

EAPN 2013 Assessment of Country-Specific Recommendations (CSRs) and proposals for Alternative CSRs (National and EO Members)

Making Progress on Poverty Reduction and Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement!

COMMON KEY MESSAGES:

- 1) Ensure coherence of CSRs balancing social/economic objectives
- 2) Require a comprehensive multi-annual national anti-poverty strategy
- 3) Set ambitious, effective poverty and social targets, with sub-targets for key groups
- 4) Reduce social and economic inequality
- 5) For working-age, prioritize integrated Active Inclusion Strategies
- 6) Ensure adequacy of minimum income that reflect real costs
- 7) Tackle unemployment especially those furthest from the labour market with multiple difficulties, through tailored approaches
- 8) Ensure key public services are accessible to all, defending universal services combined with targeted support
- 9) Give increased priority to national integrated strategies to tackle key thematic priorities and groups at worst risk of poverty
- 10) Embed meaningful dialogue with national stakeholders, including NGOs and people experiencing poverty at all stages of the NRP and actively build social capital

March 2013

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EAPN's full 2013 assessment consists of a pack of 3 documents:

1. EAPN 2013 Assessment of Country-Specific Recommendations (CSRs) and proposals for Alternative CSRs from National and EO Members
2. Detailed Country Fiches
3. 2013 country-specific recommendations to Member-State Governments made by EAPN National Networks and European Organisations

This printed version of the publication contains documents 1 and 3.

Find all these documents online here:

<http://www.eapn.eu/en/news-and-publications/publications/eapn-position-papers-and-reports/eapn-produces-an-assessment-of-country-specific-recommendations-and-proposes-its-own>

or here: <http://tinyurl.com/cjxhdbf>

INTRODUCTION

EAPN continues to engage as active partners in Europe 2020 and the European Semester, at national and EU level, in order to make progress on the poverty and other social targets and the goals of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. In 2012, EAPN members attempted to engage in the NRPs and NSRs at national level and produced alternative social CSRs¹ based on their assessment of the progress towards the poverty target in the measures of the National Reform Programmes² (2012). These proposals also formed part of broader proposals for alternative CSRs presented to Commissioner Rehn and Andor in the European Parliament on the 28th June 2012, in an initiative by the Greens/EFA party. Although we received positive feedback from this exercise, members were disappointed to see few of their Recommendations reflected in the final Commission proposals, and a continuing tendency for the CSRs to overwhelmingly reflect macro-economic and economic governance objectives, with a particular focus on austerity and fiscal consolidation, rather than a balanced set of social and economic CSRs reflecting the social Europe 2020 targets.

In 2013, EAPN's EU Inclusion Strategies group repeated and extended this exercise, aiming for a more timely input, to have the best chance to positively input into the Commission's proposals. The current document reflects member assessments of the Commission/Council's 2012 CSR proposals, and includes a review of the CSR implementation, finally proposing adoptions or new alternative Country Specific Recommendations. In this document we present the full country fiches developed by EAPN members and provide below a short summary of the main Common Key Messages. EAPN offers these proposals as part of a continuing attempt play our part as active partners in Europe 2020, highlighting the vital importance of involving National and EU Anti-poverty NGOs working directly with people experiencing poverty in the European Semester – both in developing, reviewing and implementing the NRPs and NSRs but also in the design and follow up of the CSRs.

The 2013 responses were prepared in the EAPN EU Inclusion Strategies group meeting in Brussels on the 1 and 2nd February, where the 2012 CSRs were analysed, together with their implementation, before preparing alternative EAPN proposals. Full 2013 Responses were received from 19 EAPN National Networks: (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden and the UK), with responses also from Norway and Macedonia, and 2 EAPN European Organisations members: Feantsa and Eurochild. In the proposals on alternative CSRs, listed at the end, proposals made in 2012 by other networks and members are also included, drawn from proposals made in July 2012. The final document has been edited and finalized by Sian Jones, EAPN Policy Coordinator with the policy team (Amana Ferro, Vincent Caron and Claire Champeix), with support from the Communication team: Nellie Epinat, Rebecca Lee and Leticia Gomez.

¹ EAPN (2012): EAPN Alternative Country-Specific Recommendations.

² EAPN (2012): An EU worth defending: EAPN assessment of the 2012 NRPs and NSRs.

ASSESSMENT OF COMMISSION/COUNCIL CSRs

12 out of 18 members highlighted at least some positive elements in the CSRs proposed for their countries (CY, DK, FI, FR, DE, IT, NL, PL, SK, ES, SE and UK). However 17 of the 18 highlighted more negative elements.

