

Brief Report of the Conference and Key Messages



INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

Whilst the Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated already existing social and structural problems, impacting disproportionately the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, it also created a *momentum* to finally address key controversial issues while reflecting on the architecture of the current European social protection systems. Besides the digital and green transitions, environmental challenges, climate changes, and globalization are fast changing our daily life and will impact Europe's social market economy. To tackle the impacts of the pandemic, the Commission has set ambitious plans and initiatives: several important steps forward have already been made, *inter alia*, on the recently adopted Child Guarantee, the Gender Equality Strategy, the Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities, the Youth Employment Support package, the European Platform on Combating Homelessness, the Social Economy action plan and the proposal for a Directive on Adequate Minimum Wages. Furthermore, for the construction of a strong Social Europe, an important cornerstone was set: the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan (EPSR AP), which aims at bringing new life to the twenty principles of the Pillar.

EAPN advocates for an integrated, person-centered approach, linking the Green Deal, Digital Europe, and the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan, and with a joint commitment from all political levels and actors. This will be pivotal to ensure that all these changes and challenges are properly addressed - leaving no one behind and allowing building back better without poverty.

Conference Objectives

- To generate a high-level political debate on the ongoing impact of the pandemic on the most vulnerable and poor and how to advance in social rights and in the creation of a cohesive and inclusive society for all.
- To update the audience on situation of poverty according to the different profiles of people in poverty affected by the pandemic.
- To discuss the [Action Plan on the European Pillar of Social Rights](#) (EPSR AP) and to evaluate its goal of reducing the number of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion by at least 15 million.
- To debate around a possible new overarching Europe 2030 strategy against poverty, linking the Green Deal, Digital Europe and the EPSR AP in order to ensure an equal commitment to realise green, digital and social targets.

Before the pandemic, there was a significant percentage of the population at-risk-of-Poverty or exclusion (ARPE, 2019 data) in all Member States (MS)). **92.4 million, 20.9% of the EU-27 population, were living at risk of poverty and social exclusion; mostly women, children, single-parent households, non-EU migrants and refugees, people with disabilities, homeless persons and Roma. 22.2% of children in the EU - almost 18 million - were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Around 24 million, or 5.4 % of the EU population, were 'severely materially deprived'.** The “new profiles” of poverty are people who fell into poverty during the 2008 crisis, had recovered and now "return" to being poor, plus people who became poor and / or materially deprived for the first time during the pandemic, including but not limited to frontline workers infected with COVID-19, pensioners with inadequate pensions, workers with no income and women working in the domestic and care services.

The enormous financial effort on behalf the EU and the MS notwithstanding, to go back to ‘normality’ is not a good option for those already poor and deprived, and for those whose employers have closed doors, are ill or in recovery, or without any source of income. **The positive note is that never before has there been so much support for the EU's role in a stronger social Europe.** Although people recognise the responsibility of their national governments, in the last Special Eurobarometer 509 on “Social Issues” nearly nine in ten Europeans (88%) say that a social Europe is important to them personally. In this context, EAPN welcomed the European Commission’s Action Plan on the European Pillar of Social Rights, published on 4 March 2021. The Action Plan is the long-awaited follow-up to the promise made during the Proclamation of the Pillar that the “unique European Social and Economic Model brings about shared prosperity and opportunities for all” and a long-awaited renewal of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

We value the set of measures linked to the EPSR principles but we find the coverage of all 20 principles and of different types of tools to be imbalanced. While the EPSR AP briefly refers to other overarching initiatives like the SDGs and the European Green Deal, it does not establish coherence between these and other initiatives, detailing how all of them contribute to the same goals. **Therefore, we are concerned about the lack of national targets and the potentially negative hierarchy between the rights and principles of the Pillar leaving some behind.** We believe that the Social Scoreboard should fully cover all 20 EPSR principles and better disaggregate data by population groups in vulnerable situations and household types. Annex 2 of the EPSR AP demonstrates the Commissions’ plans to add more indicators, but **a lot more are needed to**

ensure that the Social Scoreboard fully covers all 20 Pillar principles. We are also concerned about **Member States' social protection capacity to support the weakest** as well as the monitoring framework for the **Recovery and Resilience Plans which must be clearly “social” and managed with transparency and accountability.**

EAPN welcomes that the European Commission encourages Member States to organise a coordination mechanism to ensure the **engagement of civil society organisations in the implementation and evaluation of the EPSR**, as CSOs know the lived realities of people in vulnerable situations.

