



EAPN Input to the Mid-Term Review of the Europe 2020 Strategy

*Can the Strategy be made fit for
purpose enough to deliver its
promises on poverty reduction?*

July 2014

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| INTRODUCTION..... | 4 |
| EAPN'S ASSESSMENT | 4 |
| OUR DEMANDS: A Transformative Agenda to make Europe 2020 Fit for Purpose..... | 13 |
| 5 KEY PRIORITIES FOR CHANGE | 14 |
| 1. BUILDING A COHERENT ECONOMIC/SOCIAL STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE MODEL..... | 14 |
| 2. ESTABLISHING CREDIBLE POVERTY AND SOCIAL TARGETS | 16 |
| 3. PRIORITISING AN EU INTEGRATED STRATEGY TO FIGHT POVERTY AND SHORT-TERM MARSHALL-TYPE INVESTMENT PLAN | 18 |
| 4. ESTABLISHING DEMOCRATIC AND ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNANCE | 20 |
| 5. USING EU MONEY FOR POVERTY | 22 |

INTRODUCTION

In 2010, the EU launched the Europe 2020 strategy as the key policy framework to replace the Lisbon Strategy, setting 5 concrete targets to achieve its goal of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. These included for the first time an explicit poverty target to reduce poverty by at least 20 million by 2020, as well as other key social targets (achieving a 75% employment rate and reducing early school leaving to 10%) and 7 flagship initiatives including the Flagship European Platform Against Poverty (EPAP). The Strategy also seemingly embraced the need for democratic governance with parliaments and increasing stakeholder engagement to achieve ownership and visibility.

In 2015, the EU Institutions, under the auspices of the new European Parliament and Commission will carry out a **Mid-Term Review** of the Strategy. This process was launched on the 5 March 2014 with the Commission's [Stock-Taking Communication assessment of the Europe 2020 strategy](#) and followed on the 5 May, with the [launch of an on-line public consultation](#) with a deadline of the 31st October.

EAPN has invested a large amount of resources in trying to engage and monitor the delivery of the strategy: inputs to the National Reform Programmes, reviewing together the NRPs and CSRs and their implementation, and making proposals for Country-specific Recommendation. [\(See here\)](#). ***Our overwhelming concern is: Can the Europe 2020 Strategy be made fit for purpose enough to deliver its promises on poverty reduction?***

In this paper, we provide a summary of the EAPN assessment of the Europe 2020 Strategy 2000-14 and make concrete recommendations for core priorities starting from 2015. The paper has been drafted with the EAPN EU Inclusion Strategies group, including input from the Executive Committee and the General Assembly held in June 2014. The paper will provide the basis for EAPN's response to the on-line public consultation.

EAPN'S ASSESSMENT

Cautious welcome to Europe 2020

The Europe 2020 Strategy was largely welcomed by EAPN in 2010, for mainstreaming social objectives into broader economic/employment policy, and establishing for the first time a concrete poverty target, combined with social targets on employment and education. The strategy was seen as an important agenda-setting instrument, which could keep poverty at the centre of the overarching policy debate, and potentially deliver real results on poverty if combined with an effective strategy. The introduction of Guideline 10 on social inclusion and poverty underpinned mainstreaming in the European Semester, while the new Flagship Initiative – European Platform Against Poverty - seemed to offer the potential for a dynamic engagement of all actors, and cross-sectoral delivery across different DGs. Participation and stakeholder engagement were supported with Recital 16 of the Integrated Guidelines, giving a strong requirement of stakeholders' – including civil society – engagement in the whole process, particularly the NRPs.

Disillusionment as poverty, exclusion and inequality grow, rather than progress on the target

However, as recognized by the Commission's Europe 2020 stocktaking document¹, instead of progress towards the target of a 20 million reduction, poverty and social exclusion² have risen to affect 1 in 4 within the EU: 124,2 million (2012), an increase of over 6.6 million since 2010. Instead of progress towards the employment target (75% in employment), employment has also steadily declined, from 68.9% in 2009 to 68.4% in 2012 with an increase of unemployment from 7.1% in 2008 to 10.9% in 2013. Equally worryingly, employment has become an increasingly insecure route out of poverty, with an increase from 8.6% to 9.1% of households classified as working poor. Efforts to reach the numerical employment target, without complementary safeguards regarding the quality of jobs and employment, only undermine the achievement of the poverty reduction target. The situation for young people has been even worse with youth unemployment rising to 24.2% compared to adults (9.6%) and with an increase in young people not in education or training (NEETS) to 13.2%. The impact across Europe also has not been equal. As highlighted by the new Social Scoreboard, inequality is also continuing to rise in most countries, particularly in the South and East. The same story is true for poverty. Divergences, reflecting social and macroeconomic imbalances, continue to grow across Europe with the poorest regions paying the highest price and facing the most serious social impact of the crisis (with the AROPE³ rates for poverty at 50% for Greece compared to 15% for the Czech Republic and the Netherlands). The countries with the highest rates, are generally the same that have been under Troika arrangements or under greatest pressure to reduce public expenditure with austerity cuts.⁴

Devastating social impact - mistaken policies the culprit, not just the crisis

The economic crisis has generated a social crisis which has led to an unacceptable attack on people's living standards and right to a dignified life. Although some of the social impact is clearly due to the crisis increasing unemployment, there is a clear impact from austerity policies which have been supported by the EU through the Fiscal Compact, Six and Two Pack. As Commissioner Andor recently highlighted, "*recent fiscal reforms have had a regressive impact, with lower incomes hit relatively harder than others.*"⁵ The Commission's Employment and Social Development report 2013⁶ further underlined the negative social and economic impact of priority cuts to social spending: "*From 2010, social benefits failed to support household incomes...due to increase of unemployed losing their entitlements, phasing-out of stimulus measures.... reducing levels or duration of benefits, tightening eligibility rules... excluding beneficiaries from schemes.*" The impact has been clearly unequal across the EU, with recent studies highlighting that fiscal consolidation concentrated in Southern and Eastern European Countries has led to unemployment, while changes to tax and benefit

¹ EC (5.3.2014) Communication: [Taking Stock of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth](#)

² Measured by 3 indicators: AROPE (at risk of poverty and/or exclusion): at risk of poverty, severely materially deprived and people in households with very low work intensity

³ AROPE: At risk of poverty and social exclusion, calculated as an aggregate of 3 indicators: at risk of poverty, severe material deprivation and low work intensity

⁴ EAPN (Dec 2013) [Lifeboat or Life Sentence?:](#) The Troika and emergency assistance programmes and their impact on poverty and social exclusion

⁵ EC Press Release (31.03.2014): [The Europe 2020 strategy beyond the crisis](#)