Positive CSRs highlighted included:

- Fight against tax evasion, reducing the risk of poverty for the elderly, implementing a national health system ensuring universal coverage (CY)
- Reducing school drop outs and increasing vocational training and apprenticeships (DK)
- Youth Guarantee, increasing skills programmes and raising the employment rate of older workers (FI)
- Better accompaniment of job-seekers, training for people out of the labour market and support to older workers (FR)
- Tax reductions for low wage-earners, Active Inclusion and more individualized support for the long-term unemployed, raising wages to productivity levels, reducing segregation in Education and increased full-time childcare (DE)
- Tackling youth unemployment, and education/training support, tackling segmentation in the labour market and need for national unemployment benefit coverage, support for women into the labour market including through support in child and elderly care, better wage-setting mechanisms (IT)
- Tackling youth unemployment, training and education, and tackling skills mismatch (LU)
- Increasing participation in the labour market, for older people, women, disabled, tackling tax disincentives (NL)
- Tackling in-work poverty, and youth unemployment, childcare, increasing participation of women in the labour market and tackling segmentation, enforcing tax compliance (PL)
- Access to quality school and pre-school education, and 2nd Chance education (SK)
- Increasing access to the labour market for youth and vulnerable groups, tackling transitions (SE)
- Welfare reform should not impact negatively on child poverty and increase access to childcare (UK)

However, most members highlight that the dominance of the first CSRs in terms of balancing budgets and fiscal consolidation to reduce public deficits, undermined the individual positive measures. In some cases, the diagnosis of the problems was seen as accurate, but inadequate solutions proposed, likely to generate more poverty (UK). A general concern was the failure to require an overarching multidimensional strategy to fight poverty, rather than one-off measures focused on jobs at any price, without guarantees of access to quality jobs for those furthest from the labour market. The ambiguity of the CSRs' language was also a concern, with the full meaning only made clear after consultation of the Staff Working Documents: 'reform of wage indexation' (CY) implying reduction or removal; 'adapting benefit systems and improving the efficiency of public spending' (SK), implying benefit cuts; or 'improve the functioning of the labour market' (SE), meaning flexibilisation wage reductions and deregulation of employment protection and contracts leading to lower quality employment.

There was a strong commonality to the negative CSRs highlighted by members – for example:

- Reducing high taxes and social burden on labour causing concern about undermining efficient financing of social protection systems (BE,ES)
- Rationalisation (cuts) and restrictions to eligibility to minimum income and other benefit and pension levels (FR, ES, PL, UK)
- Preventing reductions in VAT for example on social housing (FR), abolition of mortgage support (NL), reduction of rent regulation (SE)
- Increasing retirement ages, without consideration of where jobs would come from, or how older people's adequate income would be maintained (CY, PL, ES), downward adjustment of pension pillars (SK)
- De-regulation of labour market, flexibilisation (ES), reducing wage bargaining and indexing (BE, LU,) and wage moderation or cuts (ES, SE)
- De-regulation and liberalisation of key public services, with no concern for the impact on cost, accessibility or quality particularly for people on low incomes (CY, DK, IT, SE).

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COUNCIL'S CSRs

Most of the Members' responses highlighted evidence to show that the CSRs had been implemented in their countries, at least partially. (BE, CY, DE, DK, FI, IT, PL, SK, ES, SE, UK). In some cases, the implementation was still in the planning stage (LU). However, the degree of implementation seems to be strongest in the countries which were most under the surveillance for their public deficits. (CY, ES, SK). For most members, however, the issue of implementation was conflictive, dependent on how far the CSRs were seen as positive, contributing to reduction of poverty and exclusion, or negative and contributing to its increase, as for example the CSRs focused on reducing public deficits through austerity measures, flexibilisation and deregulation of the labour market. In some cases, although some of the issues highlighted were positive the solutions were seen as negative for poverty reduction (UK, SE).

Where members highlighted the CSR's as positive there was mixed assessment of their implementation. In several countries, the CSRs related to youth unemployment, youth guarantee, and some measures on skills and towards supporting long-term unemployed, some progress appeared to be made (FI, FR, LU, SK,).Progress was also made in commitment to increases in access to childcare places (for example in DE and PL), although insufficient to answer the need or to tackle issue of affordability. Several countries noted progress on measures to tackle tax evasion and compliance (BE, CY), or as in the case of Cyprus tackling inequalities in pensions and establishing a National Health Care system. However, more worryingly in the few cases where explicit CSRs were made in relation to poverty, little or no implementation is noted i.e. on in-work poverty in Poland, and on Child Poverty in the UK. This underlines the impression of the dominance of the macroeconomic CSRs and the weaker impact of the more Social CSRs.

