



EUROPEAN ANTI POVERTY NETWORK

# Poverty Watch Report 2025

Promoting and Strengthening  
National and Local  
Anti-Poverty Strategies  
(NAPS & LAPS)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## ABOUT EAPN

The European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) is the largest European network of national, regional, and local networks, bringing together anti-poverty NGOs and grassroots groups as well as European organisations active in the fight against poverty and social exclusion. Together, we defend the rights of people experiencing poverty and ensure their active participation in the EU decision-making process.



# GLOSSARY

The **at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion indicator (AROPE)** corresponds to the sum of persons who are either at risk of poverty, severely materially and socially deprived, or living in a household with very low work intensity

The **European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR)** is a framework established by the EU in 2017 to promote fair and well-functioning labour markets and welfare systems across EU Member States. It outlines 20 principles and rights aimed at ensuring social inclusion, equal opportunities, and access to social protection for all EU citizens.

**Intersectionality** is a concept that examines how different forms of social stratification – such as race, gender, class, sexuality, disability, and other identity markers – intersect and interact to shape individuals’ experiences of privilege, oppression, and discrimination.

The **Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)** is the European Union’s long-term budget plan, setting expenditure ceilings for the EU over multiple years. The current MFF runs from 2021 to 2027.

<b>AROP</b>	At risk of poverty	<b>GMI</b>	Guaranteed Minimum Income
<b>AECEC</b>	Early childhood education and care	<b>LAPS</b>	Local Anti-Poverty Strategies
<b>ESF+</b>	European Social Fund +	<b>MIS</b>	Minimum Income Schemes
<b>ESIF</b>	ESIF European Structural and Investments Funds	<b>NAPS</b>	National Anti-Poverty Strategies
<b>EU</b>	European Union	<b>PeP</b>	Person experiencing poverty
<b>EAPN</b>	European Anti-Poverty Network	<b>RBs</b>	Reference Budgets
<b>EU APS</b>	EU Anti-Poverty Strategy	<b>TEU</b>	Treaty of the European Union
<b>EU-SILC</b>	European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions	<b>TFEU</b>	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
<b>FRA</b>	EU Agency for Fundamental Rights	<b>UN SDGs</b>	United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

# INTRODUCTION

Poverty and social exclusion remain a significant challenge across Europe despite policy commitments, targets and measures to eradicate poverty. Projections anticipate that 57,5 million people will still live in extreme poverty by 2030.<sup>1</sup> In 2024, 93.3 million people in the EU were at risk of poverty or social exclusion; this is equivalent to at least 21% of the EU population.<sup>2</sup>

The European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) sets out 20 key principles and rights essential for fair and well-functioning labour markets and social protection systems. The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan is the European Commission's contribution to the implementation of the 20 principles. There is a commitment to the headline target of reducing poverty by 15 million people by 2030, including 5 million children. However, this target is far from being reached and only 2.9 million people have been lifted out of poverty since 2019.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, on 10 September 2025, the President of the European Commission Ursula Von Der Leyen, committed to the eradication of poverty by 2050. The targets call for more effective tools and strategies that have a concrete impact on the lives of people living in poverty.<sup>4</sup>

The measures needed to reach the targets set out above require an understanding that the root causes are multidimensional and structural and cannot simply be addressed by economic growth, competitiveness and a welfare system.<sup>5</sup> The “EU Child Guarantee<sup>6</sup> and the Council Recommendation on adequate minimum income and active inclusion<sup>7</sup> and the announcement of the first-ever EU anti-Poverty Strategy<sup>8</sup> (EU APS) is a commendable response to poverty and social exclusion. However, we cannot ignore the commitments in the Multiannual Financial Framework and the European Semester that prioritise growth, competitiveness and security. The EU focus on competitiveness and fiscal consolidation can undermine social investment and protection.”<sup>9</sup>

- 1 UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, A Roadmap for Eradicating Poverty Beyond Growth (SRPoverty.org, 2025), <https://www.srpoverity.org/2025/01/13/a-roadmap-for-eradicating-poverty-beyond-growth/>
- 2 European Commission – Eurostat, Eurostat News, 2025, “People at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2024” <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/ddn-20250430-2>
- 3 European Commission, Proposal for a Joint Employment Report from the Commission and the Council, 2026: [https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/document/download/67ce1519-278c-4bfc-bf53-253c545a6aa2\\_en?filename=Proposal\\_JER%202026.pdf](https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/document/download/67ce1519-278c-4bfc-bf53-253c545a6aa2_en?filename=Proposal_JER%202026.pdf)
- 4 EAPN, Position Paper: Towards the Eradication of Poverty (2025), [https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/eapn-POSITION\\_PAPER\\_TOWARDS\\_ERADICATION\\_POVERTY\\_EAPN-6139.pdf](https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/eapn-POSITION_PAPER_TOWARDS_ERADICATION_POVERTY_EAPN-6139.pdf)
- 5 UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, A Roadmap for Eradicating Poverty Beyond Growth (SRPoverty.org, 2025), <https://www.srpoverity.org/2025/01/13/a-roadmap-for-eradicating-poverty-beyond-growth/>
- 6 European Commission, European Child Guarantee, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, [https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/social-protection-social-inclusion/addressing-poverty-and-supporting-social-inclusion/investing-children/european-child-guarantee\\_en](https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/social-protection-social-inclusion/addressing-poverty-and-supporting-social-inclusion/investing-children/european-child-guarantee_en)
- 7 Council of the European Union, Council Recommendation of 30 January 2023 on adequate minimum income ensuring active inclusion (2023/C 41/01), Official Journal of the European Union, 3 February 2023, [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32023H0203\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32023H0203(01))
- 8 Political guidelines for the next European Commission 2024–2029, [https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/e6cd4328-673c-4e7a-8683-f63ffb2cf648\\_en?filename=Political%20Guidelines%202024-2029\\_EN.pdf](https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/e6cd4328-673c-4e7a-8683-f63ffb2cf648_en?filename=Political%20Guidelines%202024-2029_EN.pdf)
- 9 EAPN, Competitiveness or social justice a choice to make - Reframing the 2025 Spring Package to Prioritise Social Well-being in the EU, 2025, [https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/eapn-SEMESTER\\_REPORT\\_SPRINGPACKAGE-6222.pdf](https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/eapn-SEMESTER_REPORT_SPRINGPACKAGE-6222.pdf)

The upcoming EU APS, together with National and Local Anti-Poverty Strategies (NAPS/LAPS) must address the multilayer root causes of poverty and social exclusion and have an overarching and comprehensive approach to eradicating poverty. It requires a clear commitment to a theory of change, anti-poverty measures, and mainstreaming this approach with other policy frameworks, budgets and legislation. EAPN have described NAPS as comprehensive, government-led policy frameworks aimed at preventing, reducing, and ultimately eradicating poverty at the national level.<sup>10</sup>

This Poverty Watch report outlines elements that must be included in a comprehensive and effective NAPS and LAPS framework. The report provides a broad analysis of current NAPS in 19 countries as well as exploring common challenges across Europe. Not all EU member states have NAPS and those which exist are very different in their objectives, implementation process and resources. The promising approaches to NAPS and LAPS included in this report intend to encourage the development and potential impact of NAPS and LAPS and any future developments between the standards set by the EU and requirements from Member States. The recommendations included in the report both in terms of policy development but also in terms of governance, which is essential for NAPS and LAPS.