⁶ EC (Dec 2013): [Employment and Social Developments in Europe 2013](#); p.22

systems along with cuts in public sector wages have actively contributed to the decline in real household incomes (Avram et al 2013).⁷

Attack on human rights

EAPN's assessments drawn from the reality of people experiencing poverty corroborate this evidence. The EAPN 2013 NRP Assessment⁸ highlighted that 75% of EAPN networks considered that the austerity policies promoted in the NRPs, following the Commission's guidelines, resulted in an unequal distribution of the burden of the crisis, and would generate more poverty and social exclusion, contributing to the growing inequality gap. This is primarily due to the priority given in deficit reductions to cuts in public expenditure, key public services and benefits which most affect the poor. In the countries under Troika arrangements this is seen at its most extreme.⁹ For example, in Spain all social services have suffered cuts. In Portugal 4.7 billion cuts were proposed with loss of jobs for 30.000.¹⁰ In Ireland,¹¹ cuts to jobseekers allowances have been focussed on youth, with the Budget in 2014 carrying out drastic cuts to supplementary welfare allowances for those under 26, whilst lone parents have seen their income cut by 847.60 Euros (in the period 2009-13). Indexation mechanisms on income support or pensions have also been reduced hitting the real value of benefits and pensions with a disastrous impact on the living standards of the poorest people (BE, ES, HU, NL, PT). Eligibility and coverage has also been reduced: for example in NL where the unemployment benefit has been reduced from 5 to 3 years, shifting people onto lower social assistance where full housing costs are not covered. A new law will now take into account household income, where children receive social assistance and live with their parents and the parents are pensioners, which is likely to increase hardship. In Portugal,¹² changes in eligibility requirements in the threshold have led to decreases in the number of beneficiaries from 527,627 to 420, 665 with the levels of Social Insertion Income reduced from 189.52 (2010) to 178.15 (2013). In Hungary,¹³ unemployment and disability benefits have been decreased and social assistance replaced with food vouchers. This combined with the introduction of controls on behaviour of unemployed people (i.e. checks on cleanliness) attack the basic dignity of people as well as increasing their hardship. Recent research also confirms that countries with harsher austerity measures tend to have higher death rates as well as growing health inequalities.¹⁴ This is an unacceptable social price to pay. Instead of increasing signs of social investment, short-term economic goals have been prioritized over social rights and longer term social and economic returns. The EU's macroeconomic focus on austerity delivered through the Semester is seen not only as responsible for increasing poverty but continuing to promote an unacceptable attack on human rights and to the dignity of the most vulnerable, making the poor pay for a crisis they didn't create.

⁷ Avram et al, 2013 '[The distributional effects of fiscal consolidation in 9 countries](#)'. Euromod Working Paper no EM 2/13

⁸ EAPN (2013): [Widening the Gap](#): 2013 NRP Assessment

⁹ EAPN (2013): [Life boat or Life sentence?](#) Troika and Emergency Assistance Programmes and impact on poverty and social exclusion

¹⁰ EAPN (2013): [Widening the Gap](#): EAPN 2013 NRP Assessment

¹¹ EMIN project (2014): [Analysis of Minimum Income Schemes – Ireland](#): Robin Hanan and Audrey Deane

¹² EMIN Project (2014): Analysis of Minimum Income Schemes – Portugal: Elizabeth Santos, Helder Ferreira, Liliana Pinto, Paula Cruz

¹³ EMIN project (2014): "The Progressive Realization of Adequate Minimum Income Schemes - Hungary"; Dr. Krisztina Jász, coordinator of the leader body of HAPN, in cooperation with Johanna László, Katalin Juhos, Ágnes Néray

¹⁴ D Stuckler and S Basu: '[The Body Economic, why austerity kills](#)' (2013)

Europe 2020, the poor sister in the European Semester

Europe 2020 is delivered through the governance mechanism of the European Semester. However, in reality it has never been given a fair chance. The overriding focus of the Semester is driven by the requirements of the Stability and Growth Pact focussed on deficit cuts, with Europe 2020 barely visible in most of the key documents/communications (e.g. the Annual Growth Survey, the Communication on the Country-Specific Recommendations etc.). The 2 parallel strands are imbalanced and often contradictory, with the macroeconomic stability priority accompanied by sanctions whilst Europe 2020 and particularly the social priorities have none. Although there has been a welcome increase in the number of ‘anti-poverty CSRs’ from 3 in 2011 to 11 and 12 in 2013 and 2014 (across 28 MS), these are often ambiguous in their impact on poverty, being overly concerned with increasing efficiency of welfare states rather than reducing poverty, and undermined by the predominance of CSRs focussed on the macroeconomic and fiscal requirements, which are currently promoting austerity policies. For example almost all MS received CSRs related to budget consolidation with cost effectiveness and cutting the visible focus in Health and/or Care Services (BE, CZ, IE, ES, FR, HR, LV, LU, MT, NL, AT, RO, PT, SI, SK, FI), which have a major impact on the living/health standards of people in poverty, without requirements on quality, coverage and affordability. Europe 2020 needs to be the driving partner in the Semester, promoting a coherent and balanced economic and social vision, if its goals are to be delivered.¹⁵

A lack of seriousness about the poverty target and clear strategies for delivery

From the beginning, the poverty target has been undermined by a lack of commitment to its delivery by Member States, with an 8 million shortfall on national targets set by national governments. The target based on the 3 indicators is also complex to communicate, compared to the other Europe 2020 targets with only one common indicator. However, the 3 different indicators¹⁶ go some way to capture the multidimensionality of poverty – each indicator reflecting a different aspect, e.g. relative and more absolute forms of poverty, which are crucial to charting progress. During the crisis, median incomes fell, so at-risk-of-poverty indicators were not accurate in capturing the real impact of loss of income of people, whereas material deprivation did this better. However, relative poverty indicators are fundamental for capturing how far people are able to participate on an equal basis in a specific country. Currently, Member States are able to select which indicator they wish to use. This has meant that too many Member States are guilty of gaming, having cherry-picked the indicator which can show off their best performance, (e.g. Bulgaria which focuses on at risk of poverty with falling disposable incomes disguising a real rise in material deprivation) or ignoring the EU indicators entirely (e.g. Germany, Sweden and the UK), or settling for very unambitious national targets (e.g. Poland aiming for the same level as 2008 or Belgium aiming for a reduction of 380.000 although poverty has increased by 77.000 by 2008), without clear explanations of how they arrive at their figures. This undermines the credibility of the indicators, the target, and the support to achieve them. Nearly all EAPN networks feel the EU should be more prescriptive in the setting of national targets (BE, BG, CZ, CY, DE, DK, ES, IT, NL, PL, PT, SE, UK). A further issue is the lack of timeliness and scope of the indicators used.

