

RENASIS – REȚEAUA NAȚIONALĂ ANTISĂRĂCIE-INCLUDERE SOCIALĂ

POVERTY WATCH 2017- ROMANIA

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This paper is produced by the European Anti-Poverty Network Romania (EAPN RO) – RENASIS. The report aims to highlight the key developments / trends on poverty in Romania, to briefly assess the impact of the EU, to identify the key issues that have an impact on the poor population in Romania, to make recommendations supported by concrete examples and clear evidence.



Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the **right to dignity and a decent life.**

Nelson Mandela



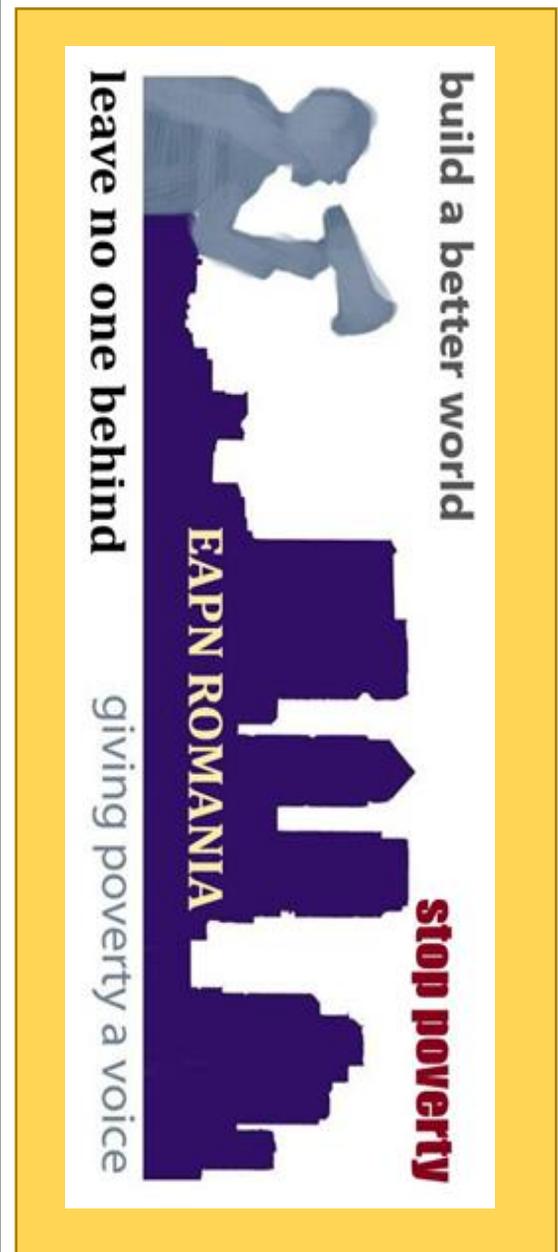
INTRODUCTION

WHO WE ARE

RENASIS was founded in 2008 by a group of 13 NGOs in Romania. Currently, RENASIS has 16 member organizations across the country and is part of the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN), the largest European network active in combating poverty and social exclusion. EAPN currently comprises 31 national networks and 18 European organizations.

The aim of the Romanian EAPN Network is to fight against poverty and for social inclusion by:

- **Strengthening the capacity of Romanian NGOs to take action in the fight against poverty at both, national and European level;**
- **Promoting active involvement of national NGOs at national and EU policy level in specific anti-poverty and social inclusion areas ;**
- **Raising the awareness of Romanian citizens on the principles and specific means of fighting against poverty, promoting freedom and human rights;**
- **Promoting concrete partnerships between NGOs, local authorities, public institutions, churches, social partners, private sector organizations and local communities;**
- **Fighting against the discrimination of individuals/ethnic and social groups/local communities based on poverty;**
- **Promoting social inclusion and sustainable development.**



MAIN MESSAGES

RENASIS considers that persons affected by poverty in Romania do not find themselves in a state of vulnerability, defined only by low or total lack of income, but they experience a series of inequalities regarding opportunities and resources which are vital for the full participation in the economic, social and cultural life, as well as their involvement in the process of decision making concerning life and their access to basic human rights.