<sup>10</sup> EAPN, Position Paper: Towards the Eradication of Poverty (2025), [https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/eapn-POSITION\\_PAPER\\_TOWARDS\\_ERADICATION\\_POVERTY\\_EAPN-6139.pdf](https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/eapn-POSITION_PAPER_TOWARDS_ERADICATION_POVERTY_EAPN-6139.pdf)

## METHODOLOGY

19 EAPN members (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Slovakia, Sweden, Spain) carried out data collection and analysis within their region to respond to a questionnaire developed by the EAPN team.

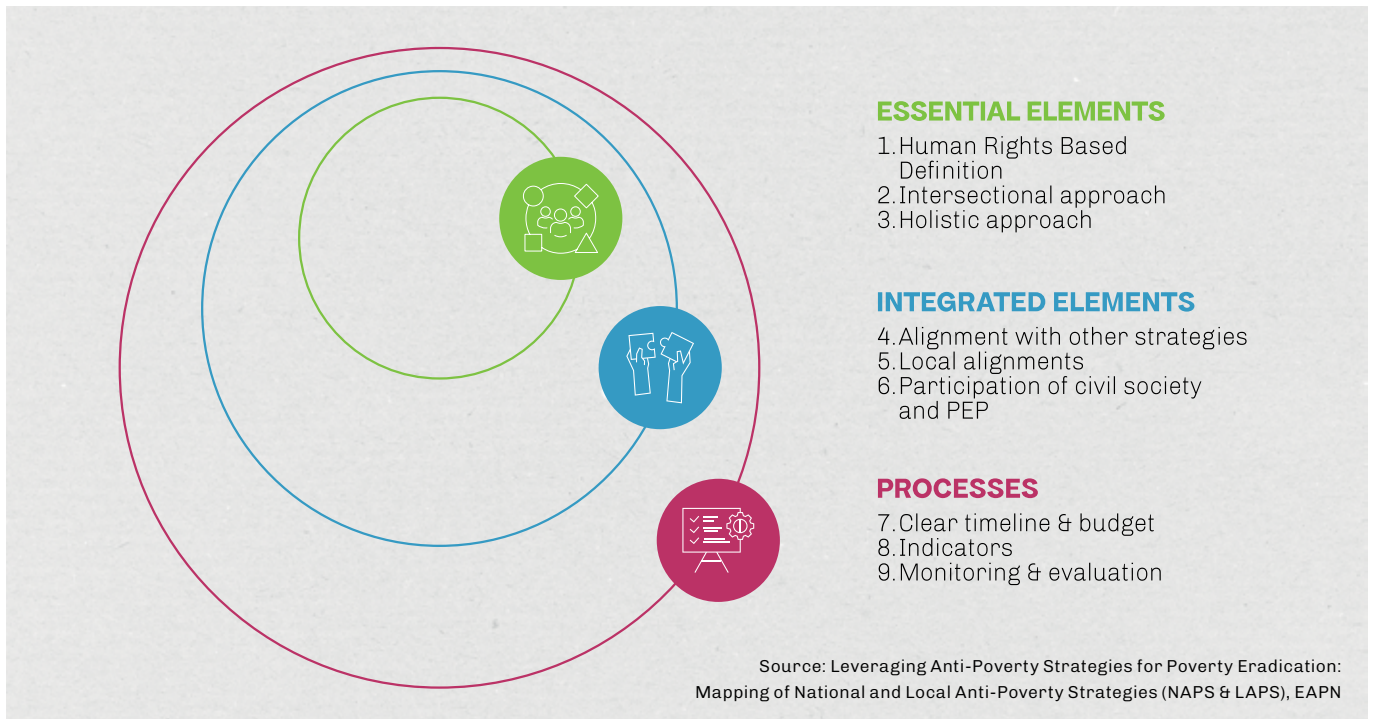
The EAPN members consulted with people living in poverty. A framework of effective and comprehensive NAPS and LAPS was developed based on the EAPN members' responses and can be seen as ambitious standards for NAPS and LAPS. It was these standards that were used to map and assess the current NAPS/LAPS in 19 countries (see appendices for the detailed mapping), including identifying good approaches that were discussed and validated by national experts.

EAPN team and EAPN members carried out data collection and reviewed and contributed to the analysis and drafting of this report in 2025.

# 1. NAPS AND LAPS FRAMEWORKS AND MAPPING

## 1.1. OVERVIEW OF COMPREHENSIVE NAPS AND LAPS FRAMEWORKS

European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) has described National Anti-Poverty Strategies (NAPS) as comprehensive, government-led policy frameworks aimed at preventing, reducing, and ultimately eradicating poverty at the national level.<sup>11</sup> A deeper review of NAPS and LAPS across Europe has enabled EAPN to develop a framework for anti-poverty strategies that include essential, integrated and process elements that create a targeted approach to eradicating structural injustices. Anti-poverty measures must be developed with the understanding that the root causes of poverty are multidimensional and not only financial.



- 11 EAPN, Position Paper: Towards the Eradication of Poverty (April 16, 2025), [https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/eapn-POSITION\\_PAPER\\_TOWARDS\\_ERADICATION\\_POVERTY\\_EAPN-6139.pdf](https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/eapn-POSITION_PAPER_TOWARDS_ERADICATION_POVERTY_EAPN-6139.pdf)
- 12 Office for National Statistics, Guidance on developing a Theory of Change in policy contexts, including steps and practical examples, [https://analysisfunction.civilservice.gov.uk/policy-store/the-analysis-function-theory-of-change-toolkit/?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://analysisfunction.civilservice.gov.uk/policy-store/the-analysis-function-theory-of-change-toolkit/?utm_source=chatgpt.com)
- 13 EAPN, Position Paper: Towards the Eradication of Poverty (2025), [https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/eapn-POSITION\\_PAPER\\_TOWARDS\\_ERADICATION\\_POVERTY\\_EAPN-6139.pdf](https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/eapn-POSITION_PAPER_TOWARDS_ERADICATION_POVERTY_EAPN-6139.pdf)

A theory of change is required as part of the essential elements of NAPS/LAPS and articulates the links between complex policy inputs, institutional processes, and behavioural or structural change and the desired outcome. A theory of change is a methodology for planning and implementation considering power relations, context, and unintended effects.