ALTERNATIVE CSRs: COMMON MESSAGES

Although all National Networks develop their own CSR proposals, there are common themes which arise. In this section we highlight the main common key messages:

- 1) **Ensure coherence of CSRs balancing social/economic objectives**, with systematic proofing of austerity measures to prevent macroeconomic CSRs driving an increase in poverty and exclusion, and generating long-term social, health and economic costs.
- 2) **Require a comprehensive multi-annual national anti-poverty strategy** to demonstrate how progress will be made on the poverty target which ensures access to rights, resources + services, developed with stakeholders.
- 3) **Set ambitious, effective poverty and social targets, with sub-targets for key groups**, improve data collection, monitoring, and extensive mutual learning on results.
- 4) **Reduce social and economic inequality**, through reducing income gaps, and supporting progressive taxation, reinforced redistribution mechanisms including universal services.
- 5) **For working-age, prioritize integrated Active Inclusion Strategies** adapted to the needs of specific groups and through personalized accompaniment, avoid punitive activation.
- 6) **Ensure adequacy of minimum income that reflect real costs**, support better take up and extend coverage to all in need, particularly increasing number who have no income.
- 7) **Tackle unemployment especially those furthest from the labour market with multiple difficulties, through tailored approaches**, support active investment in quality job creation and tackle in-work poverty, especially through increasing minimum wages. Recognise/support key role of NGOs/Social economy in this area.
- 8) **Ensure key public services are accessible to all, defending universal services combined with targeted support**. Key priorities are access to affordable health, education, social housing, but also energy, transport.
- 9) **Give increased priority to national integrated strategies to tackle key thematic priorities and groups at worst risk of poverty**: Child/ family poverty, single parents, long-term unemployed, people with disabilities, homeless people and those suffering housing exclusion, minorities including Roma, migrants including undocumented.
- 10) **Embed meaningful dialogue with national stakeholders, including NGOs and people experiencing poverty at all stages of the NRP and actively build social capital** by supporting NGOs/third sector as key partners in implementation, particularly in delivering innovative, local, grass-root services responding to people's needs.

EAPN NATIONAL NETWORKS AND EUROPEAN ORGANISATIONS MAKE THE FOLLOWING 2013 COUNTRY-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS TO MEMBER-STATE GOVERNMENTS

Member State	Country-Specific Recommendations (National Networks)
Austria	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Raise the amount of means-tested minimum income, to introduce an independent minimum income for children and to include costs for housing. 2. More labour-market measures and employment opportunities for people most excluded from the labour market, especially for people able to work only part-time. 3. A reform of the educational system, which is highly segregating (full time school, common school for children from 10 - 14 etc.)³
Belgium	<p>The recommendations we gave last year, are still very relevant, so we repeat and complete our proposals.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Activation measures without quality job creation are not a way out of poverty, but risk to be a way into poverty. Invest in quality jobs (sustainable, well-paid and accessible) and support excluded people into these jobs. <i>+ 2013: Households with low work intensity are suffering extreme poverty in Belgium. A job is not a realistic short term perspective for many of these households. Strengthening the income and support to these households should be a top priority for this government. All benefits should be increased above the real poverty line (calculated with the method of budget standards).</i> 2. Austerity Measures are not re-launching the economy. A better option is to invest in minimum income systems, secure social protection systems and services and embed a more equal tax system to provide the necessary finances for realizing this. 3. Develop clear concrete targets and sub-targets, with related indicators. <i>Evidence shows (latest EU SILC and others) that Belgium is clearly not progressing on the targets, so we need a renewed engagement, a confirmation that Belgium is still aiming at fighting poverty (decrease with at least 380.000 persons) & we need (yearly) intermediary targets. The goal should be the complete eradication of poverty.</i>
Bulgaria	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be serious in addressing wellbeing and poverty reduction as basic aims. Ask why Bulgaria (the poorest EU member state) is the country with the highest income inequalities in EU together with Latvia; Reconsider the results of imposing regressive 19th century taxation; Define a real poverty line based on price levels; 2. Make a common and public template for CSRs for all the EU countries - a general model, a standard - and follow it everywhere; Make transparent who

³ Recommendations in shaded boxes represent the Recommendations made by EAPN national networks in 2012 and where no new proposals were received.