The role of the Poverty Watch 2017 report is to promote and raise awareness regarding the interventions and actions needed to eradicate and fight poverty in Romania. The report aims to provide a brief picture of the social situation in Romania and the situation of the persons affected by poverty or who are at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

At the same time, the report presents several measures to prevent and combat poverty and the risk of social exclusion in Romania as part of the main objectives of RENASIS.

This report equally addresses political, economic and social policies that Romania has developed to boost employment, increase the minimum wage and to ensure the financial resources needed for the social welfare and social benefits as well as to provide quality social services, access to healthcare and education.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY POVERTY?

Poverty represents the situation of a person/family/group/community which manifests itself through the lack of resources needed in order to buy goods and services which are needed to ensure the minimum standard of living in a certain period of time related to the socioeconomic state of society. The poverty line represents the quantification of resources and the standards used to determine it are influenced by the general cost of living as well as the specifics of the adopted social policies. (art. 6 - the Law of Social Assistance no. 292/2011, with subsequent modifications and completions).



What is poverty? & Inequality?

Definitions

Measure

Poverty could be both an absolute and a relative concept.

Absolute or extreme poverty

- is when people lack the basic necessities for survival. For instance, they may be starving, lack clean water, proper housing, sufficient clothing or medicines and be struggling to stay alive. The United Nations tends to focus its efforts on eliminating absolute or extreme poverty. The first goal of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals was to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.

The European Union's Social Inclusion Process uses a **relative definition of poverty**.

- According to this definition, poverty is where some people's way of life and income is so much worse than the general standard of living in the country or region in which they live that they struggle to live a normal life and to participate in ordinary economic, social and cultural activities.

People are said to be living in poverty if their income and resources are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living considered acceptable in the society in which they live. Because of their poverty they may experience multiple disadvantages through unemployment, low income, poor housing, inadequate health care and barriers to lifelong learning, culture, sport and recreation. They are often excluded and marginalized from participating in activities (economic, social and cultural) that are the norm for other people and their access to fundamental rights may be restricted (European Commission, Joint Report on Social Inclusion 2004).

Inequality

- is a measure of how resources are distributed across the whole society. Generally, countries with high levels of inequality are also likely to have high levels of poverty and those with lower levels of inequality are likely to have lower levels of poverty.

Until 2010, relative poverty was the main focus when monitoring poverty at the EU level. In 2010, the EU adopted the Europe 2020 Strategy, aimed at guiding the EU towards a smart sustainable and inclusive economy. Among the five headline targets of this strategy, a poverty target was adopted for the first time, to reduce by 20 million the number of people 'At Risk of Poverty or Social Exclusion' (AROPE).

The AROPE indicator is defined as the share of population in at least one of the following three conditions:

- At risk of poverty (AROP), meaning below the relative monetary poverty threshold (60% of median equalized household income);
- In a situation of severe material deprivation (SMD);
- Living in a household with very low work intensity.

The AROPE composite indicator captures just part of the picture and does not fully describe the complexity of poverty. It is important that its three components keep being monitored separately. It is also important to measure other elements that capture the multidimensional nature of poverty: official indicators should be complemented by quantitative and qualitative information gathered by NGOs working on the ground.

To understand “official” definitions better, it is vital to ask people who are themselves experiencing poverty what the day-to-day struggle of living in poverty means and to involve them directly in identifying and delivering the solutions. Their answers can be more relevant than a mere collection of figures:

“I want that my work to be respected and well paid and I want to have access to professional training.”

“My work should be appreciated so that I can have a decent life along with my family, in my country.”

“We work hard, but we cannot afford health, education and we don’t have the security of tomorrow.”

“My children can see that they don’t have what the others have.”

“I have lost friends as I cannot participate in their activities; even to participate in self-help groups needs money and time; I’m short of money and time to participate in discussions.”

