



2017 Annual Convention for Inclusive Growth "Youth and Social Inclusion"

Side Event: Ensuring the right of young people to adequate income

Key Messages

Background and rationale

Nearly 30% of young people (15-29) live at risk of poverty and social exclusion in the EU ([Eurostat 2016](#)). There are in-built age-based restrictions, such as concerning eligibility or adequacy, in a number of countries in what regards both minimum wage provisions as well as social protection such as minimum income schemes. This leaves young people in a particularly vulnerable poverty and exclusion situation.

During the Annual Convention on Inclusive Growth 2017, the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN), the European Youth Forum (YFJ), the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) – Youth, and the European Network of Equality Bodies (EQUINET) co-organised a side-event, aimed at exploring the discriminations that young people face in accessing adequate income (minimum wage, minimum income and other forms of social protection) and the impact on poverty and social exclusion, quality labour market integration, as well as its role in limiting participation, access to rights and overall quality of life.

Questions

- What are the main challenges young people face in exercising their right to an adequate income (through work and income support)?
- What can we contribute to the protection, respect and fulfilment of this right to adequate income?
- What good practices from the national/local level can we learn from?
- What role for instruments such as the Youth Guarantee, Europe 2020, and the European Pillar of Social Rights?

The event was very well attended by a mixture of over 60 participants, representing social partners, civil society organisations, people experiencing poverty, national equality bodies, National Ministries, local authorities, and European institutions. The varied presentations and rich debate that followed resulted in positive proposals around ensuring the right to adequacy of income for young people, outlined below - a timely and crucial discussion in light of the continuing shortfall on the Europe 2020 poverty target and the European Pillar of Social Rights. Full information is available [here](#), and on the [Facebook page](#) of the event.



The Key Messages of the side-event were:

1. Invest in adequate social protection, including adequate minimum income schemes that ensure a life in dignity, for all and throughout the lifecycle

Access to adequate financial resources that allow one to live in dignity is a human right, as reconfirmed by the [Council Decision 92](#). Adequate social protection is a corner stone of our European Social Model and a pre-requisite for people to be able to contribute and engage. An adequate standard for minimum income schemes, which is social assistance of last resort, should be set at the very least at the level of the poverty line and should be rooted in cost of living and purchasing power, as reflected in the reference budgets methodology. Tax justice and the fight against tax havens and tax evasion are key components in ensuring the sustainable financing of social protection. Expenditure on social infrastructure of benefits and services should be protected from fiscal and budgetary consolidation measures, and should be considered an investment, and not a cost. The European Pillar of Social Rights is an excellent opportunity to put forward a Framework Directive on Adequate Minimum Income.

2. Support adequate wages that allow dignified living for all workers, including young workers, to ensure that work is indeed a route out of poverty and exclusion

Over the past 20 years, industrial productivity went up by 30%, whereas real wages only saw a 20% increase. Adequate wages, which allow workers and their families to live in dignity, are the best tool to tackle income inequalities and restore social justice and fair distribution. While adequate financial resources are a right, decent wages fuel a positive recovery and a strong economy, by supporting both consumption and productivity, as well as increased participation and wellbeing. Collective bargaining plays a key role in making this a reality and must be adequately recognised, supported, and resourced. Once again, the European Pillar of Social Rights can provide useful synergies for common standards for minimum wages in Europe, in those countries in which such minimum wages exist.

3. Eliminate the ‘age pay gap’ and end inbuilt age-based discrimination preventing young people from accessing their right to adequate financial resources

Young people hold the same human right to adequate remuneration from paid employment and adequate social protection. The existence of lower minimum wages for young people (Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Ireland, Netherlands, Portugal, United Kingdom, and Turkey), and of restrictions for youth on accessing or on the level of social benefits (such as Croatia, Italy and France) are concrete example of age-based discrimination. 70% of the approximate 13 million NEETs across OECD countries live below the poverty line while already receiving income support, which means that even when the access is ensured, inadequacy of schemes does not take young people out of poverty. Lower minimum wages for youth, by their sheer existence, contradict the ILO principle of equal pay for equal work. Comprehensive protection from discrimination against young people is needed, including legislation covering age and socio-economic status, and setting up independent and adequately resourced equality bodies.



4. Support meaningful stakeholder engagement and the participation of people experiencing poverty, including young people

The first step towards participation – whether in the labour market, in society, or in decision-making and the political and civic sphere – is access to adequate income resources, allowing the individual to meaningfully engage. Participation is a pre-requisite to accessing other key rights, but also empowers young people as agents in their own lives, while it ensures policy-making is evidence-based and effective in tackling issues on the ground. Enough resources need to be allocated to build capacity, as well as guidelines and indicators developed for quality participation at EU and national level. Stakeholder involvement and ownership are crucial at every step of the process – design, implementation, and monitoring of policies and practices. The European Meetings of People Experiencing Poverty are a crucial event to support such participation, while the Annual Convention and the processes around the Europe 2020 Strategy, the European Semester, and the European Pillar of Social Rights can and should also provide key opportunities to associate people experiencing poverty, including young people, as well as civil society and trade unions, as equal partners.

5. Use the frameworks provided by the Europe 2020 Strategy and the European Pillar of Social Rights to achieve concrete progress on adequate income and participation

Given that 1 of 4 Europeans lives at risk of poverty and social exclusion, and the figure increases to 1 in 3 when young people are concerned, the European Union and national Governments can't afford to be complacent. Europe 2020 must deliver on its poverty reduction target, as first step towards achieving credibility about saving Social Europe. The European Pillar of Social Rights must benchmark common standards on adequate wages and social protection, embedding them in every step of policy making, and monitoring them throughout the European Semester. Concrete steps in this direction would include EU frameworks on minimum wages and a Golden Rule establishing minimum social protection spending at adequate levels. These standards should explicitly reject age restrictions in access and level of both wages and social protection, to guarantee the right to dignified income for young people.

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Further reading:

European Anti-Poverty Network, [Youth Poverty and Social Exclusion in Europe](#)
European Youth Forum, [Social Inclusion and Young people. Excluding Youth: A Threat To Our Future](#)