It can enable reflective policy development and evaluation, particularly in addressing persistent and structural social inequalities.<sup>12</sup> A theory of change for NAPS and LAPS should include a narrative foundation on eradication of poverty<sup>13</sup> alongside social policy interventions set in political, institutional, and social contexts.

**1. Essential elements** represent the foundation of an effective anti-poverty strategy. They determine how we dismantle the power structures and root causes of poverty, and who will be targeted by the measures. It determines the approach that will be taken to tackle those root causes, an approach that should go beyond job market activation and be cross-sectoral. Essential elements include:

- a. A definition of poverty and/or social exclusion that includes an understanding of human rights, social rights (inc. digital rights) material deprivation, systemic and structural injustices and with a theory of change and action plan that goes beyond welfare policies to include anti-poverty measures.
- b. An intersectional approach with targeted measures for marginalised groups (migrants, racialised groups, women and other minorities that experience multiple grounds of exclusion and exploitation).
- c. Holistic, vertical and horizontal coordinated approach to social protection and welfare policies (economy, education, employment, energy and food poverty, health, housing, children and young people, etc.) with clear mandates, responsibilities and institutional collaboration.

**2. Integrated elements** ensure that the strategy is informed by its context. At international level with plans and initiatives, such as the European Pillar of Social Rights or the Sustainable Development Goals. Integrated elements include:

- a. Alignment with the EU and International strategies, policies and commitments (EPSR, ESF+, ESIF, MMF, UN SDGs, etc.).
- b. Strengthened national-local alignment and LAPS.
- c. Participation of CSOs and PeP through robust participatory platforms and funding.

**3. Clear and defined processes** ensure accountability and transparency regarding the implementation of the goals set by the national anti-poverty strategy. Through such processes countries ensure that they can track progress and setbacks, allowing the strategies to be adaptive and tailored to ever changing contexts. Processes include:

- a. Clear timeline, long-term budget guarantees and continuity that goes beyond political cycles.
- b. Specific indicators and measurements linked to goals, targets and priorities.
- c. Planned evaluations and improved outcomes with better targeted policies and facilitating learning and improvement in policy development.





## 1.2. MAPPING OF NAPS AND LAPS IN 19 EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

This table reflects a detailed review (see appendices) of the EAPN members' assessment of NAPS/LAPS and to what extent they effectively address the root causes of poverty and social exclusion.



### ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

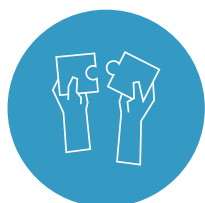
Comprehensive national anti-poverty strategy include:

	Definition	Intersectional	Holistic
 <b>AUSTRIA</b>	Austria does not have a formally designated comprehensive national anti-poverty strategy		
 <b>BELGIUM</b>	✓		✓
 <b>BULGARIA</b>	✓		✓
 <b>CZECH REPUBLIC</b>	✓		✓
 <b>FINLAND</b>	✓		
 <b>FRANCE</b>	The Pacte des solidarités is structured around four main pillars: preventing poverty and		
 <b>GREECE</b>			✓
 <b>IRELAND</b>	✓	✓	✓
 <b>ITALY</b>	✓		✓
 <b>LATVIA</b>	Latvia still has not developed a National or Local Anti-Poverty Strategy or Plan (NAPS and LAPS),		
 <b>LITHUANIA</b>	The goals related to poverty reduction are embedded in the National Progress Plan (NPP)		
 <b>NETHERLANDS</b>	✓		✓
 <b>NORWAY</b>	There is no single holistic and comprehensive		
 <b>POLAND</b>			✓
 <b>PORTUGAL</b>	✓	✓	✓
 <b>SERBIA</b>	The Republic of Serbia does not have an active National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS),		
 <b>SLOVAKIA</b>	✓	✓	✓
 <b>SPAIN</b>	✓	✓	✓
 <b>SWEDEN</b>	Sweden currently operates without a dedicated NAPS/LAPS however, efforts to combat poverty		

Comprehensive anti-poverty strategies

Broad welfare and social inclusion approach

Limited anti-poverty strategy or plan



**INTEGRATED ELEMENTS**



**PROCESSES**

Alignment	LAPS	CSO/PeP	Budget	Targets	Evaluation
(NAPS), nor have they agreed upon minimum standards regarding the design or content of such strategies.					
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
combating inequality from early childhood; expanding access to employment for all; combating severe exclusion through access to rights; building a socially just ecological transition.					
✓		✓	✓	✓	
✓			✓	✓	✓
	✓		✓	✓	✓
which means that this country lacks a unified, targeted and sustainable approach to poverty reduction.					
2021-2030 - the country's main strategic planning document, which outlines key development priorities.					
	✓		✓		
approach at national level. There are local broader, more integrated cross-sectoral poverty action plans.					
✓	✓		✓		
✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
nor have any local governments adopted Local Anti-Poverty Strategies (LAPS).					
✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
and social exclusion are integrated within the "Strategy for Social Inclusion 2018-2030," and its comprehensive social protection system.					

## 1.3. SPECIFIC MEASURES TOWARDS THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY

The above framework and mapping of NAPS and LAPS provide an overview and approach to multi-level governance and policies to eradicate poverty. NAPS and LAPS work to direct a functioning government, social protection and welfare systems which can provide specific anti-poverty measures for all. NAPS/LAPS include anti-poverty measures that aim to reduce social and economic risks, vulnerabilities and deprivations at all stages of life.

EAPN has developed several policy papers outlining a comprehensive vision for the eradication of poverty, setting out concrete measures and policy priorities. A key priority and measure underpinning this vision is the provision of adequate, accessible, and enabling income for all, including through effective Minimum Income Schemes (MIS). A strong focus on **income adequacy is essential to addressing persistent gender, ethnic, and youth pay gaps, which continue to drive poverty and inequality across Europe.**

MIS exist in most EU Member States and have the potential to guarantee a decent level of income security. However, they consistently fall below the poverty threshold and often fail to adequately account for the specific needs of women, older people, and persons with disabilities. Without reforms to ensure adequacy and inclusivity, MIS cannot function as effective tools for poverty reduction.<sup>14</sup>

Anti-poverty measures, beyond welfare and social services provision, address power, inequality, structural causes, and redistribution. From a social justice perspective, this can include:

- social and economic rights that prioritises redistributive systems and avoids privatisation and austerity-driven welfare models,
- redistribution of economic power and resources through access to housing, technology, financial services and emphasising redistribution over access,
- a focus on creating decent work and opportunities that priorities living wages, child care, collective bargaining, and workers' rights.
- addressing climate-related and economic extractivism, harms and disposition through public investment, reparative measures, and global responsibility.