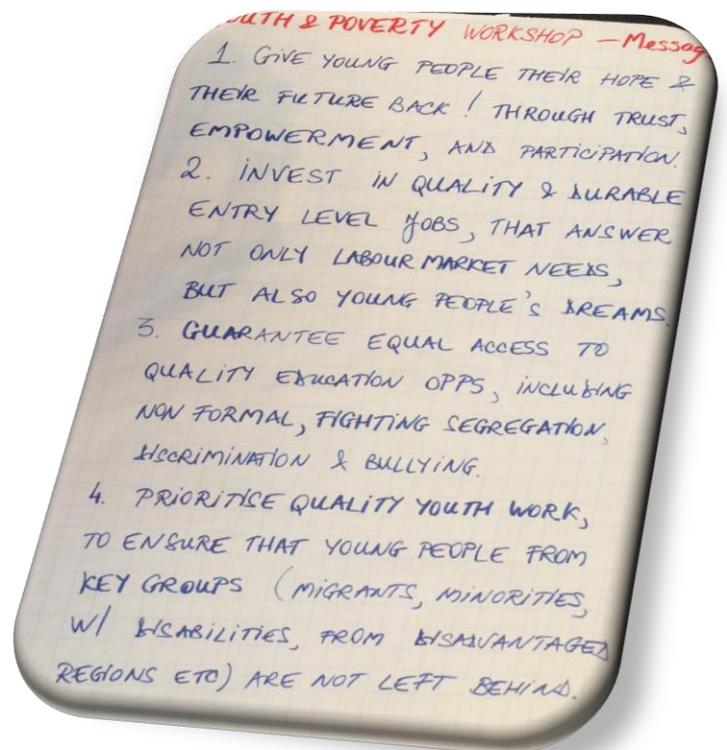
“I have slept in cardboard boxes. I had the choice to die on the street or to take back my life in my own hands. I went to social services to get help to find a house. I was confronted with an enormous bureaucracy. I had to tell my story several times, each time again and it took years before I got a house.”

“The way people look at you is humiliating. You are not considered a human being.”

“I work illegally. This is not because I think it is good - I am fully aware of the consequences-, but this is the only way for me to get a job.”

“The problem is not that we run out of money occasionally. The real problem is that we live our entire lives this way and our children grow up in this too.”

(Voices of people participating in the European Meetings of People Experiencing Poverty)



WHAT IS HAPPENING TO POVERTY IN ROMANIA? WHO ARE THE GROUPS MOST AFFECTED?

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.

Three-quarters of the poor have been poor for at least three years, which means that poverty is persistent. Poverty is also persistent across generations - children born into poor families have fewer opportunities for a better life, partly because they never attend school, or if they do attend they drop out of school early. Lacking the basic skills required for getting a job as young adults they join their parents and communities in informal employment, inactivity and at times delinquency.

By analyzing the rate of poverty by gender, we can see that there are no major differences between poor women and poor men in Romania, with an overall high share of around 40 percent in poverty.



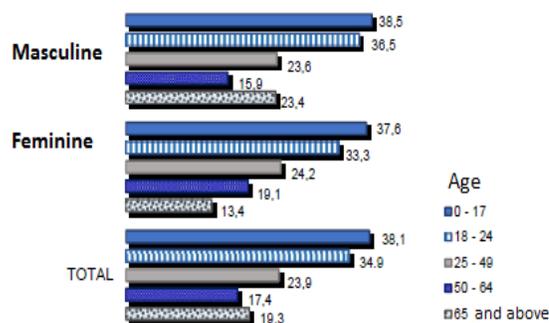
Women
39.8%



Men
37.8%

Poverty by age and sex in Romania

Source: Eurostat, 2017



Source: Dimensiuni ale Incluziunii Sociale in Romania [Dimensions of Social Inclusion in Romania], 2015

However, the risk of poverty is of different intensities when looking at the age group and several other factors. Following the evolution of the rate of poverty by gender, we observe that the most noticeable differences are in the age group of 65 and above where 10% more women live in poverty. Another age group where we find that women are more likely to be in a state of poverty is that of 18-24 (the percentage for women is 3.2% higher). The analysis suggests that almost two fifths (2/5) of teens who are 18 or younger suffer from poverty, thus being the age group with the highest risk of poverty. The age group where men are more likely to be affected by poverty is that of 50-64. The percentage is that of 3.2, the same as for the age group of 18-24.

