

DELIVERING AGENDA 2030 FOR PEOPLE AND PLANET

EAPN Proposals for a Post Europe 2020 strategy

September 2019

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Delivering Agenda 2030 – for People and Planet

EAPN proposals for a post Europe 2020 strategy

Executive summary

The Europe 2020 Strategy set out to achieve ‘smart, sustainable and inclusive growth’ with a vital new target to reduce poverty by at least 20 million. However, the target has not been achieved and today 113 million people are still at risk of poverty. Whilst the European Pillar of Social Rights is an important new social initiative it remains a framework of principles, not obligatory rights, and is not demonstrably achieving concrete improvements for people’s lives.

Priority too often has been given to economic goals of Stability and Growth justifying devastating cuts to welfare states that generate more poverty and inequality, fuelling disillusionment with national and EU governments. Meanwhile the planet is in crisis and governments have failed to act on their promises.

Whilst the European Semester has become more ‘social’, it continues to prioritize growth over social rights, reducing poverty and inequality. Moreover, people who are suffering most, and their NGOs, are not being engaged effectively in decision-making processes as equal stakeholders. A radical new agenda and participative process is necessary to achieve real improvements for people and planet, building on the learning from Europe 2020.

The new Commission and EU institutions now have a crucial opportunity to launch a new strategy to promote effective rights-based social and sustainable development, underpinned by Agenda 2030, the SDGs and the Social Pillar. As underlined by Agenda 2030, the eradication of poverty and social exclusion must be a pre-requisite, together with promoting well-being and reducing inequalities. This will require a concrete integrated strategy to fight poverty including a new ambitious poverty target and action plan to implement social rights.

Most importantly it will need high-level political commitment and a paradigm shift away from austerity, replacing the Stability Pact with a Well-being Pact, ensuring a just transition that leaves nobody behind, and prioritising guaranteeing rights through social investment in quality minimum income and social protection, public services and jobs. Increasing redistribution will be essential to reduce inequalities and finance welfare states through tackling tax evasion and avoidance and promoting more progressive, fairer tax systems.

The European Semester must reflect this shift and become a social and sustainable Semester, rebalancing economic, environmental and social goals, putting the participation of civil society and people experiencing poverty at the heart as equal partners. Most importantly, the new strategy must deliver tangible results for people and planet!

This paper sets out 4 key EAPN priorities for the new strategy with concrete recommendations:

5.1 ACHIEVING POVERTY ERADICATION AND INCREASING WELL-BEING

- **A rights-based integrated anti-poverty strategy, beyond employment**
- **An ambitious EU Poverty Target, with mid-term review**
- **Effective Poverty Indicators and Social Scoreboard**
- **Urgent action to guarantee adequate Minimum Income and Social Protection**
- **Concrete results on other social rights – particularly quality work, education and services including housing and health.**

5.2 POLITICAL PRE-REQUISITES TO ACHIEVE RESULTS

- **High-level political commitment**
- **Making well-being the goal – rebalancing the economic/social/environmental objectives.**

5.3 EMBEDDING PARTICIPATION AND TRANSFORMING EU COORDINATION INSTRUMENTS

- **A participative, social and sustainable European Semester**
- **Making Civil Society equal partners**

