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| **EAPN National Poverty Watch Reports**  ***Summary of key concerns and messages*** |

EAPN work on poverty watches collected documents from 22 European countries, providing interesting insights on national situation regarding poverty and other correlated issues. The **main** **concerns** expressed by members can be summarised as follows: many countries (AT, CY, DK, IE, IT, MT, NL, PT, ES, RO, RS, NO, SE) mentioned unequal distribution in poverty risks, which are higher for some specific groups – children (NL, PT, ES, RO, RS, NO) and immigrants (CY, DK, IE, ES, SE) were the most recurring ones, together with self-employed people, women, Roma, youngsters and elders; members also mentioned high or growing number of people living in poor households (CY, DK, FI, IE, LT, PL, PT, RS, NO), and an alarming growth of people being poor despite being employed at the same time (AT, DK, DE, IE, PT, RO, RS, NO, SE). Many members also reported high levels of indebtedness (BE, CZ, DK, FI, LT, NL), often leading to poverty traps, and growing expenses for housing and housing-related services (AT, CZ, IE, NL, NO, SE). As regarding distributional issues, many members highlighted the existence of territorial patterns in poverty distribution (DK, IE, IT, MT, RO, NO), while also addressing high and/or growing wealth inequality, despite the effects of social transfers (BE, DK, IE, FI, LT, PT). As regarding services, some members mentioned unequal coverage in the health sector, often leading to poorer health status and thus higher unemployment risks (AT, DK, DE, IE), while others mentioned inequality of chances in education, often leading to a growing job polarization and lower social mobility (BE, DK, DE, RS). Failures of the social protection systems have also been addressed, with members mentioning inadequate social benefits and minimum wages (HR, DE, IE, LT, RO, SE), poor performance in addressing poverty (HR, LT, RO) and inadequate coverage of self-employed people, which are often free to choose the level of savings for future pensions and may not be covered by laws on minimum wages (DE, NL). Finally, members also addressed high unemployment rates (AT, PT, ES, RO), rising homelessness (DK, IE, IT) and the rapid spreading of new forms of (often precarious) jobs (AT, DE, IE).

Although main concerns are quite similar across members, **key recommendations** are quite fragmented; however, there exist some wide shared messages. At the European level, many members call upon making the European semester much more focused on social issues, also by mainstreaming the EPSR and boosting the discussion on its principles (AT, DE, IT, NL, MT, PT, NO); some of them specifically call for a better use of the ESF earmarked funding to fight poverty (NL, PT). Many members also call upon specific EU action to tackle social issues (AT, CY, DE, IT, PT, NO), with some of them calling for the setting of minimum standards and secure their implementation (CY, DE, NO), while others going further by demanding an explicit European strategy against poverty and social exclusion (IT, PT, NO). Some of them also call for the adoption of new EU law on specific issues, such as minimum income and active inclusion (IT, NO).

On the national level, many members criticize the absence of a comprehensive human rights based strategy to tackle poverty, and thus call upon its adoption (DK, IE, LT, PL, PT, ES, RO, RS, NO, SE); some of them go further by demanding a special attention to be devoted to child poverty (DK, FI, PL, ES, RO). Many members also highlight the need to provide adequate minim income and minimum wage schemes, to be higher than the poverty threshold (AT, BE, DK, DE, IE, IT, MT, PT, ES, NO), but also to provide adequate minimum social benefits and to increase public spending and enhance access to the social protection system (CY, HR, FI, IE, IT, LT, MT, PT, ES, RS, NO, SE), by specifically encouraging the adoption of measures to grant access to neglected groups (IE, LT, MT, ES). As regards inequality, many members call for a reform of the taxation system, to make it more favourable towards low-income households (BE, CY, IE, IT, LT, ES). Many members also call upon the creation of good-quality and accessible public services (CZ, CY, DK, FI, IE, LT, MT, PL, PT, ES, RS, NO), with special mention for childcare, education and training (DK, IE, MT, PT, ES, RO, RS, NO), healthcare (DK, FI, IE, NL) and housing systems (CZ, FI, IE, ES). As regards employment, members demand the creation of quality jobs and the containment of precarious work (CY, DE, IE, LT, PL, RO, RS), while also calling upon the EU and national governments to give up on the perception of employment as a “magic bullet” to fight poverty (BE, DE, NL). In addition, some members call for special integration policies to reduce poverty and social exclusion among migrants (DK, IT, ES), while also demanding more appropriate funding and better participation of civil society organisation in the whole policy process (LT, MT, RS, SE). Finally, some members demand the introduction of impact assessments on poverty in major policies (IE, ES), more centralized social protection schemes to avoid territorial fragmentation of coverage (AT, IE) and better legal frameworks to provide people with concrete changes to reduce over-indebtedness (CZ, LT).

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| ***Member State/Country*** | ***Main concerns*** | ***Recommendations*** |
| Austria | * Growing expenses for housing, energy, nutrition; people with low income invest average 43% of their income for flat-renting. Together with operating expenses, water and energy they have to invest more than 50% of monthly income into housing. 263.000 people in Austria can´t keep their flats warm during cold seasons, approximately 60.000 households endangered to energy deactivation yearly. In the period between 2008 and 2013, there has been a rise of about 41% in the number of homeless people; * Problems regarding physical and psychical health; regional responsibilities of federal states lead to unequal treatment in health sector. Moreover, people affected by health issues are particularly affected by unemployment; * High unemployment, leading to loneliness and shame; the number of unemployed people grew massive over the last years: in 2011 there were in average 206.702 unemployed people, while in 2016 the number had grown to an average of 357.313 people; * New forms of work, including precarious and poor-quality jobs; the number of working poors in 2016 has been estimated in 313.000 people (approximately 8% of the population); | *At the European level:*   * The dialogue through the European Semester is mainly focused on economic issues, often failing to take adequately into account the issues of poverty and poor-quality jobs; * There is a general lack of self-reflection and motivation to search for solutions for a more equal society;   *At the national level:*   * One the policy responses to these issues was the granting for a minimum income. This intervention is organized by federal states autonomously, and amounts approximately 838 Euros/month for a single person, and 1.257 Euro/month for (married) couples. However, the amount provided is not adequate to cover real expenses, and it has been further reduced during 2015. In addition, split responsibilities of federal states cause unequal treatment of population, producing arbitrariness in cutting the out payments for particular groups (people with granted asylum, households with many children); * The EU Social Pillar it is not adequately discussed in national politics: In facts, the Pillar is not a subject in the current campaigning for the national elections taking place in autumn 2017. |
| Belgium | * Increase of risk-of-poverty-or-social inclusion for young people (18-24); * Higher poverty risk for specific groups (low skilled people, people with disabilities, people with migrant background); * The poverty-risk in Belgium is higher than the EU average for the unemployed population; * Higher financial distress for households in the lowest income quartile (high indebtedness); * Increasing dichotomy between the highly educated and low-educated people in the working-age population; * Job polarization: access to only underpaid professions for poor people who did not benefit of a good schooling about digital technologies and a targeted use of those new (mainly information and communication) technologies; * The further automation of routine based work that will push back the less qualified workers to the edge of the labour market; * Job creation not in favour of already disadvantaged specific groups with a higher risk of poverty, creating insiders and outsiders of the economic and social system; * Despite the social transfers, the inequality in wealth tends to grow. Lower incomes households have worsened in 2015-2016. Higher financial distress; * Inflation is higher than in the surrounding countries. | *Upgrading the minimum income to ensure a life in dignity for all citizens.*  BAPN and the Regional Networks against poverty reaffirmed in June 2016, just before the national budget negotiations, the need to increase the social allowances and benefits above the European poverty threshold (60 % of the median income). The main policy undertaken by the federal government to tackle poverty, is to reorder the labor market, convinced that the only true way to avoid poverty is by work. Combined with budgetary austerity, this policy tends to pull down different social rights or the condition more the access to those rights (decrease of unemployment allowances, liberalization or flexibility of labor market, …).  *Build and strengthen an inclusive market.*  It is regrettable to read that little progress has been made to integrate the vulnerable groups in society into the labor market. The conditions wherein migrants, for example, most work (precarious contracts) is not to favor stability in their daily lives. The dropping of the insertion allowances for younger people and de unemployment rates of the older workers, are not necessarily the result of a booming labor market, but also the consequences of a hardening employment policy. BAPN and its members plead for an inclusive labor market where employers’ benefits are not the only element to take into account, but also the wellbeing of the workers. The upcoming segment of temporary contracts is a worrying trend.  *Restructure the taxation system towards fiscal justice.*  The tax shift does not give the impression to improve the economic wellbeing of the most vulnerable citizens. The shift from labor taxes to consumer taxes does not ease the existence of the poorest among us. Sadly, the government tends to respond by cutting back the social expenses, to pull down the social security. |