<sup>14</sup> EAPN, Position Paper: Towards the Eradication of Poverty (2025), [https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/eapn-POSITION\\_PAPER\\_TOWARDS\\_ERADICATION\\_POVERTY\\_EAPN-6139.pdf](https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/eapn-POSITION_PAPER_TOWARDS_ERADICATION_POVERTY_EAPN-6139.pdf)

Addressing in-work poverty is another key priority, particularly through the promotion of quality employment, fair working conditions, and adequate minimum wages. Despite being in employment, many individuals and households remain unable to meet basic living costs, highlighting structural weaknesses in labour markets and wage-setting mechanisms.

EAPN also emphasises the importance of access to essential services, including water, sanitation, energy, transport, financial services, and digital communication, alongside housing, healthcare, and education. Access to affordable, high-quality housing, energy, and public healthcare remains a primary challenge for people experiencing poverty, particularly in the context of growing privatisation and rising inflationary costs.

EAPN further highlights the need to explore pathways towards the legal recognition of socio-economic discrimination. The relationship between discrimination and socio-economic disadvantage is widely recognised as complex and mutually reinforcing. Groups that experience discrimination on status grounds such as: gender, racial or ethnic origin, are disproportionately represented among those living in poverty, and status-based

discrimination is frequently closely correlated with socio-economic disadvantage.<sup>15</sup>

Currently, eighteen European countries enshrine grounds related to socio-economic status in their anti-discrimination legislation, using concepts such as social status, property, economic vulnerability, social origin, or profession. However, the absence of socio-economic status or poverty as an explicit protected ground in many legal frameworks limits public authorities' ability to address unequal treatment, hate speech, and hate crime. In societies that remain deeply segregated by wealth, people living in poverty face systemic discrimination, underscoring the need for structural and systemic remedies to overcome inherited divisions.<sup>16</sup>

The added value of NAPS and LAPS is the going beyond ensuring the welfare state delivers essential services to ensure a minimum safety net. NAPS and LAPS are opportunities to develop theories of social change that address the root causes of poverty, mainstream social rights approaches across policies and look at the multidimensional nature of poverty beyond socio-economic factors.

15 Equinet, Expanding the List of Protected Grounds within Anti-Discrimination Law in the EU, 2021, [https://equineteurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Expanding-the-List-of-Grounds-in-Non-discrimination-Law\\_Equinet-Report.pdf?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://equineteurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Expanding-the-List-of-Grounds-in-Non-discrimination-Law_Equinet-Report.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

16 UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Olivier De Schutter, "The persistence of poverty: how real equality can break the vicious cycles", A/76/177 (19 July 2021), paras. 53-54, <https://docs.un.org/A/76/177>

## 1.4. PROMISING APPROACHES TO NAPS AND LAPS

This section of the report includes some current promising practices with regards to developing and implementing NAPS and LAPS framework. There is a long history of NAPS and LAPS across Europe. Belgium has developed four federal plans against poverty and inequality, Ireland prides itself that they have had successive NAPSs since 1997. This shows a commitment to addressing social exclusion and poverty and a depth of expertise and knowledge across Europe.<sup>17</sup>

The practices below are assessed as promising in their approach and to the extent that they measure up to the EAPN network's recommendations, definitions and vision. The impact of the practices cannot be individually assessed and often depends on adequate resourcing, a functioning welfare state and being part of a coherent NAPS/ LAPS.

### A Social Rights Vision - Ireland, Portugal and Spain

EAPN EU believes that a shift in approach towards poverty eradication, not just alleviating it. A starting point is having a **social rights perspective and a definition of poverty as a fundamental human rights violation that is more than material deprivation with roots in systemic and structural injustice**. A structural shift requires a step-by-step approach and theory of change.

In the National Strategy to Combat Poverty (NSCP), Portugal defines poverty as “the scarcity or absence of resources of individuals or households to meet their welfare needs” and has targets and indicators to be met by 2030 along with a structured and integrated theory of change.

Spain is well on its way to have a strong foundation for The National Strategy for Preventing and Fighting Poverty and Social Exclusion 2024-2030 strategy because it covers the NAPS/LAPS essential elements. The definition of poverty and social exclusion is based on the AROPE, the Severe Material and Social Deprivation rate and the Low Employment Intensity.

Ireland's Public Sector Equality & Human Rights Duty, outlined under Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights & Equality Act 2014, places a positive duty on all public bodies to uphold human rights, which by extension means a positive duty to eradicate poverty. Hence, they are legally required to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and treatment for a range of groups including services users, which are those supported by the welfare state in any capacity. Public bodies must include assessments of equality and human rights as part of their strategic planning and reporting cycle and ensure that they consider the impact of policies on services users before the implementation to ensure there is no unintended impact or discrimination.<sup>18</sup>

17 BAPN National 2024 Poverty Watch, Bulgaria; EAPN Bulgaria 2024 Poverty Watch (Bulgaria first had a NAPS in 2023); EAPN Ireland 2024 EAPN Poverty Watch; [https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/eapn-BG-Chapter-PW-2025\\_merged-6304.pdf](https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/eapn-BG-Chapter-PW-2025_merged-6304.pdf)

18 Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission. (n.d.). Public Sector Duty, <https://www.ihrec.ie/public-sector-duty>

“The progress of the NSCP in reducing a phenomenon that is complex is not easily noticeable, especially when it is all very recent. The latest poverty figures have decreased, but it is very difficult to understand whether this is due to the impact of the Strategy. In any case, for those who live in poverty, there is an understanding – real and lived – that the challenges are still many. At the meeting with the members of the National Council of Citizens, persistent challenges in the fight against poverty in Portugal were identified: housing, low wages, rising cost of living, response of services, namely employment, worsening social stigma and "institutional violence". "The changes [if they exist] are so subtle, that they are not noticeable." "I believe that there are differences [that the Strategy brought] but that end up not being visible because of the stigma of poverty, hate speech, which exists on social networks and that we constantly hear... which turns out to be a barrier to some changes. It ends up emphasizing this stigma that the person is at risk of poverty, or in poverty, the only one to blame is himself.”<sup>19</sup>

**EAPN Portugal, National 2025 Poverty Watch**

## Intersectional Approach - Slovakia

Intersectionality reflects the distinct experiences of oppression and disadvantage associated with multi-layered identities and constitutes a critical analytical framework to improve the policy measures to address these experiences. Although the term started from the position of considering how gender intersects with other characteristics it is not the limitation. It is to be distinguished from multiple discrimination, which means discrimination on distinct but separable grounds and can more easily be addressed by existing legal frameworks.<sup>20</sup>

Slovakia's strategy acknowledges the intersecting forms of disadvantage experienced by specific groups, such as women, children, Roma communities, persons with disabilities, the elderly, and single-parent families. **It emphasises targeted interventions that address structural discrimination and systemic barriers.** The marginalised Roma population receives particular attention, with integrated programs in education, health, housing, and employment. Measures also aim to improve public infrastructure and community cohesion in segregated settlements. The intersectional approach also involves gender-sensitive budgeting and initiatives to support victims of domestic violence and trafficking.

