Such a situation increases immediate risk of health problems (physical and mental), as well as safety risks (a tired person may experience a higher probability of accidents).

Long working hours or multiple jobs also have a tremendously negative impact on the balance of private and professional life, with consequences on the individual, on the family and well-being of children, and on the community. As it is not possible to participate and be actively engaged, a poor worker might not be able to fight for better wages and working conditions, thus perpetuating a vicious circle.

I can't be sociable. My self-confidence is ruined, because every day I must worry about the next day. (Denmark)

I definitely think that everyone deserves it [the living wage]. It's got to be better than the minimum wage. Who can actually say that people can live on the minimum – I'm pretty sure the people who came up with the figures aren't living off it. (United Kingdom)

The impact of low wages, when they are the cause of low overall income, can be significant, and threaten not just the individual, but also the social fabric and cohesion.

Low wages usually entail low levels of social protection, poor housing conditions, increase risk of health (physical and mental) and security problems, worse access to health (services, exams, medications, treatments), strong material deprivation, lack of job satisfaction and others. In families experiencing in-work poverty, the incidence of school failure and early school leaving, as well as domestic violence, becomes significant.

For trade unions, the plight to raise wages constitutes an ongoing struggle, but their demands are often dismissed by employers' organisations and governments, with the argument that it will damage the economy (with companies going insolvent) and reduce the number of jobs available in the labour market. It almost seems as if governments consider in-work poverty preferable to poverty outside work.

The European Trade Union Institute released in July 2013, an overview of wage developments in the European Union (2000-2012), in the form of a "visual map". The findings paint a gloomy picture: austerity measures are causing rising unemployment, combined with wage cuts.³³

What this visual wage developments map is proving is that wages are the principle target of austerity measures across Europe. They clearly became the key instrument or adjustment mechanism through an internal devaluation policy. This trend did not solve the "competitiveness" problems, in particular in countries subject

33. **European Trade Union Institute**, *Wage development infographic*, 28 July 2013, available at <http://www.etui.org/Topics/Crisis/Wage-development-infographic>

to financial bailout schemes. On the contrary, it aggravated existing problems, by affecting the most vulnerable. This is unacceptable and it risks undermining further the already fragile citizens' support to the European project.

Bernadette Ségol, General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation

There is an **ongoing debate regarding what constitutes adequate pay**. In order to preserve incentives to work, it is commonly agreed that wages need to be higher than social assistance, such as minimum income schemes. However, the prevalent theory is that benefits should be kept at very low levels, which, in turn, allows wages to be kept low as well.

EAPN believes in a positive hierarchy. First, minimum income schemes and similar benefits should be set at an adequate level, for example, at least at the level of the national poverty line (which represents 60% of median income), or by the method of reference budgets (ie, calculating the cost of the basket of goods and services needed for a life in dignity). Once these benefits are set, minimum wages should be of a higher level, thus providing the afore-mentioned motivation for people to take up employment.

32. **EAPN**, *Working and Poor* – Position paper on In-Work Poverty, November 2013, available on the EAPN website (www.eapn.eu)

THE SCOTTISH LIVING WAGE CAMPAIGN

The Living Wage campaigns decided to take demands directly to employers and try to make a difference, building on the earlier success of such campaigns in London and elsewhere.

The campaigns are based on a dual approach, combining lobbying employers, with the help of trade unions, with supporting grassroots organisations to put pressure on local employers to take ownership of the campaign.

Living Wage campaigns have proved remarkably successful, also due to the magnitude of the problem, as low pay and in-work poverty are widespread in Scotland.

To date, three important institutions have become Living Wage employers: The Glasgow City Council, Scottish Enterprise (the agency responsible for business development in Scotland) and Employers in Voluntary Housing.

The Glasgow City Council also started their own Glasgow Living Wage Campaign, signing up more than 130 employers as 'living wage' employers. The Living Wage has also been debated twice in the Scottish Parliament.

As the target were employers and not the State, thus placing the responsibility to fight poverty on the former, it was easier to garner political support.

The campaigns also helped forge new links between local community organisations, trade unions, faith-based organisations and other civil-society organisations.

However, EAPN members indicate that the lack of resources has prevented it so far from reaching a larger scale and achieving more results on the ground.

See more about the campaign here: <http://slw.povertyalliance.org/>



EAPN national networks strongly highlight the need to raise the national minimum wage (in the EU Member States where it exists) or extend the scope of collective wage agreements, in order to increase the disposable income for the workers. It is extremely important that the less qualified jobs, which are often not covered by collective bargaining and sectoral agreements, provide adequate wages.

The issue of the number of non-working dependents should be addressed through a separate family income supplement, to avoid poverty traps. Equally, providing tax credits (that is, lowering taxes for low incomes) and allowing for combining social assistance with low wages are crucial tools. However, care must be taken that such measures, while needed to address a dire situation currently on the ground, do not encourage and perpetuate a culture of low wages among employers.

