

Make participation a driver for social rights

COUNTRY ANNEX

EAPN Assessment of the National Reform Programmes 2018

1. Ensure macroeconomic policies promote social rights and poverty reduction!
2. Progress on poverty + social rights with a rights-based integrated strategy/action plan
3. Implement quality employment policies that ensure that nobody is left behind
4. Invest in equal access to universal, free, quality public education and holistic lifelong learning, as well as vocational training
5. Increase EU funds for measures supporting integrated anti-poverty strategies, delivered with civil society organisations!
6. Make partnership with people in poverty a driver for Social Rights - embedding regular, meaningful dialogue with people facing poverty and NGOs

September 2018

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COUNTRY ANNEX

Member's assessment – positive/negative/what's missing

Positive / Negative – NRPs 2018

AUSTRIA

Positive measures

Targeted groups are generally focussed, detailed report regarding CSRs and EU 2020 goals

Negative measures

Often proposed measures are inconsistent with governmental plans (for example health care)

CROATIA

Positive measures

As a positive impression we can point out the same statement as we did in the previous review-it is positive (unfortunately?) that both documents recognize the serious structural problems in social sector in Croatia, such as lack of consistency and coordination among different public institution and lack of indicators when detecting vulnerable groups and almost no progress in achieving better care and protection in addressing vulnerable groups!

Negative measures

Related to the previous statement, the negative impression in NRP is the approach taken towards the social sector. Poverty and inequality are not considered as priority and social rights are not visible enough.

ESTONIA

Positive measures

- *Economy is booming (GDP growth 4,9%)*
- *Unemployment rate is low, employment rate is high and growing, wages and salaries are growing rapidly*
- *left-centrist government has significantly raised the income tax-free minimum - the minimum wage is tax-free (not very much emphasized in NRP, but as I told, real situation is better)*
- *benefits and allowances have risen (but again - not very much emphasized in NRP)*

Negative measures

- *This document is with limited impact. Passed without civil society participation in Estonia.*

- Like in previous year topic of poverty is in with one indicator: at-risk-of-poverty rate after social transfers. The text is almost unchanged, only new data added.
- Explanation of the failure to reach the target is searched excuse
- The implemented and planned measures are listed, but very briefly.

FINLAND

Positive measures

There is slightly more text under the poverty target in the NRP than before, even the text doesn't talk how the poverty is reduced, but more what the government is generally doing around social security.

Negative measures

The poverty-target is not taken seriously. The poverty target is in one sentence also called "strategic target". The NRP says that Finland is on its way to the poverty target, and there is comparison of the situation now, ie. year 2016 and 2020 target, even there would still be four more years more time to achieve the target (if I am understood correctly, the targets are measured so, that in 2020 the target should be accomplished (meaning statistic year 2018, not 2020).

GERMANY

Positive measures

/

Negative measures

Overall the report whitewashes/embellishes the situation in Germany in reference to poverty and exclusion. The "Fifth Report on Poverty and Wealth" of the Federal German Government has shown immense problematic developments on that topic.

The extent of poverty and its significance for the individual as well as the society is not clear in the NRP.

IRELAND

Positive measures

In response to Ireland's 2017 CSRs the NRP covers a broad range of areas related to services including housing, health and childcare/Early Childhood Care and Education. However, while there are some positive strategies in place or being developed across these areas there are major challenges to implementation, including the allocation of adequate resources.

For the first time also the NRP contains an Annex with a summary of Stakeholder Submissions. Stakeholder submissions have been published online with the Irish NRP for a number of years.

Negative measures

While there has been some reduction in poverty levels and the NRP highlights that Ireland joins Denmark as the most effective in using social transfers to reduce poverty (a 51% impact), there are still 16.5% of the population at risk of poverty and it will be challenging for Ireland to achieve its Europe 2020 target or its separate national poverty reduction target.

ITALY

The 2018 NRP was presented on April 26th, in a transition moment for Italy. The old government was supposed to take care of current affairs only while the new one had to be formed yet, taking office only at the end of May. Having been prepared by the outgoing government, the 2018 NRP does not contain a new policy framework and it limits itself to describing the international economic and financial evolution, updating the macroeconomic forecasts for Italy, describing the state-of-the-art of the public finances in light of the effects of the Budget Law 2018 and, the state-of-the-art as for anti-poverty measures. Progress has been made in various areas but it is impossible to know what and how the new government is planning to review, keep, change of the measures depicted in the NRP. This new government seems to be obsessed by migration and no other issue is discussed or mentioned, at least in the public speech. To conclude, we are afraid that this NRP and a good number of the measures herewith described are very likely to become “waste paper” in the next few months.