¹⁵ EAPN (March 2014): [Getting progress on poverty and participation: EAPN assessment and proposals for Country-Specific Recommendations 2014](#) and [Letter to June Council](#) with Flash Assessment of 2014 CSRs.

¹⁶ The 3 AROPE indicators: at risk of poverty (60% median household disposable income), severe material deprivation, low work intensity.

Social data based on EU-SILC is currently only available for 2012, compared to economic and employment data that is available now for this year. This undermines the potential for the social impact to be seriously considered when taking economic decisions. Moreover, the data collected still exclude key groups facing poverty e.g. homeless people and migrants which mean that current data is not capturing the reality of poverty. However, even good targets and indicators can only make a difference if backed by the right policies.

Missing a short-term ‘Marshall-type’ Plan and an integrated EU strategy

It is difficult for the poverty target to be taken seriously without a medium-term, integrated, multidimensional strategy to deliver on it. It is mainly being used to measure the impact of the crisis rather than to guide policy design and implementation. Many of the current elements, outlined below, are useful instruments (i.e. social investment, integrated active inclusion, social scoreboard), but cannot replace an overarching strategy that tackles in a coherent manner the causes and solution of growing poverty, exclusion and inequality, with separate thematic strategies for key groups, targeted on ensuring access to rights, resources and services. This will not necessarily deal with **urgency** of the current situation, with rising poverty, deprivation and inequality particularly in Southern and Eastern Member States. A Marshall-type investment plan is urgently needed to be put in place, which can ensure an urgent response to the social impact of the crisis and austerity policies, combined with a medium-term strategy to cut poverty and inequality – already shown to be effective in generating quality jobs and better growth.

A confusing European social infrastructure

The current social infrastructure is not clear, and does not provide a substitute for such an integrated, overarching strategy. EAPN finds confusion between the roles of the **European Platform Against Poverty (EPAP)**, the **Social OMC**, and now the **Social Investment Package**, as well as the role of the Social Scoreboards in the **Social Dimension of the EMU**. The EPAP is meant to be a ‘platform for horizontal cooperation, providing a dynamic framework for action.’¹⁷ The main potential benefit is the opportunity for inter-institutional working (delivering action across the policy spectrum) between different DGs on specific initiatives. However it is difficult to see concrete results, with weak implementation at national level and lack of mainstreaming into the dominant European Semester. The weak link to the national stakeholders, reduced to a one-off event (the Annual Convention), and irregular and limited exchange meetings with the Commission at EU level, also undermines the supposed commitment to a ‘dynamic’ partnership approach.

The **Social Investment Package** provides an important basis for seeing social policy as an investment, not a cost, and includes guidelines and some interesting initiatives for specific groups and themes (Investing in Children, Combatting Homelessness and implementing Active Inclusion). However, little progress has been made to encourage and support Member States to deliver on these priorities. Moreover, the thematic initiatives should not be seen as a substitute for an overarching strategy to fight poverty, more as key instruments. Care also

¹⁷ 1) Delivering Action to fight poverty and social exclusion across the policy spectrum; 2) Making EU funding deliver on social inclusion and social cohesion objectives; 3) Developing an evidence-based approach to social innovation and reforms; promoting a partnership approach and the social economy; stepping up policy coordination among MS, 4) Building on the legacy of the European Year against poverty and social exclusion.

has to be taken to ensure that a social investment approach does not undermine support for social protection systems, which are fundamental to preventing, as well as tackling, poverty.

The **Social Dimension of the EMU**¹⁸ Social Scoreboards offer key indicators to measure growing social imbalances within and between Member States. At the moment these are two separate scoreboards. The first set are part of the Alert Mechanism¹⁹ whilst the second set with different indicators is the new social and employment scoreboard covering unemployment, NEETS, disposable income, at-risk-of-poverty and inequalities (S80/S20). However the relationship between the two is not clear, nor how this relates to the overarching set of social indicators, (i.e. Social Protection Performance Monitor) or how it will be made effective to prevent negative social impact of macroeconomic and other policies.

The **Social OMC** has provided an essential framework for shared social knowledge built on partnership, working towards Common Objectives based on access to rights, resources and services. This is currently being put at risk. The Social OMC is largely invisible. National Social Reports are no longer obligatory, with limited stakeholder engagement and without a clear feed into the National Reform Programmes, whilst Peer Reviews have restricted engagement with civil society and unclear follow up. This represents a grave loss of this important social space and social agenda to underpin the detail of Europe 2020 partnership working and to support cross-national policy and practice development.

Work-first solutions are not sufficient to cut poverty

Within the Europe 2020 Strategy and the Semester, employment is mainly promoted as the only viable route out of poverty, despite the fact that unemployment is rising, and that the jobs themselves do not necessarily offer a route out of poverty, with in-work poverty rising to 9.1% in 2012. The UK has record high employment rates and record in-work poverty. Quality employment is crucial, but it is not always a solution for everybody across the life cycle, and will not by itself ensure people's right to access adequate resources and services, which can prevent them from experiencing poverty and exclusion and maintain their living standards. It does not take on board the crucial role of social protection expenditure, which reduces at-risk-of-poverty (from 25.9% to 16% after social transfers – 2012). In the employment policies proposed, less priority has been given to quality job creation and ensuring access of those most excluded, and more to 'employability' and to supply side measures, through activation. These policies often force unemployed people into 'poor jobs' or training activities by threatening them with sanctions of withdrawing vital income support if jobs are not accessed. Such a policy fails to ensure sustainable jobs that can take people out of poverty, and is manifestly against social justice, increasing deprivation and hardship for the most excluded. Without an inclusive labour market key groups of people such as people with disabilities, lone-parents, ethnic minorities, older workers etc. are likely to be only further excluded bringing higher social and economic costs. This employment priority is institutionally reflected throughout the Europe 2020 strategy, where Guideline 10 related to the poverty target is hidden within the Employment Guidelines, and where reporting on progress on the poverty target is submerged in the Joint Employment report.