| Croatia | Social support and protection systems still do not sufficiently recognize the needs and rights of the most vulnerable people living in poverty (young unemployed, credit-borne household members) who are not in the public focus and the strategy of addressing poverty;  The system of social protection and active employment policies show poor performance in the alleviation and prevention of poverty, primarily due to the inadequate or extremely low social benefits, low coverage of the poor in remuneration from these systems and the relatively low benefits that are below the poverty line;  There are clear indications that people in poverty are faced with financial problems, often with a lack of basic necessities (food, clothing, fever) and there is lack of quality family and social relationships. | There is a need to revise past measures and policies to combat and prevent poverty (for example, guaranteed minimum benefits, which have significant problems in defining the amount given the number of household members);  It is important to stop the feeling of helplessness among people living in poverty by developing different initiatives from different sectors, but also by their interconnection, while at the same time affecting decision-makers;  The media should present poverty in accordance with real indicators, not based on common stereotypes and prejudice or individual cases. |
| Cyprus | According to the Cyprus Statistical Service indexes of 2016, the percentage of Cypriot people at risk of poverty and social exclusion was 27.7% and the percentage of people under severe material deprivation was 13.6%. The minimal decrease noted between 2015 and 2016 was not a real decrease in poverty but was due to the decrease of the mean available income on which the poverty threshold was calculated. That is to say, in 2014 the threshold was at 18,418 euro per annum whilst in 2016 it was decreased to 16,943 euro per annum.  The population groups with the highest risk of poverty rate are the Unemployed, especially the Long Term Unemployed with a 37.2%, Pensioners, especially women pensioners whose pensions have a 40% gap from those of men, the Single Parent Households and the Migrants, especially migrants from third countries with 44.4%. | Whilst there is an increased need for social protection, policies and public spending for development, social and other services, are not adequate to effectively combat poverty and inequalities that have risen after the economic crisis and the austerity measures imposed. To eliminate poverty, a radical redistribution of wealth is necessary within a just, social welfare state that supports vulnerable groups by creating development and wellbeing opportunities for all the people and not only for the few.  In brief, we highlight these recommendations:   * To set minimum social indicators on the EU level and to secure their implementation on the national level; * To develop and implement policies that fight inequalities within and among EU member-states; * Immediate measures to be taken to ease the situation of groups of people under the highest risk of poverty and social exclusion; * To create quality jobs and secure access to them; * To create quality and accessible general services that cover basic needs such as education, healthcare, care etc.; |
| Czech Republic | * **Over-indebtedness** is the biggest trap that leads to persistent poverty. The number of insolvency proposals submitted by individuals has reached unprecedented dimensions. Among other things, many single parents are affected; * **The housing situation** has dramatically worsened. For a broad population, housing has become virtually inaccessible and inaccessible. Many choose inferior housing. | * Revise the Insolvency Act and the Act on Court Executors, so that Czech law provides reasonable conditions to reduce the high level of over-indebtedness; * Ensure that a law on social (affordable) housing is introduced in the envisaged timetable to ensure adequate legal regulation of the rights and obligations of all parties to proper and timely allocation of sufficient funds. |
| Denmark | Poverty and inequality are on the rise in Denmark. Child poverty is expected to increase in the coming years. In the same period the income gap has widen.  In the islands and in the provinces there are more poor people. The same applies to the Western Region and the ghetto areas in the big cities. In the country's poorest zip code, income after tax is 4 times lower than in the richest zip code. Inequality will have a long-term effect. An upbringing in a poor area draws traces into adulthood. Children growing up in the poorest residential areas of the country will as adults have a lower income than expected from their family background.  There is a strong connection between the social class a child grows up in and the class the child is in as an adult. Today one third of the children of the underclass ends up in the underclass themselves as an adult; in 2005 it was one fourth. Elite children have more than six times the chance to end up in the elite than the under-class children have. Since the mid 90's, the tax system has been changed several times. As a result, the tax system has become less redistributing. The wealthiest today pay a significantly smaller portion of their income in tax than they did 20 years ago. The richest 10 percent sits on almost the same share of total income after tax, as those 40 percent poorest do together. Looking at the wealth distribution (without pension), the ten percent with the largest net assets owns well over 60 percent of the total net wealth. Half of the population with the lowest net assets has a -7.5 percent of the total net wealth, because their total debt exceeds their total assets.  Social inequality and poverty effects health. This relationship is found for both men and women of all ages. Most of the major health problems occur more often in the lower classes and normally their consequences in terms of mortality and disability are more serious in this group. In average, socially excluded groups live 19 years shorter than the rest of the population.  In 2017, there are 6.635 homeless citizens in Denmark. The number has continually been increasing since 2009. In particular, the number of young homeless has increased. A growing number of less educated people are working poor, not least in hotels and restaurants and the cleaning sector. Some of them have more jobs on part time contracts to a lower wage.  A growing number of immigrants from non-western countries are long-term unemployed and there is a growing gap between natives and immigrants, in particular for children. Although immigrants and descendants constitute a minority of the Danish population, their children constitute a majority of poor children (2013). This makes integration, education and employment more difficult for the next generation. | * Develop and implement a national and municipal human rights based anti-poverty strategy; * National and municipal poverty lines; * A concerted effort against child poverty; * An effective integration policy; * Anti social dumping policy; * Adequate minimum income; * Improve and extend the system of social and employment rehabilitation; * Urban development projects in the big cities; * Improve the schooling system in the ghettoes in the big cities; * Health policies focusing on excluded groups. |
| Finland | * The goal set in 2010 for the EU’s Europe 2020 strategy aiming to reduce the number of people living in poverty or risk of social exclusion in Finland to 150,000 by 2020 seems to fail. Poverty in Finland has decreased only slightly in the 2010s and there are many indications that poverty may have again started to increase; * The number of households with no income has doubled since 2013 to 47,000 households; * The number of people with payment defaults is higher than ever before: last year, 373,000 people had a payment default notice and nearly 400,000 social and healthcare customer fees were collected by way of enforcement; * According to the information services of the Finnish Parliament and the estimate of the Ministry of Finance, the income of the low-income households decreases relatively the most compared to other income groups in 2015-2018. | * The number of people living in risk of poverty or social exclusion needs to be reduced. Particular attention should be paid to improve the status of low-income families with children and pensioners. Key measures to reduce poverty could include raising the level of basic security benefits and building affordable housing; * The situation of long-term unemployed (including young people and immigrants) should be improved and unemployment should be reduced. It would be essential to add resources to wage subsidies and the youth guarantee and to cancel the previous cuts concerning them; * The reform on social and health services should be implemented in a way that reduces differences in health and well-being and ensures the accessibility of services also for the underprivileged and the people who need many different services. |