STRUCTURE OF THIS BRIEF REPORT

Building on the “Introduction”, the report contains:

- the agenda of the EAPN Policy Conference
- the main points and takeaways highlighted during the two panels
- the conclusions

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Welcome

9.00 – 9.05: **Hélder Ferreira**, EAPN Interim Director

First Session: Opening

9.05 – 9.45 Introduction of the speakers: **Hélder Ferreira**, EAPN Interim Director

9.05 – 9.15 Welcome address: **Carlos Susías**, EAPN President

9.15 – 9.30 Key note speech: **Katarina Ivanković-Knežević**, Director of Social Affairs, DG EMPL, European Commission

09.30 – 09.40 Testimony as to the impact of Covid-19 on herself, **Annoula Magga**, EAPN Greece Vice-President and PeP

Panel 1: Social consequences of Covid-19 and green and digital transitions

9.40 – 9.45 Introduction, **Paul Ginnell**, EAPN EU Inclusion Strategies Group

9:45 – 9:52 **Maria Jepsen**, Deputy Director, Eurofound

9:52 – 10:00 **Maciej Kucharczyk**, Secretary General, AGE Platform Europe

10:00 – 10:07 **Freek Spinnewijn**, Director, Feantsa

10:07 – 10:14 **Ally Dunhill**, Head of Advocacy, Eurochild

10:14 – 10:20 **Michele Levoy**, Secretary General, PICUM

10:20 – 10:27 **Mary Collins**, Senior Policy and Advocacy Coordinator, European Womens Lobby

10:27 – 10:37 **Jiří Švarc**, Head of Unit for Social Investment Strategy, DG EMPL, European Commission

10:37 – 10.47 **Dennis Radtke**, MEP

10.47 – 11.10 Q&A

11.10 – 11.20 Coffee break

11.20 – 12.50 **Panel 2: EU priorities and their social dimension: what space for the social dimension in the recovery, and the green & digital transitions?**

11:20 – 11:40 **Valentina Vehovar**, Director General of the Slovenian ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities

11:40 – 11:50 **Olivier de Schutter**, UN Special Rapporteur for Extreme Poverty and Human Rights

11:50 – 12:00 **Federico Lucidi**, Deputy Head of Unit for Employment and Social Aspects of the European Semester, DG EMPL, European Commission

12 :00 – 12 :10 **Graciela Malgesini**, EAPN EU Inclusion Strategies Group (Co-Chair of the Steering Group)

12 :10 – 12 :50 Q&A

12.50 – 13.00 Conclusions

Brief Report of the Conference

Welcome and introduction

Hélder Ferreira, EAPN Interim Director, welcomed the participants – members from the European Parliament, European Commission, Eurofound, and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) – to the event.

The discussion started with a reflection on the European framework in relation to the fight against poverty and social exclusion and, more specifically, on how the Action Plan of the European Pillar of Social Rights is expected to frame and underpin the European Union priorities in terms of recovery from the Covid-19 crisis and the green and digital transitions to effectively contribute to the eradication of poverty.

