



European Parliament
Altiero Spinelli Building
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60, rue Wiertz
B-1047 Bruxelles/Brussel

Dear Mr Schmit

On behalf of the **European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN)**, the largest platform of anti-poverty organizations in Europe, representing thousands of anti-poverty organisations and activists across 32 countries, working with and for people with experience of poverty and social exclusion, we congratulate you for your nomination as EU Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights (we warmly welcome this title change!) As you are aware, this role is of the utmost importance for EAPN and for the 109.2 million people (2018) at risk of poverty and social exclusion throughout Europe. We have closely followed your hearing in Parliament, your Mission letter and the written questions you received from Parliament. Building on the interactions we have had in the last few weeks, we are pleased to share with you today our **key hopes and expectations of your five years as Commissioner**, on which we hope to work closely with you and your team at DG Employment to make meaningful progress for people experiencing poverty throughout Europe.

1. Rights-based Post Europe 2020 strategy underpinned by SDGs/ Social Pillar

We welcome the concrete approach of the new Political Guidelines and reference in your mission letter to concrete delivery on the Social Pillar and SDGs, however EAPN would like to underline the need to develop a longer-term **10 year comprehensive post 2020 strategy** that builds on the learning of Europe 2020. In this regard, EAPN strongly supports the Finnish Presidency Council Conclusions which call for a *“new long-term growth strategy for the Union, aimed at ensuring that the Union becomes the world’s most competitive and socially inclusive, climate-neutral economy”*.

A post 2020 strategy, developed together with stakeholders would set coherent long-term objectives and priority targets including on poverty reduction, monitored/delivered through the European Semester and other hard law instruments underpinned by Agenda 2030, SDGs and European Pillar of Social Rights. As with Agenda 2030 it should make the eradication of poverty a pre-requisite for a sustainable socio-economic development and rebalance economic, environmental and social goals.

We understand that such an agenda depends on many Commissioners, and indeed the President of the Commission – we are promoting this at various levels and hope to work with you and your team to ensure it happens. You can see our position paper on this [here](#).

2. A comprehensive anti-poverty strategy and ambitious poverty target

In your parliamentary hearing, you stated: *“We have to have a comprehensive strategy for fighting poverty, focusing on vulnerable people, youth, people with disability, single parents...”* EAPN has

been proposing such a strategy for many years now, so we were thrilled to hear your recognition of this need. EAPN firmly supports the development of an EU integrated, rights-based, person-centred antipoverty strategy that builds on the EU integrated Active Inclusion approach¹: the right to adequate minimum income and social protection, access to quality services (social, health/social care, education, housing, energy, water etc) and quality jobs, underpinned by EPSR and SDG principles. It needs to avoid negative conditionality and reinforce supportive, personalized case management approaches. Adopting an ambitious poverty reduction target of 50% for all Member States, as well as a commitment to end extreme poverty by 2030 (including homelessness), would set a clear moral and political commitment to the fight against poverty.

Such a strategy should be linked to thematic strategies for key groups, notably children and the homeless. We commit and look forward to working directly with you and your team to ensure that such a strategy is designed and agreed at the earliest opportunity.

3. Action Plan on the Social Pillar – with a focus on Minimum Income

EAPN has been calling for a serious action plan on implementation and monitoring of the Social Pillar since 2017, recognising the need for it to be grounded at the national level. We welcome the idea of a serious face to face consultation period with civil society organisations, social partners, governments, employers etc at national and European level – and we highlight the importance of including people experiencing poverty in these consultations. This would facilitate development of an effective action plan, which we hope would include participative governance monitoring mechanisms whereby Member States and the Commission can be held to account. An Action Plan should be delivered by the end of 2020.

We will be monitoring carefully the implementation plan for **EPSR Principle 14 on Minimum Income** as well as EAPN's other priority Principles: 1) Education, training and lifelong learning, 4) and 6) Active support to employment and fair wages, 12) Social Protection and 20) Access to Essential Services. We trust that an early priority of yours will be to actively consult with “all the organizations who are dealing with poverty and inclusion” in order to reflect on the most appropriate instruments. Given that EAPN has been leading campaigns on Adequate Minimum Income since 2008, and coordinating the DG Employment funded [European Minimum Income Network](#) (which we discussed on 14 November, and for which we have proposed a follow up stage) for over 5 years, we trust that we will form part of these early discussions as well as on the EPSR Action Plan on the other key principles. You can see key findings of the last EMIN project in the final report [here](#).

4. Civil dialogue at same level as social dialogue

Your promised to “work as closely as possible with... all relevant stakeholders, including civil society, and in particular with social partners, to deliver on the political goals presented by the President-elect in her Political Guidelines”, and highlighted the need “permanent and constructive dialogue with social partners and civil society”. EAPN has actively engaged with its national members in the European Semester through all the key milestones since 2010 and is working pro-actively to improve this engagement with the Commission and Member States, recognizing the positive progress made particularly by DG Employment and with the European Semester Officers. However there is still some way to go, particularly in terms of engagement with national governments. We will count on you to make concrete Recital 11 of the Employment Guidelines, which provides a legal basis for non-governmental organisations to be treated as key partners and ensure that the participation of civil society assumes an equal footing to that of social partners. We have concrete proposals for how this

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

engagement could lead to better accountability and solutions at national and EU level. (See EAPN Position Paper on [Post Europe 2020](#) and [EAPN Assessment of the Semester 2019 – is the Semester more social?](#)) We welcome the idea of having an officer in your cabinet with this responsibility, as well as encouraging the President to engage directly with civil society, either via the consultations on the Action Plan or via other channels.

5. Ensuring that the poor don't pay for the Just Transition

You have recognised the concerns that the transition to a carbon free economy might come at the expense of poor people, highlighting the aim of the 'Just Transition Fund' to offer "support to the most affected territories and empower people to reap the benefits of moving towards climate neutral economic models". We count on you to be a strong voice in this direction within the College, making a strong collective commitment to ensuring that the poor don't pay for this transition, that a positive social and environmental transition is ensured and that the EU and national governments regulate effectively. We need transparent ex-ante social and distributional impact analysis of proposals on a Green New Deal to assess who wins, who loses and who pays. Companies with the most responsibility for creating the climate emergency must be taxed, recognising the polluter pays principle. Prioritising investment that benefits the poor and poorer regions is essential – for example in energy efficiency particularly in social housing – ensuring that the costs are not. Investing in 'green quality jobs' is vital, also ensuring that pathways are developed to ensure access to them for low income and excluded groups. Combining environmental and social protection needs to be a key requirement, recognizing the risks. As the UN Special Rapporteur on Poverty and Human Rights says in his report on Climate Change and Poverty (June 2019), "*A robust social safety net and a well-managed transition to a green economy will be the best response to the unavoidable harms that climate change will bring*"²

Finally – we thank you for your participation in the People Experiencing Poverty meeting this week. We have received a lot of positive feedback from our members already, and we have high hopes for your mandate! We hope that we can organise a meeting on the afternoon of 5 December, when our Bureau is next in Brussels, to discuss these issues with you directly.

Yours sincerely,



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President
EAPN



Leo Williams
Director
EAPN

² https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Poverty/A_HRC_41_39.pdf