| Germany | Since January 1, 2015 a legal minimum wage exists in Germany, but it is only 48 percent of the median hourly wage and 43 percent of the average hourly wage of all full-time employees. Moreover, full-time employees employed at the minimum wage for 45 years earn pension entitlements that are below the basic state pension (“Grundsicherung im Alter”). The minimum wage alone therefore does not prevent old-age poverty even if the persons concerned had never been unemployed during their working life.  There is also a lack of social protection in the basic security system. In addition to receiving a cash allowance (“Regelbedarfssatz”), beneficiaries receive reimbursement of their housing costs – if appropriate. If both components are added, the amount of basic security is below the poverty threshold for most household constellations. There is also a lack of social protection for so-called solo self-employed persons. They themselves have to provide for their old-age security, but many, because of their often-low income, do not buy such protection.  The increase in in-work poverty has already been shown. The increase in in-work poverty is largely due to the growth of the low-wage sector. Atypical employment has also increased, although atypical employment can’t always be equated with precarious employment.  *Health.* While, according to parents with high social status, 3 per cent of their children have a very poor health status, poverty-stricken parents report that 11 per cent of their male and 10 per cent of their female children show a very poor health status. There are also great differences in adults. Only 2.4 percent of over 18-year-olds with high incomes report very poor individual health, while 13 percent of over 18-year-olds with low incomes report a very poor health status. These differences have significantly increased in recent years. *Education.* Although there are no formal differences in the use of educational opportunities in Germany, social mobility is, on the international scale, very low. The German education system does not manage to compensate for the initial differences in education among children, which are caused by the level of education and the financial resources of their parents. For example, only 23 percent of children from poverty-stricken households visit the highest German school form (Gymnasium). Children from non-poverty-stricken households attend the Gymnasium at 48 per cent.  *Discrimination*. As in most European countries, an increase in discrimination on the basis of individual characteristics, which differ from characteristics of the “majority society”, is observed in Germany. According to a recent study by the Federal Government's Anti-Discrimination Agency, 23.2 percent of respondents with an immigration background claim to have been discriminated against for racist reasons or because of their ethnic origin. Also, 10.1 percent of respondents with a low socio-economic status claim to be discriminated against because of their social situation. | *At the EU-Level:*   * Germany has to consider further factors (the at-risk-of-poverty rate, material deprivation etc.) than only the number of long-term unemployed people in the NRP. The government reports and programmes to the European Commission whitewashes the situation in Germany in reference to poverty and exclusion. The extent of poverty and its significance for the individual as well as the society is not clear in the NRP; * Human rights have to be preserved; * Social aspects have to get higher priority in the cohesion policy. Social and human interests should be more prioritized than economic interests.   *At the national level:*   * Containment of precarious working conditions and the low-wage-sector. Especially alarming is the increase of the risk of in work poverty. Unemployment is declining, risk of poverty is increasing – the federal government has to address far more fields of action to reduce poverty than reducing (long term) unemployment; * Increase of minimum wage. The monthly regular amount that people get as minimum income is still far too low (around 150 Euros for an adult) and does not guarantee the socio-cultural minimum income; * Raise the standard payment in all minimum income systems; * Abolishment of sanctions in the minimum income systems and replacement with an incentive system; * Implementation of better options of combining work and family life; * Introduction of a uniform benefit payment for children. |
| Ireland | In 2015 almost 17% of the population, or more than 783,000 people, were at risk of poverty (or relatively poor) because their disposable income was below the poverty line of 60% of the middle (median) income of all people in the country. This had grown from 14.4% in 2008. In 2015, 8.7% of the population (over 403,000 people) was in consistent poverty because they were both at-risk of poverty and experienced material deprivation. Despite a small fall in 2015 the level is still double that of 2008.  There are other groups such as Travellers, homeless people and migrants, including asylum seekers and refugees, who experience high levels of poverty but are not captured by official statistics. Poverty is also higher in some geographical areas such as disadvantaged urban areas and many remote rural areas.  *Income.*In 2015, over 783,000 people in Ireland had an income which put them at-risk of poverty. The social welfare rate of €193 received by most people is €36.97 below the 2015 poverty line of €229.97. The jobseekers rate for those under 26 years and for those 26 years of age are €127.27 and €82.17 respectively below the poverty line.  *Inequality.*It has been shown that inequality is bad for societies. While it is a root cause of poverty and social exclusion it not only impacts negatively on those on the lowest incomes but on almost everyone throughout society. In 2015 the top 20% of income earners have 4.7 times the income of the lowest 20%. This shows a reduction from 5 times in 2014. The European Commission’s Social Situation Monitor showed that in 2013 the wealthiest 10% in Ireland had one quarter of the national income while the bottom 10% only has around 3.3%.  *Access to quality employment.*Employment continued to increase with 2,063,000 people in employment in the second quarter of 2017, up 48,100 from the same time in 2016 and now just over 30,000 below the peak in mid-2007. The employment rate for those aged 15-64 years of age was 65.7% (60.4% for women and 71.1% for men). Unemployment has fallen from over 15% in 2012 to 6.2%, or 136,700 people, in the second quarter of 2017. Long-term unemployment as a proportion of those unemployed continues to fall and is now under half of those who are unemployed.  We know that persistent joblessness is more common for women, older adults, those with lower levels of education, adults with a disability and in one-adult households with children. Older and longer-term unemployed people are facing ageism in the labour market, even when they have the right qualifications and work experience.  While the numbers of those at work is increasing there are ongoing concerns regarding the **quality of employment**, including the adequacy of pay. One on four of those experiencing material deprivation is in work and 1 in 10 of those in consistent poverty. In 2015 Ireland had the third highest proportion of low paid jobs in the OECD with 24% of workers estimated to be on low pay.  There are also issues regarding the rise in precarious forms of work.  *Addressing adult literacy and numeracy needs.* Unmet adult literacy and numeracy needs are a key concern for Ireland as they have devastating consequences for individuals, families, communities, society and the economy. Recent research shows that one in six Irish adults (521,550 people) find reading and understanding everyday texts difficult: for example, reading a leaflet, bus timetable or medicine instructions. One in four (754,000 people) has difficulties in real world maths, from basic addition and subtraction to calculating averages.  *Housing and homelessness.*The ongoing shortage of affordable private and public housing is causing great difficulty for many individuals and families, directly resulting in a daily increase in homelessness. In the year to August 2017 the number of men, women and children living in emergency accommodation increased by 25%. Many thousands more are experiencing housing insecurity.  *Disability.*In 2016 only 36% of people with a disability age 20-64 are working compared to 68.5% of the overall population. People with disability had a higher unemployment rate (22% compared to 16% of other adults in 2013).  *Childcare.*Ireland spends 0.5% of GDP on early childhood care and education compared to an OECD average of just over 0.7% of GDP. UNICEF recommends a spend of 1% of GDP on childcare.  *Migration - Asylum system/migrant workers.*In 2015 the net income of non-Irish nationals in Ireland was 18% lower than that of Irish nationals, an increase from 16% in 2014. While in 2015 there were similar deprivation rates for Irish and non-Irish nationals, 24.1% of non-Irish nationals were at risk of poverty compared to 16.1% for Irish nationals. Migrants are overrepresented in low-paid sectors of employment, among minimum wage recipients and among those working part-time or unusual hours. Policies which limit the mobility of migrant workers or which do not promote the recognition of skills and education funnel migrant families into low-paid jobs and consequently leave them at risk of poverty.  *Participation.*The community and voluntary sector plays an essential role in providing supports to the most marginalised communities and in ensuring that they have the capacity to have a say in decisions which impact on their lives, resulting in more effective policy making. However, state supports to the community and voluntary sector were cut by over 35% between 2008 and 2012 with this continuing in subsequent year.  *Health.*There is a direct connection between poverty, social exclusion and inequality and worse health outcomes for those on lower incomes and from marginalised communities. This is exacerbated in Ireland by our two-tier health system. Life expectance for men in the most deprived areas is over 4 years shorter than those in the most affluent areas (73.7 compared to 78 years) while the difference for women is 2.7 years (80 compared to 82.7 years). | The Government is committed to publishing a new National Action Plan for Social Inclusion for 2018-2020. To make a serious impact on poverty, this strategy must possess some features:   * It must be led from the top and involve a commitment by all of Government, not just ‘social’ ministries, to fight poverty. Many of the instruments to do this were spelled out in the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) nearly 20 years ago, but the resources and political commitment to make this happen have been lacking; * Poverty impact assessment is a vital part of this. All major policies, including budget proposals, should be assessed for their impact on poverty and altered so as to contribute to policy reduction at the planning and implementation stages; * The strategy must be designed and implemented with the participation of people affected by poverty at all stages. It must provide resources to support for the independent voice of people experiencing poverty and their organisations to participate in decision-making; * The strategy must ensure that everyone, in work or out of work, has access to a guaranteed income which allows them to live with dignity. Minimum social welfare levels should be set at a level which is both above the 60% at-risk of poverty level and provides people and families with a Minimum Essential Standard of Living. Groups currently excluded from minimum welfare payments, such as asylum seekers in direct provision and young people need to be brought into the system. The strategy must also provide for an information campaign to ensure that people are aware of their rights and well-resourced advice and advocacy services; * The