Although declining, the risk of poverty or social exclusion has been very high, in particular for families with children, people with disabilities, Roma, and the rural population.

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.

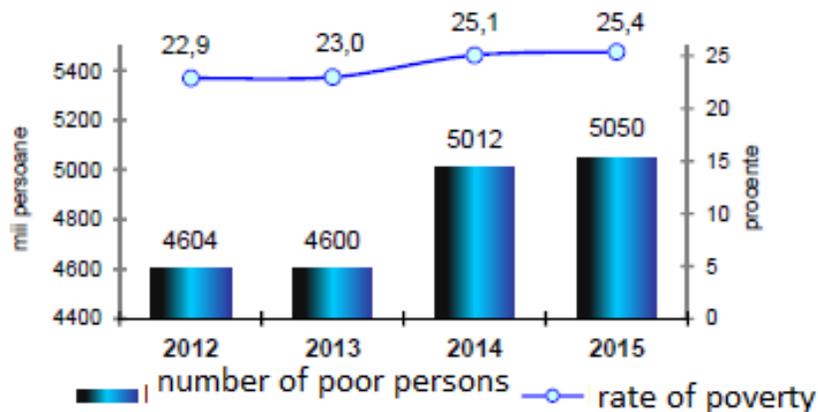
Children in rural areas are especially likely to be poor in Romania. In 2012, the World Bank estimated that more than 74 per cent of all children living in poverty in Romania live in rural areas and the rate of child poverty is over three times higher in rural areas than in urban areas. The absence of employment opportunities for parents in the formal labour market seems to be one of the main underlying causes for rural child poverty. Romania suffers from a high rate of in-work poverty, which is mostly concentrated in rural areas, mainly in the agriculture sector.

The education system is of special importance for those Romanian children living in poverty. Unfortunately, Romania has very low levels of public spending on education. The national education budget is insufficient to cover all necessary education expenditures, thus transferring much of the burden in a decentralized education on to local authorities. This has also resulted in significant “hidden education costs” for parents, who should buy textbooks, school supplies, uniforms, etc. As a result, children living in poverty have a lesser chance of remaining in the school system, which is reflected in the statistics relating to school participation and the school drop-out rate which is estimated to be 19%. The lack of education will perpetuate the poverty cycle and children will end up poor just like their parents.

A number of 57,279 children are in the Romanian state protection system and estimations indicate that around 300,000 children have at least one parent working abroad. Moreover, Eurostat shows that Romania has the largest share of births of first child to teenage mothers in the European Union, with 15.6% of all the births of the first children. According to the National Institute of Statistics, in 2015 there were 15,176 births of the first children in youngsters under the age of 19.

The distribution of disposable household income (accounting for the size of the household) is particularly unequal in Romania, thereby impairing its potential for sustainable and inclusive growth. The richest 20% of the population have an income over eight times higher than the poorest 20%. This ratio is significantly higher than the EU average. Inequalities are driven to a large extent by unequal access to health care, education, services and access to labour market. Moreover, the difference between income inequality before and after taxes and social transfers is amongst the smallest in the EU. The social reference index at the basis of the main social benefits has not been updated since its introduction in 2008.