Katarina Ivanković-Knežević, Director of Social Affairs, presented some of the most important initiatives already put in place by the European Commission to directly address poverty and further highlighted some of the main actions currently on the table. Firstly, the proposal for a Council Recommendation on Minimum Income, expected by the end of 2022, to support the Member States to modernize their national schemes and complementing the proposal on a Directive on Minimum Wages; the upcoming 2022 initiative on long-term care policy reforms; [the Strategic framework on the Union of Equality](#); [the Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities](#) and [the Gender Equality Strategy](#); [the Anti-racism Action Plan](#) and [the Youth Employment Support package](#), as well as the monitoring by the Commission of the implementation of the Council recommendation on access to social protection. Concerning the latter, the Commission has established a high-level expert group monitoring the adequacy and sustainability of the current social protection systems in relation to future challenges and opportunities.

Reflecting EAPN's strong belief in the importance of including the voice of people from the ground in finding sustainable and efficient solutions, the session ended with a powerful first-hand testimony from **Annoula Magga**, EAPN Greece Vice-President and a person experiencing poverty. She gave a moving testimony of the life of 370 Roma families experiencing poverty in Greece, during the Covid-19 crisis, highlighting their daily difficulties in accessing public health care services, food, water, and electricity. This first discussion set the scene for the upcoming panels, by extensively emphasizing the importance of a shared commitment from all relevant political actors, and of including European citizens, civil society organisations and people experiencing poverty in the dialogue. A strategy is effective if it ensures people's essential needs and respects

their human rights, in addition to the provision of income. Finally, the speakers agreed that to face the current and future challenges, the debate on possible future policy developments must be undertaken now, and it must be supported by shared responsibilities and cooperation.

Key Messages:

- The Commission is working on the proposal for a Council Recommendation on Minimum Income, expected by the end of 2022, that will complement the proposal on a Directive on Minimum Wages.
- Among the mentioned Commission's initiatives on the table: initiative on long-term care policy reforms (2022), Strategic framework of the Union of Equality, Disability strategy and Gender Equality strategy, Anti-racism strategy, Youth employment support package. Additionally, a high-level expert group monitoring the adequacy and sustainability of the current social protection systems in relation to future challenges and opportunities
- Shared commitment and responsibilities from all relevant political actors, and the inclusion of CSOs, European citizens and people experiencing poverty are essential to finding sustainable and efficient solutions and policy developments.

Panel 1: Social consequences of Covid-19 and green and digital transitions

The first panel highlighted some of the main impacts of the Covid-19 crisis as well as the foreseen impact of the twin transitions on vulnerable groups and those experiencing poverty and social exclusion.

Impact on young and older people

Maria Jepsen, Deputy Director of Eurofound began the discussion by underlining the threefold nature of the Covid-19 pandemic, being simultaneously a health, economic and social crisis, and its age-specific trends. By looking at the consequences of the Covid-19 more in detail, she pointed out that young people have been hit hard, both by the 2008 and the recent threefold crisis, especially in terms of employment participation and mental wellbeing, due to the closure of schools and lockdowns. See her presentation [here](#).

The Secretary General of AGE Platform Europe, **Maciej Kucharczyk**, emphasised the surprisingly little commitment to older people shown at the Porto Summit, in favour of the younger generations. Having acknowledged that the digital transition entails both opportunities and challenges, he further claimed that governments should pay attention to the persisting digital gap affecting those in old age and which could be preventing them from accessing to essential services.

The initiatives and effective measures displayed by the European Union and the Member States to smooth the economic and social impacts of the crisis were largely not optimistically perceived. Indeed, according to the [Eurofound report](#) only 11% of the citizens believes that they reached those in need and only half of them believes they were fair. Compared to 2016, the citizens' optimism about the future collapsed on average by more than 20 points percentage, with the lowest rate being among the unemployed (20%). Students did register optimism however (56%).

Impact on women

Mary Collins, Senior Policy and Advocacy Coordinator of European Womens Lobby, highlighted that women have traditionally played an important role in upholding society, and the Covid-19 further accentuated their central role in particular in the care sector. Nevertheless, according to the [EIGE report](#), the Covid-19 fallout took a higher toll on them, especially on younger women, with migrant origins and with lower educational attainments. Moreover, women working in the service sector, with children, and single mothers faced work-life-balance problems and compared with fathers, found it more difficult to concentrate on their job due to family responsibilities (Eurofound).