5.4 MOBILISING EU FUNDS TO SUPPORT THE ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY

- **Increase effectiveness of EU funds spending on poverty reduction**

1. WHY THE EU NEEDS A RIGHTS-BASED, SOCIAL AND SUSTAINABLE STRATEGY

- **The Europe 2020 strategy set out to achieve “smart, sustainable and inclusive growth”, but failed to deliver concrete results that improved people’s lives.** The new post 2020 strategy offers a key opportunity to make a real difference to people and planet.
- **The poverty target failed to deliver on its promises of a reduction of at least 20 million people, indeed increasing to 123 million** during the crisis, exacerbated by austerity measures. Today, 113 million people still face a risk of poverty, over a 1/3 in some Member States, whilst many groups face worse challenges. However, the target did ensure a political focus on poverty in the EU agenda, supported by EU funds.
- **Europe 2020 prioritised Stability and Growth, justifying devastating cuts to welfare states.** This generated more poverty and inequality, whilst wealth increased for the top 1%. The EU is too often seen as defending the interests of the market/businesses rather than the people it aims to serve.
- **Whilst the European Pillar of Social Rights is an important social initiative, it remains a framework of principles not obligatory rights,** without an implementation plan. The risk is that it remains on the side-lines rather than at the heart of the new strategy.
- **Our planet is in crisis, but governments have failed to act on their promises!** A ‘just transition’ is vital, including tackling the social impact for poorer regions and people. However social goals must not be secondary to environmental goals, but equal and mutually reinforcing priorities.
- **“Smart, sustainable and inclusive growth” cannot deliver for people and planet!** The current market-led growth model, with an overarching reliance on GDP, is simply unsustainable. Europe must learn lessons from Europe 2020, the financial crisis, and from New Zealand’s ‘beyond GDP’ approach, and put social and environmental justice at the heart of policy and spending decisions, making well-being the overarching aim.
- **Participation has to be central:** engaging people who face poverty and the NGOs that support them, at all stages to deliver real results. This should start with a participative process to develop the new strategy, following the example set by the SDGs and Agenda 2030.
- **The EU must launch a participative consultation process to build a social and sustainable development strategy that increases well-being, puts people and planet before growth, and makes poverty eradication a pre-requisite.**

2. MAKING AGENDA 2030 AND THE SDGs THE OVERARCHING FRAMEWORK, UNDERPINNED BY THE SOCIAL PILLAR

- **AGENDA 2030 is an inspirational plan to prioritize people, planet and shared prosperity** signed up to by all Heads of State of the UN in 2015 and delivered through 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 Targets.
- **It provides a new universal social and sustainable global agenda**, which is integrated and indivisible, highlighting the need to *“balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental”*.
- **It puts poverty eradication at the heart:** *“eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development”* pledging *“no one left behind”*.
- **It is framed by respect for human rights**, grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and other Treaties. It defends above all human dignity, pledging that no one will be left behind. *“Recognizing that the dignity of the human person is fundamental”*.
- **High-level monitoring is carried out yearly by the UN**, which the EU monitoring mechanisms (e.g. European semester) should better feed into, connecting national reports.
- **NGOs and people facing poverty are recognized as key actors** in the partnership for design, monitoring and delivery, having been directly involved in the design and adoption of the plan. *“All countries and all stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership, will implement this plan”*; *“underlining the key voices of the poor and most vulnerable”*.
- **Delivering for people is paramount! There are at least 9 Key SDGs essential to the fight against poverty and inequality.** The European Pillar of Social Rights overlaps in many principles, but not all, nor does it establish a clear goal to eradicate poverty or to reduce inequality, unlike the SDGs.
- **The EU has already committed to implement the SDGs both in its internal and external policies.** See [here](#).

3. LINKS BETWEEN THE SDGs AND THE SOCIAL PILLAR

| SDGs | European Pillar of Social Pillar |
|---|--|
| 1. End poverty | No explicit principle, but scoreboard indicator (AROPE). Most principles can contribute. Poverty explicit only in 11: childcare and support to children – right to protection from poverty |
| 2. End hunger | No explicit principle. 6, 12, 14, 20 could ensure adequate income |
| 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well being for all ages | 10, 15, 16 and 18 covering healthy, safe and well adapted work environment, data protection and right to timely access to affordable, preventive and curative health care of good quality. 20: Access to services as these also contribute to health and well-being particularly if they include social services |
| 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all | 1. Right to quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning |
| 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls | 2. Gender Equality |
| 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all | 20. Access to essential services – water is mentioned |
| 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all | 2 chapters of the EPSR are dedicated to employment - both access (1) and fair working conditions (2). Key principles include 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13 and 15 |
| 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries | No explicit principles. 3: Equal Opportunities for all groups, 17: Inclusion of people with disabilities, 19: Housing and assistance for the homeless |

