

17 May 2019

President Juncker
European Commission
Cc. President Tusk, European Council
Cc. Commissioner Thyssen, DG Employment and Social Affairs

Dear President Juncker

Re: Time to back up the Sibiu Declaration with concrete strategies and actions to eradicate poverty, reduce inequality, support the vulnerable and mitigate the climate emergency

We write to you 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 31 countries, working with and for people with experience of poverty.

On 9 May, you participated in the Informal Summit of Heads of State or Government of the European Union in Sibiu, where you agreed with other European leaders the [Sibiu Declaration](#) and discussed the [Strategic Leaders Agenda](#). As you may know, EAPN has been engaging in discussions on the Future of Europe over the last two years, notably with our [Position Paper 'The Future of Europe'](#), our response to the Commission's consultation on the Future of Europe, and our participation in various 'citizens dialogues'.

In advance of this Summit, EAPN called on European leaders to send a strong message to European voters before the European Parliamentary Elections, recognising:

1. The limits of our current economic and political systems, which have led to 113 million people EU citizens living at risk of poverty and social exclusion.
2. That we have the tools at our disposal. Leadership is now needed to ensure a transformative implementation of the SDGs and the Social Pillar, to ensure meaningful changes to the lives of people experiencing poverty.
3. That meaningful participation of civil society and people experiencing poverty is key to tackling poverty and social exclusion, and leaders must commit to the inclusion of civil society at every step of the way in the future Strategic Agenda, at the same level as social partners.
4. That social protection forms the bedrock of our societies. We need political leadership to ensure a strong, European wide framework directive guaranteeing adequate minimum income for everyone who needs it in Europe, as part of effective universal social protection systems throughout peoples' lives.

We share with you today [our reaction to the Sibiu Declaration](#), which welcomes the commitments but regrets that they feel rhetorical, particularly to people experiencing poverty:

“It has been too long that it is difficult to live and even to survive. For years, we have been promised things. We have been told that our situation would get better. For years the state has been giving us something on the one hand but at the same time it takes away something else, and finally the situation does not improve, on the contrary.”

(Guy, expert with direct experience of poverty, during the political debate of the Walloon Network against Poverty on 7 May 2019, Belgium.)

As a network which advocates with and for people experiencing poverty, we find it is hard to reconcile the social and environmental emergencies we see on the ground with 10 commitments which fail to mention poverty or social rights, despite the agreement to the European Pillar of Social Rights, and seem to relegate climate change to an afterthought.

We reiterate our key asks, for your consideration as you work through the Strategic Leaders Agenda in the coming months:

- We need an EU framework for adequate minimum wage, allowing people to live in dignity – as called for by our [2017 Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty](#)
- We need an EU Framework Directive for adequate Minimum Income
- We need a Child Guarantee and universal Child Benefit
- We need the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the European Pillar of Social Rights a binding source of primary law in every Member State, in order to meaningfully guarantee people’s social rights
- The EU must declare an “environment and climate emergency”, to set a far more ambitious strategy to tackle climate change, and must prioritise the protection of people experiencing poverty during the transition, respecting the principle of no-one left behind

Finally, we particularly welcome the commitment to reduce inequalities and to focus on the most vulnerable in Europe, putting people before politics. This should be the guiding light in national and European politics and must be a key political principle in the years to come.

Yours sincerely,



Leo Williams
Director
EAPN



Carlos Susias
President
EAPN