- **EAPN France** - The Revenu de Solidarité Active (RSA) is a complement of income from work to persons whose working time does not grant them the monthly minimum wage.
- **EAPN Poland** - A new initiative is in place, in the form of a more permissive approach regarding the combination of registered work with social assistance benefits and disability pensions.
- **EAPN United Kingdom** - A system of in-work support is in place (although reformed several times), targeted at people with children. The tax credit system is available for those in low paid work (part-time or full-time) and it is seen as one of the key factors in the reduction of child poverty. As more and more people need it, the current system is under reform with six key benefits rolled up into a single payment called the Universal Credit (UC), aimed at ensuring that all people are better off working than in welfare. The withdrawal rate of new UC will be lower, which is welcomed. The current credit is only available to people working 16h/week (30h/week, if they have no children). However, fears persist that the new system entrenches a linkage between low pay and insecure forms of work. A greater and earlier use of the new sanctions, to a wider range of recipients, is also expected.

Unstable, insecure employment



Part time work is good for those who choose it, but not for those who are forced to take up a fixed term or part time contract. (Italy)

Lasting contracts and adequate employment rights are also key factors, as how secure a person's work and income is, is closely interrelated to being entitled to appropriate social security protection.

The growing of precariousness in the labour market can be observed by the decrease of more stable forms of contracts (e.g. open-ended contracts) and the increase of other forms of contracts, more unstable and insecure (e.g. fixed term contracts, agency work, self-employment, etc). The evolution of full-time versus part-time contracts also translates the effect of precariousness, especially when part-time employment is not due to a worker's preference, but to the unavailability of full-time work positions.



- In the **United Kingdom**, the concept of "zero hour contract" means that people are on a constant on-call basis, waiting to be contacted for infrequent working hours. This perpetuates unpredictability about security of income, as well as the inability to plan for the future in a sustainable way.
- In **Germany**, "mini-jobs" mean wages no higher than 450 euro, short-term contracts, and reduced employment protection and social security, including pensions and unemployment benefits.

The issue of precariousness is particularly relevant when articulated with poverty and social exclusion. As mentioned by the majority of EAPN national networks, **precarious forms of work present a clear correlation with deprivation and hardship**. The negative impact of this correlation is enhanced by the increasingly structural dimension of precariousness. This means, an unstable job can no longer be considered a transition to a more stable form of work, but as a state in itself.

Due to a revolving door effect between periods of unemployment and work, the access to secure employment is becoming more difficult, especially to the more vulnerable groups of our societies.

If employment is insecure and the contract's duration is unstable, **the risk of not being eligible for social protection benefits is also raised**. As low quality jobs might imply no access to severance and redundancy pay, it is not possible for a person to have the money needed for a new phase of unemployment and trying to find another job.

Additionally, precarious forms of work and employment are frequently associated with low wages and instability of income, uncertainty about the future, increased difficulties to access social protection, increased flexibility in working time, reduced access to life-long learning and promotions, low or no access to maternity leave and other work/life balance measures, etc.

In the medium term, **low-quality jobs imply a level of instability and insecurity that limits a person's capacity to face the multiple challenges inherent to the different cycles of life**. Access to unemployment benefits, sick leave, parental leave, disability benefits (which are often contributory), pension and other benefits are under threat. In the long term, even the retirement pension will be severely hampered (the elderly have

a higher risk of poverty and social exclusion than the working-age population).

Implications for social security

As mentioned before, **most benefits** – including unemployment and pension rights – **are contributive**, which means that entitlement to them, as well as their level, are **conditioned upon how much time an individual has spent in paid employment, and how high was the level of pay** (as the contributions are proportionate to wages).

Social protection mechanisms play a key role of **automatic stabilisers** in times of unemployment. However, as they depend on a person's ability to contribute when employed, quality work remains a pre-requisite to access a dignified life also when not working.

The access to unemployment benefits is increasingly affected by stricter conditionality, which reduces its coverage and duration and decreases its monthly value. For example, in many Member States, the duration of unemployment benefits depends on the number of previous consecutive working days, and on the applicant's age, which means that working on short fixed-term contracts increases the risk of non-eligibility, or can reduce the duration of the benefit.

The same principle of regular contributions applies to other benefits, for example health benefits, disability benefits, parental benefits and retirement. The access to these benefits is also conditioned by contract duration, as a minimum period of contributing remains necessary to be entitled to social security protection.

The economic crisis and ensuing austerity measures have only worsened this situation, and tightened eligibility and access to these safety nets.

→ **EAPN France** – The access to unemployment benefits requires a minimum of 4 months of activity. The duration of the unemployment benefits is equal to working time, with a maximum of 24 months (for persons up to 50 years of age) or 36 months (for persons over 50).

→ **EAPN Finland** – Access to unemployment benefits requires a minimum of 26 weeks of full time salaried work within 28 months (beginning y. 2014). The level of unemployment benefits varies depending on income earned, but after 500 days it is the minimum unemployment benefits for everyone. The duration of higher level unemployment benefits depends on the duration that the person has been employed. There is no limit for earning lower level unemployment benefits, but declining to participate actively in employment services leads to withdrawal of the unemployment benefits.

The issues of health and disabilities, however, remain a specific paradox of low quality employment. On one hand, the access to these kind of benefits is hampered by working in low quality jobs, due to the fact that short contracts or atypical contracts can negatively affect the access to the benefits. On the other hand, poor working conditions associated with low quality jobs can increase the possibility of health and work safety problems, thus also increasing the chance for needing access to those benefits.