4. POTENTIAL OVERARCHING VISION AND GOALS OF A NEW STRATEGY

- **The post 2020 strategy's aim should be: to promote social and sustainable development that eradicates poverty and social exclusion**, creates well-being and reduces inequalities.
- This needs a **paradigm shift away from the current economic model of austerity**, towards social investment in social protection, public services and quality jobs, increasing redistribution through effectively tackling tax evasion and avoidance and promoting progressive taxation.
- **Ending poverty in all its forms must be a pre-requisite** for effective social and sustainable development, putting poverty eradication at the heart of all policies. There should be no complacency about the *high levels of poverty and inequality* in the EU.
- It must **explicitly protect, respect and implement human rights and promote participation** – underpinned by UN frameworks, the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the European Pillar of Social Rights.
- **People and Planet first!** Environmental, social and economic goals should be equal and coherent: the economy must serve people and planet, not the other way around.
- **Climate policy must not increase poverty** or worsen the situation of people experiencing poverty! This is likely to lead to a greater risk of populism and radical opposition. Measures to tackle climate change must take into account their social impact particularly on people in poverty and poorer regions.
- **The 17 SDGs should form the main goals of the post 2020 strategy**, ensuring continuity with the targets of the existing Europe 2020 strategy, linked to the Social Pillar.

5. FOUR KEY PRIORITIES OF A NEW STRATEGY

5.1 Achieving poverty eradication and increasing well-being

A rights-based integrated anti-poverty strategy, beyond employment

- Individual rights or principles alone, cannot deliver on poverty. This requires a rights-based integrated strategy that guarantees access to quality public services, including social services and social protection, support into quality jobs and participation.
- Despite positive EU integrated strategies to reduce poverty (Active Inclusion Strategy, Investing in Children etc), a job alone is still pushed as the silver bullet to combat poverty and ensure social rights, whilst in-work poverty increases rapidly (9.6%).
- This approach prioritises ‘making work pay’ by increasing incentives to work, by hardening conditionality, lowering benefits and increased sanctions and hardship, regardless of growing precariousness of jobs, low wages, in-work poverty and lack of quality jobs.
- Leaving nobody behind: not everybody can work, nor achieve quality jobs. Activation alone does not meet the needs of children or older people. The EU’s first priority must be to ensure **a right to a dignified life for all** with good living standards.

What Solutions?

- ✓ *Political affirmation of the right to a dignified life for all, throughout the life course and commitment to protect, respect and implement rights.*
- ✓ *Agree and Implement an EU integrated, rights-based, person-centred anti-poverty strategy building on ‘Integrated Active Inclusion’¹ – the right to adequate minimum income/ social protection, access to quality services (social services, health/social care, education, housing, energy, water etc) and quality jobs, underpinned by EPSR and SDG principles, avoiding negative conditionality and reinforcing supportive, personalized case management approaches. Tackling food poverty and food insecurity should be an urgent additional requirement.*
- ✓ *Implement agreed EU thematic strategies for key groups e.g. Investing in Children and support the implementation of the Child Guarantee.*
- ✓ *Deliver on the pledge to ‘leave nobody behind’ that underpins the SDGs. Acknowledge that extreme poverty is an urgent and growing reality needing specific measures, particularly to tackle homelessness, based on SWP² Tackling homelessness and housing exclusion.*
- ✓ *The strategy should be transparently and pro-actively monitored and promoted with stakeholders through the European Semester and supported by EU funds.*

¹ EC Commission Recommendation on the Active Inclusion of people excluded from the labour market (2008)

² EC Staff Working Paper 2013.

An ambitious EU poverty target with mid-term review

- The Europe 2020 Strategy set a high-level EU poverty reduction target: to reduce poverty by at least 20 million people by 2020. The poverty target gave visibility and kept poverty high on the EU agenda. It also brought EU funding, with the 20% earmarking of ESF. However, it clearly failed, with only a 5 million reduction towards the EU target, after large, devastating increases to 123 million during the crisis.
- The target design was flawed: all other EU targets refer to a percentage. Member States were also allowed to set their own targets, with national indicators, avoiding the EU common set³. Extreme poverty is not adequately captured. There were also failings in the implementation and monitoring.
- Agenda 2030/SDGs give a strong priority to ending poverty with 5 targets. Whilst the Social Pillar has no specific principles or targets on poverty, most principles are expected to contribute to poverty reduction.
- Europe needs to go beyond poverty reduction towards promoting well-being for all.

What Solutions?