strategy must improve the quality of work, which has been eroded during the recession. This means ensuring that those at work are paid at least the Living Wage rate of €11.70 per hour (for an individual working full time) and addressing the causes of precarious work, including zero and low hour contracts. The Intreo (welfare to work) service needs to be adequately resourced and staff provided with the level of training needed to provide a person-centered and inclusive service; * The strategy must plan for the development of quality services available to all, in areas such as health, education, transport etc. These should also be assessed to ensure that particular supports are put in place to support the most vulnerable and those on low income and facing discrimination. Investment in affordable, accessible and quality early childhood care and education must be increased towards the OECD average of 0.7% of GDP; * The Rebuilding Ireland review must include a raft of new measures to address the crisis effectively, so as to increase the supply of housing to a level which meets demand and ensures access to affordable housing for everyone. Local authorities should build and provide social housing in a planned way to meet future needs and approved Housing Bodies must be able to access finance in a way which enables them to play a key role as social housing providers. Adequate resources must be provided to fully implement a *Housing First* approach to homelessness. Rent Supplement and Housing Assistance Payment must be maintained at levels which meet market rents so that people can stay in the homes they already have and move on from emergency accommodation; * The strategy must be built from an explicit human rights foundation. Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 places a *positive duty* on public sector bodies to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality, and protect human rights, in their daily work. This duty must be supported from the top levels of Government and resources need to be provided to the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission and civil society organisations to support public sector bodies to implement their duty; * The strategy must include a five-year plan to bring overall Irish taxation levels from around 30% of GDP per year at present towards the EU average, which is currently just under 40% of GDP. Without this revenue we will not be able to invest in quality public services and social protection and to address inequality. This will involve increasing taxes on wealth, social insurance, financial transactions and other progressive forms of taxation. |
| Italy | In Italy in 2016, more than 13 million people were living in poverty, absolute or relative, its incidence being broadly stable compared to 2015. ISTAT tells us that “of the people living in the South and Islands about 10 out of 100 are in absolute poverty, compared to just over 6 in the Centre and in the North” and, that in the southern regions the risk of poverty “is triple compared to the rest of the country: Sicily (39.9%), Campania (39.1%), Calabria (33.5%).”  *Homelessness.* The second report on housing exclusion in Europe released by FEANSTA (2017) - the European Federation of National Organizations Working with the Homeless – speaks of an “alarming evidence of rising homelessness”. In Italy, according to the last survey carried out by FIO.PSD, the national branch of FEANSTA, in 2014 there were 50 thousand homeless persons, with a 6% increase between 2011 and 2014.  *Households.* The picture of families in absolute poverty is characterized by the high number of members and their young age, by their low degree of education or qualification and by the reference persons being employed in unskilled positions. Compared to 2015, the incidence of absolute poverty at the household level in 2016 was stable, i.e. 6.3% in terms of residing households (1 million and 619 thousand households, that is 4 million 742 thousand people). Households in relative poverty were 2 million and 734 thousand and in terms of individuals were 8 million 465 thousand (equal to 14.0%).  *Children.* The latest estimates tell us of 1 million and 292 thousand children living in absolute poverty (12.5% versus 3.9% in 2005) and, of 2 million and 297 thousand children who live in relative poverty, accounting for 22.3% of the total population aged 0 to 18. Living in a poor household means not to be able to take advantage of many opportunities for personal growth; few readings, few or no books at home, few friendships, little emotional and sentimental stimuli that affect the development of our children, and thus compromise their chance of a physically and psychologically good adult life.  *Women.* In Italy in 2016 women worsen their condition: from 7.3% in absolute poverty in 2015 the rate goes up to 7.9 while the status of men improves, though very little, from 7.9 to 7.8. Regarding relative poverty, of the 8 million 465 thousand individuals (14.0% of the entire population) living in relative poverty, ISTAT estimates that, in 2016, 4 million 339 thousand were women (14.0%). Many the causes of such a situation, here the most common: unfriendly labor market, being a mother, being alone with dependent children, being old and living alone.  *Young people.* Compared to 2005, the absolute poverty rate among people aged 18 to 34 is more than tripled (10.0% against 3.1 %) and compared to last year it increased by 0.2%. To date, it is estimated that the young poor are 1.17 million. Regarding relative poverty ISTAT shows that the highest rate (14.6%) is that of families with a reference person under 35. Most young Italians only know forms of atypical contracts such as short-term apprenticeships or training on the job.  *Workers.* Labor market data for the second quarter of 2017, show signs of recovery of the Italian economy: there is a growth of both the industrial output (2.6%) and the GDP (0.4% in economic terms and 1.5% on an annual basis). Numbers are all positive, showing an increase in total hours worked, (+0.5 percent compared to the previous quarter and +1.4 on an annual basis), 153 thousand more persons employed and a decline of 0.6% of the unemployment rate.  *Migrants.* According to ISTAT at 31 December 2016 there were 60,589,445 people in Italy, of whom more than 5 million foreign nationals, accounting for 8.3% of residents. According to UNHCR data, between January 1 and August 31, 2017, 98,988 people landed in Italy, the number decreasing from 2016, when 115,075 people (-14%) arrived. At the beginning of 2016 there were 155,177 people in our country with a permit for reasons related to political asylum or humanitarian protection, with an incidence of 4% on total residence permits. If only temporary residence permits are considered, those granted for asylum and humanitarian protection reach 10%.  *Older people.* ISTAT data that show that in 2016 there has been a positive trend on the incidence of poverty in retirees and people over 65 (8.2% compared to 8.6% of 2015). | As regards measures to fight poverty and social exclusion, the FEAD - Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived - operates at the European level by supporting EU countries' actions to provide material assistance. The European FEAD Network, that started in 2016, includes EU level NGOs and EU institutions, national level organizations interested in or delivering FEAD-funded activities and national Managing Authorities. In this first year and a half of activity, the FEAD Network has learned some lessons: it is crucial to improve the provision of food to people in poverty; the work of social services needs to be better coordinated with that of the organizations distributing food; the food should include more fresh produce and less canned or ready-to-eat foods; accompanying measures are essential to lift people out of poverty.  In Italy, the government has finally launched the REI (inclusion income), a poverty alleviation measure resting on two pillars: an economic benefit for families who need it and an active inclusion path under the charge of the inter-municipalities social sectors. Compared to the previous measure, i.e. SIA (Support for Active Inclusion), REI presents some interesting new elements: can access REI those families whose yearly income, according to the ISEE parameters (the Economic Assessment Tool for those who require social benefits), does not exceed 6000 € (with SIA € 3000) and beneficiaries also include the unemployed older than 50. Unfortunately, in many parts of the country the integrated system has never started, in many others it is under great strain. The National Institute for Social Security (INPS), which has extremely rigid procedures and long waiting times, evaluates the eligibility for the economic benefits.  EAPN Italy calls for the adoption of a European Directive that requires all MS to guarantee an adequate minimum income to all who need it. To achieve this, it is necessary to put in place a European strategy against poverty and social exclusion, based on rights and participation. The European Semester could have a key role in monitoring and helping to progress on social rights – but needs to be transformed. It should open its doors to civil society organizations and become a positive instrument to promote Social Europe moving towards a balanced economic and social agenda. The new European Social Pillar should not become the umpteenth and all-in-all useless "Charter of Principles" but a binding obligation. At the national level, EAPN Italy calls for the adoption of a national minimum income scheme, hinged to local welfare systems and supported by a tax reform based on the progressive taxation of wealth. We also underline the importance of harmonizing social policies and measures across the country, ensuring the same rights to all: too often, today, the opportunity to benefit from services and benefits depends on where you live. Lastly, the migration phenomenon which certainly will not diminish, urgently needs to be properly managed respecting human rights. The EU and all the member states must make every effort to: open humanitarian corridors to allow people to migrate safely; create reception systems that do not foster tensions between migrants and old residents; consider Africa as part of the economic and social system of the EU; revise the Dublin regulation to better manage migration flows and offer adequate protection to those in need. |