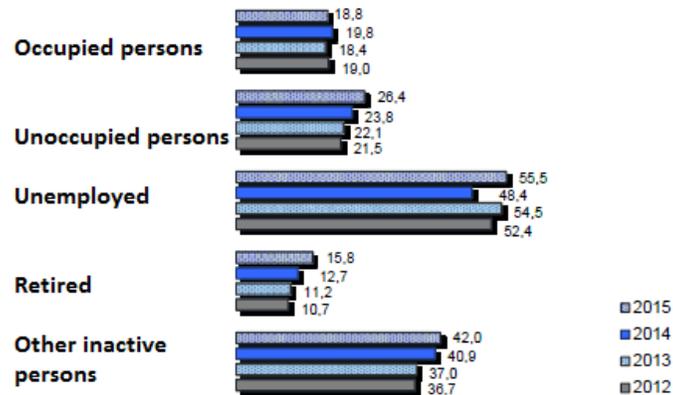
Considering all income per household, the rate of absolute poverty in Romania in 2015 was of 25.4%, using the pre-established level of 60% which is the median relative income of an adult.



Source: *Dimensiuni ale Incluziunii Sociale in Romania [Dimensions of Social Inclusion in Romania]*, 2015

The occupational status is clearly the most important characteristic when trying to achieve a general well-being. This is where the important differences occur, however, even or the persons that have jobs, the rate of in-work poverty is quite high (the highest in the EU). The most vulnerable groups based on the occupational status are represented by the unemployed and the inactive persons that record high shares of people being poor.

Poverty by occupational status



Source: *Dimensiuni ale Incluziunii Sociale in Romania [Dimensions of Social Inclusion in Romania], 2015*

Labour market outcomes improved in 2016, when the unemployment rate reached its pre-crisis low. The labour force continues 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. The number of young people not in employment, education or training remains very high.

In Romania, poverty is unequally distributed among regions. The region with the least poverty is that of Bucharest-Ilfov. The region with most people who find themselves in poverty is that of North-East and the close second is that of South-East.

Poverty by region

Region of Development	2012	2013	2014	2015
North-East	31,7	34,5	36,1	35,9
South-East	31,9	32,2	34,0	32,3
South-Muntenia	22,1	22,7	25,5	30,6
South-Western Oltenia	31,2	28,2	28,3	32,1
West	25,8	22,7	27,5	19,6
North-West	17,4	17,1	20,4	19,2
Centre	18,0	18,2	20,4	17,8
Bucuresti-Ilfov	2,6	4,1	4,8	5,9

Source: *Dimensiuni ale Incluziunii Sociale in Romania [Dimensions of Social Inclusion in Romania], 2015*

In 2016, a comprehensive anti-poverty package was adopted by the Romanian Government in a policy shift toward the enhanced provision of services catered to specific groups of the population. It envisaged pilot projects setting up integrated services in marginalized communities. A nation-wide roll-out would significantly improve the currently low provision of integrated services. Addressing successive country-specific recommendations, the law on the minimum inclusion income should enter into force in 2018. The minimum inclusion income increases the adequacy and coverage of social

assistance. It combines passive support with compulsory active labour market measures and inspections. Its activation potential is modest though, as the target is to reach 25 % of the beneficiaries by active labour market policy measures by 2021.

Although Romania encounters the second largest share of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion 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.

Expenditure on social protection

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Uniunea Europeană	17.7	17.6	17.3	17	17.5	19.4	19.3	19	19.4	19.5	19.4	19.4
Bulgaria	11.1	10.7	10.9	10.1	10.7	12.9	12.9	12.2	12.4	13.5	13.4	13.3
Germany	20.6	20.6	19.8	18.7	18.6	20.6	19.9	18.8	18.8	18.9	18.8	19
Greece	14	14.9	15.1	15.7	17	18.6	18.8	20.6	21	19.6	20.1	20.5
Spain	12.8	12.7	12.7	12.8	13.8	16	16.6	16.8	17.6	18	17.7	17.1
Poland	17.8	17.3	17	15.8	15.7	16.3	16.6	15.7	15.8	16.2	16.1	15.9
România	10.4	10.7	10.4	10.2	11.3	13.6	13.8	12.8	12.3	11.5	11.4	11.5
Sweden	22.9	22.5	21.7	20.5	20.5	22.2	21.1	20.4	21.1	21.7	21.2	20.9

Source: <https://monitorsocial.ro/data/protectia-sociala/>

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.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF EU AND NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS?