¹⁸ EC Communication (2.10.2013) 'Strengthening the Social Dimension of the Economic and Monetary Union'

¹⁹ MIP Indicators: participation rate, long-term unemployment, youth unemployment complimented with NEETs, at risk of poverty and social exclusion (AROPE)

Limited implementation of social investment, and particularly active inclusion

Although the new social investment approach, promoted by the Social Investment Package, offered new potential to approach social policy as a benefit, not a cost, with a view to long-term benefits for the economy and society, in reality little mention is made of an overarching social investment approach by national governments in the NRPs, nor in the CSRs, with the emphasis still primarily on deficit/debt reduction, through cuts in expenditure. In the EAPN 2013 NRP Assessment, 68% of members highlighted that the deficit reduction affected social investment and social protection expenditure. In the 2014 CSRs it is also difficult to see much improvement in social investment. All MS received CSRs to continue budget consolidation with deficit and debt reduction, which primarily focuses on cutting social expenditure. Whilst a few received some encouragement to invest in growth (CZ, DK, DE, IT, NL, PL, SE), this focused mainly on infrastructure and R+D, with education being the only social investment, rather than integrated support to social protection and health systems, and employment creation and support.

Although an integrated **Active Inclusion** approach (combining the three pillars of adequate income support, inclusive labour markets, and access to quality services) has been made a core priority in the recent AGSs (2012, 13 and 14), almost no visible progress has been made on the implementation, and few references made in the CSRs, and a greater focus given to activation and 'reforming' income support so as not to reduce the 'motivation to work', i.e. by reducing benefits (BG, ES, HR, IT, UK).²⁰ In relation to minimum income, the focus is not on adequacy, but on restricting 'over generous' benefits as a disincentive to a work, as reflected in several key CSRs (e.g. Ireland received a positive CSR on addressing low-work intensity households. However, it grew out of what might be seen as a negative context outlined in the staff working document emphasizing the over-generosity of replacement rates for some households). Negative, punitive conditionality is being used to force people into poor jobs or bad quality training, which can result in increased poverty, rather than integrated 'positive' activation providing wrap-around support into more sustainable jobs. EAPN members talk of a climate of 'control and surveillance' that operates primarily by 'threats' to get people engaged when in reality the vast majority are only too anxious to work but face a shortage of employment, and enormous difficulty in accessing the jobs because of the large number of people looking for work, the preferences for 'creaming' of the employers and the often insurmountable obstacles like affordable child and other care, transport, housing, educational support etc.

Some welcome **progress has been noted in increased focus around thematic priorities** – i.e. child poverty, homelessness, Roma inclusion, but falling far short of an integrated approach. For example in 2013 several MS (EE, ES, HU, RO, SK and UK)²¹ highlighted measures as part of national strategies to tackle child poverty and exclusion and promote child well-being, although the impact is not clear. In Spain, the 2014 NRP makes specific reference to a new integrated Child Poverty Plan. However, the CSRs 2014 only highlighted the need for integrated social inclusion strategies in Spain (National Action Plan for Inclusion) and Hungary (for children and Roma). In Belgium a call in the CSRs in 2013 for a comprehensive strategy

²⁰ EAPN (2014) [Letter to June Council with initial assessment of CSRs 2014](#).

²¹ Eurochild (2013).

for social inclusion for migrants was replaced in 2014 by a sole employment focus, whilst Bulgaria is no longer required to implement a national strategy on poverty and Roma Inclusion.

Underused potential of Structural Funds

The importance of the commitment to 23% of Structural Funds to be spent on ESF, and 20% of ESF to be spent on reducing poverty and fostering social inclusion is fully backed by EAPN, as seen in our EU-wide coordinated [campaign](#) (EU Money for Poverty Reduction). EAPN recent NRP reviews highlight that SF are still falling far short of their potential to deliver on poverty reduction, with a primary focus on support for activation policies, rather than active inclusion. In 2013, EAPN members highlighted through their assessment of the NRPs that Structural Funds were being used in some countries to explicitly back the poverty reduction target (CY, CZ, ES, PT, FEANTSA), whilst the majority saw little improvement. Only Spain highlighted an explicit mention made of the role of Structural funds to support the social targets of Europe 2020. Whilst Poland was one of very few countries highlighting that ESF in the programming period of 2014-20 is being designed to financially support an explicit national anti-poverty strategy as required by the ex-ante conditionality. According to the EAPN 2013 NRP Assessment, the partnership principle is also not being visibly enforced at national level, ensuring that NGOs and civil society actors can play their full role at strategic and project level. In the initial assessment of the new programming period, there is little sign of serious adoption of the new Code of Conduct, or take up of Global Grants and Technical Assistance mechanisms or clarity about sanctions that might be imposed if these requirements are not fulfilled.

Cosmetic approach to participation

The Commission's stocktaking assessment recognizes that awareness and ownership are lacking, and national stakeholder engagement and Parliament engagement needs to be improved. EAPN's own assessment²² highlights 12 National Networks managing some type of engagement, but with 75% of networks assessing the engagement as weak and low quality, with little impact. There is little sign of improvement in the extent or quality of engagement, despite a continued priority given by the Commission in the AGS and internal NRP guidelines. EAPN members highlight a focus on formal consultation, with a tendency to have one-off, primarily information meetings, often without an agenda or minutes, with little opportunity to comment on drafts. When comments are possible to the draft, few members feel that adequate feedback is provided, or that any real input is achieved. Where promising examples exist (PL, FR, BE, LU, ES), limited mutual learning or exchange of good practice is being prioritized. Such encouraging examples include the establishment of working thematic groups (PL and LU), the use of the group to develop an integrated anti-poverty strategy linked to the ex-ante conditionality in Structural Funds; the establishment of a National Platform Against Poverty (BE); a compact with regular structured consultation on the NRP with a chance to make detailed inputs to the draft, many of which were taken on board in the final draft (ES); and the annexing of stakeholders views to the NRP (FR). In terms of the engagement of national parliaments, debates are rarely organized. Although examples were given in BE, IE, LU, CZ, DE and ES, in general these were seen more as a rubber-stamping exercise with little impact on content. In Ireland, the debate in the Irish Parliament did result in some changes,

²² EAPN (2013) [Widening the GAP: EAPN 2013 Assessment of the NRPs](#).

but the implementation is unclear nor the process for continuing engagement. This clearly underlines a growing democratic deficit, that risks undermining the legitimacy of the Semester.

Key challenges summary

- The dominance of the wrong macro-economic policies and neglect of social priorities undermines economic as well as social targets; decent incomes, social investment and poverty reduction are pre-requisites for sustainable jobs and growth.
- An over-emphasis on work as the only/best route out of poverty, without much regard to quality and sustainability of work and too little regard for risk of poverty and exclusion for groups for whom paid work is not an option (for example many people who are chronically sick and disabled, carers or people not of working age).
- The downgrading of the role of universal social protection and services in keeping populations out of poverty; the over-emphasis on the risks to work incentives for small groups.
- The failure of ambition in the poverty target and lack of effective use and follow-up of the social indicators, within and beyond the Eurozone.
- Concerns that mainstreaming poverty into Europe 2020 and into macroeconomic governance has reduced the social 'space'/process to develop effective anti-policy strategy and policies.
- The failure to establish or to implement credible national poverty targets with common indicators is undermining support for the strategy and for the role of the EU.
- The lack of an effective integrated strategy to fight poverty, developed together with stakeholders, underpinned by a social investment approach and effective social architecture.
- The lack of progress on thematic priorities of the OMC, EPAP and SIP such as active inclusion, homelessness and child poverty.
- The missed opportunity to use Structural Funds' potential to have an impact on poverty.
- The absence of a European anti-poverty action programme at a time when testing innovative local solutions on the ground has never been more needed.
- The lack of democratic accountability and extremely limited and low-quality stakeholder dialogue, including with people experiencing poverty, undermining legitimacy and ownership.