The widening of gender segregation in the labour market impacted women's wages, and in turn prevented them from accessing social protection. Maciej Kucharczyk additionally stressed that for the first time since a decade, the pandemic has led to a decrease in life expectancy, and revealed persistent gender gap inequalities: the gender pay gap in the EU stands at 14% while the gender pension gap is at 30%.

Impact on unemployed and homeless people

Those unemployed or that lost their job during the pandemic, faced difficulties in (re)entering the labour market and were thus financially hit (Eurofound). According to **FEANTSA's** estimate, in 2019 the number of homeless people was 700.000 in Europe, with an increase of 70% in the last decade, not correctly captured however by the available poverty indicators (e.g. AROPE). During the crisis, some Member States implemented positive measures to tackle homelessness, increasing for example, the number of available temporary accommodations or switching from night-only to 24 hours shelters. Additionally, measures trying to avoid over-crowding and, for the first time, solutions for specific sub-groups, such as those with addictions, and couples, have been introduced. However, three main worrying points were pointed out by Director **Freek Spinnewijn**: firstly the persistency of the housing affordability crisis jointly with the rise of prices and rents, and secondly on rent arrears. Finally, particular attention should be given to the long-lasting effects on those with precarious jobs.

Impact on children

Ally Dunhill, Head of Advocacy of Eurochild, brought the attention to the impact of Covid-19 on children, who will indeed suffer more severe and persistent consequences. The main impact was on children's mental and physical health, especially for those coming from more disadvantaged families. For the latter, losing their one healthy meal in school and being victims of the educational and digital divide further exacerbated existing social inequalities.

Impact on undocumented migrants

Finally, **Michele Levoy**, Secretary General of PICUM, emphasised the recent experience and difficulties faced by undocumented migrants. Being typically non-regulated and key workers, their primary sources of inequality come from the loss of their income and impossibility of accessing essential services (healthcare services, education, banking, payments). The pandemic pushed seven European countries to include undocumented migrants in the list of those eligible for

receiving vaccines, disregarding the issue of lack of legal entitlement, but much more needs to be done.

The role of the EU in advancing Social Europe

The NextGenEU and the Recovery and Resilience Facilities (RRFs) indicate digital and green transformations as the road to the recovery, but ensuring to build trust is pivotal to reach the necessary support and consensus (Eurofound). As **Jiří Švarc**, Head of Unit for Social Investment Strategy DG EMPL, stressed, high-level mobilization of policy support and guidance to the Member States, complemented by a massive amount of resources both within the EU new budget framework and NextGenEU have already been deployed. The European Commission is working on the proposal for a Council Recommendation on Minimum Income, expected for next year, and on a guidance for distributional impact assessment, in order to ensure the ongoing labour market transitions will be fair and socially sustainable. Furthermore, the implementation of the social protection recommendation is being discussed and a report on Access to Essential Services will be published next year.

According to **Freek Spinnewijn**, Director of Feantsa, the joint agreement of all the Member States to end homelessness by 2030 and the recently signed [“Lisbon Declaration on the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness”](#) are important steps forward.

In his intervention, MEP **Dennis Radke** pointed out that nine out of ten Europeans declared to want more Social Europe. However, he emphasised that to reach this goal, the Member States and the European Union should join in their responsibilities and coordinate to proceed in the right direction.

The importance of an integrated and human rights approach for Social Europe

During the discussion, a few key elements were depicted as necessary to be kept in mind for a fair reconstruction. Among them, the **importance of taking a human rights approach, strengthening citizens' trust while prioritizing the reduction of inequalities, and the eradication of vulnerabilities and social exclusion** were mentioned (Age Platform Europe). The European Womens Lobby further advanced the idea of **complementing the Green Deal with a “Care Deal”** and stressed the importance of gender budgeting, and implementing a life-cycle approach to compensate carers and those traditionally excluded from the system. Massive investments are needed to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and to generate an effective and integrated approach. Finally, the **twin transitions should be more inclusive, even in its language, including migrants and children**. A path to regularisation should be implemented for the former (PICUM) whereas for the latter, their role as agents of change should be recognized and heard (Eurochild).