LUXEMBOURG

Positive measures

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Negative measures

It is still only a writing and editing exercise, it is not a strategic plan!

NETHERLANDS

Positive measures

The AROPE indicator with 16,4% in the Netherlands is lower than in the EU as a whole, but still too high.

Negative measures

No indication that the benefits, minimum income schemes or in work poverty will be tackled

POLAND

Positive measures

*-Development of social economy seems to be important for Polish government there are new initiatives in this area.
-Government demonstrated awareness that relative poverty is not changing a lot despite great achievement in reduction of the main indicator of at risk of poverty or social exclusion.
-The separation of the European Semester processes for the Convergence Programme and the NRP. The first is about macro-economic and public finance issues and is not consulted with social partners at all. Only in Convergence Programme we can read about ‘tightening’ the new child allowance (500 Plus). It means cuts of the allowance for over 311 thousand children in single parent families by including the court order about alimony from absent parent into the eligibility criteria. It means cut by 1.7 billion zł (Polish currency).*

Negative measures

-The separation of the European Semester processes for the Convergence Programme and the NRP. The first is about macro-economic and public finance issues and is not consulted with social partners at all. Only in Convergence Programme we can read about 'tightening' the new child allowance (500 Plus). It means cuts of the allowance for over 311 thousand children in single parent families by including the court order about alimony from absent parent into the eligibility criteria. It means cut by 1.7 billion zł (Polish currency).

PORTUGAL

Positive measures

- The development of a "New Generation of Housing Policies"*
- The reference to the new National Strategy for the inclusion of homeless people 2017-2023*
- The reference to the new National Strategy for Equality and Non-discrimination – Portugal + Equal*
- The reference to the new proposals for a Law establishing a system of balanced representation between men and women in management personnel and bodies of the public administration and parity in the organs of political power*
- Updating of the minimum wage for 580€*
- The reduction of user fees in health*
- The measure Social Provision for Inclusion ("Prestação Social para a Inclusão")*

Negative measures / What's missing?

- The reference to Roma Communities*
- A more detailed analyses of poverty and social exclusion, in particular the situation of particular groups and a reference to a gender dimension.*
- The reference to a National Strategy to Fight Poverty and Social Exclusion*

SWEDEN

The general impression is positive. A major focus is on increasing and distributing welfare to all and increasing equality. There is less overall focus on public finances. Compared with earlier NRPs, there is less focus describing Sweden's economy and finances.

A general remark: The NRP presents a general overview. The real situation for vulnerable individuals and groups however shows itself first when you look at the real implementation of these general policies.

"Equality must increase. The welfare system must be expanded throughout the country... The introduction of newly arrived immigrants needs to proceed at an even faster pace... Firm political will can help ensure that our growing prosperity benefits everyone in the country. Sweden's collective strength can increase by prioritizing joint investments for our future over major tax cuts. Policies that reduce economic disparities between different groups provide the conditions needed for a free and equal society. "NRP

"The strength of Sweden's economy must benefit everyone... Economic inequality must be combated through active redistributive policy. The Government has also introduced new indicators of wellbeing that complement GDP and provide a broader measure of societal development" NRP

However, there is no specific emphasized focus on reducing poverty and fighting inequality, It is more about welfare increases that will benefit vulnerable groups.

Positive measures

The focus is on increasing and distributing welfare to all and increasing equality. An appendix included to this year's programme presents contributions received from social partners, regional and local actors and organisations in civil society. This is included as a part of the official programme.

Negative measures/ what's missing

Specific targets for reducing poverty, as well as evaluation and commentary of the number living in or at risk of poverty are missing. The increase in relative poverty by 0.2% compared to last year's report has no commentary. The figures are not statistically secured, but development is important to follow. The structural causes of exclusion have to be mentioned in order to create a policy that really makes a difference

UK

The overarching approach is much as before, but the tone is more inclusive, quoting the Prime Minister about a country that works for everyone. There is no priority in policy for combating poverty and social exclusion. The approach of a decade remains: work is the best route out of poverty. There are major shortcomings in the ideological framework and implementation of this approach.