In the case of retirement, a contributive career over time, with few or no interruptions and an adequate wage level, is necessary to access a monthly pension whose value is high enough to keep a person free of poverty and social exclusion. But low-quality

employment and jobs mean the opposite – lower wages and instable income, more interruptions in the contributive career (due to an increased frequency of unemployment and short-term contracts) and more difficulties in re-entering the labour market. The situation is particularly difficult for **women**, who face additional difficulties in accessing the labour market and are more likely to hold a low-quality job, or to have infrequent contributions. Additional risks include the non-provision of occupational pension schemes, which means that employees need to rely exclusively on individual private savings – impossible, if the current salary is not even enough to live on in the present.

→ **EAPN United Kingdom** – Although there is a basic right to pensions and other out of work benefits regardless of work status, employment status still entitles the recipient to higher payments.

→ **EAPN Portugal** – For those out of work there is a non-contributory system, for social pensions and disability benefits, but with much lower values.

→ **EAPN Sweden** – There is other support for those not employed (or never employed) but usually the values of those benefits are not high and allow no survival guarantee. Pension and life insurance is possible but can be unreliable and not accessible to those earning low wages.



Long-term impact of low-quality work

Taking all of the above into consideration, it is not difficult to estimate the implications and long-term consequences of poor-quality work and employment on poverty and social exclusion, and on well-being and quality of life overall.

At the individual level, low quality work and employment means low wages and uncertain income. The permanent instability about the future molds the individual perspectives about life's challenges, and constitutes a strong force that locks a person in stagnancy or inactivity.

The constant stress and frequent transition periods (from employment to unemployment and back to employment) imply that the necessary adaptation to new situations takes a heavy cost on the person's health, at physical and mental level.

At the psychological level, it is considerably harder to sustain a clear identity, built on well-defined roles and a positive concept of the self, in a work context where instability is the norm, rather than the exception.

At family level, we see an increased difficulty to take on the challenges inherent to building relationships, a home or a family, and the numbers of young people that are stuck in an uncertain present are increasing.

As a consequence, birth rates are decreasing in many countries, threatening the growth of the population and generational renovation. For a family with children, low-quality work and employment mean a harder reconciliation between professional and private life,

increased stress with personal obligations, and an increased need for income necessary to adequately respond to family needs.

The children's well-being is at risk, as parents lack the time and income to fully support their development. In the case of single parents, of which 90% are women, this impact increases exponentially.

At the community level, the needs of the young and elderly population are more difficult to satisfy, as their relatives are too engaged and absorbed in the battle for their own survival.

Low-quality work and employment and low purchasing power mean an impoverishment for communities and, in the long term, threatens the dynamics of local economies and the satisfaction of the common needs.

People have less time and resources to be socially and politically engaged, to be active citizens, to contribute in meaningful ways to the community, and to build positive relationships and solidarity with others.

For society as a whole, low-quality jobs are a hidden enemy, when we consider the impact on social stratification. When good quality jobs are increasingly replaced by low quality jobs, the middle class vanishes and the economy plunges, affecting small, medium and big companies, dependent on the acquisitive capacity of the population.


This evolution is not good news, as competitiveness for the more and more reduced group of the super-rich will increase (due to continuous concentration of wealth in a smaller number of individuals and families) and, simultaneously, the consumer middle class decreases.


For the State, it means an equation impossible to solve.


The ability to finance effective social protection systems and essential services is undermined, since contributions are reduced as the tax base shrinks, and revenues are too low and inconsistent.


Public revenues will plunge, and the key role of education, health and other services, as well as social protection mechanisms, will be placed at risk.

Low quality of work and employment condemns more people to poverty, increasing the need for benefits and services which, in turn, the State is unable to provide, because the same low quality of work and employment reduced the contributory tax base.

 *People live off nothing. There are many alcohol problems; we are at the top of the suicides in Europe... Our salaries are too low and especially in rural areas travel costs are too high. (Lithuania)*

 *We're decent people and want to work for decent wages – we want a decent life.*

 *Unemployed people don't want to stay on benefits. They want to work and to be independent.*

 *People don't want to be rich, they want dignity in their life.*

Poor quality of work and employment has severe implications at both a personal level –by condemning individuals and families to poverty and social exclusion – as well as a societal level – by proliferating a wrong model of development, destroying the social and economic fabric, undermining social cohesion, and reducing opportunities for meaningful social, political and civil participation.

The economic crisis and austerity measures

In addition to the destruction of jobs and the subsequent very high unemployment levels across Europe, the economic crisis, as well as the austerity measures that followed, also placed quality of work and employment under great threat.

EAPN has monitored the effects of the crisis on employment in 2009 and 2010, with the help of its national networks on the ground. The situation is one of increased precariousness on the labour market with downward pressure on wages, employment rights, working conditions and collective bargaining.

Instead, while quality of jobs is deteriorating, compulsive activation through conditionality and sanctions is on the rise.

- **EAPN Denmark** – The quality of jobs is affected in relation to milieu, stress and insecurity.
- **EAPN Netherlands** – There is an attempt to decrease the quality of job conditions, but the trade unions are fighting to keep them and indeed there is an increase of temporary/short-term jobs; there are some new, low paid and less secure jobs.
- **EAPN Spain** – Salaries have dropped even more and working conditions have worsened in general.
- **EAPN Romania** – There is clearly a degradation of working conditions.
- **EAPN Finland** – Compulsion and punishment have been extended to those aged over 25. They are now obliged to participate in so called rehabilitating work activity. If they don't, they lose employment benefit for 60 days, or their social assistance benefit (welfare benefit) is reduced by 20% (for two months).
- **EAPN Sweden** – Though we've got a long tradition of improving access to employment through positive measures and reinforced support, the new right-wing government is rather reinforcing activation and benefits cuts.