- ✓ *Develop an overall goal to achieve well-being for all*
- ✓ *Give a strong priority to the AGENDA 2030 goal to End Poverty in all its forms (SDG 1), and adopt an EU target for all MS of 50% reduction of at-risk of poverty and social exclusion (AROPE)*
- ✓ *Include a commitment to end extreme poverty by 2030 as stipulated under SDG 1. Extreme poverty should be measured by the UN indicators, and in an EU context include the number of people experiencing homelessness (on any given day this number is at least 700.000)⁴*
- ✓ *Aim for progressive realisation of the target, agreeing mid-term 5-year targets and an action plan, recognizing the challenges faced by poorer countries with higher rates*
- ✓ *Support Member States in the delivery on the targets and ensure transparent, detailed yearly monitoring with a mid-term assessment involving stakeholders, including NGOs.*

Effective poverty and well-being indicators with social scoreboard

- The development of the AROPE indicator (at risk of poverty and/or exclusion), whilst controversial and imperfect, allowed a robust, comparable, high-level monitoring of relative poverty as well as more extreme poverty. However, the impact on specific groups/ages is insufficiently highlighted, nor the impact of combined characteristics measured (intersectionality).
- The current Severe Material Deprivation indicator is recognized as weak, as it is insufficiently comparable across countries with very different living standards.
- The Social Scoreboard in the Social Pillar is not sufficiently connected to the full set of EPSR principles, and less to the SDGs.

³ For example Germany and Sweden adopting long-term unemployment indicators.

⁴ Calculated according to the [ETHOS typology](#) (See FEANTSA).

- As the scoreboard focuses on EU averages, it does not encourage ‘upward convergence’, rather complacency around achieving the ‘norm’. The indicators need to be combined with ambitious targets to achieve more than this.
- Poverty and Social Rights must be measured as part of a broader aim to promote well-being for all.

What Solutions?

- ✓ *All Member States to use the same multiple EU AROPE indicators, as with other goals/targets, monitoring each indicator separately*
- ✓ *Disaggregate data consistently to monitor the impact of gender, age, but also ethnicity, migrants, sexual orientation, disability etc and analyse the intersectionality*
- ✓ *Replace the Severe Material Deprivation indicator with the new Material and Social Deprivation indicator⁵*
- ✓ *Increase the coherence of the Scoreboard to the European Pillar of Social Rights, including concrete indicators for all 20 principle areas and monitor them explicitly*
- ✓ *Connect the Scoreboard (averages) to the post 2020 poverty target monitoring (ambition), to support more effective upward convergence*
- ✓ *Develop multiple indicators to capture well-being including security, take up of rights, identity, participation and empowerment and social and community relations. However it is crucial to retain a clear priority on guaranteeing a decent income and living standards.*

Urgent action to guarantee minimum income and social protection

- All the SDGs and Social Rights are important. However, ‘Ending Poverty’ in all its forms is a pre-requisite and depends on guaranteeing access for all to an adequate minimum income to ensure a dignified life.⁶
- Social Protection systems are being systematically underfunded, and not treated as a social investment. Nobody should be left without sufficient income to live a decent life, whilst everybody benefits – the economy, communities and society.
- EPSR Principles 12 and 14 are essential to ensure support for an EU that protects, particularly in the context of regressive business models exploiting new forms of precarious work, leaving increasing numbers without protection rights.
- Minimum income and social protection are too often seen as separate systems. Effective income support means promoting a coherent system across contribution and tax-based means-tested benefits, with an increasing investment in the latter.
- The EU has a clear role to play to enforce these social rights, through soft instruments, but should take more urgent action through EU legal frameworks.
- Financing adequate minimum income and social protection requires public investment as a public good. This requires coherent action on tax and effective funding of public systems.

⁵ New indicator of Material and Social Deprivation (2017) see here: <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/05e37b96-ae3a-11e7-837e-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

⁶ Bea Cantillon: 10 Arguments for prioritizing minimum income as a follow up to the social pillar. (Jan 2019)

What Solutions?