| Lithuania | Despite continuing though modest economic growth, poverty is an urgent issue in Lithuania. The latest figures show a substantial increase in the poverty risk by 3.1 % up to 22.2% in 2015 (Eurostat 2016). In terms of material deprivation and low work intensity, even a higher proportion - around a third - of the Lithuanian population was affected on average in 2005-2015 (Eurostat 2016).  There is no strategy nor concrete measures for dealing with the growing poverty and social exclusion. There is neither long-term nor short-term strategy to improve these indicators. EAPN Lithuania also believes that there is a lack of more complex approach related to poverty reduction. For example, there is a huge problem of indebtedness among people experiencing poverty in Lithuania. According to the Ministry of Justice, one out of ten people in Lithuania has debts. Since the arrears are being deducted from minimum wages, pensions and other regular income, the current practice of enforced debt recoveries affects the poor, creates “poverty trap” and associates with other problems that cause poverty rise.  Despite growing poverty measures, EAPN Lithuania expresses its concern that the number of social assistance recipients has decreased rapidly over the last several years. A major reform of decentralizing social assistance benefits was implemented in 2012. There is some evidence that the reform has resulted in gaps of social assistance coverage, increased non-take-up and stigmatized assistance recipients. Nevertheless, the social assistance system was further decentralized in Lithuania in 2014. Despite calls to look into the issues of stigma and non-take-up of social assistance on behalf of the European Commission and the OECD, very little is known about these and other drawbacks.  Therefore, EAPN Lithuania has carried out a pilot study on evaluation of the social assistance reform in Lithuania. Interim findings showed that the reform may have negative effects because of strict conditionality which may lead to increasing non-take-up rates. Furthermore, municipalities interest at saving money is carried out at beneficiaries’ expense is a negative aspect of the reform.  Not only beneficiaries are in necessity in Lithuania, but also low-income people earning the minimum wage (380 EUR). In 2014 Caritas Lithuania has carried out a comprehensive study on poverty issue. The respondents were asked, among other, to indicate the reasons for household poverty and 50% of those working indicated low wage as one of the reasons. Therefore, it is necessary to focus not only of the beneficiaries, but equally on those experiencing poverty while working.  Lastly, it is important to mention extreme income inequality in Lithuania, which is one of the highest in the EU. Income growth is the fastest among the most earning people, while the low earners do not feel the difference due to the tax burden. Latest research showed that fifteen percent of the poorest population gained 4-5 percent of the total national income growth in 2005-2015, while fifteen percent of the richest people gained 30-40 percent. | ***At European level***  In terms of EU funds, it is important to mention that a huge part of financing was supposedly used to reduce poverty and to promote social inclusion. However, poverty and social exclusion rates didn’t improve. The funding is mainly used for the development of state-run programs and for the financing of the governmental institutions. There is a clear imbalance between state institutions and NGOs funding.  ***At national level***  Short and long-term measures for reducing poverty, social exclusion and income inequality in Lithuania should be designed and implemented. It should contain an integrated strategy, compiled of further improvements: tax regulation that would be more favorable to lower-paid employees; improvements of adequacy and coverage of the social assistance, further strengthening of positive work incentives; development of complex social services that would more involve the case management, provision of preventive and inclusive services, collaboration with NGOs; regulation of related legislations (e.g. indebtedness of poor people).  More attention should be paid to the creation of quality jobs. Also, cooperation with NGOs should be promoted as they are a reliable partner providing personalized employment services. The role of unqualified public works and unpaid socially useful activities should be reduced as they do not lead to well-paid long-term employment, distort labour markets and cause stigmatization of poor people. |
| Malta | In 2010, Malta set a target to reduce the number of individuals at risk of poverty and social exclusion by around 7,000 people. An implementation of a number of benefits such as financial benefits, as well as measures and reforms have been implemented in the childcare, education and employment sectors. The focus of these initiatives was on active inclusion, empowering vulnerable groups to become less welfare dependent and encouraging those who may be disadvantaged to enter and remain in the labour market, or even to educate and get the adequate training. Statistics according to the Eurostat 2016, show that the total population who is severely materially deprived has decreased from 10.2 percent in 2014 to 8.1 percent in 2015. The 2016 Maltese country report document stated that “Malta is still away from its 2020 poverty reduction target. This risk of poverty and social exclusion increased from 2008 to 2013, most notably for children and the low skilled… New measures have been introduced in recent years to correct these trends.” (European Commission, Country Report Malta working document 2016 p.2) Complementing to this; the 2017 Maltese country report says that poverty and social exclusion risks are decreasing but as stated in 2016 country report the most vulnerable are children, the elderly and the low-skilled. The Maltese are tackling the social challenges and enforcing policies for more active inclusion. On the other hand, the income inequalities are stable and also below the EU average. This is due to the low market inequalities and also the redistributive impact of tax and benefits system. (European Commission, Country Report Malta working document 2017)  Details from the 2014 SILC (NSO, 2015e) points out that 65,987 persons living in private households had an equalised income below the monetary at-risk-of-poverty threshold of €7,672 annual income, were considered to be AROPE. Individuals living in a single parent household were found to be more susceptible to be AROPE. 46.3% of those individuals had an equalized income below the national AROP line. The AROP was also higher in households with low work intensity, being 64.0 percent among persons living in households with very low work intensity.  Children and the elderly are the most vulnerable to be at-risk-of-poverty. According to Eurostat in 2015 the elderly faced a lower at-risk-of-poverty and social exclusion (AROPE) then the overall population. In the Maltese context one finds that Malta (22.4%) is below the total EU average (23.7%) but in both cases of children and elderly persons the Maltese face higher rates than the EU average. Moreover, elderly persons in Malta are at higher risk of AROPE following children between 0-17 years of age. (eurostat, 2016).  A recent study on sustaining relationships conducted among close to 2500 adults residing in Malta (Abela, Calleja, Piscopo, Vella & Zammit Said, 2016) uncovered how income adequacy also has a clear association with life satisfaction and the quality of a couple’s relationship: “Income adequacy emerged as one major predictor for life satisfaction, both for couples and singles… Having insufficient financial resources tended to be reported more by women, single or formerly married persons, parents, and those from the southern harbour region.” | ***At the national level:***   * Adopt the three minimum essential budgets as benchmarks to guide social security policies to determine adequacy of minimum income for specific households; * Give further consideration to the particular circumstances of those who legitimately cannot work. This may require strengthening the social security benefits for people who earn less than the minimum essential budget for their household type; * Uplift the statutory minimum wage slightly, but annually, for a period of 3 years. This increase would be in addition to the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA); * Ensure that entitlement to free medication through the public health system under the Social Security Act (Cap 318 Article 23) and the Fifth Schedule of the same Act is reviewed regularly to reflect a just and accessible system within a sustainable health care system. Due to the expected increase in longevity, consider adding certain medications or supplements which may be required by the older elderly, such as supplements for osteoporosis; * Address with urgency the financial situation of low-income earners who are renting private dwellings and not benefitting from any subsidies, particularly lone parent families; * Develop further assistance, structures and incentives for facilitating access to healthier, fresh food by low-income households, and accompany this by appropriate, practical nutrition education; * Extend free or subsidised provision for facilitating independent living, healthy ageing and lifelong learning for the different cohorts within the elderly population who have a low income or who face unexpected long-term financial burdens; * Strengthen core, long-term investment in community level education and participatory initiatives promoting more sustainable consumption patterns and lifestyles for Maltese and Gozitan families. Develop further awareness-raising and education for the elderly on prevention of health problems and on self-care; * Ensure that entitlement to Education for Sustainable Development and related school subjects, such as Home Economics, are implemented comprehensively from the Early Years to nurture the right attitudes and skills from a young age towards becoming responsible citizens who make informed decisions and take action to promote and safeguard personal, family and community wellbeing; * Establish financial and other assistance, structures and incentives to support social innovation initiatives by individual entities or alliances which aim to reduce poverty and improve social inclusion;   ***At the EU level:***   * Fostering peer learning and domestic policy debate in the European Semester Process; * Give a stronger voice to the European Pillar of Social Rights in all Member States and definition of concrete strategies for its effective implementation. |