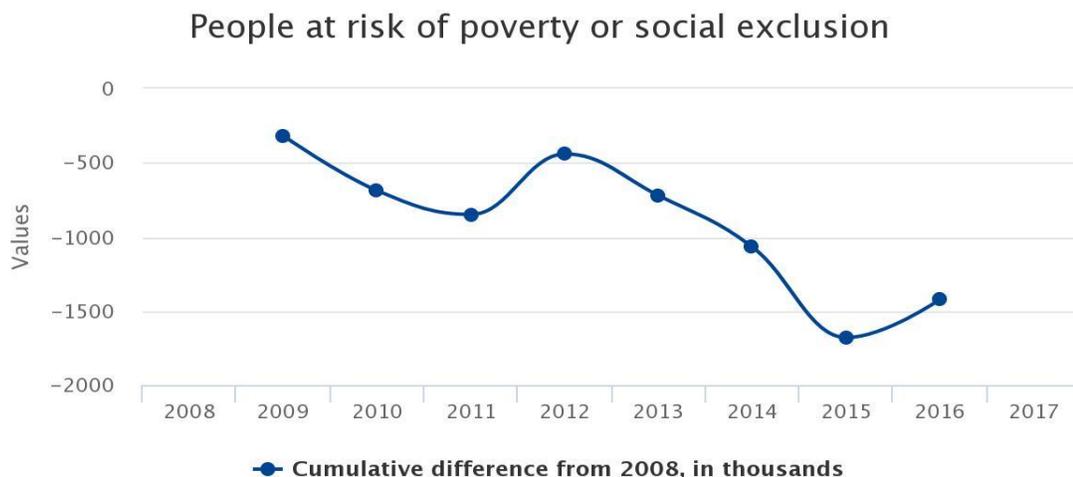


<http://www.craigsewell.co.uk/bim-projects-role-of-manufacturer/>

In 2017, the fight against poverty and social exclusion continued to be a national priority in Romania. The Romanian authorities made efforts in terms of project prioritization and funding for the groups and communities affected by poverty as well as actions and legislation to address specific areas such as: child poverty, access to healthcare and education, support for Roma communities, inclusive labour market for NEETs and other disadvantaged groups, infrastructure projects to reduce disparities between rural and urban areas.

In 2008, in Romania, there were 5 million people living in poverty and the Government stated as Europe 2020 goal to reduce that number by at least 580,000 until 2020. In 2012, the total number had already been reduced to 4.8 million, completing 30% of the objective. As the graph below shows, for the year 2016, Romania succeeded to reduce the number of people at risk of poverty

and social exclusion by 1,42 million between 2008 and 2016, and had already met its national target in 2013.



EU target: 20 million less people at risk of poverty or exclusion
National target: 580 thousands less people in combined poverty

Source: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/>

The Romanian Government targets several groups which are the most vulnerable and at risk of social exclusion and marginalization, in order to improve their quality of life as much as possible. These are as follows:

1. Persons with low income
2. Children and young people who don't have the care and support of the parents
3. People with disabilities
4. Alone or dependent old people
5. People with Roma ethnicity
6. Other vulnerable groups (drug or alcohol addicts, victims of domestic abuse, ex-convicts and persons on parole)
7. Persons living in marginalized communities

The Romanian Government has made progress in putting forward measures to reduce poverty and social exclusion. Romania adopted the National Strategy and Strategic Action Plan on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction for 2015-2020, and it passed a comprehensive anti-poverty package of 47 measures to combat poverty in the country through 2020. Some of the key measures, including increasing the employment rate, reducing early school leaving rate, scaling-up of national health programs and others will strongly contribute to narrowing the urban-rural poverty gaps.