These findings were reinforced by EAPN members' analysis of the annual National Reform Programmes. EAPN has set out its own vision and proposals of an alternative, sustainable exit from the crisis, emphasizing the need to put people first and to support job creation, quality employment and social protection, a fairer distribution of resources through equitable welfare, measuring of social progress, and open governance systems. However, this vision does not seem to be shared by decision-makers and current trends.³⁴

From the European perspective, attacks on job quality are supported by high-profile documents, introduced in the aftermath of the crisis (such as the Two-Pack and Six-Pack, the Compact for Growth and Jobs, and the Pact for the Euro), which prioritise fiscal consolidation and macroeconomic concerns

34. Dr Katherine Duffy with EAPN, *Re-engaging Hope and Expectations. Getting Out of the Crisis Together - Alternative approaches for an inclusive recovery*, March 2012, available on the EAPN website (www.eapn.eu)

at all costs. The Country-Specific Recommendations, in the context of the Europe 2020 Strategy, also exert negative pressure as highlighted in earlier chapters.

Employment sees itself reduced to just another tool for competitiveness, whose quality dimension (including wages) can be adjusted at will to suit market goals. These measures have only worsened the situation of workers and jobseekers on the ground, perpetuating in-work poverty and contributing to hardship and exclusion.

Some countries in the European Union have seen themselves forced to seek external financial assistance from the European Commission, the International Monetary Fund, and in the case of Eurozone countries, the European Central Bank. These countries signed Memoranda of Understanding with these international institutions, where they commit to substantial internal reforms in exchange for financial

help – such as cuts in public-sector wages and jobs, weakening of collective bargaining and trade-union power, adjustment of statutory minimum wages, and increased flexibility on the labour market, coupled with a reduction of employment rights and protection. A recent EAPN paper, dedicated to studying the impact of the Memoranda on poverty and social exclusion, concludes that these developments will increase the number of “bad jobs” on the ground.³⁵



- *Meeting the social implications of the crisis should be on the top of the agenda.*
- *Social reform – to reconstruct the social system – redistribution of the wealth – different taxes for different groups – business sectors - need to be more monitored.*
- *Recognise indebtedness as a cause of hidden poverty.*
- *Place people at the center of recovery. A united EU can make a change towards a more social Europe.*
- *Tax financial transactions.*
- *Redistribute the profits of the banks for a more equal society.*
- *Stop re-locations.*
- *Stop competition (it doesn't work) and discover solidarity.*
- *More cooperation in the global labour market.*

Messages from the delegates of the 10th European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty

35. Dr. Katherine Duffy for EAPN, *Lifeboat or Life Sentence? Report on the Troika and emergency assistance programmes and their impact on poverty and social exclusion*, December 2013, available on the EAPN website (www.eapn.eu).

What do people want?

The 10th European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty held in 2011³⁶ had as its topic Employment, work and jobs: the reality for people experiencing poverty and social exclusion.

Delegates were people experiencing poverty from 26 countries, who discussed together with decision-makers from the European institutions (Commission, Parliament and the EU Presidencies of Hungary, Poland and Denmark), national and international bodies, the social partners (European Trade Union Confederation and Business Europe), academics and other NGOs.

The meeting was set in the context of the deepening crisis and austerity measures, which are making jobs scarcer, social benefits harder to come by, and cause a deteriorating quality of life for many people experiencing poverty and social exclusion.

Delegates had the opportunity to describe the key issues and to make proposals surrounding the difficulties of accessing quality employment, work and jobs.

The guests, who were present to listen and exchange with the delegates, each reaffirmed the vital importance of listening to people experiencing poverty in EU policy making.

These are the proposals for quality employment, a decent salary and social rights, as they emerged from the workshops of the Meeting:

36. The 10th European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty, held on 13-14 May 2011 in Brussels, was co-organised by the European Commission, the Hungarian presidency of the European Union, and EAPN.



- **A minimum income scheme in every Member State**, higher than the poverty threshold, with no discrimination especially related to age, which would allow us to have a decent life, based on indicators of the household shopping basket, but also bearing in mind other indicators, such as access to education, telephone, internet and travel.
- **Implementation of the European Recommendation on Active Inclusion**, addressing the three pillars: adequate minimum income (including a specific directive), access to quality services and supports to access decent work; this must be done in an integrated way and not focus on activation only.
- **Decent social allowances for people who cannot work due to severe illness.**
- **End cultural discrimination between white collar and blue collar jobs.**
- **Awareness-raising of employment and social rights** and their implementation.
- **The freedom to reject or accept the jobs** that are proposed.
- **Regulations on the quality of work and a living wage for workers and their families.**
- **Restrictions on insecure exploitative types of employment.**
- **Maintain level of contributions to support financing of the social protection system.**
- **Equal pay for the same job** – including between women and men.
- **Adequate salaries that pay a 'living wage'** must be a primary goal for employment policies.
- **Create opportunities in terms of mobility, child care and access to employment.**
- **Employment security through long-term contracts and protection of employment rights.**
- *Put the question of working-poor high on the agenda.*
- *Put forward proposals related to the hidden economy.*
- **Quality Standards (indicators)** should be developed.

