



## European Semester Cycle 2021 – How to engage on the National Recovery and Resilience Plans?

### EAPN Guidance Note (4 December 2020)

This EAPN Guidance Note “European Semester Cycle 2021 – How to engage on the National Recovery and Resilience Plans?” builds on the [EAPN Briefing Note “European Semester Cycle 2021 - Information, Assessment and Action Tips for EAPN Members”](#) (5 October 2020). In order to get the broader picture, you are strongly advised to have a closer look into the latter document.

As the clock is ticking quite a bit when it comes to the finalisation of the National Recovery and Resilience Plans (RRPs), this **EAPN Guidance Note focuses on concrete action your National Network could do in the weeks to come**. It also builds on advice received from DG EMPL of what seems to be a **pragmatic approach** against the backdrop of the considerable changes in view of the main deliverables, timelines, procedures and governance mechanisms of the European Semester Cycle 2021.

We have heard that some national governments and in particular the Ministries of Labour/Employment and Social Affairs are still struggling themselves to understand the new demands and also how the elaboration of the RRP is being coordinated within their government. Several of them don’t seem to be happy about lacking guidance from their Ministries of Finances and/or Economy. We also heard that they deplore themselves the lack of transparency in their own country on how to consult with in a meaningful manner with civil society organisations (CSOs) about the priorities and concrete contents of the RRP.

#### 1. What are the relevant timelines?

**Each EU MS has to prepare a Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP) – and in addition their National Reform Programmes (NRPs)** which will be integrated into the RRP (but how this will be done exactly is still not yet fully clear). EU MS are encouraged to submit their draft/preliminary RRP as of 15 October 2020. Once a draft/preliminary RRP is submitted, exchanges with the EC will start. The EC will also give written feedback to the draft National Recovery and Resilience Plans. The final deadline for the EU MS to submit them to the EC is 30 April 2021. **The timeline and key moments to influence to contents of the RRP and NRPs will thus differ for each EU MS, i.e. we will have a staggered process**. This situation is also created by the fact that **in 2021 neither Country Reports (CR) nor Country-Specific Recommendations (CSR) will be issued** and therefore no pre-defined moments in spring 2021 for their publication.

#### 2. What could/should EAPN Members do?

- **As soon as you can (i.e. already since mid-October and likely still until Christmas 2020) prepare a short input** and send it to your National Government and the European Commission (more precisely to the Country Desk Officer) outlining **3 key demands**, backed by examples and evidence from people experiencing poverty. This should set out what you think the RRP funding should be spent on, to have the greatest impact on poverty and social exclusion in the current context. You

should reference the positive CSRs from the European Semester Cycles 2019 and 2020 which are still valid (see also below and in the EAPN Briefing Note) supported by evidence from your Poverty Watches and Semester Assessments.

- **Once the RRP and NRP are adopted and published, do a short assessment** of whether your input has been reflected, and the overall impact on poverty, social exclusion and social rights, giving clear messages and recommendations
- **Make sure that you communicate your inputs and assessments** widely through traditional and social media, involving people experiencing poverty highlighting the needs.
- **Try to meet with relevant government officers responsible for the European Semester and the European Semester Officer in your country to discuss and engage, and join any official meetings/events (on-line or otherwise)**
- **Please share your inputs/experiences and learning with the EAPN Policy Team!** We will put them together and share them with the EUISG.

### 3. Which topics in line with EAPN priorities and demands should you highlight?

When drafting their RRP, EU MS are advised to look at the full set of **Country-Specific Recommendations (CSRs) under the 2019 and 2020 European Semester cycles**. The European Commission has asked the national governments to propose in the National Recovery and Resilience Plans reforms and investments which are grouped in components. Such a component should “reflect related reform and investment priorities in a policy area” ([Guidance Document](#), p. 9) or for a specific area or theme. “For each component the Member States are invited to detail the investments and reforms included in the component, their expected contribution to the objectives of the Recovery and Resilience Facility; the related milestones, targets and timeline; and their financing and costing”.

The **objectives which can underpin a “component” to be included in a national Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP)** are reflected in the [Guidance Document](#). They are **listed there in the table on p. 10** (see also EAPN Briefing Note, 1.3, p. 5). We have copied below those in line with EAPN priorities:

- Examples for subcategory **“Labour market, education, health and social policies”**: 1) **Upskilling and reskilling** of the working age population; 2) **Reducing labour market segmentation**; 3) **Improving coverage of short-time work schemes and unemployment benefits**; 4) **Ensuring equality for all and inclusion of persons with disabilities** in accordance with obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities; 5) **Improving labour market participation, including vulnerable groups**; 6) **Improving the resilience, accessibility and effectiveness of health and care systems, their accessibility** and their crisis preparedness; 7) **Strengthening social protection** (including long-term care); 8) **Strengthening the link between education and training and the labour market**; 9) Developing skills for green and digital transitions
- Example for subcategory **“Public finances and taxation”**: 4) Fighting against tax evasion
- Example for subcategory **“Green transition”**: 3) Improving energy performance of the building stock through a renovation wave