| Netherlands | *Statutory minimum wage.* The Netherlands have a statutory minimum wage. However, this does not apply to self-employed. Self-employed are often inclined to accept 'assignments' below the statutory minimum wage.  *Flex work and self-employed.* In the Netherlands, the Work & Security Act was introduced, with the aim of converting more flex jobs into regular work. On July 11, 2017 it is known that a part of the self-employed acquires a good to very good income. Another a substantial part not yet. Furthermore, 80% do not have disability insurance and the majority do not save for retirement. The implications for the individual and society are clear. Getting sick is impossible. In case of incapacity for work there is no income, with all the consequences.  *Retirement / Pension.* In principle, the Netherlands has two pension plans. All pensions are based on the General Age Act, introduced in 1956 (AOW). This is a state pension that applies to everyone regardless of income. In determining the pension entitlement, which starts at the age of 67, for the years that have not been lived in the Netherlands or worked abroad and have not paid into the AOW, the monthly allowance deducts 2% per annum. It may happen that someone has a state pension benefit and also must apply for additional social assistance. The second part of the pension is the self-funded pension. The employer will complete it every month with the required amount. That is different when someone does not have a labor contract, becomes unemployed or self-employed, since they do not automatically build in their self-funded pension.  *Allowances*. The Netherlands has an allowance system. This is intended to: provide a child allowance independent of income and equally high for all; create a system to keep rent and care affordable; additional fees, such as the child-related budget, to prevent families with low incomes from sinking into the swamp. Thanks to this payment system, most low incomes can save themselves. The fact is that the allowances are used to cover the sharp rise in rent and not to reduce poverty.  *Debts*. Every 6th Dutchman lives with debts. Of these, between 350,000 and 525,000 families live with debts, which they can no longer pay back in a normal way. About 50% of them make use of debt relief. In addition, 25% of all families are not able to tackle incidental extra expenses of around 800 € without having to reduce on living costs or have to borrow. People in debts can ask the municipality for assistance, and they are assigned an administrator. In addition, they receive a weekly allowance for living that is determined according to the family situation. Unfortunately, we are experiencing problems with administrators who do not perform their work properly, causing the people to get of the rain into the drip.  *Child poverty*. Various research show that child poverty in the Netherlands is growing. For example, a Platform 31 survey shows that in our country 2.5 million people, including 600,000 children, live in poverty. Child poverty is apparently perceived to be more threatening than general poverty, but it should be remembered that poor children have poor parents. In the opinion of EAPN NL, too little communication with children and young people is included, especially about the effects that poverty has on them poverty and how the use of –in principle positive- extra arrangements will affect them and their life. | EAPN NL can imagine that the Youth Sport Fund and Youth Culture Fund will be an example of something similar within the local poverty policy, giving people with low incomes more opportunities for participation and solving loneliness. In a country where about 37% is single (CBS, September 2013) and the number of elderly is increasing rapidly, loneliness will become an ever-increasing problem. By thinking differently in the construction of neighborhoods, there may be a change.  We are looking for collective forms of care, a neighborhood-based approach to problems and cohesion between health policies, preventive policies, general practitioners and health insurance, and awaiting attitude change towards "prevention and prevention of aggravation of problems."  Tailoring should be paramount and have an empowering approach with sufficient support facilities, in addition to measures taken by the first responsible government, which make every citizen feel welcome and kept fit and live in control of life.  As far as the ESF is concerned, we have now been so far that 20% of the founds must be used to work against poverty and social exclusion. Unfortunately, however, we must note that 1. since the very first talks we had in the 1990s with Mr. B. Pronk, MEP (CDA), who was at that time rapporteur for the ESF, nothing has changed. The use of those 20% is aimed at accepting employment, where, as already stated, many people must first get back into a social situation so that they can make such a big effort. 2. Dutch municipalities had no knowledge of the 20% scheme. |
| Poland | Extreme poverty and severe material deprivation decreased substantially in Poland in years 2014-2016. We see positive contribution of new government policies including new generous family benefit called 500 plus and the rise of the minimum wage, but also other factors i.e. growth of employment and wages. | Our main concern is related to single parent families where there was a little improvement in extreme poverty and worrying deterioration in severe material deprivation between 2015 and 2016. Despite improvement the goal of government policy to decrease extreme child poverty below 1 percent was not achieved. It is still many times more: 5,8 percent in 2016. It means over 400 thousand children experiencing hardship. We call government to prepare concrete and comprehensive plan to achieve the goal to 2025. This plan should take into account access to at least minimum quality jobs, adequate cash benefits and quality services for families. |
| Portugal | * People at risk of poverty rate: 19% (2015) * People at risk of poverty rate and social exclusion: 25.1% (2016) * People experiencing severe material deprivation: 8.4% (2016) * People living in households with very low work intensity: 9.1% (2016) * Child poverty: 22.4% (2015) * At risk of poverty rate for women: 19.6% (2015) * At risk of poverty rate for households with dependent children: 21.0% (2015) * At risk of poverty rate for single parents: 31.6% (2015) * In work poverty: 10.9% (2015) * Young unemployment rate: 22.7% (2nd quarter of 2017) * Long term unemployment rate: 5.2% (2nd quarter of 2017) * Proportion of unemployed seeking a job for 12 months or more: 59.2% (2nd quarter of 2017) * Unemployment rate: 8.8% (2nd quarter of 2017) * Unemployment rate for women: 9.3% (2nd quarter of 2017) * Women working in part-time: 12.5% (2015) * Inequality (S80/S20): 5.9 (2015) | ***At the European level:***   * Definition and implementation of an Integrated Strategy for the Eradication of poverty and social exclusion; * Reinforcement of the European Pillar of Social Rights in all Member States and definition of concrete strategies for its effective implementation   ***At the national level:***   * Promote the development and consolidation of a National Strategy for the Eradication of Poverty and Social Exclusion; * Ensure the strengthening of social protection and support the implementation of an adequate minimum income scheme; * Invest in quality training, distinctive and capable of enhance labour inclusion of the young; * Monitoring and assess the allocation of the 20% of ESF to fight poverty and social exclusion; * Monitoring Europe 2020 Strategy and strengthen the axis of social cohesion with a specific attention to the European Pillar of Social Rights. |
| Romania | According to the Country Report Romania 2017 of the European Commission, poverty and social exclusion remain high in Romania. A percent of 40.2 of the people remain at risk of poverty and social exclusion according to Eurostat data (the highest percentage in the European Union) and poverty is three times higher in rural than in urban areas. A high risk of poverty or social exclusion persists for young NEETs, families with children and people with disabilities. Finally, Romania has one of the highest levels of income inequality in the EU and rising.  The levels of poverty, social exclusion and material deprivation from which children suffer in Romania are extremely high. According to Eurostat, almost 50% per cent of all children are at risk of poverty or social exclusion, which is the worst score in the European Union. Children are also vulnerable to the risk of severe material deprivation. Some 42.3 per cent of single-person households with dependent children and 47 per cent of households with two adults and more than three children suffer from severe material deprivation. These rates are alarmingly high compared to the European Union average of 20.1 per cent and 11.4 per cent, respectively. In addition, estimation show that around 300,000 children have at least one parent working abroad, the category of children left behind being one of the most vulnerable on a long run in Romania.  Labour market outcomes improved in 2016, when the unemployment rate reached its pre-crisis low. The labour force continued to shrink, as the population is ageing and emigration remains high. Low unemployment is matched by one of the highest inactivity rates in the EU. Employment and activity rates for young people, women, the low-skilled, people with disabilities and Roma in particular are well below the EU average. Romania suffers from a high rate of in-work poverty 19%, the highest in the Eu, which is mostly concentrated in rural areas, mainly in the agriculture sector.  Although Romania encounters the second largest share of people at risk of poverty or socialexclusion in the EU (after Bulgaria), the government allocate the smallest fractions of GDP for social protection. The benefits of social protection, in terms of the number of inhabitants, are in Romania almost seven times lower than the EU average. Not only that Romania does allocate little money for social protection, but the efficiency of using this money (measured as a reduction in the risk of poverty due to social transfers, compared to the pre-transfer rate) is the smallest in the EU. | The key **recommendations** identified by EAPN Romania are:   * Policy actions as well as legislation packages (economic and social) to tackle in-work poverty and to support quality jobs creation, in particular green and social jobs are needed; * Improve access to quality mainstream education, in particular for Roma and children in rural areas. (same as the EC CSR Recommendations. The Ministry of Education and Research should support after school programs for children at risk of poverty, including Roma children and provide hot meals, clothing and school supplies to encourage them to come to school; * Policy actions and interventions to address the massive emigration (migration of healthcare professionals, of educators, of youth “brain-drain”, etc. and its socio-economic negative effects (children/women, elderly left behind, depopulation, poorer quality of social/ educational/ healthcare services, in particular in rural areas, etc); * The Government should appoint a children’s commissioner, with a broad mandate and power to protect children’s rights. The commissioner’s office should be adequately resourced and independent; * The Minister of Labour and Social Justice should allocate funding for creation and implementation of integrated social services for children at-risk or affected by poverty and abuse. |