Key Messages:

- Young and older people, women, unemployed, homeless people, children and undocumented migrants have been particularly hit by the crisis, further exacerbating already existing inequalities. The green and digital transitions should be more inclusive, even in their language, including migrants and children, and for the latter, their role as agents of change should be recognized and heard.

- The European Commission is working on the proposal for a Council Recommendation on Minimum Income (by the end of 2022), and on guiding distributional impact assessment, in order to ensure the ongoing labour market transitions will be fair and socially sustainable. The Commission will furthermore publish a report on Access to Essential Services next year.
- A fair reconstruction requires taking a human rights approach, moving towards a transition based on citizens' trust and consensus.

Highlights from the Q&A:

- The Covid-19 pandemic has disproportionately hit racialised communities such as the Roma community. To ensure that Europe's Roma are not left behind in the Covid-19 recovery the European Union has included a specific section of the Child Guarantee highlighting the situation of specific groups of children in poverty that need extra attention, such as Roma children.
- Due to its importance, ensuring access to quality food for all was suggested to be included within the Commission's report on access to essential services scheduled for 2022, and which will focus on energy, sanitation, digital and financial services, in addition to covering basic needs. There are already funds providing food assistance to the most vulnerable groups such as FEAD, which will be integrated within the ESF+, and that will continue to be supported.
- Some European Member States did not have any official dialogue or public consultations with civil society and stakeholders, and the national Recovery and Resilience Plans were prepared without their involvement. CSOs and social partners should be adequately consulted in preparing the Recovery and Resilience Plans, and Member States are obliged to report to the Commission on how consultations were organised at the national level.
- The Porto Summit and the 14 of June EPSCO Council showed a clear high-level commitment on the implementation of the Child Guarantee. National action plans will be followed very closely by the Commission, both in their design and implementation processes.

Panel 2: EU priorities and their social dimension: what space for the social dimension in the recovery, and the green and digital transitions?

The perspective of the Slovenian Presidency

Valentina Vehovar, Director General of the Slovenian ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, began by addressing the contents of the Porto declaration, warmly welcomed by the Slovenian Presidency. Among their priorities, sustainable and quality jobs, with specific regard to adequate wages, and life quality of all generations were mentioned. Secondly, a resilient and inclusive society will be central to guaranteeing equal opportunities for children and vulnerable people as well as to ensure gender equality. The Slovenian Presidency is committed to implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights roadmap and addressing the intergenerational cycle of poverty while investing in children, whose human potential, especially in an aging society, is pivotal. They will build further on the Porto declaration while pushing for a strong social European dimension.

The perspective of the United Nations

The crisis has offered a unique opportunity to put, for the first time, controversial issues on the European agenda. In particular, **Olivier de Schutter**, UN Special Rapporteur for Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, claimed that the crisis has been a wake-up call on three main issues. It firstly

put the necessity to value work differently in the spotlight, not based merely on market considerations, but by better rewarding undervalued jobs whose great positive externalities are necessary to build social resilience. Secondly, a renewed importance to unpaid and unrecognized work within households must be acknowledged, especially in light of the emergence of a potentially vicious cycle and further worsening of gender pay gap issues. In this regard, he warmly welcomed the proposal for a “Care Deal”, suggested in the previous panel. Finally, new attention must be brought to the social-economic governance in the European Union, allowing for social investments in education, health, and social security, which are among the prerequisites for a future inclusive and sustainable growth. Indeed, only moving toward an equal society with more wealth redistribution, will allow tackling the existing tension between the need to fight poverty and a reduction of the ecological footprint. He welcomed the recently submitted paper by Belgium and Spain, proposing a new social-imbalance alert mechanism as a counterpart to the existing macroeconomic imbalance procedure. The former is based on the idea that social imbalances are a concern for people's wellbeing as well as for the functioning of the Economic and Monetary Union and the internal market. Finally, he highlighted the relevance of EAPN and its allies' work and claimed the European Semester should be a tool of social justice.