The role of the European Union

As explained in the first chapter of this explainer, **the European Union has committed**, through the Treaty and the Charter of Fundamental Rights, **to ensure social cohesion and protection against hardship, and with employment rights.**

The role of the European Union regarding economic and employment policies is stronger than its role in social inclusion policy, which means that enacting hard and soft instruments³⁷ to promote the quality employment and work agenda in Member States is possible.

Moreover, the European Union has and exercises **extensive competences in aligning macroeconomic processes**, which have a direct and often severe impact on the quality of work and employment, thus endangering its role as safeguard against poverty and vehicle for social and professional inclusion.

The European Employment Strategy, adopted in 1997, was merged into the Lisbon Strategy, from 2000 to 2010, and is now an integral part of the Europe 2020 Strategy (valid from 2010 - 2020).

The objective of creating more and better jobs in the EU is currently supported by the **employment headline target of Europe 2020**, underpinned by the Employment Guidelines. Implementation is ensured through National Reform Programmes (at the national level) and Flagship Initiatives (at the community level), and is monitored through the Annual Growth Survey and, more specifically, its annex – The Joint Employment Report, as well as through the Country-Specific Recommendations.

The European Institutions, thus, have at their disposal key instruments which could contribute in a decisive fashion to the establishment of quality of work and employment.

Additionally, Member States exchange and debate good practices through **thematic and national peer reviews**, in the framework of the Mutual Learning Programme.

This should be an opportunity to focus attention on the impact of public policies regarding job creation and the prevention of job destruction, the guidance and counseling systems, the job seeker's access to employment and training, the adequacy of unemployment protection systems in a labour market increasingly characterized by precarious forms of work, and the quality of services provided by the public employment services, especially to vulnerable groups.

37. The term "**soft law**" refers to quasi-legal instruments which do not have any legally binding force, or whose binding force is somewhat weaker than the binding force of traditional law, often contrasted with soft law by being referred to as "hard law".

Although the quality dimension is explicitly mentioned as an objective in the framework described above, implementation still leaves much to be desired, and the absence of clear quality indicators (or the unwillingness to implement what is already there) does not make it easier to effectively prioritise the quality of work and employment. The European Union, however, has an essential part to play if it so chooses.

→ **EAPN United Kingdom** - The EU has played a critical role in improving job quality in the United Kingdom. The Part-Time Workers Directive ensured pension access to thousands of workers in the UK and the Working Time Directive has meant improvements for many workers, ensuring that many had access to paid annual leave for the first time.

10 STEPS THE EUROPEAN UNION CAN TAKE

1. **Set common standards on employment rights:**
Ensure that the renewed concept and indicators for quality of work and employment, currently developed by the European Commission and the Employment Committee, take into account all relevant quality dimensions discussed in this explainer, and use them to update the Joint Assessment Framework and Employment Performance Monitor indicators.
2. **Implement the framework:**
Apply and mainstream these common standards in the processes of monitoring and multilateral surveillance of implementation, together with support for Inclusive Labour Markets, through the assessment of the National Reform Programmes in the European Semester, particularly through the Annual Growth Survey (and the Joint Employment Report) and strong Country-Specific Recommendations.

3. **Adequately define the employment target:**
In the framework of the upcoming mid-term review of Europe 2020, revise the Eurostat definition of employment which underpins the employment headline target, to make it reflect quality of work and employment beyond numbers.
4. **Pursue coherence in policy-making:**
Ensure that the balance between social and economic priorities is respected and adequately reflects the Treaty provision, by supporting a strong social dimension of the European and Monetary Union on equal footing with economic concerns, and by reinstating the social targets of Europe 2020 as priorities of the European Semester, alongside convergence and stability objectives.
5. **Don't leave bail-out states behind:**
The European Commission is ideally placed to safeguard quality of work and employment in the negotiations of the Memoranda of Understanding with countries receiving financial assistance, as well as to monitor progress towards the social targets of Europe 2020 by including these countries in the National Reform Programmes and Country-Specific Recommendation processes.
6. **Promote decent wages:**
Reverse the current European trend of decoupling wages from inflation and support adequate wages that allow people to live in dignity, and support progress towards and EU framework on adequate minimum wages, with full respect for collective bargaining agreements and national wage-setting mechanisms.
7. **Fight in-work poverty:**
Produce a Green Paper for combating In-Work Poverty, to be discussed and built upon with stakeholders beyond the social partners, including people experiencing poverty, jobseekers and their organisations, and aim to develop it into a comprehensive EU strategy against in-work poverty.
8. **Back quality research and exchanges:**
Support quality of work and employment as a key theme of multilateral surveillance and the mutual learning programme on employment, through country and thematic peer reviews, and carry out research on

the costs and benefits of better and worse quality of work and employment.

9. **Promote inclusive governance and democracy:**
Meaningfully associate stakeholders beyond the social partners, including people experiencing poverty and the unemployed, and the civil society organisations representing them, in the design, implementation and monitoring of employment policies, to ensure quality and democratic accountability, at both the national and the EU level – such as through the NRPs and CSRs.
10. **Promote a targeted approach of Structural Funds** (especially the European Social Fund) to support the quality employment and work agenda. The European Social Fund can play a key role for investing in people and ensuring educational, training and work opportunities, for people who have for one reason or another missed out on formal education opportunities and found themselves at great disadvantage in finding decent work. Member States should be required to make an appropriate use of the European Social Fund using the funds in a consistent and integrated way to design, implement and evaluate employment and work policies, which are inclusive and integrated.

