

Child Poverty & Well-being in the EU: the framework for action, challenges and the way forward

5 February 2015, Rome

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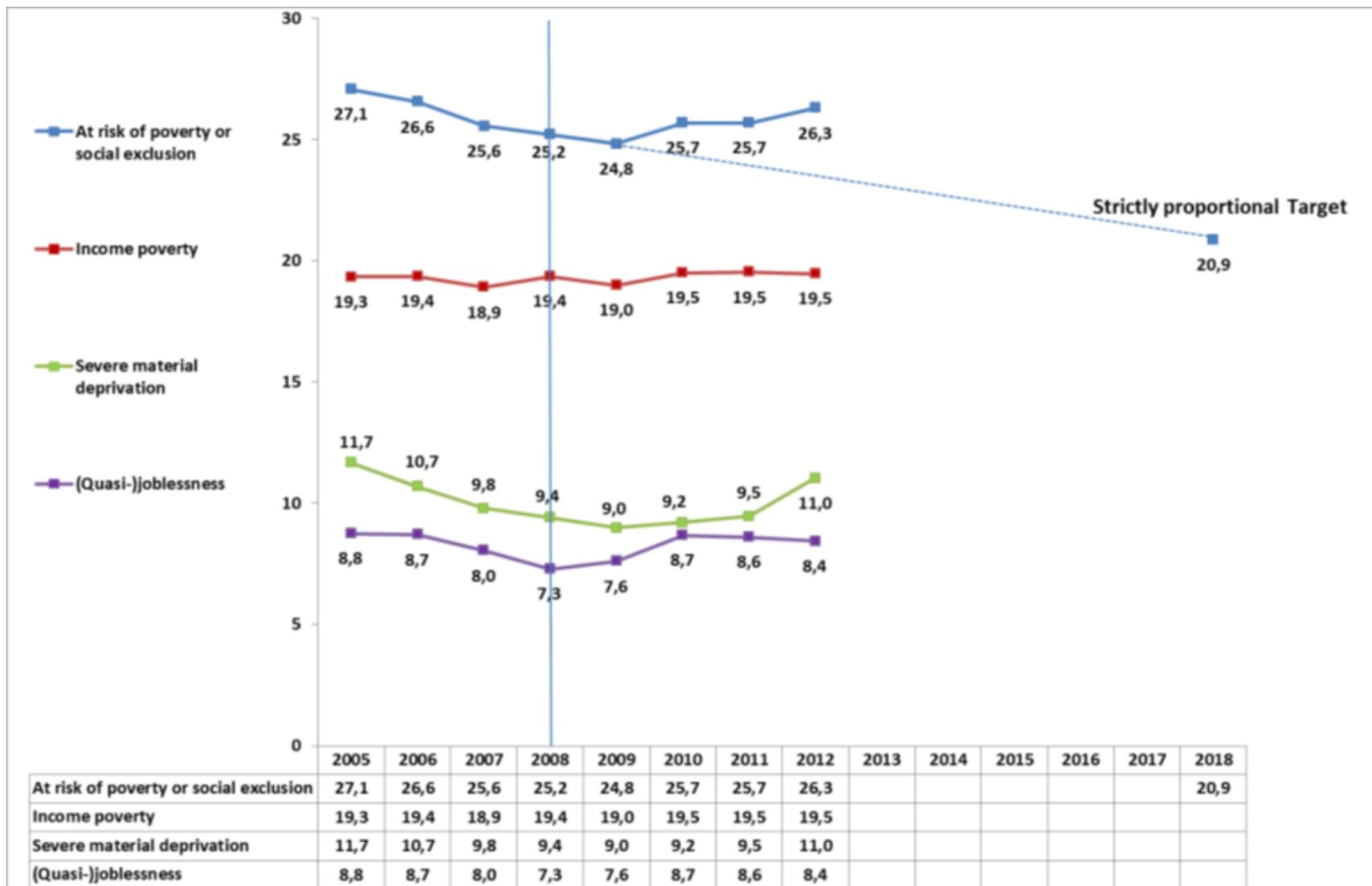
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Presentation outline

- **Situation** of children in Europe
- EU commitment? Role of the EU in **protecting and promoting children's rights**
- **Investing in children** – changing the paradigm
- Leveraging EU influence to **support members' advocacy** for child rights & well-being
- Challenges & the way forward: **Prioritising investment in children and families**