	<p>is preparing the CSR and in what relations are the authors with the national governments. Define responsibilities for example if CSR proposals are implemented and no real positive effects are reached.</p> <p>3. Establish a process to make possible the impact on country specific recommendations by different stakeholders (EAPN National networks included) in the process of their preparation.</p>
Czech Republic	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Put in practice as soon as possible inclusive and high quality education for socially vulnerable people and Roma as a political priority; increase number of Roma educated in secondary-schools, with main responsibility placed on educational institutions. 2. Implement inclusive social housing practice with integrated social services (not ghettos) in private and public housing with possibility of accessing indebtedness- reduction plans. 3. Start up a major positive active inclusion labour market policy, with direct responsibility of the employment office to employ rather than indirect responsibility based on private sub-contractors.
Cyprus	<p>In addition to the recommendations we made last year, we need to clearly ask for the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintain the social face of the state making sure that the impact of the crisis on the people is counterbalanced. 2. Thoroughly examine every new measure's impact on people to ensure that it does not contribute to raising poverty and exclusion. 3. <i>Embed meaningful participation of stakeholders in the design and full implementation of the NRP.</i> 4. <i>Invest in creating decent, quality jobs to fight unemployment.</i> 5. <i>Ensure adequate minimum income for all, as a means to preventing and fighting poverty.</i> 6. <i>Use Structural Funds better to finance projects that fight poverty for all vulnerable categories. Ensure that funding is also available to (targeted at) projects at the grass-root level, involving NGOs. Fighting discrimination and inequalities must also be ensured.⁴</i>
Denmark	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is an obvious need for many more proper jobs for long term unemployed with complex difficulties. 2. How to involve NGOs more in rehabilitation and job creation for those far from the labour market should be considered. 3. Economic and social inequality is growing in DK, even if nobody wants it. The social welfare system needs to be reformed and adapted to the new realities.
Estonia	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focus more on quality jobs and not so much on employment at any price.

⁴ Recommendations in italics refer to 2012 EAPN Recommendations adapted following assessment in 2013.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Prioritize more reducing poverty and social exclusion and consider achieving targets through better access to services and raising subsistence level and benefits. 3. Poverty target should ensure that a minimum standard of services are guaranteed at state level and are accessible to everybody. Especially for children.
Finland	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reduce health inequalities which have sharply increased. The <i>excess share of expenses of medicines and travel have increased at the beginning of 2013</i>. This further undermines the possibility of access for low-income people to health care. Investment in prevention of health (and social) problems reduces health inequalities. 2. Alleviate the situation and enhance the purchasing power of low income families with children, which were badly hit by the increase of consumption tax and freezing of the indexation of the child allowance at the beginning of 2013. Safeguard the universal social services and benefits, which reduce poverty in families with children. 3. Improve the employment of disabled people which has received only little attention. Raising the employment rate of disabled people also has an impact on lengthening working careers.
France	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Set in place a multi-annual (5 years) and multi-dimensional plan to fight poverty (employment, housing, health, reinforcing access to care, adequate income for a life in dignity, education for all, access to culture, citizenship). This plan would be drafted with the participation of people experiencing poverty. It would contain clear targets, quantifiable objectives (number of measures taken, results, gap between set objectives and what was achieved, and explanations for this gap). <i>This programme would be accompanied by clearly earmarked funding in the national budget, with funding for each year and each theme.</i> 2. Raise social benefits to the level of half of the net minimum wage. 3. Build 150.000 social dwellings per year, for a period of five years, supported by adequate funding for this objective.
Germany	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The promotion of employment must be accompanied with existence-securing wages and obligation to contribute to social insurance. 2. In poverty measurement transparent procedures must be found that for instance take participation and periods spent in the job market into the view. Beyond that, further factors (the at-risk-of-poverty rate, material deprivation etc.) must be considered than only the number of long-term unemployed people. 3. To promote the social integration of disadvantaged target groups, appropriate financial means must be made available. Amongst other things this could be realized by the 20 per cent appropriation of payments of development funds from the ESF. <p>(same as in 2012)</p>
Greece	Greece is not submitting a real NRP, thus the following proposals are directed more to the E.C and relate to the whole policy development pact as result of the EC/ECB/IMF country debt reduction imposed policy measures.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create crisis intervention new safety nets for the significant increase impoverished population, resulting from austerity policies. 2. Introduce a meaningful minimum income scheme to prevent further impoverishment. 3. Create new activation measures for the increased population of unemployed with emphasis on the young unemployed (50%), the working poor and long-term unemployed with emphasis on women. 4. Introduce poverty and inequality impact assessment of all policy measures implemented as part of the 'bail out' plans and financial and structural adjustment plans of EC/ECB and IMF. 5. Disentangle policy measures to tackle extreme rise of poverty and inequality from a 'bottleneck' conception of growth and competitiveness and introduce new social spending through direct income reinforcement schemes (via social transfers, i.e. housing, disability benefits etc.). Thus enhance household consumption power and spending to create a positive short term impact to the real economy. 6. Support special activation measures for unemployed target groups who are far from the labour market and facing multiple risks. 7. Restore low wages and pensions to their pre- Troika measures level. 8. Generally enhance social transfers as a measure to real economy growth. Demystify competitiveness enhancement austerity related measures, as they have been clearly proven to function as crisis deepening factors. Develop a new "EU Development Deal" with EU money reaching the needy EU citizens and not the EU banks. <p>Engage all stakeholders and specifically the civil society organisations.</p>
Hungary	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction of guaranteed minimum income which ensures a dignified life to everyone. 2. Sustainable employment programmes that build on local communities, local needs and capacity, builds skills of people and provide decent wage for them. 3. Treat fight against child poverty as a priority – put children’s rights and interests first!
Ireland	<p>(Changes from 2012 are in italics)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure active and meaningful consultation with all stakeholders in the development and implementation of the NRP. <i>This must be resourced.</i> 2. Implement poverty and inequality impact assessment in a transparent and constructive manner across all areas of policy, including the annual Budget, to prevent the negative impact of policy on the most vulnerable and those experiencing inequality. <i>This should be done in conjunction with stakeholders.</i> 3. Implement policies to address the growing levels of inequality, <i>including measures aimed at the greater redistribution of wealth through progressive taxation.</i> 4. Implement an integrated active inclusion approach to policy development. Specifically: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Reforms to the welfare system and activation services should ensure that people have access to a decent income and to services and supports to meet their needs. <i>These services and supports need to take account of the very different starting points for specific groups particularly those furthest from the labour market and those with low educational qualifications and literacy difficulties. All activation policies and programmes should be accessible to people with disabilities and should also incorporate the impact of the first large-</i>