- ✓ *EU must guarantee the right for all to adequate income support/social protection, throughout the lifecycle and beyond employment*
- ✓ *Minimum income must be adequate, accessible and enabling: empowering people's social participation as well as a foundation to access quality, sustainable jobs*
- ✓ *Soft Instruments like the Semester and benchmarking should be made more effective, requiring progressive achievement with the support of EU funds and establishing clear EU definition and common indicators for adequacy*
- ✓ *An EU Framework Directive guaranteeing adequate minimum income is essential to take people above the poverty threshold⁷ (60% median income) underpinned by reference budgets capturing the real costs of essential goods and services with the explicit aim of ensuring a decent life, not just minimum basic standards. A directive is feasible under current EU Treaties and would not require EU funds⁸*
- ✓ *Require increased funding/adequacy of social protection system reallocating public expenditures through a Golden Rule – social protection spending should not fall below 35% of GDP. Increase revenue by tackling tax evasion/avoidance and promoting more progressive taxation systems including tax on wealth, property and capital.*

Concrete results on all social rights

- The implementation of all 20 EPSR principles are essential for the fight against poverty.
- EAPN prioritizes 5 Social Rights that are essential to delivering a person-centred integrated active inclusion strategy to reduce poverty: Minimum Income (14) and Social Protection (12), Wages (6) (and quality work), Access to Education, training and lifelong learning (1) and Access to essential services (20). Housing (19), Healthcare (16) and Long-term Care (18) are also key. These can all be linked to SDGs (see table in Section 3).
- The main instrument for implementation will be through the European Semester and EU funds. But hard law is vital if rights are to be guaranteed, ensuring upward convergence for the EU social model.

⁷ See EESC recent opinion.

⁸ See EMIN Final Report and Recommendations [here](#).

What solutions?

- ✓ **Agree an Action plan:** ensure timed implementation of all principles through soft coordination mechanisms (i.e. the European Semester combined with EU funds) and plan progress on EU hard law.
- ✓ **Quality Jobs and Fair Wages:** develop an EU framework together with social partners and civil society organisations to guarantee adequate minimum wages/living wages which take people out of poverty and provide a positive incentive/hierarchy above decent minimum income. A benchmark for adequacy could be 60% of the average wage.
- ✓ **Access to Education, Training and Lifelong Learning:** prioritize investment in universal free public education, including early learning and care and through the life course; promote right to education beyond skills for employment, supporting life skills and participation in the Community, working in partnership with families, community organisations and students themselves to adapt to their own wishes and needs.
- ✓ **Access to Essential Services:** Guarantee rights to public services - Invest in affordable quality services, particularly housing, health and social services. **In housing,** require expansion of social housing and regulation of market to ensure affordable rents, also to access affordable quality energy and water. **In health and social care:** invest in universal free health/social care systems by increasing funding through progressive tax/tax collection including through prevention and primary care. **In Social Services:** invest in quality infrastructure to provide personalized and person-centred support for all the household and services to support delivery of all social rights. Support grassroots NGO services which accompany and do not replace state provision.

5.2 Political pre-requisites to achieve results

High-level political commitment

The Europe 2020 strategy suffered from the changeover to a new Commission which adopted a new set of priorities (President Juncker's 10 Political Guidelines). The European Pillar of Social Rights is an important social initiative, backed by the inter-institutional proclamation. However it lacks ownership and concrete plans for implementation.

What Solutions?

- ✓ *A high-level commitment from the new Presidents of all EU institutions to adopt Agenda 2030, the 17 SDGs and 169 goals as the overarching frame, underpinned by the EPSR. The President of the European Commission should bear the overarching responsibility, making each Commissioner responsible for an SDG and ensuring coherence.*
- ✓ *A commitment to coherent, effective action – with a roadmap and action plan setting out a plan with timed delivery of key milestones for all 17 SDG goals, implementing the 20 principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights.*
- ✓ *Visible recognition and binding obligations to involve stakeholders particularly people with direct experience of poverty and Civil Society Organisations in the design, monitoring and implementation, providing greater transparency, accountability and better solutions.*

Making well-being the goal: rebalancing economic/social/environment

- Although there has been an improvement in the Social CSRs⁹ with the Social Pillar, fiscal/economic coordination remains dominant, with stability and growth as the main goal, undermining social rights through continued austerity and cost-cutting.
- GDP and economic growth continue to be the main measure of progress, rather than an approach embedding well-being for people and planet, reducing inequality and ending poverty.
- Scenario 1 from the Reflection Paper on the Future of Europe¹⁰ offers hope but currently gives priority to transition to 'green growth', rather than a coherent social and sustainable development strategy, with low profile given to social rights and poverty.

⁹ Country-Specific Recommendations (CSRs)

¹⁰ EC. Future of Europe Reflection Paper: Towards a sustainable Europe by 2030. (28.01.2019)

What Solutions?