The two main policy drivers remain the same.

- *For the Treasury, the fiscal framework is still austerity, achieved by cuts to public spending. This has damaged the effective implementation of new policies with new metrics, across the public services, including national and local civil service, health, education, employment and social security, police, fire and judiciary. There are not enough staff, not enough training, too many metrics taking too much time and too great a reliance on new and often cost-pinched IT 'solutions'.*
- *The model of causes and interventions for combating disadvantage remains individual/ behavioural. Support for the poor and disadvantaged is largely based on interventions using negative incentives such as financial sanctions, reduction of autonomy, removal of rights, e.g. access to certain forms of housing, and removal of children, which has increased substantially. The poor and people with a disability are dealt with as a cost, or in the case of the small troubled families programme, 'multiple high cost', to the economy/ rest of society and the primary driver is to get costs down. The primary underlying assumption is that people are workless by choice, and their behaviour must be managed whether this is through the operation of the social assistance schemes and their replacement in progress, the Universal Credit regime, or the Work and Health Programme (to get people with a disability into paid work), or the Troubled Families programme. On the other hand, business incentives are primarily positive: e.g. the Government underwriting risks of engaging in what were public programmes, offering long-term contracts in energy, housing, transport, health, education and employment and skills, that are in effect monopoly or oligopoly and enable businesses to extract economic rents (i.e. excess profits). There are also many business subsidies; two examples are housing subsidies that increase developers' profit and the payment of 90% of the costs of training for employers whose pay bill is below £3m a year. Subsidies to business are presented as investment, subsidies to people on low and moderate incomes are not seen as social investment but as 'the welfare bill'; 'the cost to the taxpayer'.*

There a continuing reliance on privatising services even where there is no evidence that outcomes improve or are sustained, or cost less, whether in education or in the probation services.

Positive measures

- *There is a clear presentation in the NRP of the facts of low productivity and low growth, though reliance on the Office for Budget Responsibility's too positive expectations should by now be tempered.*
- *There is a further acknowledgement that government intervention can be positive. For example, the development of an Industrial Strategy and intervention to boost investment and skills. But the analysis of causes, the nostrums and the financing envelope are more limited in vision and often in scope. As well, where there is big spending on infrastructure it is biased to southern England. Policy is not coherent. There is a clean energy strategy - the new nuclear plant (Hinkley Point C) is offered as part of that, and the subsidy per kilowatt to the industry is excessively generous, but other clean energy sources – such as solar, have seen subsidy much reduced. Tidal power in Swansea was recently costed in such a way as to be rejected, despite it being clean energy, widely supported and enjoying a proposed subsidy from the Welsh Assembly. The clean energy policy is part of meeting climate change targets, but Parliament has just voted heavily to build a third runway at Heathrow in the south of England. This is categorically not environmentally friendly and may further concentrate growth in the south. But some trades unions including the largest, Unite, support it as do some northern MPs, as a best hope for growth and skilled jobs. Despite talk of Northern powerhouses etc., the Industrial Strategy is not properly developed for the regions nor devolved to them.*
- *There is some recognition that continued austerity is producing unacceptable outcomes, for example in health and social care, but this is not presented in the NRP. Announced in June is some welcome new money (£20 billion over five years) for the National Health Service (NHS). It is substantial but not adequate to compensate for eight years of chronic underfunding or to address an increasing and ageing population and new treatments; 4% year on year budget increase would be necessary to maintain services. There will be dispute over how to pay for this £20 billion; it has been promoted partly as a 'Brexit dividend' yet the Government has said taxes will have to rise. If these turn out to be largely indirect taxes on consumers, they will hurt the poor most. Including indirect as well as direct taxes, the poorest pay a higher proportion of their income in tax than all other groups. Progressive income tax would be fairer. Properly closing some tax loopholes will take international action. But wealth taxes, including property taxes, windfall taxes and corporation tax are revenue sources that have mainly benefited from policies that favour wealthy people and corporations and could be better used to increase revenue.*

Negative measures

The failure to tackle the structural, as opposed to behavioural, causes of poverty.

