

***Meeting of Interparliamentary Social Affairs Ctee
24th March 2017, Malta***



***Poverty and Social Exclusion,
Working towards a more Inclusive Europe
Sian Jones,
EAPN Policy Coordinator***

YOU CAN'T
FEED THE POOR

Poverty and Social Exclusion, working towards A more inclusive Europe



Outline

- **Introduction**
- **What's happened to poverty?**
- **What role for the EU?**
- **Putting EU strategy against poverty at heart of Inclusive EU**

Introducing EAPN



- ❑ **Independent Network of NGOs** committed to fight against poverty + social exclusion, with people in poverty.
- ❑ Started in 1990 – **key actor** in poverty programmes and development of social OMC.
- ❑ Receives **financial support** from the European Commission (PROGRESS/now EaSi)
- ❑ 31 **National Networks** and 16 **European NGOs** as members (6000+ organisations)
- ❑ **Participation of people** with direct experience of poverty must be part of the solution.
- ❑ **Eradicating poverty is feasible and a political choice**

- ❑ **Everyone has the right to a life in dignity, and a life free of poverty.**
- ❑ **Combating poverty/ social exclusion, promoting social justice/ fundamental rights: core EU objectives**
- ❑ **Since 2010, EU supported Europe 2020 target to reduce risk of poverty and social exclusion by 20 mln**
- ❑ **Instead Poverty increased (4.6 million) together with inequality**
- ❑ **Austerity has contributed to increase, increasing distrust in EU and government role**
- ❑ **An effective EU rights-based, integrated, antipoverty strategy key to Inclusive Europe for all.**

15th EU People Experiencing Poverty Meeting



Introduction: Quotes from the 15th People Experiencing Poverty Meeting



- “It’s hard for us..but worse because there is no hope for my children’***
- “Money and better services like housing is crucial, but it’s also about dignity.... about empowerment”.***
- “What difference does it make to vote? People don’t trust politicians. They are there for their own interests and don’t represent us...”***
- “We want politicians to show that we live in a more equal and just country – not just for the privileged and the rich....”***

What's happened to poverty?



- **Europe 2020 target to reduce poverty by at least 20 million by 2020** based on 3 indicators (at risk of poverty, severe material deprivation and low work intensity)
- **2015: 118.7 million people (23.7%) at risk of poverty and social exclusion (EU SILC)- nearly 1 in 4 of the population. Slight decline from 2015 (24.4%)**
- **Highest risk in Bulgaria, Romania and Greece (41.3%, 37.3% and 35.7%)** and lowest risk in Czech Republic (14.0%), Sweden (16%) and NL and FI (16.8%)
- **Highest increases in Greece (from 28.1% in 2008 to 35.7% in 2015), Cyprus, Spain, Italy** compared to highest decreases in Poland, Romania and Bulgaria.
- **The main risk is income poverty (1 in 6) compared to material deprivation (1 in 12) and jobless households (1 in 10).**
- **17.3% at risk of poverty, has increased since 2014 – with highest levels in Romania,(25.4%) Latvia, Lithuania and Spain, Bulgaria (22%)**
- **Material deprivation has decreased – average is 8.1%, but over 20% in Bulgaria, Romania and Greece (22.2%)**

Not all groups face the same risk...

- **Children (26.9%) compared to older people (17.4%) adults (25.4%), young people (23.7%) – 40% in RO.**
- **Women, single parents (48.3%) large families (27.1%).**
- **Excluded groups facing bigger risk: Roma (80%), and migrants (40.1%) also people with disabilities (30%) also homeless**
- **Unemployment is a risk, but a job alone is not enough: 10.5% in-work poverty, 55% of poor families are working in UK.**
- **Adequate Social protection is essential to reduce poverty
Average 17.3%; range from 25.4 (RO) % to 9.5% (CZ)**

Austerity policies have increased poverty..

- **Job loss, long-term unemployment, precarity of contracts.**
- **Preference for expenditure cuts in benefits** *eg SPC report 2011 – restrictions on eligibility, duration, reduced benefit, particularly to disabled, children, young people, changes indexation, sickness benefit, targeting in housing/child benefits..*
- **Cuts to Services – eg social services/employment, but also health undermining universal principles.**
- **Rises in prices of basic goods** *eg electricity, food and rents – increasing indebtedness also public transport*
- **Inadequate revenue: Limited tax rises – and generally regressive** *ie VAT and property taxes, not tackling flat taxes, tax evasion*
- **Rolling back welfare state started before 2008...**

Is the EU helping? Opportunities..

- Europe 2020 poverty target and guidelines mainstreamed in European Semester: (2016: 11 poverty CSRs cf to 6 in 2015)
- 20% of ESF to fight poverty and promote social inclusion and social pillar inclusion strand in all funds including research .
- Social Investment package – Active Inclusion Recommendation, Investing in Children, and Tackling Homelessness
- New European Pillar of Social Rights – offers chance of upward convergence on social standards and employment/social rights?
- Future of Europe? 5 scenarios – a new vision for Europe?

Is the EU helping? Threats...

- **EU economic governance encouraged austerity policies increasing poverty**
- **Juncker priority to fiscal consolidation, investment and restructuring/modernizing labour markets and social protection.**
- **2015/6 - increased investment: EFSI, public investment as guarantee for private risk, not public or social.**
- **Current EU priorities: Fortress Europe: deficits, security and migration not social progress**
- **BREXIT/Fear of populist backlash – driving retreat behind subsidiarity whilst EU intervening directly in social budgets**

What way forward? More Social EU

- **Need for inspiring vision not timidity: transformative social + sustainable EU**
- **Ensure EU macroeconomic objectives contribute to social goals/and prevent negative distributional impact**
- **A clear social dimension based on EU social rights, social investment and social standards**
- **Concrete impact on poverty: EU framework: minimum income, minimum wage/ spending on social protection?**
- **Democracy now! Clear mechanisms to ensure effective participation of NGOs and people most affected.**

What way forward – People at the heart

- ❑ **Poverty is a structural not an individual problem...
You can't solve poverty without reducing inequality**
- ❑ **Don't blame the poor.. support and empower!**
- ❑ **What works? A rights based integrated, anti poverty strategy through the life course for all groups**
 1. *Adequate minimum income and social protection*
 2. *Accessible and affordable public services: housing, health, education, transport, energy..*
 3. *Access to inclusive, quality jobs*
 4. *Thematic strategies for key target groups: Investing in Children, Homeless etc*
 - *Personalized, joined up support*
 - *Financed through fair distribution/ tax justice*
- ❑ **Participation + empowerment as pre-requisite**

What way forward – people at the heart



EAPN Publications: www.eapn.eu

- ***Nobody left behind: Access to affordable health and housing services.(2017)***
- ***Inclusive Labour Markets (2017)***
- ***What progress on Social Europe: EAPN Assessment of NRPs 2016 (2016)***
- ***Last Chance for Social Europe: EAPN position on the European Pillar of Social Rights (2016)***
- ***Lifeboat or Life sentence: Troika programmes and impact on poverty and social exclusion (2013)***
- ***Re-engaging hope and expectations: Getting out of the crisis together (2012)***

For Further Information



Contact

Sian Jones, EAPN Policy Coordinator

E-mail: sian.jones@eapn.eu

Phone: +32 2 226 5859

***Address: Boulevard Bischoffsheim 11, 1000
Brussels;***

[Website: www.eapn.eu](http://www.eapn.eu)