

Beyond Europe 2020 to Agenda 2030

Working together for a post 2020 strategy
that really benefits people and planet

Short Conference Report and Key Messages



Brussels, 13 June 2019

Conference Programme

8.30 Registration

9.00 **INTRODUCTION: Why the EU needs a post 2020 strategy that benefits people and planet**

Chair: Leo Williams, EAPN Director

- Philippe Lamberts, MEP, Co-President of the Greens/EFA group, European Parliament
- Carlos Susías, EAPN President/EAPN ES
- Vera Hinterdorfer, EAPN Vice-President/Activist with experience of poverty/EAPN AT

9.30 **PANEL DISCUSSION: How should the new strategy end poverty and implement social rights?**

EAPN's draft position will be presented, followed by responses from social NGOs, then discussion within the audience

- Sian Jones, EAPN Policy Coordinator
- Bert Luyts, Advocacy Officer, EU, ATD Fourth World
- Freek Spinnewijn, Director, FEANTSA
- Réka Tunyogi, Head of Advocacy, Eurochild

10.15 **Coffee table discussions**

- what you disagree with/what's missing
- feedback session
- summing up by the chair

11.15 *Coffee break*

11.30 **ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION: How should the new strategy ensure synergies for people and planet?**

Inputs from social & environmental NGOs and Trade Unions, then discussion with the audience

- Leida Rijnhout, Steering Group member of SDG Watch and Agenda 2030 Multi-Stakeholder Platform
- Mary Collins, Senior Policy & Advocacy Coordinator, European Women's Lobby
- Graciela Malgesini, Chair of EAPN EU Inclusion Strategies Group/EAPN ES
- Marco Cilento, Senior Advisor, ETUC

12.15 **Discussion with the audience**

- buzz exchanges with tables preparing a question
- presenting questions and exchange with panel

12.45 **CONCLUSIONS & WRAPPING UP**

- First Vice-President of the European Parliament, Mairead McGuinness video
- Jiří Švarc, Head of Unit for Social Investment Strategy, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission
- Leo Williams, EAPN Director

Introduction

2020 marks the end of the Europe 2020 strategy that aimed to promote smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. It was notable for adopting 5 key targets, 1 of which was a poverty target, to reduce those in poverty by at least 20 million people by 2020. However, despite the unacceptable failure to deliver on this key target (only a 5 million reduction by 2017), no review or public consultation of the strategy is planned.

The main proposals coming from the Commission are through the **Future of Europe** Reflection papers. In January 2019, a new Reflection Paper, "[Towards a sustainable Europe by 2030](#)", was adopted. This paper aims to stimulate discussion on the EU's vision and strategy for the long-term implementation of the Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as part of a broader debate on the future of Europe and the priority setting for the new European Commission. This paper sets out **three scenarios on how Agenda 2030 and the SDGs could be incorporated into the EU's priorities:**

1st scenario proposes an overarching SDG strategy to act as a 'compass' with strategic action coordinated with Member States including concrete and time-bound targets, a 'sustainability first principle' on regulation, coordination of national reporting and monitoring through the European Semester, with a key role for the Multi-stakeholder platform.

2nd scenario proposes continued mainstreaming of the SDGs in all relevant EU policies, but not enforcing Member State Action. This would "guide the development of the post EU-2020 growth strategy focusing on areas of EU value added, e.g. circular economy, climate."

3rd scenario proposes putting an enhanced focus on EU external action, i.e. mainstreaming SDGs in EU external policies, reporting to UN process.