The role of Member States

Member States have a key role to play in devising employment policies which ensure quality jobs and inclusive labour markets. EAPN networks have identified a series of positive steps that governments can take.

10 STEPS MEMBER STATES CAN TAKE

1. **Start from a rights-based approach**
As indicated in the first chapter of this explainer, a number of international documents and organisations, which governments have signed up to, include the right to decent, sustainable employment and safeguard a number of crucial employment rights. This rights-based framework should be the starting point when articulating employment policy at a national level.

2. **Give political visibility to the quality dimension**
At the moment, the public discourse is seldom concerned with quality, when solving unemployment at all costs is paramount, and little attention is paid to what kind of jobs are offered, and how people are stimulated to take them up. Instead, governments should support research to prove the added-value of quality of work and employment, coupled with a real prioritization of the quality dimension in employment policy-making.
3. **Develop quality frameworks**
Quality is, arguably, a subjective notion, and relativism can lead to unstable, insecure, low-quality jobs be interpreted as “suitable”. In the absence of a unified European quality framework, and in order to build up to it, governments need to develop self-standing, integrated national quality frameworks, pulling together elements currently scattered across different pieces of legislation, and complementing them with additional dimensions. EAPN strongly recommends that all its 10 Principles of Quality Work be taken into account.
4. **Ensure that minimum wages are living wages**
7 out of 28 Member States do not yet have a statutory minimum wage in place. In the other 21 countries, minimum wages are often not living wages, meaning that they are often insufficient and incompatible with a dignified life, while wage inequality is the main component of income inequality. Governments need to take steps to ensure adequate national minimum wages, following a positive hierarchy, which first sets benefits such as minimum income at a level above the poverty line, and then sets wages at a higher level, to support incentives to work.
5. **Stop precariousness**
Short-term contracts, atypical forms of employment and precarious jobs are on the rise, with severe prejudicial effects for the individual, the economy and society alike. The expansion and enforcement of employment rights, including duration of contracts, labour market flexibility, hiring and firing policies and coherent employment and social protection are badly needed to ensure social and economic cohesion, and to prevent poverty and social exclusion.

6. Support positive Activation practices

Current punitive approaches have proved unsuccessful in getting people into sustainable jobs, while they have only increased poverty, social exclusion, marginalization and hardship. It is time to shift to a supportive approach, which focuses on individual, tailored pathways towards employment and inclusive, providing holistic support and integrated services and fighting discrimination, as part of an integrated Active Inclusion approach. Better staffing and training for public employment services, as well as the setting of qualitative targets alongside quantitative ones, are crucial elements.

7. Combat in-work poverty

Evidence from the ground overwhelmingly indicates that not any job constitutes a real route out of poverty, and that pushing people into low-quality, unsustainable jobs only increases their chances of experiencing hardship and deprivation. Subsequently, develop national strategies to combat in-work poverty, through raising the quality of jobs and employment overall, and as part of a more comprehensive, over-arching national anti-poverty strategy, anchored in integrated active inclusion approaches.

8. Safeguard employment rights

This explainer has demonstrated that employment protection is being reduced across the board, with negative consequences for people, communities, the economy, and society as a whole. National legislation should enshrine employment rights, including the links with social protection systems, and should respect and encourage collective bargaining practices and social, as well as civil, dialogue.

9. Prioritise the inclusive function of employment

As initially mentioned, aside from its economic role, employment should be a vehicle for better personal, social and societal inclusion, a means of contributing meaningfully and in a rewarding way. Governments need to take the necessary steps to ensure the absence of discrimination, support for vulnerable groups, adequate reconciliation between private and professional life, equal access to quality education and training opportunities, as well as a just progression into employment and job satisfaction.

10. Embed meaningful participation

Employment policies, if they are to foster quality and sustainability for jobs and employment, need to be deeply rooted in realities on the ground, and devise adequate responses, based on correct needs assessment. For this purpose, the ongoing, relevant involvement of stakeholders, including people experiencing poverty and the unemployed, and their civil-society organisations alongside social partners, is indispensable.

The role of NGOs and social partners

I would like to make a wish. None of us decided to become poor. We want people to take our experience into account. We are the only ones who can express our situation. (France)

Social partners hold a privileged position, through social dialogue, in engaging with employment debates, and trade unions have been at the forefront of the fight against low quality work, at both a national and an EU level.

Moreover, **trade unions** exert a decisive impact through collective bargaining, contributing in essential ways to the shaping and guaranteeing of employment rights, including most aspects of quality of work and employment referred to above.

Employers should embrace a more inclusive vision of employment, and work together with trade unions to ensure that social dialogue places quality at the heart of employment debates.

It is not always easy for **civil-society organisations** to have a say in these processes. The space for involvement for NGOs seems to be more favorable at regional and local level,

through the cooperation with local structures of the public employment services and with municipal authorities.

NGOs have traditionally considered the trade unions as partners, and have managed to get their views across in social dialogue through alliances with them.

Other key partners are the **organisations representing the unemployed**, who also enjoy better access to employment-related decision-making.

