

WHAT STRATEGY TO FIGHT POVERTY, SOCIAL EXCLUSION & INEQUALITY?



Thursday 15 June 2017

Learning from the past to
**Beyond
2020**

What strategy to fight poverty, social exclusion & inequality?

Brussels, 15 June 2017



Panel 1: What strategy to fight poverty? EAPN proposals

Sérgio Aires, EAPN President

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1. What are the key elements for an EU anti-poverty strategy? Learning from past



- ❑ **Important to recognize key achievements** – Minimum Income, EU treaties, NAP's Inclusion, Active Inclusion, Europe 2020, 20% ESF ear-marking, EPSR
- ❑ **But little progress on poverty and growing inequality** – with 118 million, 1 in 4, and increases since 2008, inequality gap.
- ❑ **Key Learning Points:**
 - Eradicating poverty is a political choice
 - We need a shift in our economic model – fair distribution
 - Jobs alone not enough: integrated rights-based strategy: quality social protection, services and jobs
 - Participation in decision-making is a pre-requisite
 - Funding bottom up initiatives is crucial

1. What are the key elements for an EU anti-poverty strategy? Key Elements



- 1. Aim to eradicate poverty, social exclusion and inequality.***
- 2. Be rooted in EU values, with people and well-being at centre***
- 3. Embed a rights-based approach, defining priorities***
- 4. Put dignity and participation first***
- 5. Develop a comprehensive, integrated strategy - minimum income/social protection, quality services and employment.***
- 6. Promote inclusive education and personal development***
- 7. Ensure no one left behind***
- 8. Invest in personalized support***
- 9. Promote work-life balance***
- 10. Support grass-roots initiatives.***

Key Messages



- ❑ We need a turning point: redistribution of power, investment in real participation, shift in the development model to reduce inequality, social and sustainable**
- ❑ Combating poverty is a collective responsibility, tackle structural causes of poverty not just symptoms**
- ❑ Deliver on people's demands for obligatory social rights across the EU**
- ❑ We need a strategy based on integrated active inclusion anticipating challenges, pro-active, preventative, forward looking, looking at future for all groups, based on participation**

Key Messages



- ❑ No one left behind – equal access for all groups, to quality jobs, education and ambitious action to guarantee adequate income for those not in work**
- ❑ Monitoring and accountability - we need effective national strategies, as well EU , with participative monitoring involving NGOs and people experiencing poverty, at national, regional, local level if there is to be ownership/partnership**
- ❑ Investing in social welfare states means fiscal support and fair redistribution**
- ❑ Social Rights and Strategy may need a change in the Treaties**

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Panel 2: What post EU2020 framework/governance? EAPN proposals

*Paul Ginnell, Co-Chair of EAPN EU
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What post 2020 framework/governance process?

Learning from the past



- ❑ **Europe 2020 strategy step forward** with poverty and social targets and EU funds (20% ESF)
- ❑ **Social actors having some success in using target** to keep focus on poverty in the European Semester (eg CSRs)
- ❑ **However, Semester remains primarily a macroeconomic tool:** austerity, weaker welfare states/ labour markets
- ❑ **Same approach that was responsible for the crisis** and promotes wrong model of redistribution
- ❑ **Participation of civil society and people in poverty** has become weakened despite NGO commitment
- ❑ **20% ESF earmarking, with active inclusion strategies is positive** but mainly short-term employment initiatives
- ❑ **New European Pillar of Social Rights offers potential for progress,** but unclear about impact also beyond Eurozone

What post 2020 framework/governance process? What elements are needed?



- ❑ **A transformative sustainable social/ environmental agenda**
- ❑ **Participatory impact assessment to stop negative impact**
- ❑ **SDG/Agenda 2030 offers ambitious agenda** but can it be made the driver? with effective participation/ monitoring?
- ❑ **European Semester** - likely to be coordinating instrument
- ❑ **Aim to eradicate poverty in all forms must be central**, promote social rights and reduce inequality
- ❑ **Targets remain crucial, sub-targets**, obligatory indicators
- ❑ **Renewed support for the Social OMC** to increase detailed focus on social policies
- ❑ **Governance process must agree compulsory guidelines** for meaningful engagement for civil society at all stages
- ❑ **EU funds for support poverty, grass-roots initiatives**

What action should be taken in the Pillar of Social Rights and Future of Europe?



European Pillar of Social Rights

- **Positive step forward** for ‘upward convergence’ on rights.
- **However, still non-binding** framework of principles
- **Legislative proposals are interesting**, but unclear impact on poverty or clarity of support from Member States
- **Strong concerns about Eurozone** limitation
- **New Social Scoreboard** could provide benefits, but shouldn't replace poverty target, or key focus on poverty
- **20 Policy domains** – eg adequate minimum income/wage important, but needs policy coherence with economic goals
- **Complement not replace integrated antipoverty strategy**
- **Participation** - including people with direct experience of poverty must be core elements in delivery and monitoring.

What action should be taken in the Pillar of Social Rights and Future of Europe?



Future of Europe

- **5 scenarios give little focus to social objectives**
- **Social not a dimension but a central objective**
- **Social Dimension Reflection Paper offers 3 scenarios with 2 offering stronger social action**
- **Support for more Europe depends on what kind of Europe on offer....**
- **A new social sustainable strategy, with fair distribution and strong welfare states to reduce poverty, exclusion and inequality will be key**

Key Messages



- European Semester is not well known and not well liked at national level... needs political will and commitment to drive real change and effective social/participative process**
- We need a shift in the model – social isn't a dimension but the objective and economic is the instrument to achieve it**
- Need a coherent social economic and environmental approach that puts the real needs of people and well-being at centre and contributes to a social and sustainable Europe**
- More focus on fair taxation, redistribution, financing social protection, investment in services, social entrepreneurship and participative impact assessment**
- More ambitious goals – e.g. EU welfare Union.**

Key Messages



- ❑ Visible, explainable and accountable! participation with partnership approach and co-decision, not just information but outcomes.**
- ❑ The name (European semester) needs to be changed, the SDG's provide a much clearer and more understandable framework.**
- ❑ Concrete, measurable targets, with common indicators and effective monitoring linked to clearer and accountable and consequences triggering policy impact.**
- ❑ Quality of engagement of civil society and people in poverty is key, and on equal footing with social partners = financing and role e.g. UN level.**

Key Messages



- See it as an opportunity – and demand a stronger role for civil society at national, local and EU level.**
- Needs to reinforce access to quality jobs and rebalance for equal focus on social protection, services and care beyond paid work**
- What does convergence mean? Goal must be to close the gap between and within MS**
- Make principles concrete, operational and mandatory and the scoreboard real.**
- Give clear role for NGOs and PEP at national level, to provide evidence of what works and doesn't work**
- Needs most social scenario in the reflection paper, and beyond the Eurozone, otherwise it will reinforce social dumping and inequality – widening the gap.**

Key Messages



- What Europe are we talking about? People not just citizens!**
- Key aim to keep EU together based on solidarity. We must derive lessons from the past when well-being and welfare was more at the centre.**
- Scenarios don't provide us with much – we want a more ambitious social and sustainable vision for Europe – a 6th scenario!**
- The EU must take some responsibility for negative social impact feeding far right and populism.**
- Making the EU more participative and democratic, focused on clear ambitious vision, could bring EU back to its core.**
- Participation needs resources and financing. Key role of young people and people in poverty.**