

# Barometer Report

**Monitoring the implementation of the  
(at least) 20% of the European Social  
Fund that should be devoted to fight  
against Poverty during the period  
2014-2020**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

March 2016



# MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE (AT LEAST) 20% OF THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND EARMARKED FOR POVERTY

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The **full report**, as well as **infographics** are available on the EAPN website under Key Publications: [www.eapn.eu](http://www.eapn.eu).



# MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE (AT LEAST) 20% OF THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND EARMARKED FOR POVERTY

## INTRODUCTION

The new programming period of ESF gets at least 23.1% of the national Structural Funds (SF) allocation, and gives a higher profile to social inclusion and poverty reduction with 20% of ESF earmarked for social inclusion<sup>1</sup> and a strengthened partnership approach including NGOs through a [European Code of Conduct on partnership](#).<sup>2</sup> For the first time the ESF national budgets are secured, with the mandatory minimum of 23.1% of the total SF national allocation. The Fund for European Aid for the most deprived (FEAD) also extended its scope of intervention for broader social inclusion activities but is not meant to overlap with ESF. <sup>3</sup> You can find more detailed information and links on the new Fund in the [EAPN Tool Kit](#) which includes contact details of managing authorities and a glossary of key terms.

With a stronger focus on social inclusion and a better promotion of bottom-up and community-led approaches, the structural funds Regulations 2014-2020 provide a more favourable legal framework for more funding opportunities for social NGOs. Regarding this point we can't forget the ex ante Conditionalities, i.e. on poverty reduction, based on integrated anti-poverty strategies. In the document produced by the European Commission called Guidance on ex ante Conditionalities for the European Structural and Investment Funds PART II (February 2014)<sup>4</sup>, we can read: *"This guidance is addressed to geographical units for ESI Funds. Its purpose is to provide a framework for the assessment by the Commission of the consistency and adequacy of the information provided by Member States on the applicability and fulfillment of ex ante conditionalities. It is also made available to Member States"*.

### Major Milestones:

- Partnership Agreements (PA) submitted in April 2014 and approved in December 2014.
- Operational Programmes (OPs) submitted, negotiated and approved in all Members states.
- OPs related to FEAD all adopted.
- Report monitoring OPs and Partnership Agreements will be delivered in December 2015 – particularly ex ante conditionalities and partnership principle.
- Mid-Term Review of Structural Funds takes place in 2016 led by Directorate General Regional Policy (DG REGIO).

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<sup>1</sup> Art. 4.2. ESF.

<sup>2</sup> Art. 5 CPR.

<sup>3</sup> MS can choose between two types of Operational Programmes: OP1 for food aid or material assistance, and OP 2 is broader pathways to social inclusion.

<sup>4</sup> Available: [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/information/legislation/guidance/](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/legislation/guidance/)

## **Aim of the EAPN Task Force – Monitoring the 20% earmarked for poverty and the partnership principle and to propose guidelines for better implementation**

An EAPN Policy Task Force was set up by the EU Inclusion Strategies Group (EUISG) in 2015 to develop instruments to help EAPN monitor the use of the new Structural Funds - European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) – 2014-2020 and particularly the European Social Fund (ESF).

The Task Force was led by EAPN Portugal with support from the EAPN secretariat, and involved EAPN Bulgaria, Estonia, Germany, Romania, and Spain. It has progressed on developing a Barometer which will graphically assess the participation of anti-poverty NGOs in partnership in ESIF and especially monitor the delivery of the 20% of ESF on poverty.

## **MAIN RESULTS**

We have received a total of 16 responses from the EAPN Networks. All the members of the Task Force answered the questionnaire: Portugal, Spain, Germany, Bulgaria, Estonia and Romania. The other National Networks that accepted this challenge were: Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Malta, Poland and Slovakia. Three Networks sent some comments but didn't fill out the questionnaire (Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands).