EAPN has had many small and specific policy asks, for which we have campaigned with others, and we have even won a few. But for many years, EAPN UK has had three overarching priorities that would do much to change the economic and social landscape to make it hostile to poverty, including child poverty, which is rising. We believe a different approach would also improve productivity, speed up adaptation to change, lower social costs and increase social cohesion. These are: i) change the orientation of macroeconomic policy so that it is more expansionary, more social investment-oriented and relies less on monetary policy instruments to make changes; ii) raise the level of social assistance incomes to the poverty line and the minimum wage above that, and iii) launch a large-scale social house-building programme at genuinely affordable social rents.

What's missing

AUSTRIA

EPSR, legal rights approach, housing

CROATIA

Missing is the vision of the structural reform of social sector and social welfare in particular. Current social system lacks the developmental approach and support and monitoring mechanisms, namely there are neither clear plans nor incentives aimed at raising the quality and availability of services in social sector.

ESTONIA

Other forms and problems of poverty.

FINLAND

Comprehensive analysis about how the AROPE is moving, what the government is doing to achieve the poverty target and the impact-analysis to poverty on the measures the government is taken is missing.

GERMANY

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IRELAND

Apart from stating that Ireland has performed relatively well on most of the indicators of the Social Scoreboard supporting the European Pillar of Social Rights the Irish NRP does not mention the European Pillar of Social Rights.

ITALY

/

LUXEMBOURG

Housing, over-indebtedness, adequacy of minimum wages and adequacy of minimum income are not addressed!

NETHERLANDS

A clear indication that poverty is a real –also economic- problem. The NRP states that the Netherlands are doing well concerning their goals for the 2020 Semester.

POLAND

- *Senior poverty and inequality not even mentioned in the part on social policy for the elderly.*
- *Housing poverty and inequality or homelessness not even mentioned in the part about the Housing Plus initiative.*
- *Research evidence about effectiveness of the proposed measures in reduction of poverty and inequality*

EPSR not mentioned at all in the main body of the NRP.

PORTUGAL

Negative measures / What's missing?

- The reference to Roma Communities
- A more detailed analyses of poverty and social exclusion, in particular the situation of particular groups and a reference to a gender dimension.
- The reference to a National Strategy to Fight Poverty and Social Exclusion

SWEDEN

Specific targets for reducing poverty, as well as evaluation and commentary of the number living in or at risk of poverty are missing. The increase in relative poverty by 0.2% compared to last year's report has no commentary. The figures are not statistically secured, but development is important to follow. The structural causes of exclusion have to be mentioned in order to create a policy that really makes a difference

UK

- *The NRP shows no evidence of a social rights perspective. There is a heartlessness to social policy that promotes harsh policies as tough on slackers, wasters, skivers, illegals etc. Government (and some Opposition) language and that of large parts of the media, is 'dog-whistling' very negative stereotypes of low and moderate-income people. Needing social assistance benefits or taking up low-paid work is seen as a 'choice'. The very harshness of the policies, (referred to by the film director Ken Loach as 'conscious cruelty') reinforces a socially divisive belief that to get such treatment, these people must deserve it.*
- *As usual, the NRP states that there is no 'formal consultation' on it, as it contains no new policy; it is a collation of existing policy. It is also made clear that there is no upstream role for NGOs in civil dialogue, the only opportunity is as part of dialogue on implementing policy. This is in stark contrast to business, which is invited to contribute to policy-making.*

Member's Recommendations

Recommendations – NRPs 2018

AUSTRIA

- 1. Gender Pay gap*
- 2. high quality healthcare supply with preventive justification and social approach*
- 3. housing*

CROATIA

- 1. Discourage the early retirement. Consolidate social benefits and improve the poverty reduction capacities.*
- 2. Introduce structural social reform/ benefits distribution to be linked to the minimum standard of services, in order to avoid huge regional disparities in quality and access to services.*
- 3. Reduce the territorial fragmentation of the public administration, streamline the functional distribution of competencies and enhance the capacity to design and implement public policies. In consultation with social partners, introduce harmonised wage-setting frameworks across the public administration and public services.*

ESTONIA

- 1. The state and municipalities must ensure the provision of social services provided by law, but unfortunately are not guaranteed at the present time or which availability is difficult due the bureaucracy of case management. Housing first!*
- 2. Income of older people and people with disabilities should grow! Most of them currently live at risk of poverty.*
- 3. In order to reduce the gender pay gap improve wage transparency in the private sector.*

Brief Justification/evidence of why these are the priority

CSR proposals were:

- 1. Ensure that the nominal growth rate of net primary government expenditure does not exceed 4.1 % in 2019, corresponding to an annual structural adjustment of 0.6 % of GDP. Improve the adequacy of the social safety net, in particular for older people and people with disabilities. Take measures to reduce the gender pay gap, including by improving wage transparency in the private sector.*
- 2. Promote research and innovation, in particular by providing effective incentives for broadening the innovation base.*

But they are partly too general.

