

## EAPN's Key Messages

### Annual Convention for Inclusive Growth 2016

BRUSSELS, 21 MARCH 2016

**Put poverty back on the agenda – and make sure the EU delivers!**  
***Acknowledge rising poverty and inequalities, refocus Europe 2020 and the Semester on the targets, ensure that the Social Pillar is fit for purpose, and support participation and meaningful engagement of stakeholders!***

The Annual Convention should continue to review **progress on the Europe 2020 poverty target together with stakeholders, including people experiencing poverty**. The 26 million shortfall towards the poverty reduction target of Europe 2020, and the high rates of poverty and social exclusion experienced by one in five European citizens, are reasons of great concern, putting at risk the social cohesion of the EU, as well as a sustainable recovery and the credibility of the European Union.

Important processes already in place, such as the **Europe 2020 Strategy and the associated European Semester, are now more relevant than ever**. It is crucial that they are not forgotten but, rather, strengthened and reinvigorated, in order to make the best of the remaining 4 years of the Strategy and ensure meaningful delivery on the objectives. The new initiative on a **European Pillar of Social Rights needs to demonstrate firm commitment on ensuring a Europe free of poverty** and exclusion, by combatting inequalities and providing a rights-based approach, as part of an **integrated anti-poverty strategy**, based on quality jobs, services, and social protection, and the promotion of EU social standards.

Above all – **people must be put at the heart of the Strategy**. Participation and empowerment are not about 'making people in poverty responsible for getting themselves out of poverty' which they did not create. It means giving people a voice and developing a governance system based on regular, respectful stakeholder dialogue at national and EU level, that takes on board their concerns and solutions.

#### FOUR KEY MESSAGES

- 1. Poverty, social exclusion, and inequalities are still the key challenge for the EU**
- 2. Don't discard commitments made – deliver on Europe 2020's poverty reduction target**
- 3. A fresh start with the European Pillar of Social Rights – but is it fit for purpose?**
- 4. Participation of people experiencing poverty and their civil society organisations is key!**

## Poverty, social exclusion and inequalities are still the key challenge for the EU

122.3 million people in the European Union are at risk of poverty and social exclusion, due to the current 'austerity' approach and imbalanced recovery. The migration crisis compounds the ongoing series of crises the EU has been experiencing. Instead of creating competition between the poor and the desperate, now is the time to address inequalities, to counteract tax avoidance and tax fraud, so that the wealth is available to invest in quality public services and social protection systems, and ensure that the needs of all are met. We must fight poverty and not to fight the 'poor'. We call on decision makers to take responsibility for policy choices, rather than blaming the economic crisis. To reverse this trend:

- **Macroeconomic policies need to be put on a par with social objectives, and at the service of social inclusion and cohesion.**
- **Social policy must be seen as an investment not a cost, and as a pre-requisite for high quality growth and social inclusion.**

## Don't discard commitments made – deliver on Europe 2020's poverty reduction target

Europe 2020 goals and targets must be restored to the heart of the European Semester, with specific sections in the NRP linked to delivery on the Europe 2020 poverty and other social targets, CSRs on poverty for all countries, and a renewed commitment to spending 20% of ESF on poverty reduction.

- **Restore faith in Europe 2020 and the European Semester processes by taking the targets seriously and pushing for their implementation in the remaining 4 years till 2020. The improved presence of social concerns in the Country Reports must be translated into real commitments and actions to address poverty, exclusion and inequalities.**
- **Develop integrated anti-poverty strategies, to tackle the multidimensionality of poverty for all groups, based on personalized, integrated Active Inclusion (inclusive labour markets, adequate income support, access to quality services), linked to thematic strategies for at-risk groups.**

## A fresh start with the European Pillar of Social Rights – but is it fit for purpose?

The Outline of the Social Pillar is a comprehensive proposal over 20 policy fields, rooted in a rights-based approach. However, EAPN is concerned that the proposal to review all social legislation (social acquis) could reduce rather than strengthen social rights in Europe. No progress will be achieved unless the EU policy frame is made social as well as economic, and more pro-active measures are needed if the initiative is to deliver. EAPN welcomes the proposal and will seek to participate actively at national and EU levels in the proposed consultation.

- **Translate the Social Pillar into an integrated EU rights-based anti-poverty strategy, including progress on EU social standards, starting with a Minimum Income Directive.**
- **Ensure that this is not undermined by a continued policy of austerity, cuts, and imbalanced recovery and that political and financial backing are available to implement this initiative.**

## Participation of people experiencing poverty and their civil society organisations is key!

Effective involvement of people experiencing poverty and their civil society organisations at all stages of policy-making, particularly in the framework of the European Semester process (design, delivery, and evaluation) is crucial and must demonstrate policy impact.

- **Launch a process to develop common guidelines and indicators to measure the effectiveness of stakeholder dialogue, monitored and reviewed annually through the European Semester.**
- **Support the organisation of annual European Meetings of People Experiencing Poverty, as a key moment to involve beneficiaries and obtain their direct feedback on policy processes, to ensure the legitimacy, ownership, credibility, and effectiveness of social policies.**

**See key related EAPN documents:** ⇒ [EAPN Response to the Annual Growth Survey & Joint Employment Report 2016 \(www.eapn.eu\)](http://www.eapn.eu)  
⇒ [EAPN Assessment of NRPs 2015: Can the Semester Deliver on Poverty and Participation? \(www.eapn.eu\)](http://www.eapn.eu)  
⇒ [Key Messages from the 14<sup>th</sup> European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty \(www.eapn.eu & www.voicesofpoverty-eu.net\)](http://www.eapn.eu)

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