### **The questionnaire is divided into two parts:**

- 1) assessing participation and partnership (e.g. in the Monitoring Committees and in developing the Partnership Agreements (PA) and the Operational Programmes (OPs).
- 2) analysing the delivery on the 20% ear-marking for promoting social inclusion and combating poverty in the PA and OPs. As highlighted above, the **source of data** on partnership and the 20% on poverty this year, will be drawn primarily from reading the [Partnership Agreements](#) and the ESF [Operational Programmes](#) for each country.

From the average of the responses we notice that in general there is a commitment from the Managing Authority in the implementation of the Code of Conduct on Partnership, however this commitment is perceived to be not fully implemented. The perception of the involvement of NGOs is considered low, as well as the satisfaction with the implementation of the Code.

Taking into consideration the average that asked for the involvement of EAPN Networks to be extended to include the drafting of the PA when answering the first question, we realise that participation at the level of the Partnership Agreement, is quite low (less than 3 – 2.88).

The general satisfaction of National Networks (NNs) about the involvement of anti-poverty or social NGOs in the preparation of OPs is significantly low in almost all of the countries that answered the questionnaire. Exceptions are Germany and Spain.

All the NNs say that there is a place for the social sector in the monitoring committees, but the quality of this participation is low in most cases.

The average of **satisfaction in terms of monitoring the 20% of ESF dedicated to social inclusion and poverty reduction in PAs and OPs** is rather low which leads us to consider that although there was a concern about the allocation of funds for the fight against poverty, there is a certain disbelief regarding the effective implementation of these funds.

In the **second part** of the barometer questionnaire the National Networks had the opportunity to make their assessment about the following themes:

- Promoting Active Inclusion
- Integration of marginalised Roma communities
- Integration of other marginalized groups (migrants, including undocumented, other ethnic minorities, human trafficking victims, asylum seekers, homeless people, other,...)
- Acces to health and social services of general interest
- Promoting access to sustainable and quality employment
- Enhancing access to affordable sustainable high-quality services
- Promoting social entrepreneurship/economy and vocational integration in social enterprises
- Community-led local development strategies
- Anti-discrimination
- Gender equality

The **full report**, as well as **infographics** are available on the EAPN website under Key Publications: [www.eapn.eu](http://www.eapn.eu).

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## FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

### AT EUROPEAN LEVEL

#### ***Develop an effective EU Monitoring Framework***

- The implementation of the Partnership principle and code of conduct should be monitored on a yearly basis during the implementation of the next programming period through the European Semester process (both through the NRPs and CSRs) and other internal mechanisms.
- The European Commission should also closely monitor and report yearly that, within each member state (MS) and Region at least 20% of the ESF for social inclusion and poverty reduction is earmarked and that the ex-ante conditionalities are adequately fulfilled and underpin the programmes and measures, particularly the anti-poverty strategy. A set of indicators should be agreed with MSs to show how the measures contribute to the Europe 2020 poverty target.<sup>5</sup>
- The focus on the monitoring should be on quality delivery and impact and should go beyond OPs and PAs to the project level. It should be based on criteria and indicators which measure short and long-term progress towards integrated social inclusion and steps out of poverty, not just getting people into any job. This should include access to sustainable and quality employment, quality services and minimum income/social protection (Active Inclusion). Measurement of support for empowerment, autonomy and participation is also key.
- Stakeholders including NGOs, and people with direct experience of poverty and social exclusion, particularly those who are current or future beneficiaries should be included as essential partners in the monitoring and evaluation process.

#### ***Promote more effective mutual learning and peer reviews***

- Intentional focus is needed on sharing practices on the use of funds to deliver poverty and partnership between European Countries and inclusion of these practices in the implementation process of OPs. Peer reviews can play a key role.
- The Transnational Learning Network e.g. on Inclusion can also play its part, as well as the EU Structured Dialogue, but must ensure engagement of practitioners, and social NGO stakeholders, as well as policy makers, and see how to ensure learning from people facing poverty and exclusion.
- Guidelines must be developed to ensure mainstreaming of learning into the policy processes at EU and national level.

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<sup>5</sup> To reduce the number of people at risk of poverty and/or exclusion by at least 20 million by 2020.