OUR DEMANDS: A Transformative Agenda to make Europe 2020 Fit for Purpose²³

EAPN calls for ambitious changes to Europe 2020. Priority must be given to ‘protecting’ as well as ‘enabling’ EU Citizens - to stop the tide of rising poverty and inequality and to take concrete steps to create adequate social investment and universal social protection to reduce poverty now and prevent its increase. Secondly, to bring credibility and legitimacy to EU decision-making through increased democratic engagement and participation. However, for this to be achieved a more ambitious vision for Europe is needed. A vision that will help Europe move towards a more coherent, social and sustainable development that goes beyond growth/GDP and judges its progress in people’s well-being, shared prosperity, greater democracy and social cohesion as well as environmental sustainability. We understand this debate is unlikely to happen in the Mid-Term Review, but the recent European election results strongly show a demand to rethink our model of development and the EU must respond to that with an open debate on the Europe we want.

In the shorter term within the scope of the Mid-Term Review, EAPN supports a re-focussing on a coherent, balanced approach to deliver on the promises of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The Semester must be made the tool of this revitalized Europe 2020 and its targets, rather than being dominated by the Stability and Growth Pact’s focus on shrinking the nation state’s resources and powers to deliver social cohesion. It must prioritize an explicit, integrated, rights-based EU Strategy, capable of reducing poverty, social exclusion and inequality, developed through democratic and participative engagement. To give meaning to implementation it must be effectively backed by EU funds. **In the short term, EAPN calls for an emergency “Marshall Plan” to combat poverty and rising inequality in the worst affected Member States:** to alleviate the impact of the recession and austerity measures on the poor across Europe, and a medium-term plan to deliver adequate minimum income, quality services, and quality jobs and to progress towards EU social standards that can ensure them. Reinforcing the social dimension of the EU and the EMU must go beyond social indicators, and changes in governance to impact on policy. A well-resourced local action Poverty programme could be key to support new models of social delivery and cross-national learning.

²³ For more explanation on terms used in the SIP – see [EAPN glossary](#) and [SIP Briefing](#) (2013).

5 KEY PRIORITIES FOR CHANGE

1. **Building a coherent economic/social strategy and governance model**
2. **Establishing credible poverty reduction and social targets**
3. **Prioritising an EU integrated strategy to fight poverty and an urgent Marshall-type investment plan**
4. **Establishing democratic and accountable governance**
5. **Using EU money for poverty**

1. BUILDING A COHERENT ECONOMIC/SOCIAL STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE MODEL

What

It is essential that Europe 2020 refocuses on restoring balance to economic and social objectives, which can deliver shared prosperity and a sustainable future for the EU. Growth alone will not ensure a reduction in poverty, quality jobs, nor sustainable livelihoods (nor delivery on climate change and resource efficiency). In reality, this requires a shift towards a more sustainable development model which puts the economy at the service of an inclusive and sustainable society. Will the EU take on this long-term challenge? A dialogue space is urgently needed to articulate how such a model could be developed.

In the short-term, the European Semester must be made the instrument to deliver a revised Europe 2020, focused on delivering its objectives and targets, rather than primarily a tool to deliver the Stability and Growth Pact, delivered through Stability or Convergence Programmes. Currently, even many of the stated means of achieving the social dimension are determined by other economic goals e.g. the over-emphasis on compulsion and cost-cutting in public services and benefits, as well as through a narrow employment-only focus as the only solution for addressing poverty and social exclusion, rather than supportive, integrated active inclusion approaches based on universal access to social protection and public services. All parts of the Strategy and Semester mechanisms should then reflect this rebalancing including the Annual Growth Survey (AGS), the Commission's Guidance for NRPs, and the CSRs. The Commission's proposals on reducing income taxes to make them more 'growth friendly', whilst important for their focus on tackling tax evasion and avoidance, are also liable to have a negative impact which overly strong focuses on 'consumption' and indirect taxes which disproportionately fall on those on the lowest incomes.

For this reason, EAPN sees the need for both a move forward towards a Social as well as an Economic Union as a key priority for the EU. But it will be necessary to have a distinct social strategy and agenda – a Social OMC, to work out the detail of how the social dimension of the EU can be delivered. This should include more specific social objectives, but must feed into Europe 2020 at the highest level, or it risks being side-lined. Key to this approach is the need to take the poverty guidelines out of the employment guidelines and Joint Employment Report, with its own guidelines and report – to allow an integrated approach on social protection and social inclusion to provide a balanced focus with employment policies.

The Lisbon Treaty social clause (Article 9) must be operationalized and applied to all areas of policy, including Structural Funds, EMU etc., to ensure delivery on these commitments as the

Treaty requires. Social Impact Assessment must be converted into an operational tool to ensure that social goals are mainstreamed across the whole Europe 2020 and Semester process at all stages (ex-ante to ex-post). The EU could lead the way in demonstrating that it could be done effectively. For the Eurozone, ensuring that the new Scoreboards promoting the social dimension of the EMU influence policy is essential. If this is not done then the social, and particularly the poverty reduction commitments will continue to be undermined by the regressive impact of the current macro-economic goals.