FINLAND

1. Decrease the risk of poverty and social exclusion in the line of Europe 2020 national target. That could mean raising the level of basic social security benefits and building more affordable housing especially to big cities. There is extra need for action concerning reducing the child poverty, the poverty of youth and homelessness of youth. To tackle generational poverty, it would be important to invest more to the early education and education.

2. Improve the situation of long-term unemployment (including youth and migrants/immigrants) and decrease unemployment. It is important to increase resources for active labour market policies, especially for wage substitutes and Youth Guarantee.

3. The social and health care reform should be done so, that it would decrease health and wellbeing inequalities and secure good and accessible services also for vulnerable people and people who needs many services.

Brief Justification/evidence of why these are the priority

1. Poverty is not decreasing enough and many different developments and policies (including the cuts in the social security, prices of housing) indicate that it can start to increase again.

2. Unemployment is not increasing anymore, but the long-term unemployment is still very high. Active labour market policies should give also positive incentives for work, otherwise it can also increase poverty of the unemployed people.

3. Social and health care reform is somehow still on its way, but the aim to reduce health inequalities with this reform is more and more missing in action. Finland has relatively big health differences between socio-economical groups. Brief Justification/evidence of why these are the priority

GERMANY

1. A more extensive approach to fight poverty, especially child poverty, and to improve social inclusion must be implemented.

2. Measures must be taken to fight in work poverty, to reduce precarious work, to decrease involuntary part time work and mini jobs.

3. We need a discussion about the income and the expenses of the state: transparent and sustainable to secure general interests. E.g. a reform of the tax-system, establishing the financial transaction tax would help to make more and sustainable social investments.

Brief Justification/evidence of why these are the priority

Poverty and exclusion is still tackled mainly by means of employment policies, suggesting to increase the numbers of employed/curb unemployment. Although this is an important matter it is not comprehensive. Social protection and social services need to be strengthened and social investments are needed.

IRELAND

- 1. The new National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2018-2021 must be an ambitious and integrated anti-poverty strategy. It must be designed and implemented with the participation of people affected by poverty at all stages.*
- 2. Implement a transparent and effective process for the poverty, equality and gender impact assessment of all relevant policy.*
- 3. Benchmark all social welfare rates at a level which is sufficient to both lift people above the poverty line and provide them with a Minimum Essential Standard of Living.*

Brief Justification/evidence of why these are the priority

The Irish Government is in the process of drafting a new National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2018-2021. In this process it has highlighted an active inclusion approach. However, there has been a heavy emphasis on labour market access as the main route out of poverty. A balanced integrated approach needs to be prioritised and implemented.

There has been a commitment to poverty proofing/impact assessment in Ireland since the first anti-poverty strategy in 1997. It is on a statutory basis as part of Regulatory Impact Assessment. However, it has been largely impacted in a very ineffective manner. There is a commitment to equality/gender impact assessment, with an emphasis on budgetary policy, in the current Programme for Government. It is important that this gets implemented effectively.

The main welfare rates in Ireland play a key role in lifting people out of poverty. However, the current levels are not at levels adequate to lift people above the poverty line or provide them with a minimum essential standard of living. EAPN Ireland is calling for welfare levels to be benchmarked against both of these measures.

ITALY

- 1. Migrants arriving in the country are the poorest of the poor: they are not the problem; the issue is how we relate to them. We need a humane and anti-poverty and anti-social exclusion policy that is consistent with our role in the Mediterranean.*
- 2. Progressive taxation based on wealth. The 20% flat tax proposal, that has been tried out in more than one country already, always made rich people richer and poor people poorer (cuts in services etc.).*
- 3. Improve the REI (Inclusion Income) and make it a Dignified Minimum Income. Let's improve what we have instead of headlong rushes!*

LUXEMBOURG

- 1. Take strong action in the field of social housing, regarding both the provision of housing at affordable prices in general, as well as the provision of special social housing. Install strong control of rent prices and a national framework for the municipalities possibility to tax apartment vacancy. And: implement the national strategy against homelessness!*

2. Use the potential of the law on social impact companies to boost employment in this sector.
3. Lead the strategic change process (called "Third Industrial Revolution") in a way that social impact is not only one of the evaluation indicators, but that it is a decisive element in the planning and implementing phases (e.g. the changing world of employment by homework, continuous reachability, outsourcing, crowd producing etc.)