### ***Ensure bottom-up meets top-down***

- Increased support and technical assistance must be given to support the Implementation of bottom–up, innovative approaches by NGOs and grassroots organisations working alongside key target groups at the project level.
- Specific support for evaluation frameworks and mechanisms is important to enable the learning from such pilot exercises to be fully captured, and then mainstreamed and rolled out.
- Global grants, particularly offering 100% or high up-front funding can offer an important means to overcome financial obstacles for this engagement.
- This must be combined with effective top-down guidance, monitoring and reporting in terms of policies and EC regulations.

### ***Increase poverty as a priority in Multi-Annual Financial Framework***

- In the next programming period it is important that the earmarking of at least 20% of ESF dedicated to fight poverty and social exclusion is kept as a central priority, if real progress is to be made on the delivery on the poverty reduction target. The focus must be on *quality* measures which support people with integrated, personalized support out of poverty and into inclusion and which really impact on poverty and social exclusion.
- The anti-poverty orientation in the ESF must be combined with an effective partnership approach as proposed in the code of conduct. Both instruments (minimum quota and quality delivery to fight poverty and using the partnership approach) are fundamental for the next funding period of the ESI-Funds 2021-2027.

## **AT NATIONAL LEVEL**

- At least 20 % of the ESF fund is foreseen to fight poverty and social exclusion but the attitude of the ESF funding is strongly related to the integration into the labour market (in many countries). Therefore it is desirable that the perspective for a future cohesion policy is wider and focused on tackling poverty and integrated social inclusion, based on active inclusion and steps out of poverty and towards participation in society. This should be open to all target groups which are facing poverty and excluded from the labour market, like homeless people and people with drug and alcohol dependency etc. and those who need support to ensure access to services/social protection and to participate in society (e.g. families - including single parents, migrants, ethnic minorities etc.).
- Member States/Regions should use Structural Funds to implement integrated active inclusion approach, based on the 3 pillars, as essential to the delivery on the poverty reduction target. The ex ante conditionality of an integrated anti-poverty strategy based on these principles should be actively underpinning the development of the programme.
- The FEAD fund can be considered as a good addition to the current focus of the ESF, but it should clarify the links to support social inclusion with the rest of the ESF programme. For

instance in Germany they use the FEAD for the integration of EU immigrants and homeless people into society.

- Regular evaluations of the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the funds dedicated to supporting the social inclusion priorities should be carried out. These actions should be made compulsory for the Managing Authorities by introducing them in the evaluation plan of the respective Operational Programme, which have to be adopted by the Monitoring Committees (MCs), and stakeholders should be involved in the MCs.
- Effective engagement of NGOs, including people with direct experience of poverty is crucial to effective monitoring. All Monitoring Committees should actively include these organisations, and review their methodologies and processes based on quality guidelines, drawn from the code of conduct on partnership.
- More efforts should be made to support smaller innovative grassroots projects developed in partnership with NGOs, through effective use of Technical Assistance, and priorities to partnership and global grants.
- Managing Authorities should be encouraged to develop an additional set of indicators on the expected contribution of the ESF funds to the anti-poverty target of the Europe 2020 strategy. This information needs to be included in the annual implementation reports in addition to the information required by the regulations.
- Draft annual implementation reports to be discussed in the Monitoring Committees with stakeholders and published online and should be made available for comments. The comments should be sent to the Managing Authority and to the European Commission with the reports.

## **AT LOCAL LEVEL**

- Criteria for the selection of operations and project evaluation methodology relevant to social inclusion projects have to be developed with the participation of social NGOs and representatives of the so-called “target groups” (final beneficiaries) – these organisations and people living in poverty and social exclusion know better what kind of projects will help them become better-off.
- NGO representatives (and people living in poverty and social exclusion themselves) need to take part in the evaluation committees (for calls for proposals relevant to social inclusion priorities) as well as in the other tasks of Monitoring Committees, at all phases of the planning, monitoring and implementation process.
- Technical assistance should be used in order to support the participation of social NGOs in the decision-making and implementation processes i.e. development of innovative projects.
- Global grants and arrangements for up-front financing are crucial to enable small organisations to deliver on their potential.



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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.**



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