

EAPN's Key Messages

Annual Convention for Inclusive Growth 2017

BRUSSELS, 24 APRIL 2017

[@EAPNEurope](#) #ACIG2017

Last Chance for Social Europe? Social Pillar must lead to concrete results for poverty reduction and participation, including for youth!

The **2017 Annual Convention on Inclusive Growth** comes at a turning point for the EU. As the EU considers the various scenarios proposed in the **Future of Europe White Paper**, it needs to prove that it is acting in the **interests of ordinary people**, - not just the market and business interests - and capable of uniting the EU around an ambitious vision based on rights and solidarity. With over **118.7 million people (2015)** at risk of poverty and social exclusion and increasing inequality, the EU cannot afford to be complacent. The **Annual Convention must be a key instrument** to drive real progress on reducing poverty and inequality, working together with stakeholders and people in poverty to forge effective solutions.

The **European Pillar of Social Rights** is rightfully welcomed as the main EU social initiative. But what impact will it have? A test of its usefulness to Social Europe is how far it goes beyond a 'pillar of principles', as a **binding instrument** embedding social rights equally across the EU, beyond employment and including in macroeconomic policies; and supporting **concrete initiatives** that can positively impact on people's living standards.

EAPN welcomes the decision to focus this year's Convention on **youth inclusion**, rather than just youth employment. However, not all youth face the same risks. It is vital to empower and support youth facing multiple risks, through personalized, integrated solutions to adequate income support, quality services and quality jobs.

Finally, participation of young people, and all groups facing poverty, is crucial! – not only to 'hear their voices', but to empower people to defend their rights and be active contributors to effective policy solutions.

See *EAPN Key Documents* on the Social Pillar, European meetings of People Experiencing Poverty¹, Youth Inclusion.

FOUR KEY MESSAGES

Annual Convention must champion progress on poverty and inequality!

The European Pillar of Social Rights must be more than principles!

Youth inclusion means rights-based integrated solutions, not just employment!

Participation is a pre-requisite to empowerment, ownership, and accessing other rights!

¹ See *Key EAPN Position Paper: Last Chance for Social Europe: on the EPSR; Report of the 2016 EU Meeting of people experiencing poverty; Position Paper on Youth Inclusion.*

Annual Convention must champion progress on poverty and inequality!

Although poverty and social exclusion have slightly decreased since last year, there is still no progress on the Europe 2020 target. Inequality continues to increase. The Convention is the only opportunity to provide a yearly spotlight on these crucial issues, and monitor delivery together with stakeholders, as well as institutional players. People experiencing poverty must be seen as key partners!

- ***Make the Annual Convention an independent conference assessing delivery on commitments to “reduce poverty and inequality”, including the 20% ESF earmarking on poverty, with NGOs and people experiencing poverty as equal partners;***
- ***Invest in an EU integrated anti-poverty strategy to access adequate income support, quality services and jobs, supported by EU Funds;***
- ***Tackle growing inequality through social investment in welfare states and fair distribution: including living wages, public services, progressive taxation and combating tax fraud.***

The European Pillar of Social Rights must be more than principles!

Benchmarking common principles on employment and social rights is an important step towards embedding social standards, but not enough! ***This is a last chance to save Social Europe!*** Social Rights need to be more than employment rights, made binding and mainstreamed into all policies. They must be delivered through concrete actions that guarantee a decent life to all.

- ***Make the Pillar binding, mainstreamed through economic and other policies and ensuring no negative distributional impact. This must be monitored through the European Semester with meaningful engagement of stakeholders;***
- ***Invest in concrete actions to guarantee EU social standards beyond employment – propose an EU framework on minimum income, minimum wages and a golden rule benchmarking adequate levels of minimum social protection spending.***

Youth inclusion through integrated solutions, not just employment!

Youth are more at risk of poverty and social exclusion than adults, but some groups of young people face even higher risks. Employment is crucial, but not an automatic solution when young people are ‘incentivised’ to leave education and take up precarious, low paid jobs, leaving them without quality jobs, adequate income support or access to key services.

- ***Promote personalized, rights-based integrated strategies to foster youth inclusion – ensuring equal access to adequate minimum income, services including education and housing and quality jobs, promoting youth empowerment and participation;***
- ***Recognize multiple and increased risks faced by specific groups of young people and children e.g. homeless, migrants, ethnic minorities including Roma, amongst others.***

Participation is a pre-requisite to empowerment, and other rights!

The European Meetings of People experiencing Poverty in 2015 and 2016 highlighted the right to participation, not just as beneficiaries and consumers, but as citizens exercising their rights to a voice and to take part in decision-making processes. Participation is a pre-requisite to accessing other key rights, but also empowers people as agents in their own lives. Anti-poverty NGOs play a key role in supporting this process and need increased resources to be effective.

- ***Invest in participation: increase resources to build capacity and ensure meaningful participation at all stages of the policy process, including annual European Meetings of People Experiencing Poverty;***
- ***Develop guidelines and indicators for quality participation at EU and national level in the European Semester and other EU processes, to be monitored through the European Semester.***