

From the Delors White Paper (1993) to the EU Pillar of Social Rights (2016), what future for the fight against poverty in Europe?

EAPN CONFERENCE

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to the EU Pillar of Social Rights (2016),
what future for the fight against poverty in Europe?

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How can we guarantee the shaping of a Pillar of Social Rights that adequately addresses the *social emergency* in Europe when it comes to *poverty and inequality*, and works hand in hand rather than subordinate to *economic policies*?

1. Social Emergency in Europe: Poverty & inequality?

“ I keep on living to take care of my dog”

“ I stay alive because of my cat”

*(Preparation PEP Meeting 2015, How
do you experience poverty today ?)*

1. Social Emergency in Europe: Poverty & inequality?



- 122.3 million people in the European Union are at risk of poverty and social exclusion ↔ 342 billionaires (Oxfam 2015)
- Despite promises, “strategies” “goals” “pacts” “packages”... most people in poverty experience very little progress
- General feeling of insecurity and fear: the safety nets are getting weaker, people are (afraid of being) excluded
- We are losing people: literally (suicides), but also people who disappear from the radar (homeless, refugees, children !)
- Another “consequence” of the refugee crisis (?): more people who are suffering poverty and social exclusion are competing for reduced resources

1. Social Emergency in Europe: Poverty & inequality?



- Societies of extremes:
 - people in work suffering massive burn outs vs people who don't get access to the labourmarket
 - decreasing group of middle class people, extreme poverty versus extreme wealth (cfr report ILO EC)
 - xenophobia and racism, radical right political parties and movements
- Raising inequalities, not only income and wealth inequalities, but also in terms of rights
- awareness of injustice, massive protests, demonstrations, strikes ! “we don't take this anymore” “There is an alternative”

1. Social Emergency in Europe: Poverty & inequality?



- Social Pillar needs to acknowledge this urgency,
- Recognize tackling poverty, social exclusion and inequalities as the key challenge for the EU
- There is a social crisis, this demands an ambitious answer and firm, immediate action (cfr financial crisis),
- Time for “Europe” to be explicit: Europe for the 1 % or a Europe of and for the citizens ? Europe for the many or the few ?

2. A pillar adequately addressing this social emergency ? Content ?



Fight against poverty/social rights as
an instrument for economic growth ?

Vs.

Economic growth as an instrument
for social rights/fight against poverty ?

2. A pillar adequately addressing this social emergency ? Content ?

"We have reached a tipping point. Inequality can no longer be treated as an afterthought. We need to focus the debate on how the benefits of growth are distributed. Our report '[In it Together](#)' and our work on [inclusive growth](#) have clearly shown that there doesn't have to be a trade-off between growth and equality. On the contrary, the opening up of opportunity can spur stronger economic performance and improve living standards across the board!" OECD Secretary-General

2. A pillar adequately addressing this social emergency ? Content ?

- In the preliminary outline of the European Pillar of Social Rights , there is still a strong focus on growth, be it inclusive growth. We need a shift of focus towards social rights and social justice.
- This should be the goal of upward social convergence, convergence towards more equal, socially just healthy societies, instead of convergence towards “*more resilient economic structures*”

2. A pillar adequately addressing this social emergency ? Content ?

- The EPSR should offer a positive choice for more equal societies, not only tackling negative consequences of today's economical processes. (cfr Report Oxfam)
- During the last decades, welfare systems have been “modernized” and made more “sustainable”, in reality, we see they have been weakened. Progressive privatization and the reduction of social protection, (in terms of coverage, adequacy and accessibility) put social rights in danger. The European Pillar of Social Rights has to restore this.

2. A pillar adequately addressing this social emergency ? Content ?

- There already exist EU policies that are useful to address these challenges, but they should be put in practice. A good example is the Recommendation on Active Inclusion. The EPSR needs to guarantee the implementation through concrete measures:
 - The realization of **adequate accessible minimum income schemes for all: through a framework directive**
 - Access to quality universal services: reverse the trend of privatization and austerity. The EPSR should stimulate investments in these services – social services, including housing but also health, energy etc.
 - Inclusive labourmarkets: not only focus on the jobseeker (with personalized, pathway solutions as part of integrated approaches to support those who can work towards quality and sustainable employment), but also make the labourmarket itself more inclusive !
With accessible sustainable quality jobs and anti-discrimination legislation

2. A pillar adequately addressing this social emergency ? Content ?

- **Quality jobs** can be an important instrument in the fight against poverty, but are not enough to tackle the current social crisis. The preliminary outline of the EPSR lacks a **strong focus on inclusion of people that are out of work**, especially the most vulnerable groups (homeless people, migrants, Roma, people with disabilities, single parents...)
- Tax Justice → financing of social protection, and tax as an **instrument for redistribution** not for growth, which can reduce inequalities is important. More **fiscal justice and social investment as an alternative for austerity** (role for Europe ? cfr Panama Papers...)

