



The European Anti-Poverty Network has read with interest the Commission's Communication: "[A strong Social Europe for Just Transitions](#)" and the related package of documents. Our network and our members will respond more fully in due course – at this stage we share our initial reactions.

European Pillar of Social Rights

We have been calling for the fulfilment of political agreements like the SDGs and the Social Pillar for some years now,¹ recognising that the agreements and plans are in place – what has been lacking is simply the political will for implementation on the ground. We thus welcome the open acknowledgment that action must be taken, and specifically the plans for the consultation on the implementation of the Social Pillar – we will be actively contributing with our members. However, EAPN has been fighting poverty and inequality for 30 years now, and we know that the 110 million people in Europe at risk of poverty are impatient and want to see concrete improvements to their lives. 30 years, and 110 million people still at risk of being trapped in poverty by low paid, unstable jobs, rising living costs and inadequate social protection – this is a poor reason to celebrate. We call on political leaders all over Europe to step up their ambition in the fight against poverty and inequality, and we expect an ambitious Action Plan in early 2021, covering all 20 of the principles, proposing new EU and national initiatives with participative monitoring involving civil society organisations and people experiencing poverty, signed off at the highest level,

Green New Deal

We recognise the positive impact that the proposed European Green Deal could have on Europe, and the contribution it will make to tackling the global climate crisis. If managed and resourced correctly, it could lead to a just and inclusive transition towards a much more sustainable Europe. While this is certainly moving us in the right direction, the European Green Deal must ensure the poor don't pay for a Just Transition and that they are not left behind. Policies proposed within the European Green Deal must first be run through a poverty impact assessment to ensure the poor are not paying, that inequalities are not increased. Biljana Dukovska (North Macedonia), Vice-President of EAPN, said: "*A Just Transition, if poor people are expected to pay for it, simply will not be just.*"

The best protection for this transition is to guarantee adequate welfare states and safety nets which will be essential to protect poorer groups and regions from its potential negative impacts. This must be coupled with investment in decent, energy efficient social housing, ensuring the costs are not passed on to poor tenants, and supporting pathways to decent green jobs for excluded groups.

While the European Green Deal clearly envisages strong public and private financing, we regret that it doesn't seem to recognise that companies which have the **most responsibility for creating the climate emergency should be taxed accordingly**, recognising the polluter pays principle.

What place for Poverty?

It is positive to see a specific section on fighting poverty and exclusion in the Communication, with an important mention of key issues like minimum income, homelessness, energy poverty and more.

¹ EAPN proposals for post 2020 Strategy

However, it is concerning that the only concrete EU initiatives highlighted are the Child Guarantee and that on Roma equality and inclusion – both crucial, but not sufficient to make significant progress on ending poverty in all its forms (SDG 1). We reiterate the need for a comprehensive plan to tackle poverty throughout Europe, notably an EU integrated anti-poverty strategy and a renewed, more ambitious EU target on reducing poverty. We recognise the commitment to a “wide reflection on the multiple and interconnected causes of poverty to rethink the way forward” but point out that many such solutions exist already and are well known and documented. Richard Delplanque (France), Vice President of EAPN, said, “These existing solutions should form the basis of such a reflection, and people experiencing poverty themselves and their NGOs should be at the heart of any such reflections.”

Our 30 years’ experience of fighting poverty throughout Europe has shown us that strong social protection schemes, adequate minimum income schemes and decent wages are crucial components to protect people from being pulled into poverty, and to help them escape it. Strong social inclusion policies are the engine of economic development, not its consequence - the translation of Principle 14 of the Social Pillar (the right to an adequate minimum income for all those who need it) into a legally binding commitment for all Member States should be a political priority for European Institutions and Member States, and we will need to see ambition for an adequate living wage, and commitment to raise overall wage levels throughout Europe.

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