One of the priorities is **a socially fair transition to a sustainable economy that should leave no one behind**¹, however the paper predominantly focuses on how to deliver green growth, with the social objectives left to the European Pillar of Social Rights. It also falls short of the ambition to deliver the transformative Agenda 2030 vision: "*This Agenda is a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity. It also seeks to strengthen universal peace in larger freedom. We recognise that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. All countries and all stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership, will implement this plan.*"

In 2017, EAPN's policy conference "Learning from the past to beyond Europe 2020" already agreed **key messages**² on the need for an ambitious post 2020 built on Europe 2020 targets that could deliver an "ambitious social, sustainable and democratic vision for Europe based on Agenda 2030 and the SDGs." This strategy should implement the European Pillar of Social Rights and develop an explicit rights-based integrated anti-poverty strategy based on active participation and backed by EU funding. This has been further developed under EAPN's Future of Europe Position Paper, calling for support for a sixth scenario. This participative conference came, therefore, at a timely moment – just after the election of the new European Parliament and before the start of the new Commission, to agree concrete demands that can ensure that the post 2020 strategy really delivers on social rights and poverty, putting SDG 1 at the heart of a truly social and sustainable post 2020 strategy.

¹ This priority highlights need for social investments in education, training, lifelong learning, working conditions, health and long-term care, social inclusion and gender equality.

² [Key Messages from 2017 EAPN Conference: Learning from the past to beyond Europe 2020.](#)

Conference Objectives

- To raise awareness of current challenges facing people experiencing poverty in the context of a lacking strategy.
- To exchange with stakeholders & decision-makers on concrete proposals for the EU post 2020 Strategy.
- To debate on how to create synergies to benefit people and planet, as part of a transformative EU and in the context of the new Commission and Parliament.

The event was lively and well attended by over 100 participants, including 80 EAPN members from 31 National Networks, including people with direct experience of poverty and European Organisation members, as well as key stakeholders and decision-makers from the European Commission, Council and Parliament. The format was participative, interspersing speaker panels with interactive ‘World Café’-style table exchanges, facilitated by EAPN experts.

INTRODUCTION: Why the EU needs a post 2020 strategy that benefits people and planet

The conference was opened and chaired by **Leo Williams, EAPN Director**, who welcomed all and clarified that the conference was aimed at identifying positive proposals which create mutually reinforcing synergies between environmental and social justice, in the context of the new EU institutions.

The discussion was then kicked off by guest speaker **Philippe Lamberts MEP, Co-President of the Greens / EFA Group in the European Parliament**. He highlighted shortcomings in reaching the Europe 2020 poverty reduction target, attributing it to flexibilisation of the labour market and tax policies benefitting the rich. What is needed is a four-pronged approach, privileging equality, ecological footprint, public health, and civil liberties, while economic considerations can’t override any of the four elements. *“There is an environmental time bomb, and an inequality time bomb, and we need to deal with both”*.

Carlos Susías, EAPN President (EAPN ES), lamented the lack of intention to evaluate the Europe 2020 strategy, because poverty numbers are still too high. He highlighted how austerity measures following the economic crisis have worsened the social situation on the continent, and pleaded for a strong European Parliament, working closely with stakeholders, including civil society, as well as other institutions, to promote the right to live in dignity for all, as codified by the Charter of Fundamental Rights, and reinforced by the European Pillar of Social Rights.

Vera Hinterdofer, EAPN Vice-President (EAPN AT) and activist with direct experience of poverty lamented that those facing hardship and exclusion every day are forgotten, and that basic needs which other take for granted – food, shelter, access to medical care – are not met. She also stressed the need for adequate minimum income schemes, based on reference budgets, as well as quality jobs, which actually take people out of poverty. True partnerships with people experiencing poverty and their NGOs are also needed. *“The strength of a society is reflected in the welfare of its weakest”*.

PANEL DISCUSSION: How should the new strategy end poverty and implement social rights?

The panel explored how should the new strategy end poverty and implement social rights, using as basis for discussion EAPN's position and NGOs' inputs.

Sian Jones, EAPN Policy Coordinator, presented EAPN's arguments for the need for a rights-based social and sustainable EU strategy, that would achieve real progress on poverty reduction, curbing inequalities, and promoting wellbeing. Such a strategy would build on the Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the European Pillar of Social Rights. It would also include four key priorities: 1. Achieving poverty eradication and increasing well-being; 2. Political pre-requisites to achieve results; 3. Embedding participation and transforming EU coordination instruments; 4. EU funds to support the strategy. See full [PowerPoint](#) presentation for more details.