## Local Cooperation - Netherlands, Norway and Poland

Every municipality in **the Netherlands** has a poverty policy, which can be divided into the Minimum or Participation Policy and debt counselling. Municipalities consult with client councils and increasingly utilise their experience. **Not only consulting experts by experience, but also employing them is part of this policy.** Based on figures from Statistics Netherlands (CBS), approximately 33,000 people between the ages of 18 and 65 were homeless in 2024. Municipalities have begun a census, partly at the initiative of organisations of and for the homeless. The Hague is leading the way, and other major cities appear to be following suit.

Despite **Norway** not having a national action strategy, several municipalities have already developed well-functioning action plans to combat poverty, **demonstrating the existence of local expertise, creativity and commitment. A national strategy could consolidate local efforts, foster coordination and knowledge exchange, and provide fiscal predictability.** It would also strengthen small and mid-sized civil society organisations that deliver essential services but often lose funding in

<sup>20</sup> European Commission, Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025, 2019, includes intersectionality as a cross-cutting principle for implementation. It explains that policies must consider how gender intersects with other personal characteristics (e.g. race, disability, age) to produce unique experiences of discrimination [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy\\_en?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy_en?utm_source=chatgpt.com) and European Commission, Advancing LGBTI Equality in the EU: from 2020 and Beyond, 2019: [https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2019-12/2\\_intersectionality\\_and\\_multiple\\_discrimination\\_0.pdf?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2019-12/2_intersectionality_and_multiple_discrimination_0.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

times of financial instability – coincidentally when they are needed the most.

As a prime example of a large-city LAPS, the "Strategy for Solving Social Problems of the City of Rzeszów (Poland) for the years 2023-2030" showcases a comprehensive and systemic approach. The document's vision is ambitious, aiming to create "an inclusive city" that is "safe and friendly for all residents". **Its five strategic pillars cover a broad spectrum of issues, including family policy, support for seniors, disability rights, social inclusion for those in crisis, and the development of community-based services.** Given the city's scale and its role as a key hub for Ukrainian refugees, the strategy necessarily focuses on **managing complex service networks and integrating responses across different sectors.** It functions as a tool for system management, coordinating the actions of numerous public and non-governmental actors to address the multifaceted challenges of a large urban population.

### Participation of Civil Society and People Experiencing Poverty - Belgium, France and Portugal

Cooperation with regional networks in **Belgium** has been established to ensure the effective and efficient participation of people living in poverty in federal and European policy-making. The regional networks of EAPN Belgium (BAPN) and their affiliated local associations are in direct contact with people experiencing poverty themselves. They support the participation of people experiencing poverty in the consultations organised by BAPN on federal and European policy issues. **EAPN Belgium coordinates these meetings, establishes the necessary links with federal and European policy processes and ensures that a common position is developed on the basis of the exchanges. This is particularly important because of the significant regional differences in poverty rates.**<sup>21</sup>

"It is not motivating for people if their contribution is not valued. A bit of consultation is not enough. In this way, people eventually drop out and politicians miss the opportunity to learn from experiences that can help them develop a good anti-poverty policy. In fact, we believe that the presence of experts by experience at decisive moments is highly desirable. So, please give us a say in the whole policy process, please give us hope, we have had enough of despair." Participant in the BAPN GPS group.<sup>22</sup>

#### BAPN, National 2025 Poverty Watch

**France** has established **Regional observation councils** (known as "observation locale de la pauvreté") that bring together NGOs, municipalities and researchers. Their impact, however, **depends on adequate resourcing and stronger links to decision-making processes** and ideally within a coherent national strategy which France is yet to develop.

21 In the Brussels-Capital Region, no less than 37.2% of the population, almost 4 in 10, live in poverty or social exclusion. In Wallonia, the figure is 21.8%, more than 1 in 4 people. Although Flanders scores better, here too 12.8%, more than 1 in 10 people, live in poverty or social exclusion in BAPN National 2025 Poverty Watch, [https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/eapn-BE\\_Poverty-Watch-2025-6232.pdf](https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/eapn-BE_Poverty-Watch-2025-6232.pdf)

22 BAPN - The group decided to call themselves GPS because the people have the ambition to guide the federal Plan against Poverty and Inequality, like a GPS. BAPN, National 2025 Poverty Watch, <https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/eapn-BE-Poverty-watch-BAPN-2025-NL-6231.pdf>

In the Portuguese National Strategy there are mechanisms that promote the participation of civil society organisations and people experiencing poverty. There is a Consultative Forum that includes representatives of public and private non-profit entities, NGOs, experts and representatives of civil society. Concerning the participation of people experiencing poverty, this is considered in Axis six of the Strategy aims to "make the fight against poverty a national goal" and integrates two strategic objectives. There are two ongoing practices that involve people in vulnerable situations: **Participatory forums promoted by civil society entities, such as EAPN Portugal; and participatory sessions (pilot projects) within the scope of the NSCP Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation Project.** The participation of the most vulnerable citizens in the context of the NSCP remains limited. The direct involvement of people in poverty needs greater consolidation and capacity building, so that they can **continuously monitor the operationalisation of the Strategy.**<sup>23</sup>

### Measuring Impact - Belgium and Slovakia

**Each measure in the Belgium federal plan must include a quantitative target and budget estimate, as well as the deadline for implementation of the measure.** Where necessary, the gender and disability dimensions must be specified for each measure. An ex-ante impact analysis and

a numerical target that will make it possible to measure the impact. Plans for an independent evaluation of the plan by the Federal Planning Bureau, as provided for in the 2023 Act. The privileged partners are also involved in the evaluation, including BAPN as the representative of people experiencing poverty, and the Belgian Platform.

EAPN Slovakia, provided informal monitoring through civil society **shadow reporting and expert feedback.** It is invited to **government reviews in an advisory role.** Through Monitoring Committees, SAPN has a formal consultative role in assessing EU-funded programme progress.

### Longevity and Sustainability of NAPS and LAPs - Belgium, Bulgaria and Greece

Thanks to the Act of 9 October 2023, the federal Plan against Poverty and Inequality is now enshrined in **Belgian** law. This means that from now on, **every new federal government is obliged to adopt an anti-poverty plan and that this plan must comply with certain principles and formal requirements.** **Bulgarian** NAPS have followed the **duration and periodicity of EU strategies, for 10 years.** **Greece's** National Strategy is independent of elections, from 2021 to 2027, as it has a long-term multi-year duration beyond the four years which is the cycle of each government.