Brief Justification/evidence of why these are the priority

1 is (more or less, with a small update) the same since 2014 (Nr.2), because the problems in the housing sector aren't solved (and will not be for several years). 2 is a logical consequence: the possible fruits of the new law should be harvested. 3 builds on the actual strategic future plan being put into practice by the government but lacking cruelly social approaches.

NETHERLANDS

1. Rents are rising strongly whilst rent supply levels are frozen. That has to be opened again and at least rise with the new level of rents. Next to this there is a hug lack of social housing.
2. The minimum income schemes, including the statutory minimum wage, which is existing for 50 years now! need to at least follow the rise of the wages of the civil servants, which will rise for 7% in 2018 and 2019.
3. We have a hug need on sheltered jobs for people with a handicap or disability. Decrease the number of jobs has to be stopped. This does not mean that the policy to bring people with a disability to the 1st labour market is wrong or should end, but it means that the finalisation of the sheltered jobs is a wrong policy. It has to work next to each other.

Brief Justification/evidence of why these are the priority

These three themes are co responsible for the poverty and social exclusion people suffer. Changing this means:

1. an investment in the financially weaker part of the population.
2. It means what participation means: are allowed to take part and not looking form a distance
3. It is great for the domestic spending and that way creates new jobs and economic growth
4. It will save money on health issues
5. It means that all have the full right to social Inclusion.

POLAND

1. Substantially expand childcare for up to age 3 children with special programs for children form disadvantaged and poor families. Increase the financing of the government Program Toddler (Program "Maluch") to at least 1 billion zł per year. Start the research program about child poverty in Poland.
2. Cancel the exclusionary principle from care benefits (śwaidczenie pielęgnacyjne, specjalny zasiłek opiekuńczy) which requires their recipients not to work. Substantially develop respite care services for carers. Stop discrimination of carers of adult dependants.

3. *Cancel the income test for the only or first child in Family 500+ Program. Make new child allowance (program 500+) more redistributive and equitable by exclusion of rich families (e.g. at income test 1922 złotych net per person in family). Establish clear goal for child poverty reduction e.g. decreasing of the number of children living in extreme poverty from 325 thousand in 2017 to less than 50 thousand (less than 1%) in 5 years.*

4. *Change homelessness policy focus from developing shelters to housing measures e.g. housing first, supported housing. Establish national deinstitutionalization strategy.*

5. *Start to develop a strategy for employment of persons with disabilities on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ground. Inspiration could be the 500 thousand plus strategy i.e. creation of 500 thousand jobs for people with disabilities (proposal of the NGO Fundacja Aktywizacja which main focus is economically activating of persons with disabilities).*

Brief Justification / Evidence:

1. *Childcare for 0-3 year olds is very important as social investment and life chances equalization. It is good for mothers and children living in poverty. Mothers could look for a job, combine a job and care. Children from poor families have more diverse and stimulating environment. As the evidence from Germany showed expansion of 0-3 childcare is good for fertility rate. Government changed recently allocation from 150 million to 450 million zł but it should be much more. Only 14,5% children up to age 3 (subsidized babysitters included: 15,7%) are covered by early childcare. Government does not know how many children from poor families participate in the early childcare. There is a lack of research evidence about child poverty in Poland beyond simple poverty statistics from households budget surveys or EU-SILC.*

2. *Exclusion of carers from work as requirement for entitlement to care benefits is not reasonable. Respite care services in Poland are significantly underdeveloped. There is differentiation of care benefit on the ground of the timing of dependency development. It is more generous (three times as much) for carers when dependence occurred in childhood (up to age 18 or 25 if in education).*

3. *New child allowance is also for rich families but it excludes some low-income families e.g. single parent with one child at minimum wage. There is no clear government goal for reduction of child poverty.*

4. *Government Program Housing Plus (Mieszkanie Plus) is preoccupied with providing new places in shelters which is not compatible with modern approach to fighting homelessness.*