| Spain | In the Europe 2020 Strategy framework, the Spanish government set the target of reducing between 1,400,000 and 1,500,000 the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion, and a proportional reduction in the case of child poverty, before the end of 2019. The statistical evidence shows that no progress has been made in meeting these commitments. In the past year, the AROPE indicator has decreased by 0.7 percentage points (345,000 persons less), up to 27.9% of the population, affecting 12,989,405 people. It is the second year that there is a reduction, although modest, of the indicator.  The risk of poverty and exclusion is similar among men (28%) and women (27, 9%). The most notable differences are among age groups. Those over 65 years have the lowest AROPE rate, with 14.4% (13.7% in 2015). The rate of adults between 30 and 64 in AROPE went down to 27.10% (28.5% in 2015). Young adults (16-29 years of age) have the highest rate, with 37.6% (36.4% in 2015). Children under 16 have the second highest rate, with 31.7% (33.4% in 2015).  People living in households with children have AROPE rates up to 30 percentage points higher than those living in households made up only of adults. In Spain, there are 1,541,7000 households with a mother and her children, in front of 355,700 with a father and his descendants, according to the National Institute of Statistics (INE). That is: 81.3% of single-parent households are really “single mother". In the case of mothers, 38.5% are widows, 36.4% are separated or divorced, 13% are single and 12% are married. In two out of three of these households the parent lives with only one child.  Non-EU population’s AROPE rate is still the highest, although it dropped from 63.9% to 60.10% between 2015 and 2016. The EU residents have the second highest rate, which peaked from 40.2% to 47.30% in the last year. The Spanish population got a rate of 25.5% in 2015 and of 24.70% in 2016. Despite these figures, it is important to remark that foreign population in Spain does not exceed 12% of the total, so that although the rates of AROPE are high in these groups, this fact has a reduced overall weight.  A 2.1% of the population is suffering the three factors that make up the AROPE (2.2% in 2015): Low-employment or unemployment, poverty and severe material deprivation (SMD). It is 1,025,736 people in the worst possible economic and social situation.  The people in monetary poverty face worse living conditions with insufficient needs satisfaction. In 2016, the Survey of Living Conditions included a specific battery of questions on these topics:   * Income: 37.7% of people in poverty live in households which make ends meet with great difficulty; this figure is almost four times higher than that recorded among the non-poor (27.6% do it with difficulty, 22.4% with some difficulty, 9.9% with some ease and 2.4%, with ease or much ease); * Care: 18.3% of the population living in poverty cannot replace their damaged clothes with new ones; * Sociability: 25% cannot meet their friends or family to eat or have a drink at least once a month; * Digitization: 20% do not have a home computer and 17.5% do not have a home or mobile internet connection; * Mobility: 16.6% do not have a car; * Nutrition: 8.2% cannot afford a meal of meat, chicken or fish at least every other day; * Support network: 6% have no possibility to ask for help, if needed, to relatives, friends or neighbors. For all these items, the percentage of people who are not in poverty and cannot satisfy these needs is less than 5%.   The Spanish welfare system has traditionally performed very weakly in the fight against poverty and social exclusion. The increase in child poverty rates experienced in recent years seems particularly worrying due to the possible occurrence of "scarification" processes that may hamper the educational and vocational future of children. For budgetary reasons due to fiscal consolidation, programs aimed at achieving educational success in childhood and facilitating the reconciliation of parents' professional and family life (by facilitating the early schooling of children aged 0 to 3) have been cut. Cash transfers to families also fell within this restrictive approach. | A Comprehensive Plan to Combat Poverty should be put in place, with three perspectives:   * Protection and promotion of those fundamental aspects whose possible deterioration has a greater incidence in triggering processes of social exclusion (employment, housing, minimum incomes ...); * Protection of those particularly vulnerable groups (Single-parent households with children, unemployed adults and those without income or income, households with no income, households with large families, households with widowed and low-income households, households that cannot provide the basic needs of children and grandchildren, households with people with disabilities, with great unmet needs, support for their autonomy, homeless people, migrants and refugees); * Objective (ex-ante) evaluation of the potential (regressive) impact of policies that are implemented at all levels (social screening), in order to avoid negative consequences on people with fewer resources and opportunities.   The Government should also work to promote income guarantees:   * Increase in the number of persons receiving minimum income through the Autonomous Communities and Social Security, compared to 2016, making the income system compatible with part-time or temporary employment, in a complementary way, thus facilitating labour market reinsertion. The goal should be to increase 230,000 new recipients of minimum incomes, up to at least 550,000 in total; * Increase of 20% in the amounts of non-contributory, welfare, disability, sickness and disability benefits, to combat the poverty of these groups; * Increase of 20% of widows' pensions, to combat the poverty of these women, prioritising those with family burdens, with a disability of 65% or more; and other specific situations. Estimated: 2,400,000 beneficiaries; * 20% increase in orphans and permanent disabled pensions, to tackle disadvantages and poverty of these groups. Estimated: 1,280,000 beneficiaries; * Child benefits extension up to a 1,200 Euro per child (0-17) per year. This monthly amount is like what would be the average of these benefits in Europe (and would lift many families from the poverty line). This amount would be contributed to the salaries or benefits of the father, mother or guardian. In the case of persons affiliated to the Autonomous Workers' Regime (self-employed), it could be deducted from VAT and / or Social Security contributions. Estimated: 3,000,000 children and young people from 0 to 17 inclusive; * Bring the Minimum Wage closer to the Average Salary, and not to the Poverty Threshold; * Establish systems of bonus to employment, when the person has a job, but it does not ensure a decent life. Establish a tax credit system for the precarious middle classes, to complete a decent income.   The Government should also provide housing guarantees:   * We also propose an "individual second chance law", for cases of people and families who have lost their home and, moreover, have been left with a debt that they cannot pay. This figure exists in most European countries, in addition to the United States, and would mean a financial respite for thousands of households; * This Plan should serve to combat energy poverty, which particularly affects the poorer sectors. Specifically, the Government should ensure that no handicapped person with disabilities is deprived of their access to basic subsistence goods, such as electricity and gas, as they constitute a particularly vulnerable group.   The Government should also promote measure to improve social accompaniment, by following some guiding principles: improvement of Social Services and Long-term care for dependent persons; fighting school failure and early school leaving; strategy for citizenship and integration of people of foreign origin, and their descendants; strategy against Gender Violence. |
| Serbia | The basic conclusion of the poverty watch in Serbia is that poverty levels have stagnated in the last few years. General economic conditions are marked by gradual recovery from the economic crisis and Serbia has the highest risk of poverty and social exclusion among all countries in Europe in which these indicators are measured. In addition, the absolute poverty rate is quite high and has been at an above 7% for several years.  In addition to the general problem of poverty, there are also some specific:   * Poverty risk incidence rates among single-parent families and among children are generally higher than the national average. * The risks of poverty and social exclusion are widespread among Roma population, especially in substandard Roma settlements; in comparison to general population, they considerably less participate in education, face more obstacles to access social services, their children are more exposed to risks of malnutrition and show lower scores on child development. * The risk of poverty among the working population is increasing gradually. Particularly high at risk of poverty rate is found among the self-employed. * There is a real threat from the reproduction of poverty, since children from the poorest families have lower chances to complete elementary school, and to enroll secondary school. This trend is even more drastic among the Roma population, which results in the fact that only 2% of Roma children reach university education. | * Define a coherent policy of combating poverty:   + Formulate and adopt the National Strategy for the Poverty reduction;   + Link the objectives of this strategy to the appropriate SDGs and targets;   + Asign responsibility to governmental body (SIPRU) for coordination of that strategy and coordinate this unit with body responsible for the implementation of Agenda 2030 in Serbia. * Increase the scope and effectiveness of social protection measures and ensure their transparency and regular monitoring; * Define measures to increase coverage and reduce dropouts in primary and secondary education, enable their funding and independent monitoring of implementation; * Define measures to promote decent work, provide resources for their implementation; * Further work on reducing gender differences in education, employment and decision-making; continue to work to reduce gender-based violence and the equal development of boys and girls; * Include civil society organizations, representatives of vulnerable social groups and people with poverty experience in defining and implementing measures to reduce poverty and social exclusion. |