What remains clear is that both trade unions, as well as civil-society organisations working with people experiencing poverty, have a keen interest in promoting quality of work and employment, which sets the basis for increased and strengthened cooperation.

→ **EAPN United Kingdom** – The Trade Union Congress holds an annual conference on poverty with many people experiencing poverty attending. The main trade union federation and its regional bodies are relatively well engaged with anti-poverty networks and NGOs.

→ **EAPN Ireland** – We are very centrally involved in public debate and political lobbying strategies. The Europe 2020 Working Group works with trade unions and other NGOs, participates in meetings with department officials and elaborates submissions to government in policy design.

Some NGOs are very active in the public debate about policy measures to fight poverty and social exclusion, developing seminars, debates, publications and involving political parties and policy makers.

It is important to develop partnerships also with the academic world (researchers), the media, and the cultural organisations.

By increasing the available scientific knowledge about quality of employment and work and its causes and impacts, NGOs raise awareness and promote a positive change around the issue and, as a consequence, attain the backing of the whole society towards its promotion.

Equally, with the development of the so-called “third sector”, alongside the public and the private one, NGOs are also employers, often striving in adverse funding conditions to secure quality of work and employment for their employees, and to provide a role model.

Social-economy enterprises combine a commercial approach with social goals and a transparent model of governance, where employees are also owners of the company, and the profit is reinvested or dedicated to social inclusion objectives.



A particularly positive example is offered by work integration social enterprises, or WISEs, which offer pathways to inclusive employment to key groups, some furthest from the labour market, either as a stepping stone towards the open labour market, or as long-term employment.

In decision-making, NGOs have the added value of bringing to the table a perspective on employment that is grounded in the reality of people living on low incomes, through their work directly in communities and with those concerned. The input of people experiencing poverty, unemployment or low-quality jobs is a relevant source of information for finding appropriate solutions to the problems. The organisations that represent the unemployed and people experiencing poverty are, thus, valuable partners, not just for social dialogue, but for democracy itself. Suppressing these voices is not an option, as it leads to bad policy-making, which in turn fuels poverty, exclusion and inequalities, and social unrest.

It is **essential to empower people experiencing poverty, the unemployed and the people employed in low-quality jobs to share their experiences** based on every day practices and interactions with services and employers (enhancing the good practices, but also highlighting the bad ones).

Capturing the richness of their views demands an ongoing process, firmly based on mutual trust, and focused on positive impacts to justify these efforts. It is not an easy process, as creating a participative environment for people implies opportunities to meet, develop ideas, train and help them understand their role.

For this to happen, regular working processes, supported by meetings and forums, at local, regional and national level are crucial.

At the European level, access of civil-society organisations to policy-making processes continues to be restricted. In the Integrated Guidelines underpinning the Europe 2020 Strategy specific support is given to the partnership principle involving stakeholders at all stages of the NRPs:

“When designing and implementing their National Reform Programmes taking account of these guidelines, Member States should ensure effective governance of employment policy. While these guidelines are addressed to Member States, the Europe 2020 Strategy should, as appropriate, be implemented, monitored and evaluated in partnership with all national, regional and local authorities, closely associating parliaments, as well as social partners and representatives of civil society, who shall contribute to the elaboration of National Reform Programmes, to their implementation and to the overall communication on the strategy.”

Recital 16 of the Integrated Guidelines

Despite this clear requirement of consultation processes in the Member States, EAPN members report that the **participation of civil-society organisations in the development of National Reform Programmes is still inexplicably residual**.

Although in some Member States some form of consultation process is in place, its organisation is still lacking the necessary conditions for a true and meaningful input. Where they do exist, the consultation processes are organised in the form of reactions, comments or suggestions asked for at the last minute and without all the relevant information made available. EAPN is currently working on a handbook for meaningful consultation of stakeholders, including people experiencing poverty and the civil-society organisations representing them, in the Europe 2020 Strategy processes.

A coherent agenda for the future

It is high time to strategically **rethink the structural aspects of the labour markets**, especially considering the negative economic, social, demographic and cultural impacts of unjustifiable and unsustainable trends, associated with low quality employment and jobs.

Revising the wage formulation mechanisms in order to provide adequate/living wages, **enhancing employment security** (and promoting stable and durable contracts) and **rethinking social protection**³⁸ are fundamental.

For a person experiencing poverty, the application of these principles will sustain the essential inclusive policies for accessing or returning to the labour market, or even society more broadly.

When a quality and sustainable job ...

- provides decent wages and working conditions,
- allows a balanced reconciliation of private and professional life,
- encompasses the participation in collective bargaining and social dialogue,
- enshrines the principle of non-discrimination, guarantees access to training and personal development,
- includes career progression opportunities and promotes job satisfaction

... it is reasonable to expect that people stay in jobs and can develop good working lives.

Both the European Union and the Member States have a key role to play, as

employment policy, in its dual capacity as fuel for the economy and source of dignified lives is regulated at both levels, and not always in the most coherent way.

→ **At the European level**, it seems that quality of work and employment have received endorsement – with the Active Inclusion recommendation, the Revised European Social Charter, the Employment Package and the more recent Social Investment Package, but also with the intersectoral agreement regarding inclusive labour markets signed by the social partners at EU level. It is, however, now the time to put it into practice.