Bert Luyts, EU Advocacy Officer, ATD Fourth World, echoed that the Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals were an important framework, with a renewed ambition to end poverty, not just reduce it, and to leave no one behind. A holistic approach is needed to tackle poverty and all its aspect – insufficient income, lack of decent work, material and social deprivation, institutional exclusion, unrecognized contributions. See full [PowerPoint](#) presentation for more details.

Freek Spinnewijn, FEANTSA Director, stated that the European Semester, while a process that can be improved, is a very necessary tool, which features more openness in the Country-Specific Recommendations, for example on housing-related issues. The Semester is also the framework that drives investment priorities, which makes it very relevant. He concluded by stating that the European Commission needed to translate the Sustainable Development Goals into a concrete Action Plan, and that it was also up to civil society to follow up on this and put pressure.

Réka Tunyogi, Head of Advocacy, Eurochild, added that much more is needed in Europe in order to fight child poverty and fully implement the 2013 Investing in Children Recommendation. Children need to be acknowledged as a priority, even receiving their own Commissioner. She also highlighted the Multiannual Financial Framework as a good instrument, including the new Annex D of the Country Reports, which asks countries to have an integrated anti-poverty strategy, which needs to have involved civil society, in order to access Structural Funds.

Coffee table discussions

Participants were split in 11 discussion tables, each featuring two discussion questions. For the full proceedings of the exchanges, please see the annex of this Report.

Table 1

- Theme 1a: ***An ambitious EU poverty target with mid-term review***
- Theme 1b: ***Effective poverty indicators and social scoreboard***

Table 2

- Theme 1c: ***A rights-based integrated antipoverty strategy, beyond employment***
- Theme 1d: ***Urgent action to guarantee minimum income and social protection***

Table 3

- Theme 1e: **Concrete results on all social rights**
- Theme 1a: **An ambitious EU poverty target with mid-term review**

Table 4

- Theme 2a: **High-level political commitment**
- Theme 2b: **Making well-being the goal: rebalancing economic / social / environment**

Table 5

- Theme 3a: **A participative, social and sustainable European Semester**
- Theme 3b: **Make civil society equal partners**

Table 6

- Theme 4a: **Increase effectiveness of EU funds spending on poverty reduction**
- Theme 3a: **A participative, social and sustainable European Semester**

Table 7

- Theme 1a: **An ambitious EU poverty target with mid-term review**
- Theme 1b: **Effective poverty indicators and social scoreboard**

Table 8

- Theme 1c: **A rights-based integrated antipoverty strategy, beyond employment**
- Theme 1d: **Urgent action to guarantee minimum income and social protection**

Table 9

- Theme 1e: **Concrete results on all social rights**
- Theme 4a: **Increase effectiveness of EU funds spending on poverty reduction**

Table 10

- Theme 2a: **High-level political commitment**
- Theme 2b: **Making well-being the goal: rebalancing economic/social/environment**

Table 11

- Theme 3a: **A participative, social and sustainable European Semester**
- Theme 3b: **Make civil society equal partners**

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION:

How should the new strategy ensure synergies for people and planet?

Leida Rijnhout, Steering Group member of SDG Watch and Agenda 2030 Multi-Stakeholder Platform, highlighted that a “*paradigm shift*” is needed in our society, although it is often not happening: “*To have synergies is to make it more political and go for a system change*”, she said expressing skepticism about the neoliberal ideology. She continued expressing concerns also about participation: “*If the objective is to achieve real participation of civil society and grassroot organisations, consistent funding is crucial*” and online consultations are not providing the opportunity to engage in real dialogue, only giving the illusion that everybody can have a voice in the processes.

