

POVERTY WATCH 2020

"Covid-19 supercharging poverty"

data and experiences from the ground

29 January 2021

Online conference

14.00-16.30

With MEPs

Cindy Franssen & Marisa Matias





Poverty Watch 2020 | COVID-19 supercharging poverty

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#PovertyWatch

The International Federation of Social Workers – Europe Poverty Watch Report – Issues and Recommendations January 29, 2021

Fran McDonnell

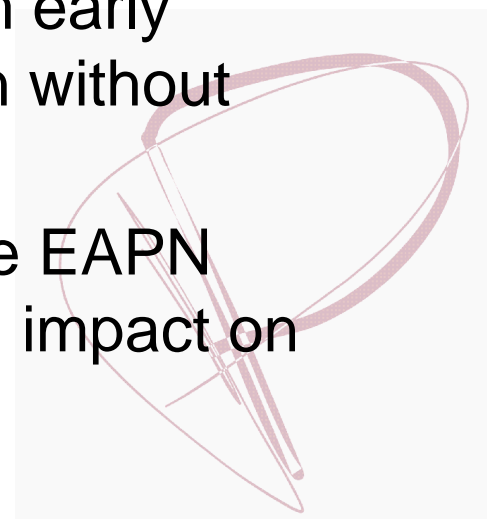
International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW)
Europe





Introduction

- IFSW is a global organisation with 5 regions
- The IFSW Europe region is an NGO which represents Social Work Associations from 50 countries including all EU member states
- 12 countries responded to the Poverty Watch questionnaire
- Social workers work with people experiencing the impact of Covid-19 (individuals, families and communities from early childhood to older age), who are facing poverty often without access to essential social services
- The report is a summary of members feedback in the EAPN Poverty Watch survey which focused on poverty and impact on services





Summary of Main Issues:

1. The pandemic is exposing cracks that have been in health, care and social welfare systems for years due to austerity, marketisation and underfunding with serious consequence of health, social and economic inequalities
2. Chronic underfunding and lack of recognition of the importance of adequate social services and social protection systems has left many people without the resources, protection and support they need
3. With increases in people experiencing illness, unemployment, poverty and family stress
4. The organisational structure of health and social care services varies widely between countries but social care is often treated as a separate and unequal system
5. Resulting in the shocking the number of excess deaths of older people in care homes, the disregard for the health and safety of care staff and the isolation of older and disabled people in their homes.
6. Lack of funding and access to support systems, social care and health services means that people receive too little help too late to prevent problems like child and vulnerable adult abuse, domestic violence, mental health issues, homelessness, and institutional care for people who have not received the social support they require to maintain or regain their independence.



Specific issues identified by most social work associations

1. Increase in poverty and unemployment, particularly those already in low paid jobs, women and young people
2. Lack of access to social services - Services/safety nets, which are stretched anyway, were unavailable – leading to an increase in isolation, mental health and safeguarding issues

People facing everything alone. They missed what is so important for their wellbeing (Netherlands, Austria, Ireland).

3. Closure of schools put huge pressure on families and left vulnerable children at risk. Many harms hidden from view including domestic violence.
4. Digital inequality affected access to education, social services, benefits

Social work had to be done mainly by digital means, but the poorest families, people with learning disabilities, many elderly people, migrants, do not always have the (financial) means for digital contact or the experience of using it (Netherlands, Ireland, Romania).

5. Black, Asian and minority ethnic people were disproportionately affected by death, illness, loss of jobs with over representation in lower paid jobs and many BAME health and care sector staff disproportionately affected by Covid-19



Specific issues identified by most social work associations (cont)

6. Homelessness and poor quality housing

“The main challenges were for the most vulnerable homeless people or people with severe drug or mental health problems who need support from social workers to access health and social systems” Denmark

“Overcrowding, housing insecurity and homelessness are among causes of unprecedented rise in numbers of children referred to social workers because of safeguarding concerns and rise of children coming into care” UK

“People living on the streets have lost access to the system regardless of age. Although measures have been taken to suspend evictions, now that time has passed, this is now being resumed. The number of people is rising” (Germany).

7. Refugees and migrants more vulnerable – people in camps and those reliant on NGOs

“Restrictions on some migrants receiving financial support were eased but now being put back in place resulting in destitution” UK





Conclusions – what should change

1. Crucially transformative social protections systems for all and preventative social services need to be seen as an investment in society and not a cost.
2. The EPSR must be an instrument to eliminate poverty, social exclusion and discrimination
3. For effective recovery, integrate the EPSR's so that it underpins the new EU strategies, frameworks, plans and funding including New Green Deal and Digital transformation.
4. Focus on what this would look like with targets, SMART outcomes and how to achieve it with human rights principles based on participation, accountability, and non-discrimination.
5. Implement the Child Guarantee including access to social services
6. Provide adequate social housing for all and combat homelessness with fair access to resources for migrants and refugees
7. Invest in community based social services, strengthen neighbourhood cohesion and new social partnerships with the participation of experts by experience in developing them.
8. IFSW strongly recommends developing long-term, sustainable strategy and funding model to improve access to universal, quality social services and investment in workers and carers – take into account increasing need caused by the pandemic
9. Social services are “essential” to the implementation of the ESPR and for cohesive and resilient societies and should be included in Principle 20, ‘Access to essential services’