5. *In Polish government development strategy (Strategia Odpowiedzialnego Rozwoju, 2016) there is announcement of the new strategy for people with disabilities. It is still not ready. Employment rate of people with disabilities is very low in Poland and economic inactivity rate is very high. Only 29% of people with disabilities in working age were employed or looking for a job in 2017. Poverty of households with people with disabilities is higher than of households without them. Extreme poverty was higher by 81% and relative poverty was higher by 58% in 2017.*

PORTUGAL

(THE INFORMATION IS THE SAME OF THE PREVIOUS QUESTIONNAIRE – 2017 – with a simple adjustment in the 3.)

1. *The need for a National integrated Anti-Poverty Programme, including specific strategies for specific “publics”, reinforcing and supporting other European strategies (children, elderly, Roma, disabilities, in-work poverty...)*

- 2. The need to guarantee an adequate and fairly social protection system (fiscal fairness) and define an adequate minimum income at national level.*
- 3. Guarantee a democratization of the European semester process and a real synergy with the European Pillar of Social Rights*

Brief Justification/evidence of why these are the priority

1. A National Anti-Poverty Programme is essential, as it is not possible to fight poverty and social exclusion with an emergency programme structured on piece-meal policies with no intrinsic coherence. It is also not possible to detach social policies from other policies (including employment and education and training policies but also fiscal, economic and demographic policies), as the current situation clearly demonstrates the strong negative influence of the policies currently implemented and makes the case for the poverty proofing of those. Only under a comprehensive and coherent strategy will be possible to fight poverty and social exclusion with better and improved social policies that are not questioned and endangered by other relevant (and most of the predominant) policies. We consider that it's crucial to evaluate all the measures and policies that are spread and unarticulated and define a strategy with the involvement of all the different ministries and civil society. Monitoring social impact should be a priority.

2. Although it's already possible to view a positive concern towards social protection benefits (Social Insertion Income; Solidarity Complement for the elderly; Family allowance...) it's important to integrate them in the construction of a national strategy to fight poverty. An adequate social protection system is fundamental to support people who fall into a vulnerable situation but must be an integrated way that goes beyond money and allows an integrated inclusion of these people in a decent work and decent access to services (housing, health, education, culture...).

At this level it is also important to invest in a serious debate on the definition of an adequate minimum income (the conclusions of EMIN Project can be an added value on this matter) and in fighting stereotypes that still affect the beneficiaries of these measures (especially social insertion income beneficiaries) and are an obstacle to their inclusion.

3. The importance of the European semester for national policies (assessment and definition) is clear. However, it's necessary to provide other moments of consultation and REAL participation of key actors, like social economy entities that have a deep knowledge of national level context. But also, the national Parliament level! This process of participation must be clearly defined at European level – guidelines for participation and monitoring of the European Semester. And we must underline that participation costs!! Therefore, enough resources should be available for raising awareness about the semester and for the support of people experiencing poverty in a more direct participation of its design, implementation and evaluation.

Concerning the Pillar of Social Rights is quite significant it's absence from this NRP. It's important to improve the knowledge on the Pillar and its discussion, and particular the reflection of its 20 principles in the political documents and political measures at national level

SWEDEN

1. Combating poverty and inequality by including; setting clear targets, and defining an overarching, comprehensive, integrated national strategy for combatting poverty including an analyse of the structural causes that create poverty and inequality.

Targets and strategies are important for effective measures and possibilities to evaluate the result.

2. Improved integration, economically, ethnically, culturally, etc.

The lack of integration is a basis for lack of social cohesion, social exclusion, negative subcultures, violence and crime, poverty and unequal living conditions, etc.

3. Ensure everyone a possibility to appropriate and affordable housing.

A decent housing is a prerequisite for a dignified life and the opportunity to maintain a work, social and cultural integration, etc.