How

- Make progress towards a Social as well as an Economic and Banking Union as part of the post 2015 road map.
- Start the debate on how the EU can deliver social progress beyond GDP, supporting an inclusive and sustainable development model ensuring shared prosperity and well-being.
- Prepare a Communication which sets out guidelines for coherent smart, sustainable and inclusive growth which can deliver on the goals and targets of Europe 2020 and confirms the macroeconomic objectives as the servant to a more inclusive and sustainable EU. Make the Semester the key instrument of Europe 2020.
- Introduce a new Golden Rule, which operationalizes the horizontal clause and ex-ante social impact assessment methodology, by requiring economic and other policies to prove their contribution to social goals and the targets and not to undermine them.
- Give priority to reducing inequality through redistribution and resourcing a more equal society – particularly a focus on more progressive taxation and tax justice.
- Develop separate social protection/social inclusion guidelines for the poverty target, outside the employment guidelines and require the development of a separate Joint Social Protection/Inclusion Report on an equal footing with the Joint Employment Report developed by the SPC with the Commission.
- Encourage a more equal role for employment and social/equality actors to monitor the social impact of economic priorities and to support the development of an integrated inclusive growth approach within the Commission and within Council formations, i.e. between EPC, EMCO and SPC.
- Effectively mainstream the social and employment scoreboards into the Alert Mechanism on the same basis as other economic indicators, and ensure that they act as triggers to policy change when the imbalances increase beyond an agreed level.
- Make the Annual Progress Report on Europe 2020 goals and targets the central document to drive the European Semester and/or rename/refocus the Annual Growth Survey to mainstream the core objectives of Europe 2020, aligning the Stability and Growth goals to not compromise these.
- Organize all instruments in the Semester systematically, to reflect the main objectives and targets and the necessary policies to achieve them, i.e. separate sections on all objectives and targets, with an assessment of how the total package contributes to their achievement.
- Restore balance to economic and social CSRs. Country Specific Recommendations should be addressed to all MS who are not making progress on the poverty target, and the other social targets.
- Support the development of a Social OMC promoting a detailed EU Social Agenda and mechanism, to feed into Europe 2020 in order to ensure detailed development of effective policies and the strengthening of the social area within Europe 2020. National Social Reports should be obligatory and be timed to feed into the NRPs, documenting

Member States' plans to implement on integrated strategies to fight poverty, including on access to an adequate minimum income. These should then underpin the reporting on the poverty-reduction and other social targets in the NRP.

2. ESTABLISHING CREDIBLE POVERTY AND SOCIAL TARGETS

What

The social targets have not been achieved, but this is not a reason to abandon them. They provide a vital litmus test of the social priorities of the European Union, and should be placed even more at the core of Europe 2020 and the European Semester. However, the targets need to be made more effective and better implemented. The poverty target is the only target not expressed in a %, using a complex aggregate of 3 indicators and where Member States are able to select their own indicator, not even the EU ones. The poverty targets needs to be put on the same basis as the other targets and given equal weighting.

The triple indicators on poverty are complex and difficult to communicate to the general public. However, we recognize that politically any change to the basis of the target is unlikely. So we insist that more must be done to ensure that the 3 EU indicators are used and monitored consistently by all Member States, if the target is to have any credibility. It is also important to set the target within the broader dashboard of social indicators, currently captured in the Social Protection Performance Monitor, which should be give more visibility in the overall assessment. An indicator capturing at-risk-of poverty anchored in different years is also useful. For example, measuring how much at-risk of poverty levels have changed to date based on income levels fixed at the beginning of the crisis.

All the social targets should be disaggregated according to gender/age/group breakdown. A next step would be sub-targets for particular groups or situations which face higher risk of poverty, i.e. unemployed or not at work due to illness or disability, lone parent households, children and young people, people with disabilities and special needs, older people in some countries, but also homeless, ethnic minorities including Roma and migrants are other key groups. This will need to be matched with new sources of data collection and more timely retrieval.

Some refinement or additions to the targets may also be considered. The education target is currently focused only on formal education. The EU should commit to an adult literacy target under the education targets. This would strengthen and prioritise adult literacy responses on a European level and within EU Member States.

The employment target is also problematic, as it only captures whether people have worked for 1 hour in the week of reference, and does not account for the quality or sustainability of the employment, and indeed its role in delivering people from poverty. Complementing the purely numerical employment targets with binding criteria on quality, most of which are already present in the Social Scoreboard and the Joint Assessment Framework, is a pre-requisite to ensure that achieving the employment target does not undermine achieving the poverty-reduction target. Moreover, achieving precarious, unstable employment, which can only be counted in the week of reference, does not ensure the sustainability of progress

achieved on the employment rate in the medium and long run. Sub-targets focusing on particular groups at risk, as above, are also needed.

A strong argument can also be made for an additional target focusing on inequality. This should not replace the poverty target. The growth of inequality in wealth and income is widely acknowledged as one of the major challenges facing the EU, by a range of disparate actors (OECD, IMF, World Economic Forum 2013 and 2014). This is further highlighted by the European Commission in its yearly review (Employment and Social Development Outlook 2014) and with the welcome inclusion of inequality indicators in the new social and employment scoreboard. The price of inequality is not only increasing poverty but a widening gap between rich and poor that undermines social cohesion and well-functioning and performing societies.²⁴ Increasingly growing inequality it is recognized as a major barrier to a return to sustainable growth (IMF 2014).

How

- Give new priority to the poverty target based on the 3 indicators, but require a percentage decrease overall for each indicator by all Member States, as with the other targets.
- Require Member States to use all 3 EU indicators to establish ambitious national targets towards reducing poverty, by the agreed percentage, rather than cherry-picking the indicator which allows them to appear to perform best.
- Review and establish new targets for MS who claim to have met the poverty target already.
- Reformulate the Eurostat definition underpinning the employment target, and complement it with indicators which measure also the quality and sustainability of the employment, and consider the introduction of sub-targets for key groups.
- Require Member States to make medium to long-term projection planning in the NRPs and NSRs showing how the targets will be reached, over what period and by what policies, requiring them to provide yearly updates explaining the trends and shortfall and setting out the plans for adjustment of policy to achieve the targets.
- In the Annual Progress Report and Annual Growth Survey, provide comparable information on the progress reached and the reasons for this, including the shortfalls.
- Establish sub-targets for key priorities – e.g. children, youth, homeless, migrants, Roma, long-term unemployed, single parents.
- Invest in more timely social data and the development of new indicators/data collection mechanism that can capture the most vulnerable groups – e.g. homeless and migrants.
- Explicitly monitor and report on the broader dashboard of social indicators, e.g. those established in the employment and social protection performance monitor, and ensure coherence within the overall Joint Assessment Framework.
- Establish a new target for reducing inequality, based on the indicator used in the social scoreboard (20/80% quintile).
- Consider a target for Adult lifelong learning and adult literacy.