	<p><i>scale activation of women, many of who are mothers. Activation of mothers, and in particular lone parents, should only proceed if services, such as quality, affordable childcare, are put in place.</i></p> <p>II. The focus on growth and job creation should prioritise quality jobs and ensure that everyone benefits. Within this it is important to adopt an approach to tackle the problem of in-work poverty and the existence of poverty traps.</p> <p>5. Cease the cuts in services to the most vulnerable. This includes services that are provided by community organisations, many of which involve a large voluntary input.</p> <p>6. Social inclusion should be a cross-cutting goal for the Structural Funds Programmes for Ireland for the 2014-2020 period and NGO's, including anti-poverty organisations, must be key partners in the design and delivery of programmes.</p>
Italy	<p>1.</p> <p>a. Give the possibility to stakeholders to contribute effectively to the elaboration of the National Reform Programme and involve them in the implementation of anti-poverty policies and measures;</p> <p>b. Promote an active, meaningful, effective and structured dialogue with the NGOs and other stakeholders engaged in the fight against poverty and social exclusion;</p> <p>c. Assure that this contribution is reflected in the contents of the NRP and the NSR.</p> <p>(this alternative recommendation is similar to and completes the first one from 2012)</p> <p>2.</p> <p>a. Change the vision about social inclusion policies by moving from “non-assistance” to the promotion of Active Inclusion measures, in particular for young people.</p> <p>a. Improvement, reclassification and efficacy of expenditure in social protection and decrease additional costs that are 1, 74% compared to a EU-7 average of 0.83 (additional costs incurred to implement policies such as accompanying measures).</p> <p>b. In order to fight poverty and social exclusion and for activating Active Inclusion Measures that may lift people out of poverty, it is crucial that Italy puts in place a national scheme for Adequate Minimum Income that is still lacking in the country and that access to services is delivered in full.</p> <p>c. To obtain this result it is important that the government shifts its priorities in public spending raising the amount of money spent for “unemployment; housing and support to fight against exclusion” improving its social spending so as to match the social spending of the major EU Member States.</p> <p>d. For the efficacy of the fight against poverty it is necessary to have a multi-dimensional and multiannual strategy and integrated policies with real involvement of people living in poverty and of NGOs engaged. In short, we need an anti-poverty strategy, which we never had.</p> <p>(this alternative recommendation is similar and complete the second from 2012)</p>