23 EAPN Portugal, National 2025 Poverty Watch, [https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/eapn-Portugal-Poverty-Watch\\_EN\\_-2025-6239.pdf](https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/eapn-Portugal-Poverty-Watch_EN_-2025-6239.pdf)

## 2. COMMON CHALLENGES

The comparative table of NAPS and LAPS in 19 European Countries (2.1), illustrates the high level gaps within each country as well as the broad approach based on the information provided by EAPN members. Each of the three main elements: essential, integrated, and process, are integral to building NAPS and LAPS that rise to the challenge of poverty eradication and social inclusion. As there are different needs across Europe and within member states, the plans should vary accordingly. Although the specific measures and details of an anti-poverty strategy will be different depending on the local, regional or national context, there are some common challenges discussed in more detail below

### 2.1. HOLISTIC APPROACH

#### What is a Holistic Approach?

A holistic approach to National Anti-Poverty Strategies (NAPS) understands poverty and social exclusion as extending beyond income, fiscal measures, and labour market participation alone. A holistic approach ensures that policies are coherent and priorities are consolidated into a comprehensive, cross-sectoral, and coordinated strategy that allow for coherent and effective implementation.

Anti-poverty strategies aim to identify the drivers of poverty, outline effective solutions, and provide a framework for implementation. **As EAPN members consistently emphasise, poverty is multidimensional in nature and therefore requires coordinated responses across different parts of national authorities and legislative branches.** EAPN members highlight either the absence of NAPS or the difficulties that NAPS/LAPS have in

securing: adequate social benefits to ensure a decent standard of living, strong child anti-poverty measures, affordable housing, energy security, universal and affordable access to health care, inclusive education, access to justice, and the protection of social and human rights.

**EAPN Spain** recognises that the NAPS act as a “steering framework, guiding and coordinating the different policies, plans and measures on poverty and social inclusion, and providing a common reference for monitoring progress and impact across all levels of government.”<sup>24</sup> Similarly, for **EAPN Ireland's** the NAPS Roadmap for *Social Inclusion 2020–2025* seeks to mainstream **social inclusion across a wide range of government departments, including employment, childcare, and measures addressing the marginalisation of vulnerable communities.** However, the implementation and policy coherence is often where countries face noticeable challenges.

24 EAPN Spain, National 2025 Poverty Watch, <https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/eapn-Spain-Poverty-Watch-Report-6296.pdf>

Poverty eradication is a complex issue that requires a significantly complex policy response and commitment. A holistic approach is therefore about allowing to remove structural barriers to access income and services in all areas of life. **It also permits a multiplier effect of policies and better return on social investment.** Employment activation, has been a main policy response to social exclusion and poverty. However significant barriers to employment remain, particularly the lack of access to affordable childcare. This barrier disproportionately affects women and contributes significantly to high poverty rates among lone parents. Beyond supporting employment, access to early childhood education also enabling role in breaking cycles of intergenerational poverty. Holistic anti-poverty measures, in this instance, integrate employment, education, childcare, and gender equality considerations.<sup>25</sup>

**EAPN France and Sweden** report the absence of **formal anti-poverty strategies, but strong welfare and social protection systems.** In France, social policy has increasingly **narrowed towards labour market integration** as the primary response to poverty. This approach reflects a reductive and often **stigmatising** understanding of poverty and has proven ineffective in practice. **Although unemployment declined between 2016 and 2022, poverty rates did not decrease significantly, a trend well documented across Europe.** This disconnect can be explained by structural labour market changes, including the rise in precarious employment, underemployment, involuntary part-time work, and the expansion of the working poor factors that labour-market-focused strategies fail to adequately address.<sup>26</sup>

**Anti-poverty strategy should not be mix up with social security system.** Social security is a system of financial support designed to help people against risks due to illness, loss of employment and age. **It's a mix a participatory benefit and universal – healthcare** - coverage. Where Anti-Poverty Strategy aims at eliminating poverty entirely through a holistic approach, social security systems aim to provide short-to medium-term protection that helps individuals manage financial hardship and maintain a basic standard of living, especially during periods when their employment income is reduced or lost. It also aims at keeping essential out of the law of the market to ensure a universal access to healthcare. History of the establishment of social security, the funding and governance mechanisms system differs of course across country. It generally involves social partners and state authorities.

25 European Commission, The European Pillar of Social Rights (the 'Pillar') highlights the importance of gender equality, work-life balance and ECEC as key objectives of the Union: <https://op.europa.eu/webpub/empl/european-pillar-of-social-rights/en/> Council (EU) Recommendation of 8 December 2022 on early childhood education and care: the Barcelona targets for 2030, 2022: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022H1220\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022H1220(01))

26 EAPN France, National 2025 Poverty Watch; <https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/eapn-Poverty-Watch-France-2025-EN-6306.pdf>

## 2.2 REGIONAL AND LOCAL SPECIFICITIES

Austria, France, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway<sup>27</sup> Serbia and Sweden, have been identified as having broad social protection and welfare systems designed to protect individuals from social risks associated with unemployment, old age, disability, and other life events. A recurring critique of broad **social welfare systems is that they remain hierarchical and centralised**, often lacking mechanisms for structured participation, territorial responsiveness, and targeted measures for specific groups or regions. **Without greater decentralisation, coordination, and meaningful local engagement**, these systems risk reproducing territorial inequalities rather than addressing them.

EAPN members emphasise the multifaceted nature of **rural disadvantage**, including limited access to transport, essential services, and employment, alongside the environmental impact of reliance on private transport. An explicit anti-poverty and anti-discrimination focus is therefore essential at the local and regional levels. Some countries combine extensive **social security systems with specific strategies or plans**.

Although Finland operates both NAPS and LAPS, **EAPN Finland** reports, that while major cities such as Helsinki, Tampere, Turku, and Oulu have developed local strategies, the measures adopted are broadly similar across cities, suggesting limited responsiveness to specific local contexts. In Slovakia, many small municipalities **lack expertise or resources** to design and deliver effective LAPS. Some local plans are highly specific and needs-based, others are vague or formalistic. Horizontal coordination between sectors and vertical coordination with municipalities can be fragmented even though there is national guidance.<sup>28</sup> In France, governance challenges at the territorial level are compounded by capacity constraints: Regional Commissioners for the Fight against Poverty are tasked with coordinating local authorities and civil society, monitoring local initiatives and managing cross-cutting programmes. Yet in practice, they are often **under-resourced and working in isolation**. Similarly, **EAPN Latvia** highlights **inconsistent and bureaucratic burden** to access support from local governments, the absence of coordinated local structures, and a **lack of long-term strategic vision** at municipal level.