- ✓ *Refocus macroeconomic priorities and budget to promote well-being, end poverty and reduce inequality, guaranteeing social rights and environmental protection.*
- ✓ *Replace Stability and Growth Pact with a Well-being Pact which requires all Member States to deliver on the above priorities.*
- ✓ *Support Scenario 1 of the Future of Europe reflection paper but ensure strategy benefits 'People as well as Planet', ensuring a just transition that leaves nobody behind: making ending poverty a pre-requisite, embedding positive synergies between environmental and social standards and preventing negative impact; making the economy an instrument for promoting well-being, just transition and reducing inequality.*
- ✓ *Invest in wealth research and put forward viable proposals for embedding more equal distribution and redistribution of income and wealth.*
- ✓ *Rebalance resources in the European Commission/EU institutions to provide equal staff/resources for social and economic departments (e.g. DGs), and Secretariat General.*
- ✓ *Create a transparent checklist and mechanism to ensure ex-ante social, environmental and distributional impact analysis to prevent negative macroeconomic measures.*
- ✓ *Ensure greater, transparent accountability – pro-actively share, involve and listen to reactions of people and NGOs on the ground, to ensure the EU is on the right track.*

5.3 Embedding participation and transforming EU coordination instruments

A participative, social and sustainable European Semester

- The European Semester is likely to remain the main EU coordination instrument for the new strategy. Although progress has been made on recognizing its role in social as well as economic coordination, the dominant focus continues to be on promoting the stability of the Euro and macroeconomic growth, prioritizing austerity and privatisation.
- The reduced number of CSRs only confirms this domination, squeezing out a consistent focus on poverty and social rights, without an appreciable increase in implementation.
- The Semester would need to be transformed to ensure Agenda 2030 and SDG objectives are promoted through a balanced approach putting social and environmental goals on a par with economic and ensuring equal participation of civil society as key stakeholders in policy decision-making processes.
- The Semester should connect more effectively to the UN's "Voluntary National Review process", which effectively monitors the implementation of the SDGs at the national level.

What Solutions?

- ✓ *Transform the European Semester into a Social and Sustainable Development Semester, delivering on the environmental and social goals of Agenda 2030 and SDGs, with the ending of poverty as a pre-requisite.*
- ✓ *Establish an explicit Road Map setting out objectives, key actions, the role of key institutions and stakeholders, with detailed timelines and guidelines, and detailing how all the EPSR principles and SDGs following up on Europe 2020 targets are to be monitored and delivered, including at regional/local levels.*
- ✓ *Replace the Annual Growth Survey with the Annual Social and Sustainable Development Survey giving equal priorities to economic, environmental and social goals, published together with a Joint Employment and Social Development Report. Reflect priorities in equal chapters (e.g. 1 explicit chapter on social goals – end poverty etc - in the Country Reports, National Reform Programmes).*
- ✓ *Expand the number of CSRs to ensure at least 1 social CSR and 1 each for other key areas (i.e. economic and environmental), underpinned by a full analysis of all SDGs/Social Rights/Scoreboard indicators in the Country Reports.*
- ✓ *Establish a clearer connection between the EU European Semester coordination process and the Voluntary National Reviews feeding into the UN High Level Political Forum and support a shift to compulsory National Reviews.*
- ✓ *Allocate specific resources and agree obligatory guidelines to ensure accountability and participation, embedding civil society organisations and people experiencing poverty as equal partners in design, implementation and monitoring of policies, particularly in the Semester.*

Make civil society organisations and people experiencing poverty equal partners

- European Civil Society Organisations have been the poor sister in Europe 2020 through its main coordination instrument: the European Semester. They have been neglected until recently in the main driving documents (AGS) compared to social partners.
- Some improvements have taken place recently at EU level – including the new Recital 11 in the Employment Guidelines and a renewed commitment by the Commission to useful stakeholder dialogue (DG EMPL – 2018/19).
- At national level, the engagement is inconsistent across Member States, with some promising examples and many poor ones, but with very little evidence of consistent impact. The growing role of European Semester Officers is promising, but uneven.
- The systematic involvement of people directly facing poverty and social exclusion is currently a missed opportunity to learn what works from the ground and ensure credible and sustainable solutions.

What Solutions?