UK

1. Incomes: *Change the negative dynamic between benefits incomes and the labour market: so - social assistance: end the freeze on benefits and the 2-child limit on child tax credits and reinstate better work allowances and disability premiums; improve system quality and capacity to get people into good work, by fully funding the childcare offer, improving the quality of assessment of people with reduced capacity for paid work and enabling work coaches to focus on positive support; ensure the claimant commitment respects the realities for claimants and cut out sanctions for minor breaches of conditionality: paid work incomes: raise statutory minimum wages to the real Living Wage level, including commensurate increases for those aged under 25; improve access to employment rights and tribunals and eliminate bogus self-employment; support access to trades union organising, especially for atypical and self-employed workers; improve the quality and scope of the apprenticeship programme and address the distortions created by the current funding system, increase funding and support for further education colleges and establish clear access routes and funding for life-long learning.*

2. Housing: *launch a properly funded Housing First programme and amend the draft National Planning Framework document to define affordable housing at social rents and to enable a Housing First approach. Embark on an ambitious mass affordable house building programme to double the number of houses built each year in order to meet the 300,000 per year government target and address the backlog; ensure the proposed National Planning Framework viability testing does not enable 'gaming' by developers around the social housing numbers especially in large schemes; make it legally simpler and financially viable for local authorities to build and manage social rented homes; ensure that house-building standards require high energy efficiency, reintroduce space norms and have high standards on building safety, design quality and local vernacular. Fully fund the removal of combustible cladding from the nearly 700 high rise blocks which have it, right now.*

3. Economic policy: *end the focus on deficit and debt reduction at the expense of green growth. Ensure infrastructure spending does not rely on expensive forms of private finance, that Government takes a lead and has due regard for developing all of the UK's regions.*

Investment: Embark on an ambitious green growth strategy, especially in infrastructure and transport (therefore for example, overturn the Heathrow decision and the Swansea tidal barrage decision, in opposite directions, and reinvest in solar and wind and readjust the feed-in tariffs). Support advanced technology green growth especially in transport, better support local public transport and local authority powers to own and manage it. Provide more powers to local authorities to support the development of local businesses providing quality jobs. The idea of an Industrial Strategy is welcome but needs to be more ambitious and do more to address the future of work and the Government's role in leading the kind of change we want, rather than reacting.

Change the perspective on social security and social protection so it is understood as an investment in quality lives, reducing the costs of ill-health, social disaffection and isolation. Support social investment, especially in care, including adult social care and childcare and finance pilots of new community-organised models of provision.

Revenue-raising; Better growth will improve the tax take. Reintroduce progressivity in the income tax system. Introduce land value taxes and other progressive property taxes and wealth tax. Freeze the personal allowances and remove the cap on national insurance. Reverse the cuts in corporation tax and close loopholes. End bogus self-employment and collect appropriate tax from employers; end market distortion by taxing the self-employed as for employees and provide further improved access for the self-employed to the social security system.

Brief Justification/evidence of why these are the priority

The United Nations special rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Professor Philip Alston, has launched an inquiry into the impact of austerity policies in the UK over the last eight years. That says it all.

Incomes: social assistance benefits for working age are below half of the poverty line – pensioner social assistance is close to the poverty line and guaranteed. Upward convergence is required for decency and dignity. The National Audit Office says the new Universal Credit benefits system has failed even its primary goal of saving money. Wages are below the median in 2008 and in-work poverty is widespread and rising. The UK has some of the most restrictive trades union legislation in the western world.

Housing: there is a housing crisis – a crisis of affordability to buy or to rent - not enough housing supply of genuinely affordable homes, developers who can game the system and build housing that is more profitable but with slower sales because less affordable; rents that are 8 times ordinary earnings, more and more families with children in unsuitable short-tenancy private rented accommodation; homelessness almost doubled in the last few years, the highest ever numbers in temporary accommodation; the smallest homes in Europe, no space standards and almost no design standards. As Grenfell shows, very limited regard for tenants' safety. A shrinking and degrading of public spaces and the public realm.

Macroeconomic policy. Austerity has brought the deficit down – but only to where it was before the crisis – and debt has flatlined, with no obvious way at current rates of growth that will ever change. The cost has been i) severe damage to the current and future standard of living of poor and moderate-income people and to the quality and accessibility of public services and the general public realm. ii) Rapid increases in inequality of incomes if the very top incomes are included (they are mostly not), they have soared away from the rest, FTSE 100 employers are paid more than 130 times their workers' pay; iii) even greater inequalities in wealth iv) few discernible benefits. Employment is at a record high but so is in-work poverty and job quality in the 'low-skilled' part of the labour market is getting worse. There is underemployment and a failure to count people as unemployed who have few hours and would like more. Investment has remained low. Brexit is causing more uncertainty; the industrial strategy is limited.