



September 30th 2020  
EUISG Webinar

# Semester - ASGS and Semester

- Non changed elements (Fairness section) and introducing changes related to timing.
- Recovery and Resilience Plans are the new guidance documents. From October to end of April 2021, presented in one single document, with a scope is 2026.
- 750 billion Euro to tackle the core issues. The EU has been trying to provide immediate and mid-term responses.
- There would be no Country reports and no CSR. This changes our role, there is no path for engagement of civil society, as those established during the Semester.
- These Plans should address Economic and Social challenges, and implement the previous CSR, unless the EC says they were fully implemented.
- Nearly 40% on climate change and just transition, 20% on digital skills... But there are “hooks” for social resilience, related to observed vulnerabilities in MS. Include labour market participation of vulnerable groups.
- There are several references to be used. The role of the EPSR is mentioned, use of Social Scoreboard not clear, there is no specific reference to human rights, not the implementation. Same on SDG/UN Agenda 2030.
- CSO: we have a role, although seems to be soft. The contact is with our Semester Officer.



*Filip Tannay, European Semester Team Leader, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion: What overall changes in ASGS 2021 and the European Semester in relation to social rights and poverty reduction, in the context of the revision of the Semester with the Recovery and Resilience Facility. What steps will be taken to improve civil society organizations engagement at national/EU level?*

*Maria Baroni, Policy Officer, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion: What progress on key EAPN priorities in European Semester 2021, in the next context? – particularly Minimum Income and Social Protection, access to Services, quality jobs and fair wages?*

# The Recovery and Resilience Plans

- The ASGS with the Guidance, with the template for these plans, came out.
- This should be understood in the current economic context, health and economic crisis, rebound. The reaction was to react in a different way than in the previous crisis, for example in the labour short-term schemes.
- Messages on the Green transition (connectivity, digital skills) and the Just/Fairness Dimension (long-term care, preparedness, resilience as an all encompassing concept, the ability to adapt and respond. Active labour market, gender and protection of the most vulnerable).
- Philosophy: “The EPSR remains the compass”. Growing inequality is an issue in itself. Ensure support for all parts of the society. BUT not earmarked funds for SOCIAL.
- Funds: achieving CSR, flagships and the focus in 4: promoting economic, social and economic cohesion, mitigating the impact of the crisis and supporting the green transition
- IMPORTANT: Guidance document to complete the Plans! Advice to use it. Should be SMART. Quantitative targets, measurable achievable targets.
- Assessment of the Plans by the EC: how they contributed to resolve the challenges? By the Council.
- The Semester is included in the Recovery and Resilience Plan. The Autumn Package will appear in November. The MS are to Summit drafts from October 15th. Winter Package is not going to happen, as it is redundant with the Plans.

# Role of the Social?

- The Pillar/SDG/the Social/ are there but not clearly. There is no earmarked money for the Social.
- MI is no clearly mentioned, although “social protection” is there, and this could include MI. They are working in the Council Conclusions, finalized on 25th, with technical work around it.
- There would be more if the social is related to Green transition, clean energy or broadband Access...
- The guidance document indicates government should consult about the participation of stakeholders.
- Engagement by 3 steps: 1) drafting, giving inputs to the authorities in charge; 2) assessment of the plans (the EC has 2 months for evaluation) and 3) when MS present the plans, the “experts” can react.

# Action Plan of the Pillar to be endorsed in May 2021

- Action Plan on the EPSR is on a procedural process, 2021 will be endorsed in the Summit in May, in Portugal. The work is now almost finalized.
- Quality of Jobs. There is the issue of protection for non standard workers.
- Minimum Wage Proposal: will be finalized and adopted soon
- “Rethinking social protection”? The crisis put a lot of tension on them and showed the different qualities and capacities to face the emergencies. We need SPS which are resilient for the long-term.
- The social scoreboard is still valid, is the statistical basis.