- ✓ *Adopt an explicit commitment to put civil society organisations engagement on a par with social partners, at all levels of EU policy making – EU, national and regional/local.*
- ✓ *Agree obligatory guidelines and a practical handbook, support capacity building of Member States and stakeholders through benchmarking/mutual learning/peer reviews/transnational exchange on promising practices and common challenges.*
- ✓ *Establish a funding line to support effective permanent dialogue with people experiencing poverty and NGOs at national level, including children and young people, and promote the development of cross-sectoral alliances and their input.*
- ✓ *Appoint a specific Commissioner and officers in each DG responsible for civil society engagement for each SDG, particularly through the Semester.*
- ✓ *Agree explicit guidelines for European Semester Officers ensuring equal treatment of NGOs and people in poverty, to other stakeholders and monitor transparently.*
- ✓ *Embed a yearly Round Table conference, at which national and EU civil society organisations raise concerns/proposals directly with EU institutions.*
- ✓ *Commit to direct dialogue of ‘experts with experience of poverty’ with decision-makers in EU institutions through the yearly meeting, but also in on-going policy development.*

5.4 Mobilising EU Funds to support the strategy

Increase effectiveness of EU funds spending on poverty reduction

- The Europe 2020 poverty target/priority also brought EU funds with it – e.g. 20% earmarking on poverty reduction in the European Social Fund, and important EU research and other funding lines. The ex-ante conditionalities have been crucial to requiring action on anti-poverty strategies based on active inclusion.
- Whilst the 20% has been well monitored by the European Commission, it is difficult to get accurate information about the project level and to ensure that funding is being used to effectively support poverty reduction and social inclusion. The main success criteria remain getting people into any job rather than social inclusion or social rights.
- Priority for funds is increasingly given to large-scale national public or private projects rather than supporting grassroots innovation, with NGOs struggling to get an equal role in monitoring committees or to get support to access or manage funds.
- Serious concerns continue to be raised regarding the lack of effective action by the EU to tackle corruption and misuse of EU funds.

What Solutions?

- ✓ *Increase earmarking on social inclusion to 30%, supporting funds for FEAD; better monitor and enforce 'enabling' ex-ante conditionalities with clear outcome indicators tracking quality of integrated active inclusion strategies and impact on poverty and social exclusion; monitor the effectiveness/quality of food distribution and progress to social inclusion through FEAD.*
- ✓ *Strengthen the partnership principle by implementing the code of conduct on partnership through an ex-ante condition, making meaningful participation of NGOs and beneficiaries obligatory in the monitoring committees as well as in delivery.*
- ✓ *Avoid the instrumentalization of ESF by national governments to finance mainstream public programmes and implement effective sanctions when EU funds are misused. Encourage exchange with civil society to transparently monitor these developments.*
- ✓ *Support innovative, longer term projects developed by grassroots community organisations and NGOs, with upfront funding, and global grants, avoiding the 20% co-financing requirement.*
- ✓ *Improve monitoring with soft social indicators i.e. distance travelled to social inclusion and out of poverty, with quality of outcomes including mental health, confidence, social integration, life skills as well as quality sustainable jobs.*

Annex 1 Status of the Document

This position paper was developed by the EU Inclusion Strategies Group which has delegated powers within EAPN to develop EAPN policy position papers and reports. A scoping note was discussed and agreed in the EUISG meeting on the 27-29th September 2018 and initial discussion took place on the overall approach and key headings. A detailed draft discussion document was prepared by the staff team with the EUISG Steering Group and discussed in the EUISG meeting on 21-23rd March 2019. Following this a full draft was prepared and circulated to members for comments in April, then presented and discussed in an external policy conference involving also EUISG and EXCO members, through discussion tables on the 13th June. Further detailed discussions were carried out on the draft with the EUISG on the 15th June. A final version incorporating inputs from members in the EUISG exchange and conference was sent to members for comments on the 26th July with a month for final inputs until the 26th August. Comments were received and incorporated as relevant from 7 members (EAPN PT, EE, FI, LV, IFSW, NL, DE). It was signed off unanimously by the EUISG on the 14th September 2019.

In accordance with the EAPN protocol on forming policy positions, the final version was signed off by the EXCO on the 15th September 2019.

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See EAPN publications and activities on www.eapn.eu

The European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) is an independent network of nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and groups involved in the fight against poverty and social exclusion in the Member States of the European Union, established in 1990.



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