- Example for subcategory “**Digital transition**”: 4) Strengthening digital skills, **reducing digital divide**
- Example for subcategory “**Business environment**”: 4) **Measures to reduce private indebtedness**

Several of the “policy hooks” set out in the [Communication on the AGSG 2021](#) are in line with the priorities of EAPN (see also EAPN Briefing Note, 2.2, pp. 9/10). This comprises: 1) Better preparedness and resilience of the national health and social protection systems as well as equal access to affordable and quality health care, long-term care and childhood care systems; 2) Measures to reduce energy poverty; 3) Reskilling, upskilling, vocational training and measures to reduce the digital divide, with a particular focus on disadvantaged groups, women and young people; 4) Measures in line with inclusive education; 5) Policies to ensure equal access to education, quality healthcare, as well as strengthening long-term care; 6) Legislation and policies to reduce the gender pay gap. **When submitting your 3 key demands to your national governments, you can also focus on these “policy hooks”.**

**You can, however, obviously also send proposals which deal with other topics, e.g. adequate minimum income, decent (minimum) wages, in-work poverty and precarious working conditions, homelessness, access to adequate social protection, etc.!!!**

When providing input and submitting concrete proposals for measures and reforms of high priority, EAPN members are advised to develop them **in line with either the Country-Specific Recommendations (CSRs) 2019 and 2020 and the above-mentioned objectives for the “components” as listed in the table on p. 10 of the [Guidance Document](#) or the “policy hooks” the ASGS 2021 lists in the section on “fairness”.**

#### **4. How could/should you engage?**

As with the European Semester cycles in the past years, **EAPN members should try to engage** (give inputs, then review the proposals and make recommendations) **with your national governments and with the European Commission.**

##### **4.1 Engaging with your national governments**

EAPN members should urgently get in touch with their relevant national ministries **as of mid-October 2020** (and until Christmas 2020) to find out in what the state of play is in the preparation of the **national Recovery and Resilience Plans (RRPs) and the National Reform Programmes (NRPs)** and to ask **when, how and to whom they can provide inputs, submit proposals, meet up relevant government officials, participate in meetings, etc..**

We understand from some members that it is the Ministries dealing with EU funds i.e. ESF plus who are primarily responsible, but this may vary from country to country. Please feedback to the EUISG group this information.

## 4.2 Engaging with European Commission staff in your own country and in Brussels

Albeit the important shifts in the governance structures (see above under 2.3), EAPN members are advised to **contact the European Semester Officer** in their country and to **share the input and concrete proposals submitted to their national governments also with the EC Country Desk Officers** and then their assessment of the Recovery and Resilience Plans and NRPs once adopted.

More information on contact points and advocacy channels can also be found in the [EAPN European Semester Toolkit 2020](#). A full **list of the European Semester Officers** in place in early March 2020 can be accessed [here](#). A full **list of the EC Country Desk Officers** for nearly all EU MS can be accessed [here](#). Please note that both lists can be a bit outdated. **In some countries the contact persons might have changed!** Please also note that the EC Country Desk Officers for countries for which no personal e-mail is included in the table did not agree with sharing their direct contact information with external stakeholders such as EAPN. For these countries (EE, FI, LT, LV) please use the generic e-mail [EMPL-C5-UNIT@ec.europa.eu](mailto:EMPL-C5-UNIT@ec.europa.eu).

## 5. Reference documents / information for further reading

### 5.1 EAPN

- [EAPN Briefing Note “European Semester Cycle 2021 - Information, Assessment and Action Tips for EAPN Members”](#) (5 October 2020)
- EUISG 30.09.20: Presentation [“EUISG 2021 European Semester cycle, 2021 AGSG and Recovery and Resilience Facility”](#) (Mathias Maucher)
- EAPN Capacity Building Webinar 19.11.20: Presentation “European Semester (up to) 2020 and EAPN European Semester Toolkit 2020” (Mathias Maucher) + Presentation “EAPN Assessment of progress in European Semester and impact of European Semester Reforms 2021” (Sian Jones) => [Members’ Room](#), *“Materials from webinars/capacity buildings/conferences”, “Capacity Building Webinar on Members’ Engagement in the European Semester, 19 November 2020”*
- EUISG 01.12.20: Presentation [“New European Semester 2021 & RRF 2021 How work on the ground & to engage?”](#) (Mathias Maucher)
- [EAPN European Semester Toolkit 2020](#)

### 5.2 European Commission

- EAPN Capacity Building Webinar 19.11.20: Presentation [“RRF and the European Semester in 2021”](#) (Filip Tanay)
- Commission Staff Working Document: Guidance to Member States: Recovery and Resilience Plans ([Guidance Document](#))