²⁴ R Wilson and K Pickett: [The Spirit Level](#) (2008 and 2012)

3. PRIORITISING AN EU INTEGRATED STRATEGY TO FIGHT POVERTY AND SHORT-TERM MARSHALL-TYPE INVESTMENT PLAN

What

One of the reasons that the current targets are failing is the lack of a coherent strategy for delivery. In the case of the poverty target, no coherent, overarching, EU integrated strategy for all groups has been developed and agreed, although individual strategies have been developed for some specific groups: e.g. Roma Inclusion, Investing in Children, or proposed by EU Institutions and stakeholders e.g. on tackling homelessness.²⁵ As has been highlighted, employment is promoted as the only viable route out of poverty, despite the fact that unemployment is rising; that the jobs themselves do not necessarily offer a route out of poverty, and without a priority given to quality employment or ensuring access for excluded groups. Such a strategy needs a short and long-term perspective, and to defend universal benefits and services as the fundamental basis of the European Social Model. Targeting without a universal right to services, embeds 'poor services for the poor' and fails to promote equality, nor is it effective in ensuring take up or preventing as well as alleviating poverty. This approach needs to embrace the potential to move forward on social standards through EU benchmarking and frameworks which can ensure a level playing field across increasingly divergent regions. An immediate response to the crisis, with an immediate action plan to ensure social investment to reduce poverty and mitigate the negative social impact of the crisis, is a major priority.

The current social infrastructure needs to be clarified. A strong Social Pillar to match the Economic and Banking Union is a crucial first step. But also revitalizing the Social Open Method of Coordination as the 'social space/dialogue' to build consensus social policy and with the European Platform Against Poverty, refocused on an integrated strategy on poverty and linked institutionally to the national level. The role of the SIP in reducing poverty must be made more explicit, as a key tool and made operational.

The needs of specific groups are also not consistently supported and should be highlighted much more strongly within the strategy. Many need specific strategies to support them to achieve social and economic inclusion, not just into employment, within an overarching strategy. Some initial work has been done in this respect through the Social Investment Package particularly the Commission Recommendation supporting the 3 pillar approach to investing in children (access to resources, services and participation), and to confronting homelessness, but often it seems a rather piecemeal approach, weakly reflected in the follow up, particularly in the CSRs. Key groups, such as young people, are only addressed from the perspective of employment and education (Youth Guarantee, Youth Employment Initiative), while their broader needs in terms of access to resources (including adequate income), services (including affordable housing) and rights (including participation and empowerment) are not taken into account, and a thematic strategy is badly needed to avoid a lost generation.

Discrimination and Migration are also completely absent from Europe 2020, as well as the issue of gender, particularly how the crisis has impacted, the gender pay and pension gap,

²⁵ See FEANTSA: www.feantsa.org and [EP Resolution \(2013/2994\(RSP\)\) on a European Union Homelessness Strategy](#).

and key vulnerable groups like migrant women. This should include issues related to social welfare, tax, employment opportunities, access to services.

Social Innovation is a core concept in the guidelines, however there is an over-emphasis on identifying only 'new' ways to address poverty and social exclusion, when successful measures are being cut or undermined. Social Innovation should also not just be about privatising mainstream services under pressure from austerity measures. Much clearer support needs to be given downstream to where the innovative approaches are generated i.e. bottom up innovative projects that are developed with local communities including NGOs and social economy organisations, as well as large scaling-up operations developed by mainstream government.

How

- **Require a short term Marshall-type plan to reduce poverty** – in the short term, public investment is needed for an integrated plan to create quality jobs, and for universal social protection and public services in order to stem the spiralling poverty levels.
- **Give urgent priority to the development of an effective, integrated and multidimensional EU strategy to fight poverty and social exclusion**, built around agreed core elements as highlighted below, and require Member States to develop integrated strategies along the same lines.
- Such an Integrated Strategy should:
 - 1) ***Aim to eradicate poverty and promote social inclusion for all groups, ensuring access to rights, resources and services and implementing the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the horizontal social clauses (Art 9 and 10, TFEU).***
 - 2) ***Reduce inequality by promoting fairer income distribution, and redistribution through promoting tax justice and access to services.***
 - 3) ***Support a Social Investment approach, which invests in people through essential universal social protection/minimum income as well as enabling services with the explicit objective to reduce poverty and inequality.***
 - 4) ***Progress the development of EU wide social standards, starting with a Framework Directive on minimum income under TFEU Art175 to ensure decent living standards to keep people close to the labour market and ensure a dignified life.***
 - 5) ***Promote Integrated Active Inclusion: Adequate income support, inclusive labour markets and access to quality services for people in working age, insisting on rights to income support and services for all across the life-cycle regardless of their employment situation.***
 - 6) ***Invest in durable quality of work and employment: Support people, and especially key groups facing multiple obstacles, into good and sustainable jobs, pro-actively tackling in-work poverty and supporting transitions from school to work, between jobs, and from work to retirement.***
 - 7) ***Ensure access to quality services: particularly universal access to benefits and services: education and training and lifelong learning, employment support and counselling, affordable health and long-term care, affordable housing and quality social services, essential public services including energy and transport services.***
 - 8) ***Promote empowerment and participation as an essential pre-requisite for social inclusion and active citizenship in the management of the services as well as in the overarching policy development.***
 - 9) ***Pro-actively tackle discrimination and establish and implement sub-strategies for key target groups and themes as endorsed by the Social investment Package: e.g.***

Investing in children, combating homelessness, Roma inclusion strategies, but also for older people and migrants (including undocumented).

10) **Promote social innovation that prioritizes ‘more effective services and methods’ without undermining existing effective public services, and that gives priority to supporting local initiatives that respond to community needs.**

- Retain and refocus the **European Platform Against Poverty** towards the development of an EU integrated strategy to fight poverty, on a par with the other flagships, with yearly work programmes, clarifying the individual strands and how they will be delivered through Europe 2020, the Social OMC and the SIP. Require the establishment of national platforms against poverty to feed into the European Semester providing financial support to national governments and stakeholders to ensure effective operation. Convert the Annual Convention into an independent dialogue forum between national actors engaged in the Semester and the EU level to review progress on the poverty target, highlight good practices and make recommendations to the Council.
- Financially support a **yearly Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty** with decision-makers which provides direct proposals to the EU Conventions on Poverty.
- Clarify the relationship of the **Social Investment Package** to the EPAP and its contribution to the anti-poverty strategy to achieve the poverty target, and establish yearly work programmes to implement the strategy as a whole and thematic strategies (investing in children, tackling homelessness, active inclusion).²⁶

4. ESTABLISHING DEMOCRATIC AND ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNANCE

What

There is a lack of debate at EU and national level on Europe 2020, particularly on the need for an integrated strategy to fight poverty, beyond employment. This debate is particularly lacking at national level where all stakeholders need to be engaged, including anti-poverty NGOs, people with direct experience of poverty and national parliaments. Europe 2020 strategy has not progressed on getting ownership from either stakeholders or national parliaments. The Commission’s Communication rightly highlighted this as one of the key challenges for the future success of the strategy. EAPN’s own assessments have demonstrated the growing gap (see above). A clearer and more transparent process must be put in place, with adequate resources – staff and financial at EU and national level.

