

EAPN STATEMENT PORTO SOCIAL SUMMIT – MAY 7, 2021

Introduction

The Porto Social Summit is expected to set a **European agenda for the next decade** that leaves no one behind. EAPN must highlight the opportunity (and urgency) for European leaders and Civil Society to rethink what a **Social Europe free of poverty and social exclusion truly means**.

We welcome the intention to reinforce the commitment from Member States, European institutions, Social Partners and Civil Society to the implementation of the Action Plan for the European Pillar of Social Rights (AP/EPSR). Nevertheless, **EAPN must demand more ambition to face the challenges that lay ahead**.

The Action Plan of the European Pillar of Social Rights

EAPN published its [first reaction](#) to the European Commission's presentation of the AP/EPSR¹, which is expected to deliver on the promise that the **unique European Social and Economic Model can bring shared prosperity and opportunities for all**.

As Commissioner Nicolas Schmit stated, the Plan contains tools, and policy and legal initiatives, backed up by **resources from the Recovery and Resilience Facility and ESF+, and by a monitoring framework**. Several have been welcomed by EAPN, such as the **EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child and a Council Recommendation establishing the European Child Guarantee** (see [our statement](#)), the **European Platform on Combating Homelessness** (see an [open letter](#)), the **proposed Adequate Minimum Wages Directive** (see [our statement](#)), the Affordable Housing Initiative, the report on access to essential services, and the High-Level Expert Group to study the future of the welfare state, to name a few.

[1] <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=23696&langId=en>.

EAPN fully supports the EC in making effective use of these tools and using the revised Social Score board for monitoring progress on social rights. But we continue to question whether the set of targets and objectives will effectively deliver on the promise and expectations of the [EU's citizens](#), who view the lack of social rights as a serious problem (71%), and perceive a Social Europe to be important to them personally (88%).

“We need to move from good intentions and diffuse declarations to clear and budgeted legislative mechanisms that make the rights of the European population effective and enforceable.”

Carlos Susias, President of EAPN

Albeit crucial, the reduction target of 15 million people at risk of poverty (with a sub-target of 5 million children) is an **unambitious scaling back of Europe's 2020 target of 20 million**, especially in the context of **expected higher levels of poverty and income inequality in the future**. Furthermore, it is nowhere near to the **Sustainable Development Goal 1 (SDG) and its target to reduce numbers by at least half by 2030**.

For EAPN, the SDG 1 target (1.2) would have been a more fitting demonstration of the commitment of EU institutions and national governments **to improve the lives of the 91 million people at risk of poverty or social exclusion and to the 22.2% of children living in poor households in the EU27 (2019)**.

“It is worth remembering that there are no poor children in rich homes, and no rich children in poor homes.”

Carlos Susias, President of EAPN

It is now up to Member States to **define their own national targets, and demonstrate their commitment to the AP/EPSR**, within what Commissioner Schmit highlighted as a “shared responsibility” between EU institutions and national, regional and local governments. We **strongly urge governments to increase the ambition on the poverty reduction target, and welcomes the efforts of Members States that are working on much-needed national anti-poverty strategies**, which will be essential to consistently integrate the initiatives of the AP/EPSR.

EAPN remains strongly engaged in fostering that ambition, by providing opportunities to work with national governments. On March 22, EAPN and EAPN Portugal held the conference [“Action Plan for the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights”](#), which included government and civil society representatives. On May 3, **EAPN organised a roundtable with the UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, the European Commission, the governments of Portugal and Slovenia, and EAPN members in Portugal, Slovenia and France.** The event involved discussions on the AP/EPSR, in light of national perspectives in combatting poverty and social exclusion, as well as international human rights law. On 4 May, EAPN co-organised with Solidar the workshop **“Employment: Roadmap to quality employment through a just transition and a fair recovery”** as part of the Social Platform’s Flagship Conference, highlighting the importance of quality of jobs when delivering on headline target 1 of the AP/EPSR.

Minimum Income

EAPN regrets that the Action Plan does not include a Framework Directive on Minimum Income, which we view as legally feasible and within EU competencies in the social and cohesion policy fields, whilst respecting principles of subsidiarity and proportionality and protecting national competencies. **A Framework Directive would have demonstrated EU commitment to the promise embedded in the AP/EPSR principle 14.**

EAPN expects the alternative Council Recommendation in 2022 to contribute in updating the EU framework on Minimum Income to effectively support and complement the social protection policies of Members States. It should be based on the strengthened exchange of good practice and mutual learning, within processes that bring together national authorities, civil society organisations, social partners, researchers and people experiencing poverty and social exclusion. It should also be periodically analysed and reviewed, to make sure Minimum Income Schemes (MIS) are modernized regarding the eligibility criteria and the benefit levels, and assessed in terms of adequacy, coverage, take-up and connection with labour market activation measures and the access to goods and services.

In implementing the Action Plan, **we encourage Member States to organise and strengthen coordination mechanisms to allow for meaningful engagement and participation of all** - civil society organisations, social partners, and citizens, especially people at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

"European citizens, and especially people in precariousness and poverty, observe, with increasing distrust, the vague appeals of goodwill and the absence of executive commitments that truly affect their lives in a positive way, by materializing their rights"

Carlos Susias, President of EAPN

Participation of People Experiencing Poverty

On May 3, **EAPN organised three sessions with People experiencing Poverty in EAPN's national networks in France, Belgium, Spain and Italy and the UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights.** They had the opportunity to hear how the contributions given in December 2020 were used in his mission, provide additional information regarding the current implementation of MIS, and exchange on the necessary conditions for the implementation of the Child Guarantee at national level. **As main beneficiaries of policies, their information, knowledge and experience should always be valued and taken into account when improving policy recommendations, design and implementation.**

"There are problems in terms of participation. As far as I am concerned, administration have not found a way for people experiencing poverty to participate. How can we have voices heard? They should do like other bodies and look at concerns for children and society at large. I would say firstly there needs to be transparency. The users of these services cannot access information, so they do not know what's happening in terms of intervention."

M^a del Carmen García Suárez, PeP, EAPN Spain

Conclusion

Faced with an overwhelming pandemic and an uncertain recovery, **the EU and Member States must transform this crisis into an opportunity to rethink their social and economic model**, stressing the former over the latter. **It is the opportune moment to demonstrate to all EU citizens that they are at the centre of the recovery** by effectively addressing the structural causes of poverty through the AP/EPSSR, the Green Deal, and the Recovery and Resilience Plans.

Now is the time to fight against poverty and social exclusion in an integrated way, and to guarantee all EU citizens, especially people experiencing poverty, the right to an adequate, accessible and enabling minimum income, to social protection and to affordable public services.