In order to implement the objectives of 2015-2020 National Strategy on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction, a programme with a budget of 21 million Euro (2014-2020 ESF) will finance the technical assistance provided to local public authorities in order to establish and operate public social assistance services in territorial-administrative units where these services were not established (2014-2020 HCOP, PA 4 Social inclusion and fighting poverty, IP 9iv - Enhancing access to affordable, sustainable and high quality services, including health care and social services of general interest).

The negative aspect in the 2017 is the fact that there is a high probability that most measures will remain on the paper or they will be considered overambitious. For example, as most of the funding to support the anti-poverty measures/ projects comes from the European Structural Funds and there is a huge delay in opening the calls and actually utilizing the funding, it's possible that most projects' implementation will have to be postponed for the following year. Also, the level of investing (including social investment) is very low. The longer-term success will hinge on the capacity to effectively target and absorb available EU funding.

Structural Funds are considered the panacea to all the difficulties Romania is facing as, in almost all the cases, the European Structural Funds represent the only funding available to support the proposed measures. The European Funds are the solution to respond to the challenges in the areas of social inclusion and poverty, inclusive labour market, access to quality social services, investing in social infrastructure, better access to education, labour market, healthcare and social services for the Roma or for people living in rural areas. Nevertheless, the level of attracting the EU funds period 2014-2020 is lower than 1%, therefore, the projects and investments are at most in early stages: project idea, project application or in evaluation procedure.

Some examples of projects funded with European Structural financing that can support the efficient delivery on national poverty target:

- As regards the package of measures aimed at Increasing energy efficiency in residential buildings, public buildings and public lighting systems (co-financed by the ERDF within ROP 2014-2020), the call of proposals corresponding to Operation A-Residential Buildings was launched, leading to 194 applications totalling 1.53 billion Lei submitted by mid-March 2017, out of which 107 were rejected and the remaining applications are under different evaluation stages. For the Bucharest-Ilfov Development Region, 10 projects (to be funded by ERDF and state budget) totalling 67.34 million Lei are under contracting phase. The second call is scheduled to take place by the end of April 2017. By 2023, ROP 2014-2020 will reduce energy consumption in the housing sector by improving classification in terms of energy consumption for 128,758 households. Within the Improvement of energy efficiency of households and communities with low incomes in Romania programme, financed by Global Environment Facility through the UNDP, a database of thermally refurbished buildings was developed and 107 buildings were registered in. Because the original application did not fully meet the database design requirements, in 2016 a new application called IT System for collecting, managing and archiving data on energy certification, technical expertise and building design was contracted¹⁵⁴. Currently, the application is tested in terms of inputting and checking the data and the applicants.
- In order to reduce and prevent early school leaving and promoting equal access to qualitative preschool, primary and secondary education two calls for competitive projects were launched: (i) "School for all" – financing integrated socio-educational measures targeting at the same time the family, the school and the community. The call is open to all schools, but disadvantaged ones have priority in the evaluation phase; (ii) "Motivated teachers in disadvantaged schools" is a dedicated call for

highest degree of disadvantaged schools where many children are at risk of early school leaving and which fail to attract or maintain qualified teachers in schools. The schools targeted therein are also those organized in atypical teaching contexts i.e. in hospitals, for children in detention, remote areas, virtual school, and other forms regulated by law. The Second Chance programme will continue to be implemented, a draft of non – competitive project being already elaborated to extend this programme under the Human Capital Operational Program. In terms of developing the National Strategy on Educational Infrastructure, a first draft was developed and a proposal of criteria for prioritizing investments financed by ROP (Regional Operational Program) was submitted to MDRAPFE.

At the same time, the Romanian Government undertakes to assist people and families in difficult situations with a future programme – Minimum Inclusion Income (MII). MII conciliates measures to tackle poverty and consolidates three social assistance benefits (i.e. minimum guaranteed income, family support allowance and house heating aid). MII will enter into force on April 2018, and will be the main support measure to prevent and tackle poverty and social exclusion, including for poor families with children.

WHAT EAPN ROMANIA IS DOING?