None of these instruments will make a difference without political will and recognition of the added value brought by such engagement for better policy solutions, as well as increased credibility and accountability. For this reason, strong direction is needed through EU guidelines or Code of Guidance, through promoting mutual learning and good practice and by allocating EU Social Innovation and Structural Funds.

The European Semester Officers have a new role to engage with stakeholders to communicate the strategy. At the moment this seems primarily economic. Their role could be transformed to become dynamic agents, whose job it is to promote effective dialogue on the Semester process with all key stakeholders.

²⁶ See [Independent Experts’ Report 2014](#).

National Parliaments are also rarely consulted. The Commission could strongly encourage national governments to ensure that NRPs are debated and approved by national parliaments not just by governments. The European Parliament is currently side-lined from the key decisions within Europe 2020 and the Semester. This must change.

Finally, the strategy needs high visibility and ownership. This means public awareness-raising, but not just by EU or government-organized communication campaigns which are unlikely to have much impact on a highly sceptical public. Independent grass-roots stakeholders, particularly civil society who have a higher level of credibility²⁷ with the public, could become key partners to help build capacity but also promote wider debate and discussion through a wide range of different tools.

How

- Develop together with MS and stakeholders obligatory transparent EU guidelines for engagement of stakeholders at all stages of Semester and in the design, delivery and evaluation of policy (i.e. NRPs, CSRs and feed into the AGS) with an implementation handbook providing inspiring practices and tips on effective methodologies.²⁸ Mainstream these into the Guidance note on the NRPs, ensuring systematic monitoring in the NRPs.
- Invest in participation and democratic accountability, and take the time to rethink methods of operating, evaluating the benefits and costs of failure to engage people in the Semester.
- Ensure that people with direct experience of poverty, together with the NGOs that support them, are explicitly involved in the dialogue process at EU, national and sub-national level.
- Require the involvement of national parliaments through all stages of the Semester, with the organization of a national debate on the progress on the strategy, including on the poverty target, and in the approval of the NRP.
- Support the call for of an inter-institutional agreement regarding the Semester between the European Parliament, Council and Commission as called for by the EP.²⁹
- In the AGS and Annual Progress Report, make a specific analysis of the state of play on the extent and quality of democratic and stakeholder engagement, developing common indicators and reporting process, including stakeholder satisfaction surveys.
- Transform the European Semester Officers into comprehensive promoters for stakeholder engagement with a specific task to engage all stakeholders, including civil society and people experiencing poverty in the Semester, with a budget to support capacity building, awareness-raising and mobilisation activities around Europe 2020/the Semester and its impact.
- Include stakeholders in the bi-lateral meetings between Government and Commission on planning and review of policies and funding to deliver on the targets.

²⁷ See [Flash Eurobarometer 373](#) (March 2013) which highlights 59% of people support that NGOs share their values and interests and trust them to act in the right way to influence policy

²⁸ See EAPN Handbook for stakeholder engagement: Give a voice to citizens (*coming out Aug 2014*)

²⁹ EP [Report on European Semester for economic coordination - the AGS](#). Feb 2014

5. USING EU MONEY FOR POVERTY

What

For Europe 2020 to be effective on the delivery on poverty, EU Structural Funds are a crucial instrument, and should be an integral part of the delivery strategy. Under the new regulations and thematic ex-ante conditionalities, Structural Funds should have already started to help delivering on the poverty target as proposed in the EU flagship initiative of the European Platform Against Poverty. However, from EAPN assessments, the 20% use of ESF for the purpose of social inclusion has been modest so far with an overemphasis on funding for activation policies, rather than social inclusion and integrated active inclusion, as required by the thematic priorities. The ex-ante requirement for an anti-poverty strategy to be in place, needs to be implemented and monitored. The commitments to improving engagement and access for NGOs through the new Code of Guidance also need to be implemented if the Funds are to ensure active NGO engagement in the management and delivery of SF projects. The new Community Led Local Development guideline, offers an important opportunity to support integrated local and bottom up initiatives in partnership with local authorities with the active participation of people experiencing poverty. However, if progress on poverty is really to be made using EU money, a new Poverty Programme which can finance local initiatives and promote cross-country learning could make the difference.

How

- Member States should prioritize delivery on the commitment of 20% earmarked for poverty reduction in their Operational Programmes and support the coordinated use of ESF and ERDF, including actively promoting CLLD (Community Led Local Development) and monitoring the effectiveness of the actions taken.
- The European Commission should monitor and ensure the compliance by Governments and Managing Authorities of the ring-fencing of 20% ESF for social inclusion and actively require and monitor delivery on the ex-ante conditionality on integrated anti-poverty strategies including active inclusion approaches that do not focus on activation alone, but ensure an integrated approach, ensuring access to quality services and adequate income support.
- The use of Structural Funds to improve administrative capacity to pilot or improve minimum income schemes is welcomed, however, the adequate co-financing and long-term sustainability of financing from national budgets needs to assured.
- Member States should be required to report in detail on the use of Structural Funds to achieve the poverty target of the Europe 2020 strategy, including delivery on the ex-ante conditionality on an anti-poverty strategy in their National Reform Programmes, and to assess the impact.
- The Commission could help Member States by documenting good practices from countries in the use of the ESF for innovative approaches to fight poverty and social exclusion, in particular on integrated active inclusion linking adequate MIS with inclusive labour market measures and measures to guarantee access to quality services, and not limited to just activation measures.
- The partnership principle and the Code of Guidance should be properly enforced to ensure access to the Structural Funds for NGOs, and engagement in the design, delivery and evaluation of the Funds, including for organisations representing people experiencing poverty and for other relevant partners. Community Led Local Development (CLLD)

should be actively supported and monitored as the key instrument in Structural Funds dedicated to bottom-up, and people-led development.

- As part of a commitment to increasing transparency and accountability, the European Commission should also ensure a good management of Structural Funds at regional level, by putting in place a centralized mechanism to collect and deal with information, questions and complaints sent by NGOs and other relevant actors.
- The EU should invest in a new poverty programme: a well-resourced local action programme to fight poverty which could support new models of social delivery and cross-national learning.

INFORMATION AND CONTACT

For more information on this publication, contact

Sian Jones – EAPN Policy Coordinator

sian.jones@eapn.eu – 0032 (2) 226 58 59

See EAPN publications and activities on www.eapn.eu

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



EUROPEAN ANTI-POVERTY NETWORK. Reproduction permitted, provided that appropriate reference is made to the source. July 2014.



EAPN is supported by the Directorate – General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion of the European Commission. Its funding is provided for under the European Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity PROGRESS (2007 – 2013).

For more information:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=327&langId=en>

The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect the position of the European Commission