Mary Collins, Senior Policy & Advocacy Coordinator at European Women’s Lobby, emphasised that, back in 2010, Europe 2020 had completely ignored any gender dimension, therefore huge gaps were still there: the coming 10-year strategy must address those discrepancies. It may be worth mentioning a gender pay gap on average of 60% and a gender pension gap of almost 40%. For her organisation, though, the key question for the future is another, namely: *“How will we ensure that the economic framework embraces Agenda 2030, bringing together a coherent package?”*, she asked. As model and inspiration for the EU, she mentioned the case of New Zealand, where a *well-being budget* has been put forward. Moreover, also the intention expressed by the Finnish Presidency to prioritise well-being is encouraging. She concluded reaffirming that what is needed is a holistic approach for the next 10-year strategy, bringing together social rights, environment and economy.

Graciela Malgesini, Chair of EAPN EU Inclusion Strategies Group/EAPN ES, started her intervention by referring to the 1992 Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit, where the term “sustainability” appeared for the first time. In particular, she stated that *“we need to work on what we have, namely a local agenda called Agenda 21, and if we don’t like it, we should change it”*. Furthermore, she underlined that it is fundamental to work on a win-win approach and on a global dialogue on social rights, avoiding a disconnection between environmental sustainability and social justice. We should make sure that the green transition does not harm poor people and their territories, who have less resources to face climate changes. *“Poverty is not abstract, it has a face, often of a woman and of a single-parent”*, she said; and the jobs of the future must be both decent *and sustainable*, for instance avoiding energy poverty traps.

Marco Cilento, Senior Advisor at ETUC, pointed out that the next challenge is to improve the quality of jobs but at the same time implementing a just, right-based sustainability transition. Workers and employers will play a great role in it, but a constructive dialogue and a shared cultural change will be crucial premises for a non-harmful flexibilisation and reorganisation of production. He mentioned how the current unfavourable situation of the labour market, with workers concerned about their future and the technological transition, is characterised on the one hand by raising employment rates but on the other hand by a reduced quality of jobs. Furthermore, collective bargaining has been destroyed in several countries, with wage stagnation as an effect: to counter these trends, regulating multinational corporations is a paramount point, first and foremost regarding working contracts. According to him, also the role of the State is crucial: a minimum level of income should come together with investment in public employment services and a fight against tax elusion.

Discussion with the audience

During the discussion with the audience, a question on how to bridge a sort of *linguistic gap* between European institutions and real people on the ground was raised. In this regard, the importance of communicating personal stories of people experiencing poverty to policy makers was reaffirmed. From the public, the question whether the SDGs should be translated into a European framework was then proposed, and the speakers agreed on the fact that the EU should develop the next strategy bringing as much as possible of the objectives and benchmarks of the Agenda 2030 into it. Among the attendants, the issues of access to sustainable and accessible food for all, of energy poverty and the need to combine the social and the environmental to design good policies were also referred to: a holistic approach and the need to challenge the neoliberal model were presented as a path towards more equality, reminding that huge amounts of wealth are available, but with unequal distribution.

Conclusions and Wrapping Up

Mairead McGuinness, first Vice-President of the European Parliament, sent a video message, stressing that, while Europe was trying to work more and more on the social dimension, further support to people and families and a better coordination were needed, especially in times of crises and difficulties. *“Our common objective is a more equal society, and towards this goal education and opportunities are key issues.”* See [full video intervention](#). **Jiří Švarc, Head of Unit for Social Investment Strategy, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion of the European Commission**, highlighted the importance of understanding to what extent growth was inclusive. While the risk of poverty and social exclusion was high in many Member States, in-work poverty had been on rise, income polarisation was widening, there were both risks and opportunities in the job market. A challenging task is to interpret data being careful in terms of aggregation and averages. Finally, he highlighted the role of civil society, suggesting that, to be successful in addressing poverty, stakeholders should make sure that a social perspective is mainstreamed in all policies. **Carlos Susías, EAPN President / EAPN ES**, echoed the point that civil society and EAPN must keep fighting in a determined way for eradicating poverty and social exclusion in Europe, so that no one is left behind. Agenda 2030 and the European Pillar of Social Rights can be a guide towards this goal, and the European institutions must give a strong commitment to citizens and people experiencing poverty, since it is unacceptable that 113 million people are still at risk of poverty and social exclusion in the EU. Austerity must end, and the participation of civil society enhanced – he concluded.

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