EAPN RO (RENASIS) and its members support people affected by poverty to defend their access to rights and to improve their living conditions and also facilitate their access to social protection and quality services, as well as to processes of influencing public policies that concern them directly.

The active members of RENASIS provide assistance and support to different groups of persons that include:

- children (e.g. World Vision Foundation, SOS Satele Copiilor Romania, Human Catalyst Association, Pestalozzi Foundation)
- young people (e.g. Novapolis Association, AUR-A.N.S.R.U., Fundatia pentru Invatamant, Universitatea Petre Andrei)
- migrants and Roma community (Novapolis Association, World Vision Romania, SOS Satele Copiilor)
- women (e.g. Societatea de Educatie Contraceptiva si Sexuala) and
- other disadvantaged persons in rural areas (e.g. PAEM Foudation, World Vision Foundation, CENTRAS, ESTUAR, Meridiane Socio-Culturale Association).

Main projects developed by RENASIS and its member organizations address the problems that people affected by poverty face in Romania: poverty among those who are employed, child poverty, poverty among young people and the elderly, the Roma minority, access to education and the public care services, access to housing and health services.

One focus of EAPN RO for 2017 is to build and develop a space of dialogue so that the voice of people affected by poverty or persons at risk of exclusion to be heard better and stronger both at national and European level.

In this sense, the Annual meetings of people experiencing poverty (PEP) are key moments of RENASIS that provide a framework for interaction among people affected by poverty, and make visible participatory processes organized at local and national level to combat poverty and social exclusion. In 2017, RENASIS developed advocacy actions at national level to draw attention to the in-work poverty in Romania, what categories are affected by in-work poverty and the consequences that affect not only the person but also the country (e.g. massive emigration of youth and qualified personnel).

At the same time, during 2017 EAPN RO implemented and get involved in 3 projects aiming to bring the issues of poverty and social exclusion into the public attention and on the Romanian public agenda, to raise awareness and to inform about principles and adequate means to fight poverty and marginalization, to give a voice to the people experiencing poverty and to empower members of the civil society and the anti-poverty sector in general to develop specific actions and interventions in this areas:

“JOURNALISM PRIZE GOES INTERNATIONAL 2017-2018” project aim to select and



symbolically award articles, journalistic reportages and videos, including online media products and other types of journalistic materials in Romania that show respect for the people affected by poverty and the reality they live in and also those that analyze the social causes of poverty. The Jury is composed exclusively of people experiencing poverty directly, and the prize is awarded for the following categories: written press, online media, radio and television.



EMIN 2 (The European Minimum Income Network)

project aims at the progressive realisation of the right to adequate, accessible and enabling minimum income schemes, through:

- Strengthening the EMIN Networks and Networking at EU and National Levels
- Building awareness that adequate and accessible incomes are not only good for the people who directly benefit but also for the whole of society
- Ensuring progress through engaging in relevant policy debates and initiatives at EU and National levels



"PACT": ProActive Case-based Targeted for social inclusion (<http://www.pact-project.eu/>) project is an initiative aimed at innovation in social services with the objective of designing and testing a new model of care for people at risk of social exclusion in Castilla y León, which will simultaneously combine two interconnected strategies: the public-private partnership and a proactive social investment.

Also, members of RENASIS implemented a series of projects, campaigns and initiatives such as:

- Example of a project implemented by Novapolis Association and World Vision Foundation regarding migrants' integration in Romania: <http://www.novapolis.ro/he-project-integration-services-and-assistance-for-migrants-in-region-2%E2%80%B3-offered-support-for-migrants-from-region-2/>
- Example of action taken by an NGO member of EAPN Romania (Human Catalyst Association) that runs an advocacy campaign so that the School after School programme to be financed by the Romanian State Budget as stated by the Law of Education, at national level: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CkkSV27ZnBk&t=23s>
- Examples of projects targeting child rights and protection implemented by SOS Statele Copiilor Romania: <https://www.sos-satelecopiilor.ro/pe-cine-ajutam/proiecte/>

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ⓜ 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.

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