Children in EU at risk of poverty or social exclusion



Wide (and growing) divergence across EU

Children aged 0-17 at risk of poverty or social exclusion, %*, EU-28, 2012

Low

15-21% FI (14.9), DK (15.3), SE (15.4), SI (16.4), NL (16.9), DE (18.4), CZ (18.8), AT (20.9)

Medium

22-30% EE (22.4), FR (23.2), BE (23.1), LU (24.6), **EU-28 (26.3)**, SK (26.6), CY (27.5), PT (27.8), PL (29.3)

High

31-35% MT (31.0), UK (31.2), LT (31.9), ES (33.8), HR (33.8), **IT (33.8)**, IE (33.1), EL (35.4)

Very high

40-52% LV (40.0), HU (40.9), RO (52.2), BG (52.3)

Mainstreaming child rights in EU policy & action

- **UNCRC** no provision for ratification by an inter-governmental body (in contrast to the 2006 UN Convention on Rights of People with Disabilities which was ratified by the EU)
- But **Article 3(3) of the Lisbon Treaty** includes explicit reference to protection of child rights as an objective of the EU
- Child rights are enshrined in the **Charter of Fundamental Rights** of the EU (Art. 24)
- 2011 **EU Agenda on the Rights of the Child** – priority actions eg. Child-friendly justice but also mainstreaming across EU action

Mainstreaming child rights in EU policy & action cont.

2014 new European Parliament, new European
Commission

93 elected MEPs have signed up to be
child rights champions

The EP approved the creation of an
Intergroup on children's rights
on 11 December

www.childrightsmanifesto.eu



Investing in Children

- Throughout last decade child poverty increasingly acknowledged as an EU political priority
- Eurochild advocated for comprehensive approach that promotes children's well-being from a child-rights perspective
- REC 'Investing in Children – Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage' adopted by EC 20th Feb 2013

3 pillar approach

- Access to adequate resources
 - Support parents' participation in the labour market
 - Provide for adequate living standards through a combination of benefits
- Access to quality and affordable services
 - Investing in early childhood education and care
 - Education systems
 - Universal right to health care
 - Safe, adequate housing and living environment
 - Enhance family support and the quality of alternative care settings
- Children's right to participate
 - Promote children's participation in decision making that affects their lives
 - Support the participation of all children in play, recreation, sport and cultural activities

Our theory of change

- ❑ **Political will** – Is there high level recognition of children as rights holders? Do politicians understand investment in vulnerable children and families as a political priority?

- ❑ **Policy reform** – Is there a culture of evidence-base policy reform? Are their mechanisms for inter-sectoral cooperation and multi-level coordination?

- ❑ **Civil society** – Are policy makers open to civil society influence? Does civil society have the capacity to build alliances and argue consistently and effectively backed up by evidence?

Leveraging EU influence to support members' advocacy for child rights & well-being



- <http://www.alliance4investinginchildren.eu/>
- **24 EU networks and organisations** united in this Joint Action
- Pushing for full implementation of EC REC Investing in Children
 - common **advocacy activities**
 - drafting **Implementation Handbook**
 - supporting **national alliances**



2 national pilots – Spain & the UK

Supports coordination of an Alliance

Common advocacy work - & in particular focuses on leveraging EU influence:

- By raising issues of child poverty & well-being in the European semester process
- Ensuring that EU structural and investment funds are used to support implementation of the REC Investing in Children

Leveraging EU influence to support members' advocacy for child rights & well-being



- <http://www.openingdoors.eu/>
- Jointly coordinated by Hope & Homes for Children and Eurochild
- 12 countries
- Ending institutional care: strengthening families
- Links to EU structural funds, Europe 2020, REC Investing in Children

Challenges

- The Juncker Commission vision is primarily around **economic regeneration and job creation**.
- BUT a **‘work first’** model is just too simplistic. It will exacerbate inequalities and leave our societies more disintegrated and fragile.
- The European Commission is narrowly interpreting its mandate and stripping its work down to a strictly economic agenda. **The ‘social dimension’ is seen primarily as a measure to protect the ‘economically active’.**

Prioritising investment in children and families is the only sustainable way to build inclusive, safe and prosperous societies.

The way forward – what might an EU Investment Plan for children look like?

- **Education reform** would take a central stage
- **Early years** as an investment priority
- Investment should be massively increased in **health promotion and prevention** rather than into disease treatment
- **Community services, early intervention**
- **Welfare reform** – ensuring everyone can live in dignity

It's much easier to think about investment in infrastructure than changing the way we do things in society!!!





**Thank you for listening – www.Eurochild.org
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