# National inputs - Portugal

- Portuguese government presented the RR Draft Plan and it was focused on Productive Promotion, although the EPSR was mentioned.
- Poverty Watch: Huge raise in unemployment, mainly female. MI recipients grew, as there was an increase in the applications and the need of food. But the amounts are not adequate. PEP testimonies show they have not money to pay for medicines or food, poverty is going to increase.
- The National Plan/strategy to implement the EPSR could be an opportunity. Need to increase social protection.
- We need more space to civil dialogue. Hopes that Portuguese presidency could increase participation “to lead the storm”.

# National inputs - Lithuania

- Economic performance was good, but the CSO show a huge social crisis, as increase of hunger.
- 30,000 children did not have personal computers or Internet, even worse for disabled children. Poor quality, and overcrowded housing
- Shortage of social services: Decrease in staff, increase in demands
- Digital gap
- Problems are not new, the pandemic increased their negative consequences.
- Recommendations: they insist in well-financed (with progressive taxing) and regulated social protection and social security for a crisis like that. We need an Action Plan, including SDG and EPSR, to reduce income inequality and poverty. A balance with Green Planning. Accesibility should be increased, the importance of MI, as it only reaches 1/3 of those under the poverty threshold. Importance to responding into individual needs, not put people in a box.
- Strong cooperation is needed on behalf of the Commission, we are worried about the uncertainty of the interlocution. The Semester should be social as never before. But it is not clear how.