The perspective of the European Commission

Federico Lucidi, Deputy Head of Unit for Employment and Social Aspects of the European Semester, reiterated the significance of the European Semester in line with the Porto Summit. In particular, it plays an important role in monitoring the progress towards the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and in coordinating social and employment policy actions. Moreover, despite its initial focus on sustainability, the social dimension has been better integrated in the Semester since 2018, by including the Social Scoreboard and an agreed methodology with the Member States to identify the main challenges in the annual Joint Employment Report. In the 2020 cycle, the European Semester aimed at mitigating the social impacts of the crisis and supporting an inclusive recovery. The next Joint Employment Report for which the Commission will adopt a proposal this Autumn will include specific guidelines on how to tackle the current social challenges, in line with the new European targets set for 2030 and endorsed by the Porto Summit: at least 78% of people aged 20-64 should be in employment; at least 60% of all adults should participate in training every year and the number of people at risk of poverty should be reduced by at least 15 million, including at least 5 million children.

The renewed social dimension has been reflected in the funding programmes, and both the implementation of the EPSR and the promotion of policies for children and youth are among the assessment criteria for the Recovery and Resilience Plans. Concerning the future Semester, the 2022 Annual Sustainable Growth strategy will outline all its key elements, but some of them can already be foreseen: the RRP and the revised Social Scoreboard will be implemented in the monitoring mechanism of the Semester, and the revised social scoreboard will be embedded in the Semester, as indicated in the Action Plan of the EPSR. The recent EPSCO Council has endorsed new headline indicators for the Revised Social Scoreboard that will be used in addition to the previous ones, including a specific indicator on people at risk of poverty and social exclusion concerning children; an indicator on housing cost overburden; on the disability employment rate gap, and on participation in adult learning.

Key Messages:

- Among the Slovenian Presidency's priorities, sustainable and quality jobs, with specific regard to adequate wages, life quality of all generations, resilient and inclusive societies to ensure equal opportunities for children, vulnerable people, and gender equality have been mentioned. Building on the Porto declaration, they will push for a strong Social Europe, implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights roadmap and addressing the intergenerational cycle of poverty.
- The pandemic has been a wake-up call on three counts: need for valuing work differently and better rewarding undervalued jobs, in light of their positive externalities; acknowledging a renewed importance of unpaid and unrecognized work within households; and bringing new attention to the social-economic governance in the European Union.
- The Commission will adopt the Joint Employment Report in autumn, and it will include specific guidelines on how to tackle the current social challenges, in line with the new European targets set for 2030 and endorsed by the Porto Summit.
- The key elements of the future Semester will be included within the 2022 Annual Sustainable Growth strategy and a few of them can already be foreseen: the RRP and the revised Social Scoreboard will be implemented in the monitoring mechanism of the Semester, and the revised social scoreboard will be embedded in the Semester, as indicated in the EPSR Action Plan.
- New headline indicators on the revised Social Scoreboard have been endorsed in the recent EPSCO Council, such as a specific indicator on people at risk of poverty and social exclusion for children, an indicator on housing cost overburden, on the disability employment rate gap, and on participation in adult learning.

Highlights from the Q&A:

- The Slovenian Presidency stressed the importance of quality work for the life-quality of all generations and they will take into account three aspects related to sustainable work: measures for health and safety at work, right to skills, and flexible work arrangements. A flagship conference will be organised on this topic in October, which will feed into the Council conclusions that they aim to adopt at the December EPSCO Council meeting.
- The issue of energy poverty and poor housing conditions is remarked in the EPSR AP, and energy services are among the essential services covered by principle 20. The Commission has taken several initiatives in this domain for example through the Renovation Wave, launched at the end of 2020, and the Recommendation on energy poverty. Furthermore, the Recovery and Resilience Facility could be used to address challenges in this area. To quickly allocate the resources to the most in-need groups, the RRP is built around milestones and targets that the Member States have to comply with, to ensure timely answers. To prevent Member State's deviations from the national plans, the Commission has set up a specific task force that carefully assesses their implementation.
- The Social Scoreboard never had a pure monitoring role, but it rather contributed to underpin specific recommendations for the Member States, and its already high policy relevance will be further improved with its revision.
- The proposal for the Social Scoreboard is included as an annex to the Action Plan. The EPSCO has endorsed the headline indicators proposed by the Commission, and Eurostat will publish them starting from mid-July. There is still an ongoing discussion on the secondary indicators.

EAPN Recommendations

Graciela Malgesini, EU and Advocacy Officer of EAPN Spain, pointed out a **key lesson learnt from COVID-19**: poverty is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, which acts as a major social and physical and mental health determinant factor, that cannot be addressed through simplistic measures.

“Any society with high levels of poverty is not only unjust, unequal and unethical, it is also unhealthy and weak in the face of crises”

A strategic approach, including overall targets and cross-cutting measures, and not merely focused on labour market or economic growth, must be pursued. Adequate economic investments are needed to revert the aforementioned inequalities, starting for example with mainstreaming gender and equality of treatment. Adequate political commitment and funding are two additional necessary elements, particularly crucial during times of crisis. In light of this, EAPN advocates for an “integrated, person-centered approach”, linked with the Green Deal, Digital Europe, and the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan to ensure an equal commitment to achieve ecological, digital, and social goals. Graciela Malgesini recommended **five main priorities for building back better without poverty**:

1. Adequate Wages, MI schemes and Pensions. *Tackling gender, long-term, and youth unemployment with jobs for all, profiting from the green and digital transitions*
2. Universal Child Benefits. *Providing Income support for single-parent families*
3. Universal and high-quality Healthcare. *Including Mental Health and Long-term care*
4. Adequate and affordable Housing. *Fighting and ending homelessness (ETHOS)*
5. Universal and High-quality Education and Vocational Training. *Fighting the digital divide*

See her presentation [here](#).

Closing remarks

The recent Covid-19 crisis enhanced already existing inequalities, demonstrating the fragility of our welfare and protection systems. Magnifying the value of work which has positive externalities for society by shifting the current paradigm was mentioned during the discussion as an important step forward. The pandemic lead us to a forced experience of the digital transition, which became one of the main agendas on the table. Taking advantage of the lessons learned, we must be prepared for the upcoming green and digital transitions, and ensure they will be socially just for all. In light of this, the recently adopted Child Guarantee, the proposed framework directive on Minimum Wages, and the Council Recommendation for Minimum Income schemes are among some of the main initiatives we should carry on with. Additionally, the Distributional Impact Assessment has been brought forward during the discussion as one pivotal element to look at these transitions from different angles such as the gender, ethnic and age dimensions. It is important to develop strong and robust protection systems for a more inclusive and adequate society, and civil society organisations and people experiencing poverty are important actors that should be included in the process, at all levels. Despite recent progress to tackle the crisis’ short-term impacts, an overarching approach is still missing. The possibility of capitalizing on addressing the consequences and lessons learned from the pandemic while including social goals and rethinking a more sustainable and long-term interaction between the social and economic governance has been raised as a possible approach. This would be possible by reconsidering the

role of social investment and the way in which wealth and redistribution is pursued in our society, in light of the value of daily life work, or by rethinking many of the choices of the past. It is necessary to start a debate on how to advance with social rights, to create a fairer and more inclusive society. As **Carlos Susías**, EAPN President, stressed, indicators are important but a common mission and a holistic approach are indispensable to eradicate poverty and social inequalities in Europe and globally.

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Graphic @EAPN

The European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) is the largest European network of national, regional and local networks, involving anti-poverty NGOs and grassroots groups as well as European Organisations, active in the fight against poverty and social exclusion. It was established in 1990.



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