3. Pillar of Social Rights: legal status, implementation, operationalization ?



In this context, minimum wage policies contribute to lifting the income position of those at the bottom of the wage scale and facilitate their households' progression towards the middle group categories.

*Mechanisms of wage fixing and wage bargaining were also found to play some role. While the removal of the wage indexation mechanism in Italy in the early 1990s was accompanied by an immediate increase in inequalities, the **survival of the indexation system in Belgium seems to have contributed to limiting inequalities and to stabilizing the middle class.** Extension mechanisms and coordinated collective bargaining in a number of countries also contributed to more coherence along the income scale and less inequalities between the two extremes.*

(Trends in the world of work: What effects on inequalities and middle-income groups, ILO and EC)

3. Pillar of Social Rights: legal status, implementation, operationalization ?



- ↔ CSR's and country report (Belgium)
- Link with other EU policies ? cfr Austerity measures creating poverty, some CSR's lack consistency and coherence with many pushing governments to reduce social rights (social protection systems),...at the same time as some CSRs press for better social provisions – eg adequate minimum income.
- We need hard law, strong targets (on different levels), a strong legal basis, hand in hand with national ownership eg a Framework Directive on Minimum Income.
- But also soft coordination systems eg Social OMC and European Semester that give priority to social rights, and ensure that economic policies deliver on social goals and targets.

3. Pillar of Social Rights: legal status, implementation, operationalization ?



- Social rights: **unconditional** and for all people in the EU ?
- Tackle today's dominance of economic policy
→ enforceable social rights ?
- **Effective** Social impact analysis – ex ante and ex post! Particularly on economic policies, and mechanisms to prevent negative trade offs – make it visible and make the decisions at political level.
- **Political and financial backing** are necessary to implement the EPSR
- .
- () Even for economic reasons, an ambitious EPSR with strong social rights strictu sensu is necessary, cfr cost of poverty and inequality, social stabilizers, consumption...
- The **credibility of the EU is at stake**. We cannot afford new strategies, promises, targets, declarations of rights... without putting them into practice, without achieving the goals. It's not an option any more.

4. How does this relate to the UN Sustainable Development Goals ?



We (the Heads of State and Government and High Representatives) resolve, **between now and 2030, to end poverty and hunger everywhere**; to combat inequalities within and among countries; to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies; to protect human rights and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; and to ensure the lasting protection of the planet and its natural resources. We resolve also to create conditions for sustainable, inclusive and sustained economic growth, shared prosperity and decent work for all, taking into account different levels of national development and capacities.

4. How does this relate to the UN Sustainable Development Goals ?



1.1

By 2030, **eradicate extreme poverty** for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day

1.2

By 2030, **reduce at least by half** the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions **according to national definitions**

1.3

Implement **nationally appropriate social protection systems** and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable

1.4

By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have **equal rights to economic resources**, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance

4. How does this relate to the UN Sustainable Development Goals ?



- How will the SDGs be **implemented, and linked to Europe 2020**, ensuring that it supports upward convergence? (cfr different indicators)
- Europe 2020 should not be replaced, but seen as a **step in a broader roadmap** of eradicating poverty
- Ambitious statements are dangerous if we don't make it happen!
- The central question is the **implementation and the political will**
- Enforceability, hard law and sanctions, juridical framework ?
- Responsibility on local – regional – national – European and global level ! Demands action on all levels. Coordinated action.

4. How does this relate to the UN Sustainable Development Goals ?



→EPSR should be considered as first set of instruments to realize the UN SDG's. But work must be done to ensure upward social convergence, with no indicators or targets lower than existing EU one's

→Most important question: what will happen in reality ? How will people notice the difference ?

Thank you!

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