At the same time, as pointed out, quality of work and employment is also consistently undermined by the European Union, which is evident through measures such as the Euro Plus Pact, the Two-Pack and Six-Pack, and the Fiscal Compact, as well as the Country-Specific Recommendations and other mechanisms of the European Semester, and, last but not least, by the endorsing by the European Commission of negative measures in the framework of bailout negotiations with Member States receiving external financial assistance.

→ **Member States** find themselves caught between a rise of neoliberal agendas at the national level, the pressure from international markets, and mixed messages from the European institutions.

It is high time to re-establish, at both national and European level, the balance between re-launching the economy and preserving decent standards of living, between tightening budgets and spending and ensuring social cohesion, between reducing the debt and sheltering people from hardship and exclusion.

It is high time to bet on integrated, comprehensive, balanced macroeconomic strategies, with ex-ante and ex-post social impact assessment, which support and contribute to poverty reduction, quality of work, and employment for quality of life.

38. by broadening its coverage, adapting the entitlement conditions and articulating benefits in a more flexible relation with work and employment.

EAPN considers that the creation of quality and stable jobs in the context of an inclusive labour market constitutes an essential part of a more broad anti-poverty and social exclusion strategy.

Although the quality of employment and work remain an absolute prerequisite for addressing poverty, we must not expect it to be the sole aspect to guarantee a dignified life. In order to avoid the negative pressure exerted by our current unemployment levels, we

also need an integrated and complementary enhancement of social protection against poverty. Coherently, EAPN national networks stress the importance of Active Inclusion as a broader approach that encompasses the quality of employment and work.

Again, the messages of the delegates of the 10th European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty speak for themselves about what needs to be done.



→ **The need for quality jobs:** *If employment is to be a way out of poverty then public authorities and social partners must ensure that the trend towards 'working poor' is reversed and conditions for quality jobs with living wages, decent social protection systems and conditions that respect work and private responsibilities are created. Poor-quality jobs for poor people is not an answer.*

→ **The absence of jobs:** *The delegates confirmed that people who live in poverty want to work but the reality is that there are more people wanting work than there are jobs available. The crisis has made this situation even worse. In the absence of jobs people need access to income sufficient to live in dignity.*

→ **Support to access employment:** *Even in case of difficulties to find employment, tailored support should be provided for people living in poverty or the long term unemployed to help them access decent employment. Investing in early childhood development, schooling, including not abandoning people who drop out of school early and opportunities for people in poverty to access lifelong learning are essential investments to increase chances to become employed.*

→ **Tackle discrimination:** *Specific attention was given to the problem of discrimination and exclusion for groups including: disabled people, migrants, ex-prisoners, long term unemployed and Roma. The implementation of anti-discrimination legislation as well as positive actions should be taken to overcome the barriers caused by discrimination. The particular difficulties faced by women, who often have the major caring responsibilities, and often work in sectors with precarious and poor quality jobs need special attention.*

→ **Implement the commitments:** *Delegates said that they have heard many fine proposals to fight poverty at these and other meetings, such as: the target to reduce poverty, the active inclusion recommendation on adequate minimum income, access to essential services and support to access employment, the commitment for strategies to address homelessness or child poverty. The delegates gave a clear message that real action is needed to follow up and implement the commitments. They reiterated that people experiencing poverty are ready to engage at all levels in the necessary actions.*

→ **Tackle the causes of poverty and not only the symptoms:** *The delegates reaffirmed that the current economic and social systems have an effect on the occurrence and levels of poverty and there was a clear call on the political institutions to respond by combating the causes of poverty and not only the symptoms.*

Messages from the delegates of the 10th European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty

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(All available on the EAPN website – www.eapn.eu)

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This EAPN Explainer on *Quality of Work and Employment in the EU* is the 5th in a series of EAPN Explainers, tackling key issues and debates, which are also priorities within the EU poverty discourse, in understandable, everyday language. They are aimed primarily at people working in civil-society organisations, but also at anybody who is concerned with how to make progress on reducing poverty and social exclusion in the EU.

This booklet is equally intended as a tool for other civil-society organisations, trade unions, academics, the media and other stakeholders, including public opinion, to understand and better militate for the quality of work and employment, as a fundamental prerequisite for quality of life.

Employment is a concept that holds a double value in our societies. On the one hand, it is an economic resource, providing the economy with a capable and sustainable workforce and, on the other hand, it is a vehicle for inclusion and integration, for breaking isolation and fulfilling people's need to contribute and be relevant in the world. We focus in this explainer mainly on this second dimension, and how employment can best respond to this human and social right to dignified lives, free of poverty and exclusion.

This explainer was drafted by Helder Ferreira (EAPN Portugal) and Amana Ferro (EAPN Secretariat, Brussels), completed by EAPN's Employment Working Group in 2011, subsequently enriched by the work of the members of EAPN's EU Inclusion Strategies Group in 2012 and 2013. The booklet builds on the specific work carried out and questionnaires completed by EAPN's Employment Working Group in 2011, subsequently enriched by the work of the members of EAPN's EU Inclusion Strategies Group in 2012 and 2013. The main source of information is the direct experience on the ground of EAPN's national membership in 29 European countries, as well as 18 European Organisations.

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The European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) is an independent network of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and groups involved in the fight against poverty and social exclusion in the Member States of the European Union, established in 1990.