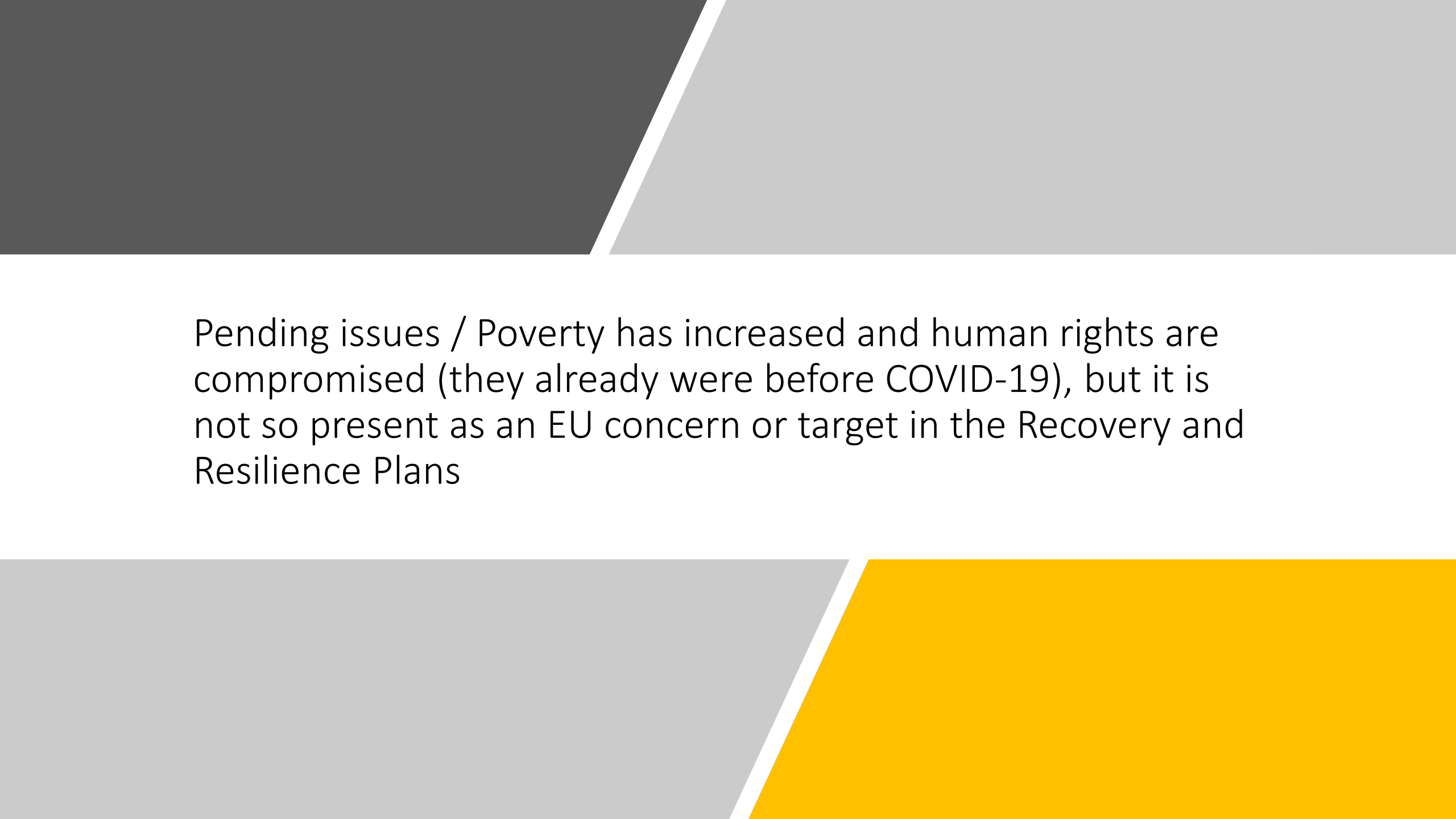


# National inputs - Ireland

- PW reflects the impact of COVID-19. The level of poverty has not returned to the level of 12 years before. The commitments to EU2020 not met.
- Cannot return to the policies of the past. We need to implement integrated anti-poverty strategies, with solid targets. Addressing existing inequalities, as they have no more negative impact on those already living in poverty.
- EAPN Ireland: working on: 1) Access to affordable and quality services. 2) Income adequacy. 3) Legislative protection for the protection of people in poverty. 4) Promoting Active Community Organizations.
- Positive engagement with the EU Officer, but CSR much emphasis on macroeconomic stability. Poverty is not mentioned in the NRP in 2020.
- People are using charities to survive, instead of having a solid system of social

# Replies

- Portugal: the EC is working on a benchmarking exercise, they are aware of the effort to improve the MI and that is not sufficient. There's a CSR on that.
- Lithuania: focus on taxation is very important, for increasing the collection and to better the progresivity of the system. The level of benefits is important there, but the quality of social services and housing have shortages. Special attention will be given to Energy Poverty.
- Ireland: quality of public services is an issue. Not leaving people behind AND alone, as the benefit system is good in cash, but could be better in inclusion programs, particularly healthcare, childcare, personal services. Not only charity.
- Legal requirements for the programming period with ESF Plus, they want to see anti-poverty strategies with use of the funding.



Pending issues / Poverty has increased and human rights are compromised (they already were before COVID-19), but it is not so present as an EU concern or target in the Recovery and Resilience Plans

# Pending issues / structured participation

- Participation and transparency is still unclear/concerning...
  - The civil dialogue at the national level is very heterogeneous and not obligatory to carry on
  - We developed a relatively good governance progress during the Semester, and now we may lose this interlocution.
- Our proposal: We need a regular, structured dialogue to follow-up these measures, this is a on—off. We need more engagement.
- Transparency:
  - Will be the Guidance an instrument to support our participation? Are these documents (the Plans in particular) public so we can get more involved?
  - We need a Guide to coordinate/integrate all the different Key/tools and plans at stake.

# The three steps/ways recommended for civil society involvement:

1. Get in contact and make sure you are into the debate. Identify who is the Minister in charge of the Plan. Who is the liason person in the Social Ministry.

- Delivery of plans around mid-November.
- If not, prepare a document with position and send it to the Commission. Let the EC know which are the three core reforms we need to be implemented.
- The final Plan will not be approved until January.

2. Provide our views/comments when the Plan comes out

3. Do an assessment of the achievements and targets.

Examples: In Italy and Portugal have been public discussions and consultations, could be an example.

Integration of tools should be done at the national level. The choices at the national level are key.

Thank you!