	<p>3. Put in place an employment strategy focusing on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. developing high quality work through major investments in research, development and innovation and by raising the rate of graduates in science; b. local development through investments in new sectors and the recovery of traditional activities and crafts which have been abandoned by young people but may offer new employment opportunities; c. reducing administrative costs and taxes on labour, both for employers and workers, which in Italy are among the highest in Europe; d. increasing net wages which are very low and therefore increase the number of working poor. <p>(this alternative recommendation is similar to and completes the third one from 2012)</p>
Latvia	Still building network in Latvia.
Lithuania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Invest in Social Capital, confidence in NGOs, partnership for innovation. 2. Promote clustering for new jobs and social innovation. 3. Establish a simulation institution in Universities.
Luxembourg	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make out of the NRP an integrated strategic programme, better coordinated with the NSR and involving all stakeholders in the drafting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. 2. Combine the employment, research, climate/energy and education targets-related measures with the ones for reducing poverty and also evaluate for each measure its contribution to the poverty/social exclusion target and make sure that the sum of the effects of all the measures reaches the target. 3. Take strong action in the field of social housing, regarding both the provision of housing at affordable prices in general, as well as the provision of special social housing. At least as an intermediary measure introduce rent subsidies for those parts of the population that cannot afford the high lodging prices; such a measure should be accompanied by a strong control of rent prices in order to avoid that the amounts spent on the measure will not end up in the pockets of the tenants.
Malta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Take more seriously the issue of school drop outs. Education is key to opportunities for employment. The government should also see that employers do not abuse their workers by offering them precarious jobs. The right of the workers should be safeguarded at all times. 2. It is strongly recommended to raise the minimum wage and introduce an adequate minimum income for all in order to strengthen the purchasing power of families which is of utmost importance. The purchasing power is being weakened with the higher cost of living and utility bills including gas. This measure will alleviate people from poverty and social exclusion. 3. The Pension Reform should ensure that it will address the most vulnerable groups of society i.e. the elderly and persons with disabilities and more services should be made available to these groups.

<p>Netherlands</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure social rights for the self-employed to prevent the creation of a large group of people in poverty in the future: Self-employed people often work long hours at a low rate and have insufficient income to pay insurance against occupational disease and a pension premium. 2. Don't blame the pensioners. Raising the pension age to 67 for people who have worked for more than 40 years, often in hard, physical jobs is unfair and counter-productive, rather than giving their jobs to the new generation. 3. Ensure the affordability of basic services: health care, dentist, daily healthy meals, rent, gas, water, electricity. 4. Guard against growing inequalities with decentralization to municipalities creating a poverty trap. Ensure national policy and national adequate minimum income and wage and allowances that cover the costs of health care, education, etc. With regard to the cap to income support to 110%, (regardless of real costs ie of housing, children etc), support a gradual tapering off system with minimal policies applied to the target groups over the 110%, ie gradual reductions (110-120% = 75%; 130-150% = 50%; 150-170 =25%). This will reduce poverty and support incentives to work. Calculate charges and income for the net income plus rent and care supplements minus paying rent/mortgage and health insurance premium.
<p>Poland</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a comprehensive strategy to fight poverty and social exclusion that is evidence-based and rights-based: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A comprehensive strategy means an integrated approach embracing cash, tax and services for the benefit of the people experiencing poverty and at risk of it. - Cash means increasing guaranteed minimum income to 100% of the poverty gap. - Tax means substantially raising an amount of income free of income tax. - Services means ensuring more of them in quantity and quality, and guaranteeing access. This means substantially increasing employment in social services. - Evidence-based means a strategy based on quantitative and qualitative assessments that draws regularly on gathered experiences and views of those who live in poverty or at risk of it. - Rights-based means that it is a priority before public finances concerns, and all instruments of international and national law are ratified, respected and enforced (e.g. In Poland the Revised European Social Charter is signed but still not ratified). 2. Secure and adequate housing is an important base for human wellbeing and economic security. Prevention of housing insecurity, rent arrears, evictions and homelessness is crucial for an effective anti-poverty strategy and it should be prioritized in public policy. Ensure that experiences and views of people with housing problems are adequately gathered and applied in policy making, policy monitoring and evaluation. 3. Take adequate actions to decrease in-work poverty. Do not force the unemployed to take any jobs which leave them in poverty after removing social benefits. The main measures should be increasing the minimum wage, lowering taxes and contributions on low wages, without losing or decreasing benefits in the future. Another measure is allowing people on low incomes to combine income from work with cash benefits, especially those connected with social assistance, family, housing, and disability. Experiences and views of