27 Norway is the only country in this group that has LAPS and not a NAPS. EAPN Norway, National 2025 Poverty Watch, [https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/eapn-Norway-Poverty-Watch-EN\\_2025-6236.pdf](https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/eapn-Norway-Poverty-Watch-EN_2025-6236.pdf)

28 EAPN Slovakia, National 2025 Poverty Watch, <https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/eapn-Slovakia-Poverty-Watch-2025-6243.pdf>

## 2.3 STRUCTURALLY INDUCED POVERTY

### What is Structurally Induced Poverty?

Structural poverty is the result of different policy, institutional, legal, administrative and bureaucratic practices creating barriers to escaping poverty. It refers to how policies are designed and how they impact individual and communities in practice. Structurally induced poverty more specifically speaks to the barriers as well as policy incoherence and violations of right principles in policies and their implementation leading to greater risk of poverty. Systemic, in the case of social rights, refers to the overall political and economic model in Europe creating condition for the expansion and aggravation of poverty. Therefore, anti-poverty initiatives should not be taken out of this dynamic but rather analysed regarding its relations and implications of the roots causes of poverty, from the growth model to gender or racial division of labour and wealth production to all forms of domination and exploitation.

### Housing

The European Pillar of Social Rights recognises access to affordable, adequate, sustainable and inclusive housing as a key social right. Depriving people of housing and decent living conditions further marginalises vulnerable or racialised groups, such as migrants, roma and children.<sup>29</sup> The case studies and examples provided across the nineteen EAPN members vividly reveal **systemic injustices and state induced and sanctioned poverty regarding housing**. For example, in Bulgaria, Greece, Netherlands, and Poland discriminatory attitudes surrounding housing accessibility actively create hardship and homelessness.

One of the generators of poverty according to **EAPN Bulgaria** is housing policy, with the demolition of Roma buildings constructed illegally, without providing people and their children with alternative adequate housing.<sup>30</sup> For **EAPN Ireland**, the privatisation, along with the disinvestment in essential public services, has led to lopsided development and imposed a huge fiscal strain on the state. Housing in Ireland now costs more than 112% of the EU average, and the government shells out over €537 million each year on Housing Assistance Payments, much of it ending up with corporations and investment funds.

<sup>31</sup>The issue of homelessness features prominently in the **Greek NAPS** but appropriate housing policies have not been implemented, neither in **scope nor in eligibility criteria** for beneficiaries.<sup>32</sup>

29 European Union, Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union - Article 34, 2007: [https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/88931d53-380c-4763-8e5b-1e31e3e0b6b2?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/88931d53-380c-4763-8e5b-1e31e3e0b6b2?utm_source=chatgpt.com); European Economic and Social Committee, The EESC's first-ever Housing Forum, advocating housing as a fundamental right, 2024: [https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/news-media/press-releases/eescs-first-ever-housing-forum-advocating-housing-fundamental-right?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/news-media/press-releases/eescs-first-ever-housing-forum-advocating-housing-fundamental-right?utm_source=chatgpt.com) and EURoma, Council Conclusions (2024) on improving access to services to promote the social inclusion of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion, including Roma, 2024: [https://www.euromanet.eu/news/council-conclusions-on-access-to-services-by-people-at-risk-of-poverty-or-social-exclusion-including-roma/?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.euromanet.eu/news/council-conclusions-on-access-to-services-by-people-at-risk-of-poverty-or-social-exclusion-including-roma/?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

30 EAPN Bulgaria, National 2025 Poverty Watch, [https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/eapn-BG-Chapter-PW-2025\\_merged-6304.pdf](https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/eapn-BG-Chapter-PW-2025_merged-6304.pdf)

31 EAPN Ireland, National 2025 Poverty Watch, <https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/eapn-IE-Poverty-Watch-2025-6233.pdf>

32 EAPN Bulgaria, National 2025 Poverty Watch, <https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/eapn-IE-Poverty-Watch-2025-6233.pdf>

## Migrants

**EAPN** migrants or refugees. This can leave them outside the scope of poverty-reduction measures. **Poland** identifies migrants as a vulnerable group requiring integration. However, recent changes in policy for Ukrainian refugees directly conflict with the NAPS's goal of preventing homelessness.<sup>33</sup> Certain migration policies increase the risk of poverty when **residence permits are employer specific** or access to **social support is limited or delayed** when migrants are unable to regularise their situation. The labour market can be difficult to access for migrants and undocumented migrants are completely excluded from the formal labour market. While the Slovakia NAPS mentions inclusion of marginalised communities, **migration and asylum frameworks are largely separate**, with little integration of inclusion measures for

## Cost of Living

**EAPN Austria, Ireland, Greece, Latvia, Netherlands** and **Slovakia** provide examples of how the rise in the cost of living and energy prices as a structural factor for poverty. Rising energy prices have intensified energy poverty, disproportionately affecting low-income households the most. Policies on housing renovation, energy efficiency, and sustainable mobility must therefore ensure that low-income households **face no up-front costs, pay the price of the decarbonisation and have access to clean, affordable energy**.<sup>34</sup> Embedding social justice within climate action is essential to ensuring that the transition to a green economy does not deepen existing inequalities.

**EAPN Austria** reports the cuts in the social protection budget have led to cuts to energy subsidies, without implementation of alternative support programme. The global rise in energy prices also impacts on transport, food costs and the environment.

“My wage remains at the same level... Meanwhile, all my expenses are going up because of inflation – electricity, water, all utilities, and even, I don't know, everyday shopping, right?”<sup>35</sup>

**Person experiencing poverty, Poland, EAPN Poland**

For **EAPN Latvia**, those with an income slightly above the Minimum Income threshold<sup>36</sup> are particularly vulnerable to falling into poverty, as their income is still not enough to cover their daily expenses and they do not receive any social support as they **do not formally meet the mean-tested eligibility criteria**.

33 Recent changes in policy for Ukrainian refugees, such as the introduction of co-payments for collective accommodation centers and the removal of the 40 PLN/day housing support, create conditions that foster homelessness and housing exclusion. This directly conflicts with the NAPS's goal of preventing homelessness, and as the report notes, has contributed to a dramatic but officially undercounted rise in hidden homelessness among refugees (Szarfenberg, 2024, p. 27). EAPN Poland, National 2025 Poverty Watch, <https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/eapn-Poland-Poverty-Watch-2025-6238.pdf>

34 European Anti-Poverty Network. (2022). Social and labour aspects of the just transition towards climate neutrality: Position paper. <https://www.eapn.eu/social-and-labour-aspects-of-the-just-transition-towards-climate-neutrality-eapn-position-paper/>

35 EAPN Poland, National 2025 Poverty Watch, <https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/eapn-Poland-Poverty-Watch-2025-6238.pdf>

36 It refers to the maximum level of income a household can have to be eligible for last-resort social assistance benefits.

“I have been retired for two years. I receive €495 a month and have no other income because I no longer work. My wife is also a pensioner; her pension is €465. We live in a private house and most of our income goes towards utilities – gas, electricity, water, television, internet and telephone services.

In summer, we also have to buy firewood and briquettes.

