

BUILDING A SOCIAL STANDARDS UNION, WHAT ROLE FOR THE EUROPEAN SEMESTER?



Thursday 7 December 2017



BUILDING A SOCIAL STANDARDS UNION, WHAT ROLE FOR THE EUROPEAN SEMESTER?



Panel 1: How well is the Semester delivering on social rights?

EAPN analysis of the 2017 NRPs

*Paul Ginnell, Chair EAPN EU Inclusion Strategies
group/EAPN Ireland*

#EAPNconf
#SocialRights

BUILDING A SOCIAL STANDARDS UNION, WHAT ROLE FOR THE EUROPEAN SEMESTER?



Context

- European Semester has shown a positive shift to take social concerns more on board over last years.
- Commitment to mainstream the European Pillar of Social Rights and Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.
- However, 118 million people still in poverty and social exclusion, no progress on the Europe 2020 target to reduce poverty by at least 20 million set in 2010.

BUILDING A SOCIAL STANDARDS UNION, WHAT ROLE FOR THE EUROPEAN SEMESTER?



NRP assessment

- Key moment for EAPN in assessing impact of Semester process in tackling poverty, and promoting social rights at national level so far.
- Basis for draft messages to the AGS.
- Questionnaire responses from 20 national networks (BE, CY, CZ, DK, EE, FI, FR, DE, IE, IT, LV, LT, LU, NL, PL, PT, RO, ES, SE, UK) and exchange with members in June workshop.

BUILDING A SOCIAL STANDARDS UNION, WHAT ROLE FOR THE EUROPEAN SEMESTER?



Summary Scoreboard

70%	The NRPs does not have poverty as a main priority (88% in 2015)
55%	The NRPs lack an integrated strategy on poverty (71% in 2015)
50%	There are signs of an increased concern about social rights and standards.
55%	The employment measures proposed in the NRPs are not the right ones to ensure access to quality jobs for all. (53% in 2015)
70%	The education and training measures are primarily aimed at increasing skills not at ensuring an inclusive quality education system. (59% in 2015)
40%	Structural Funds are NOT being used effectively to reduce poverty and to deliver on the 20% ear-marking of ESF. (65% in 2015)
60%	Anti-poverty NGOs were NOT consulted in the development of the NRPs. (53% in 2015)
70%	Antipoverty NGOs views were NOT taken seriously into account. (76% in 2015)

BUILDING A SOCIAL STANDARDS UNION, WHAT ROLE FOR THE EUROPEAN SEMESTER?



Positives

- Increased focus on poverty and social exclusion but macroeconomic priorities still dominate
- Some welcome examples of an integrated anti-poverty strategy - but often fails to tackle poverty in all its forms or promote strategies for key target groups. BUT – missing in most NRPs
- Improvements in some strategic approaches to tackle needs of key target groups – e.g. child poverty or investing in children, tackling issues of housing exclusion, and in some cases homelessness, youth, migrants and people with disabilities
- Progress by some on increasing adequacy of income either through income support – minimum income/unemployment benefit/child benefits increasing or indexing pensions or increasing minimum wages

BUILDING A SOCIAL STANDARDS UNION, WHAT ROLE FOR THE EUROPEAN SEMESTER?



Negatives

- Europe 2020 goals, particularly the poverty target, continue to have low visibility.
- Role of the NRP in Semester process? – Seen as a report not a plan.
- Concerns about implementation of some positive measures
- Whitewashing of the real extent and impact of poverty and failure tackle the structural causes
- Failure to address and promote redistribution of wealth and resources
- Concern about the impact of continuing cuts in benefits and services and failures to really address the adequacy of income support - despite new initiatives
- Any job too often proposed as the magic bullet to solve poverty
- Consulting civil society : Some improvements but inconsistent and often not in a meaningful way. Concrete steps to make civil society organisations a key partner is a priority for most EAPN members

BUILDING A SOCIAL STANDARDS UNION, WHAT ROLE FOR THE EUROPEAN SEMESTER?



Gaps

- Lack of an overarching social vision or new thinking for tackling poverty and mainstreaming social rights - Limited signs of a more rights-based approach
- Addressing growing problems of inequality, human rights of migrants, demographic trends and effective financing of welfare states
- Inadequately addressing growing indebtedness, the lack of affordable housing and the shocking rise in homelessness, the impact of emigration
- Quality work, including access for excluded groups and pay
- Commitment to strong welfare states as a positive investment, supported by inclusive growth policies

BUILDING A SOCIAL STANDARDS UNION, WHAT ROLE FOR THE EUROPEAN SEMESTER?



Key messages

1. Make macroeconomic policies coherent with social rights
2. Prioritize social rights and an integrated strategy to effectively reduce poverty
3. Make the employment target deliver on poverty reduction and social inclusion
4. Foster equal access to education for all groups
5. Ensure ESF 20% has an impact on poverty!
6. Make the NRPs a true and participatory driver of positive social change

BUILDING A SOCIAL STANDARDS UNION, WHAT ROLE FOR THE EUROPEAN SEMESTER?



Proposals for AGS

Called on President Juncker to ensure:

- ✓ a more **balanced** economic and social strategy
- ✓ make **social rights and standards** a priority in line with the European Pillar of Social Rights and
- X give equal weight to **participation** of civil society organisations and people with experience of poverty as with social partners.

BUILDING A SOCIAL STANDARDS UNION, WHAT ROLE FOR THE EUROPEAN SEMESTER?



Engaging with the Semester: Better Europe Alliance/Ireland

- Engagement with Commission – Sense of some issues being reflected
- Macroeconomic/Fiscal rules still dominating – but more sense of need to address social issues
- Wider engagement with Government Departments – impact?
- New integrated action plan to address poverty
- Budget and policy Impact Assessment
- Housing/homelessness, health inequalities, support for autonomous community organisations, adequate minimum income.
- Investment