	<p>people who are working and poor should be recognized as the main information base for reforms.</p>
Portugal	<p>We reinforce the need for Portugal to present a NRP that could follow the implementation of the poverty target and adjacent commitments and allow the participation of civil society.</p> <p>In this context, our 3 key proposals for Alternative Country-Specific Recommendations for Portugal in 2013 are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The need for a National Anti-Poverty Programme, including a specific strategy against child poverty – we need to go beyond emergency programmes; 2. The need to fight unemployment (including the LTU) and promotion of growth, based on quality jobs, with fair pay, adequate training policies and incentives for the inclusion of young and older workers; 3. More tax justice and better policies targeted at fighting inequality.
Romania	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A careful and real involvement of Romanian Government in increasing the Structural Funds’ absorption (this can have a positive effect on national budget, infrastructure, social inclusion, etc.) 2. A special attention to long-term national strategies to fight poverty and social exclusion and orientation to durable effects and results. A better control on human resource investments and analysis of possible effects. 3. All measures should start from the local context and local conditions, in consultation with local people and civil society, and not from a general idea.
Slovakia	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Revise the institute of subsistence minimum on the basis of living standards research and set the minimum pension for person with sufficient work record as (at least 1.2) at the subsistence minimum; adapt the benefit system with consideration to the Active Inclusion Recommendation (to guarantee modest but decent life to those living on minimum income). 2. Involve NGOs and people experiencing poverty in the design and evaluation of active employment services on central and local levels. 3. Make clearer commitments (with quantitative controllable indicators) in regard to improvement in access and quality of pre-school education of vulnerable groups, including Roma.
Slovenia	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Involve also the NGO and financial sector in the settlement of the crises; financial sector as main culprits for global crises are not actively involved in solving the crisis while all the burden for that is mainly transferred to individuals – involvement must be present as cooperation in establishing new, quality jobs and as an aid for those who are the most affected by the crises ; in that matter we are missing a governmental long-term strategy about how financial sector will reimburse state money which was used for its saving (e.g. state used a significant amounts of public money for banks stability, banks still need an additional injection of capital for stability). All segments of society must be included in resolving the crisis. 2. Raise the minimum wage at least to the poverty line and with combination with first recommendation start to invest into quality, and stimulate decent jobs creation policy. Present NRP employment strategy is focused just on any job creation policy – jobs which pay under the poverty-line wages are not the way out of poverty for individuals and therefore are not so attractive to them. Quality jobs with stimulating environment, decent payment and high added

	<p>value are a more effective way to get individuals and families out of poverty and how to be more concurrent on world, global market. Such policy could also help to re-launch higher spending and thus help the economy and state sector to get more income (e.g. more tax, contributions, etc.)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Change the indicators for poverty and social exclusion measurement (or new social legislation); new social legislation already starts to show the negative consequences of these – in combination with chosen indicators (for measuring poverty and social exclusion) the percentage of poverty and social excluded people does not reflect the reality (it is already not realistic!) ; in general this percentage is lower than in reality because in the statistics an important number of people who rejected social transfers although they were eligible are not counted. 4. Do not focus and rely just on saving and cuts. Investment into better conditions and opportunities could be more stimulating and expected from people and in the end could produce better results, especially in the medium and longer term.
Spain	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The social chapter and the poverty targets of EU2020 should be reintroduced with full political strength and consequent funding. It should also be included as addenda for 2012. It is a guideline indicated by the EC Annual Growth Survey (priority 4). 2. The effort of the way-out of the crisis should be redistributed more equally, with a bigger effort on the part of the wealthy and the big companies (including the banks that took us into this chaotic situation). The austerity cuts should not touch the red lines of the welfare system, although reforms to improve their efficiency and efficacy are welcome. Vulnerable people, families and children, cannot be neglected any longer. It is urgent to deliver a major strategic plan, with the participation of all stakeholders, to address the more than 2 million jobless households and those living under the poverty threshold. 3. New Recommendation for 2013: To prioritize and to apply urgent measures to tackle unemployment which now surpasses 27% of the active population, and youth unemployment, reaching 56%. In particular, to tackle the unemployment of the vulnerable groups, combined with effective flanking services which also support the family, in order to improve the situation of people at poverty and social exclusion.
Sweden	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Address growing inequality (economic/income as well as in health, in education etc.). It is a process that is threatening social cohesion and increasing social costs. 2. An active job creation strategy is needed, which should not only focus on the labour supply side. 3. A more active housing policy – which in itself can create new jobs, and reduce household debts due to non-affordable housing, and reduce social costs for segregation etc. There should be no more privatization of public housing and more possibilities to rent housing and not be forced to buy.
UK	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The programme of welfare reform must be halted. Specifically we call for measures to reduce the uprating of benefits below prices to be abandoned; for a National (English) scheme to be introduced to replace Council Tax Benefit; for