| Sweden | **Poverty** has grown in recent decades. But it is still largely a hidden problem that is not fully reflected in the statistics available. Most of the above are those living at or under the poverty line but do not seek or for various reasons do not receive any support if there is, or can not get enough support. It is about **working poor** with low and or periodic income, long-term illness, families with children (mainly single parents), poor pensioners (mainly women). Particularly vulnerable, of course, are the vulnerable EU citizens and the **undocumented refugees**.  The fact that poverty is now perceived as a real societal problem in the population is also confirmed in the large-scale survey conducted during the year where 45% of a representative sample of Sweden's population believes poverty is a fairly or very big social problem in Sweden today?  According to the EU statistical body, 13% of Swedes lives in "**risk of poverty**" (2015), and 1.3% of Swedes are living in **severe poverty**. That is, income below 60 percent of the median income.  The fact that the government claims in its UN report on Agenda 2020 that the general social security protection creates security for all and counteracts economic vulnerability is not correct.  A growing problem is those that ends up **without support**, between different welfare systems because of conflicting rules, lack of knowledge of the individual or ignorance the staff, etc. More and more voluntary organizations are those who has to give support instead. In the big cities, Stockholm and Gothenburg, for example, one quarter of the City misson's efforts go to those who fall between the chairs.  The other problem is that the **benefit levels are too low**. Above all, it applies to those who live on long-term social benefits. Research shows that 56% of city missions' all reported efforts go to people who live on long-term financial assistance. According to the Social Services Act, economic assistance is ment to be a temporary support. However, there are many who never get rid of social and economic vulnerability and dependence. Since financial assistance is insufficient to provide a person (or family) for an extended period of time, the individual's material and psychosocial situation is worn down: they are forced to live for the day, and ordinary investments such as winter shoes, glasses or the like can not be paid with long-term financial assistance. The National Board of Health and Welfare's figures show that about one-third of all those who receive financial assistance (which is just over 4% of the population) get it for a long time, and that proportion has increased slightly in recent years.  A specific problem is the housing shortage and the **high housing** costs for low and average income. The lack of affordable housing strengthens vulnerability and further complicates the ability to get rid of poverty trap.  Another complication is that there is a confusion in the general debate about the concepts to be used and how poverty is to be measured. This, in combination with the great invisible poverty, makes it difficult to discuss and establish relevant action plans to combat poverty. This is also one of the reasons why Sweden lacks concrete targets and indications of how poverty reduction is to be measured. | * The government makes a **comprehensive mapping of poverty** in Sweden, which is not only limited to social services statistics but also includes those not always seen in the statistics, for example, working poor, long-term illness, families with children and low-income retirees; * In this survey, they should interact with **civil society actors** and utilize their experience and knowledge. * To develop a **relevant definition of poverty** in Sweden and set clear and measurable goals for how to measure and eliminate / combat poverty; * That the government is investigating the **current system failures / system deficiencies** in our welfare systems and developing strategies that counteract these including clarifying the authorities' responsibility to cooperate so that the individual does not end up "between the chairs", without support between the various welfare systems; * The **social insurance system's benefit** levels are adjusted so that pension levels, sickness compensation, etc. ensure the opportunity to live a dignified life with full participation in society; * The politicians should work for everyone's right to support and participation through work, support or employment; * Low levels of compensation and **social benefits** are raised and adapted to general living costs and current needs in today's society; * That the parliament decides on a **national action plan** to abolish poverty. |
| Norway | **Increasing poverty among households**: from 2011 to 2015 the percentage living under the poverty threshold for a period of 3 years has risen **from 7,7 % to 9,3% (450.000 people).**  **98.200 children** or 10% of all kids where living in households under the EU-60. If we look at the amount which were under the **EU – 60 only for one year** the amount of people **were 550.000 or 10,9%** people living under the poverty threshold. The total percentage of people living under the poverty threshold from 1996 up to 2008 was stable and since the median income decreased during the financial crisis in 2008 the percentage among low income household was actually reduced. But since 2010 the gaps have increased, and the percentage has risen with 1, 6% if we measure the EU-60 over a period of 3 years (2011 compared with 2015).  **Regional differences: the capital Oslo has the highest percentage of child poverty with 17,5%,** almost more than 4% more than the second highest region.  **Unemployment** (fully unemployed, including part-time unemployed and unemployed in labor market measures): Total: 4, 2% **whereof 53%** of the group are entitled and receiving benefits. Persons with reduced working capacity and on rehabilitation measures constitute approximately 60.000 people in October 2017.  **Regarding upcoming policies,** the main focus is on activation and sanctioning people on benefits. Norwegian Employment and social policies **have no Active inclusion approach in their policy making approach**.  **More working poors:** tax deduction for commuting for groups which are forced to apply for work in other parts of the country are taken away from 2018.  **Since 2013 tax cuts policies** have been introduced. An average income has received 0,75 € per day in tax cuts while the richest have received 190€ per day in tax cuts.  **More means tested benefits** as replacement for easy taken up benefits will come next year. More bureaucratic procedures to get access for benefits are a tendency.  **Less people** who today are qualifying for unemployment benefit and work assessment allowances, will receive it from next year because of changed legislation. Since these allowances today are financed by the state, more people will be affected by this new shuttlecock issue between the state financed subsidies and municipalities which are responsible for the social assistance. Since new groups have to apply for social assistance (financed by each community), more people will increase their dependency to the public authorities since it’s harder to access social assistance than the state financed subsidies.  **NEET**: In Norway it’s also **approximately 73.000 NEETs** – Not in Employment, Education or Training  **Housing:** 82% of the households own their own flat. During the last 15 years municipalities have sold out many of their rental flats to private. For the poor people it’s been harder to live in cities because of increased housing prices.  3 years ago we had a **pension reform** which entailed that pensions had a gross rise with a certain percentage and were after the rise it was taxed like salary. Since the pension became harder taxed, the net amount for the beneficiary was almost the same as before the reform. Meanwhile the government didn’t rise the housing allowance limit, so many thousands suddenly received 9€ gross pension more than the maximum qualification limit to receive housing allowance per month, and lost several hundred Euro in housing benefit per month at the same time. Many of these former recipients are now dependent of social assistance instead of living of their pensions and housing allowance alone. | ***At the European level:***   * Definition and implementation of an Integrated Strategy for the eradication of poverty and social exclusion; * Reinforcement of the European Pillar of Social Rights in all Member States and definition of concrete strategies for its effective implementation; * To use the recommendations and targets in the European Pillar of Social Rights to create a framework directive which can enforce all the Member States and countries in the EEA – European Economic Area to introduce Active inclusion recommendations in their social policies and fight against poverty.   **At the National level:**   * Norway doesn’t have an overall National Strategy for eradication of poverty and social exclusion, so if a framework directive could force our government to introduce a right based Minimum Income/social assistance benefit it would help people facing poverty; * Ensure the strengthening of social protection and support the implementation of an adequate minimum income scheme; * Invest in quality training, distinctive and capable of enhance labour inclusion of the young to avoid future challenges; * More flexible pathways to education for young people which can reduce the amount of drop outs; * Our government has to take into consideration which consequences their new reforms will entail. Today our government knows. But sanctioning vulnerable groups and only reward the rich is not a good pathway for future challenges and a sustainable development for our country. |