	<p>the introduction of Universal Credit to be further delayed until the labour market improves and for the increased sanctions associated with the benefit to be scrapped.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The UK must retain the child poverty reduction target and the four measures of child poverty in the Child Poverty Act of 2010. The UK government should re-establish stakeholder dialogue with NGOs on the development of its anti-poverty policies. This should sit alongside the Commission on Social Mobility and Child Poverty, and would enable engagement on the development of strategy overall. Such mechanisms must also involve people with direct experience of poverty.
Candidate and Accession	
Macedonia	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> To increase prioritization and increase coverage for socially vulnerable groups with effective active labour measures and employment programmes. To increase the minimum income scheme that will guarantee income sufficient to live with dignity. To increase access to high quality social services for vulnerable groups by governmental support of CSOs and through the introduction of minimum standards for delivering social services for different vulnerable groups for government as well as CSO sector.
Serbia	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> New government should adopt a development strategy that will be strongly profiled towards inclusive development and that will serve as base for short-term and mid-term reform programmes. New government should adopt social inclusion and poverty reduction strategy, or at least anti-poverty platform, where it will declare clear objectives and means aiming at achieving better social inclusion and social protection of all groups under various social risks. Determination towards socially sustainable development and social inclusion should be clearly recognized in the new budget plan.
EFTA	
Norway	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> There are no good policies which include active inclusion on poverty. Those outside, remain outside. CSRs are not relevant for the policies in Norway.
European organisations	
AGE	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Address more effectively in the NRPs the social OMC objectives on pension adequacy, access to health and long-term care and social inclusion of the most vulnerable older people i.e. mainstream social protection and social inclusion measures as proposed under NSRs into the NRPs in order to improve eventually quality of life and dignity in old age. Disaggregate the headline poverty reduction target and its three components by age and gender in order to address the specificity of poverty risk among older population in general and, in particular, among its specific sub-groups such as older women, single older persons, older people in rural areas, ethnic minorities older migrants etc.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Analyse and tackle the material deprivation and living conditions of older people in conjunction with national economic, social or cultural contexts in order to address also other poverty factors such as isolation, the consequences of solitude i.e. in terms of suffering or multiple discrimination. 4. When implementing the Europe 2020 strategy to restore an inclusive and durable, Member States and Commission are urged to ensure a balanced macro-economic and social policy response i.e. reflected equally in National Reform Programs and National Social Reports.
FEANTSA	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support the European Parliament's call for the “development of an ambitious, integrated EU strategy, underpinned by national and regional strategies with the long-term aim of ending homelessness” by building on the measures highlighted in the National Reform Programmes (twelve countries made explicit reference to homelessness in their 2012 NRPs), through tools such as peer reviews, research, social policy experimentation, transnational exchange projects, and general policy coordination between ministries responsible with homelessness and housing exclusion (meeting under the Irish presidency of the EU on 1 March 2013). 2. Further develop national actions on homelessness based on evidence-based strategies; set targets on homelessness to make visible and measurable progress in reducing poverty; promote access to mainstream services (health, housing, employment) for all, especially vulnerable groups. Country-specific recommendations from the European Commission could encourage countries without measures to tackle homelessness to actually develop a homelessness strategy/policy/programme (as is already the case in half of the EU Member States). 3. Ensure that adequate financial investment is made in social and health services now in order to avoid spiralling costs of homelessness for society in the future. Social services are a fundamental pillar of any strategy promoting active inclusion of people furthest from the labour market, including homeless people who often represent a high proportion of the people behind long-term unemployment figures. Social services are also an important sector for job promotion and economic growth (as highlighted in the European Commission's 2012 employment package). Countries which are slashing budgets in social and health services should be invited to reconsider these decisions and have better targeted social investments. 4. Take wider measures to prevent homelessness such as increasing social housing stock, promoting access to housing solutions for vulnerable groups, prevent over-indebtedness, and prevent evictions or repossessions (in line with requests from the European Parliament calling for a study http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/budg/dv/2013_com_first_interim_report_/2013_com_first_interim_report_en.pdf (p.13) on the right to housing). Countries with very strict eviction laws (which go against fundamental human rights) should amend these laws according to the social and economic rights laid down in EU and international covenants.
Eurochild	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recognise that child poverty and social exclusion is a key barrier to achieving Europe 2020 objectives and targets. Every Member State should set a specific

	<p>child poverty target in its NRP and NSR as part of its agreed national target contributing to the EU target to reduce poverty and social exclusion.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Though child poverty and social exclusion features as a priority in some countries' NRPs in 2012, too often measures were piecemeal and a rights-based approaches were hardly visible. Member States, all of whom are signatories to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, should develop more comprehensive approaches to tackling child poverty and social exclusion and promoting child well-being as part of overall national strategies for poverty reduction and social inclusion. 3. Increase efforts to identify and protect the most vulnerable groups of children and their families from the worst effects of the economic & financial crisis and austerity measures. Member States should ensure that policy areas covered in the NRP and NSR are proofed (eg. through impact assessments) to express their potential impact on children so that their positive contribution to tackling child poverty and social exclusion can be maximized and the risk of having a negative impact can be minimised. 4. The long-term EU budget (2014-2020) makes even stronger links to the Europe 2020 process, therefore Member States should ensure that EU structural funds are used to support measures that promote the social inclusion and well-being of children, and prevent and tackle educational disadvantage. 5. Develop a set of standards or guidelines for the meaningful involvement of stakeholders, in particular civil society in the social dimensions of the Europe 2020 process and monitor their implementation by Member States. Children and young people must be recognised as actors in their own right and actively consulted on policies and practices to promote their social inclusion and well-being at local, regional and national level.
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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.



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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).

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