As well as this, we need to allocate a significant amount of money each month for our medications. Unfortunately, we have not been granted low-income status because the property we own does not ‘formally’ allow us to obtain it, despite our actual living situation. We grow some of our own food - in our backyard garden. We are no longer welcome on the labour market due to our health problems and a lack of demand for people our age. We are both disabled and have joined a disabled people's association. For 10 euros a year, we receive four food parcels there, as well as the opportunity to get clothes for ourselves and our grandchildren. That is the only tangible help we receive. We survive as best we can, and we consider ourselves to be people living in poverty.”

**Janis Z., a retired disabled person, EAPN Latvia**

Additionally, war has had an impact on the increased risk of poverty in Europe. In Latvia, for example, war has disrupted exports and energy supplies, increased inflation. EAPN Norway and Slovakia also raised the impact of the conflict on rising living costs in a context of budget discipline induced by the European economic governance.

### **Austerity Measures**

The cuts in public spending have clearly **weakened social security and services**, which have been cornerstones of the welfare system. **EAPN France** describes austerity measures as effectively institutionalizing a form of **state-accepted poverty**. EAPN members in countries with no NAPS (Austria,

Finland, France, Latvia, Netherlands) report that fiscal discipline creates a breeding ground for reforms to **tighten conditionality** to receive a minimum income and contradicts the spirit of social rights, **delegitimizing** beneficiaries. **EAPN France** also makes an important link to the cuts in budgets and grants that weakens the operational capacities of local authorities and civil society actors. ALERTE's perspective (EAPN France members) raises a specific example of a **lack of policy coherence** in recent reforms centred on labour market activation and sanctions, **an approach that conflicts** with a social-rights-based anti-poverty approach and risks undermining poverty reduction objectives by **increasing insecurity and non-take-up of rights**.

There are many examples that highlight how austerity measures and housing policies disproportionately impact on children and how the state is essentially **sanctioning child poverty**. For **EAPN Poland**, the Fiscal Policy on Family Benefits has frozen family allowances for low-income families since 2016 and does not automatically index the main "800+" child benefit annually. This directly contradicts the NAPS's goal of reducing child poverty. "As inflation erodes the purchasing power of these benefits, their ability to protect families from poverty diminishes, a direct cause of the recent spike in child poverty rates."<sup>37</sup>

### Digitally Induced Poverty

EAPN defines digital poverty as the inability to adequately engage with digital devices and online spaces due to a lack of skills, material resources or information. While digitalisation is often presented as a means of improving access to services, it has, in practice, contributed to digitally induced poverty, particularly for people already at risk of social exclusion. The increasing digitalisation of public services has created **additional barriers to accessing essential information, social benefits, and employment opportunities**, forcing individuals and households to incur extra costs simply to participate in the digital sphere. As a result, digitalisation has deepened existing inequalities, widening the gap between those who are digitally literate and those who are digitally excluded, and undermining access to public services and social protection.<sup>38</sup>

One participant expressed this starkly: *"I can't fill out all these forms, they keep turning me away."*  
PEP EAPN Slovakia.

Country examples further demonstrate how digitalisation intersects with limited participation and weak consultation mechanisms. In the Netherlands, digitally mediated access to social support has similarly produced exclusionary

outcomes. The Social Energy Fund, an EU-funded initiative intended to reduce energy costs, has been criticised by users for its **inaccessible application process**. Reports indicate that the website is frequently overloaded, application procedures are overly **complex**, and funds are often exhausted before eligible applicants can complete the process. Consequently, many individuals who believe they are entitled to support are left without assistance, highlighting how digital-first systems can undermine the effectiveness and equity of social policy interventions.

## 2.4 INTERSECTIONALITY AND TARGETED MEASURES

Intersectionality as a guiding concept and approach is referred to by only three EAPN members, Portugal, Slovakia and Spain. Some NAPS, identify marginalised groups and gender inequality but lack a consistent critical assessment and understanding of the **compounding needs** of certain groups when viewed from an intersectional approach. **Spain's** intersectional approaches in the strategy refers to different vulnerable groups (women, children, migrants, Roma people, people experiencing homelessness, etc.). But intersectionality is treated in a fragmented manner rather than as a cross-cutting principle guiding the design, implementation, and evaluation of policies. In addition, the strategy does not include **targeted measures** to address the feminisation of poverty, as gender is referenced only in broad terms **without concrete actions** to reduce gender-based inequalities.<sup>39</sup>

A French initiative that supports parents, families and children by providing targeted and appropriate measures can be seen as targeting vulnerable groups. Nurseries prioritise spots

37 EAPN Poland, National 2025 Poverty Watch, <https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/eapn-Poland-Poverty-Watch-2025-6238.pdf>

38 EAPN, An Exploratory Study on the Use of Digital Tools by People Experiencing Poverty, 2024: [https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/eapn-643004\\_Event-5952.pdf](https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/eapn-643004_Event-5952.pdf)

39 EAPN Spain, National 2025 Poverty Watch, <https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/eapn-Spain-Poverty-Watch-Report-6296.pdf>

for parents in employment integration pathways, combined with support towards employment or training. Access to stable childcare, family stabilization, increased autonomy for women provides a **structural response** to gendered and child poverty, bridges social, educational, and integration policies and implements an integrated approach to family poverty.<sup>40</sup> However, **EAPN France** states that while some vulnerable groups are mentioned in the Pacte (single-parent families, vulnerable women, disconnected youth), there is no intersectional analytical framework guiding policy design and implementation.<sup>41</sup> Beyond presenting concepts such as the feminization of poverty or the specific economic penalties faced by women for their disproportionate role in **unpaid care and domestic labour work** NAPS/LAPS across Europe fail to be fully inclusive or address the complex, intersectional realities of all vulnerable populations.<sup>42</sup>

Some strategies, plans and approaches do mention different vulnerable groups but their proposed solutions **do not align with their most pressing, immediate needs**. For **EAPN Bulgaria**, the NAPS shows a continuing need to rethink the applied approaches and instruments and implement targeted poverty reduction interventions. In Poland, there is no mention of the **Roma community**, a group consistently identified at the European level as facing extreme rates of poverty and social exclusion. The Czech Republic, similarly, does not have an intersectional approach in the NAPS/LAPS to address the structural injustices faced by **Roma**. Across all NAPS/LAPS there is scarce mention or analysis in the economic and social challenges faced by **LGBTQ+** individuals, who can experience discrimination in housing, health and employment.

## 2.5 PARTICIPATION

The involvement of people experiencing poverty (PeP) is a crucial principle and methodological foundation for **transparent, evidence-based, and accountable policymaking**. Effective participation requires clear safeguards to prevent **extractivist approaches** that instrumentalise lived experience without translating it into policy impact.

Extractivist participation occurs when people experiencing poverty are consulted but their perspectives are not reflected in final policy decisions; are used only to legitimise short-term objectives; or when participants are not adequately resourced or compensated for their time. A robust participatory methodology must therefore include practical measures that ensure dignity, reciprocity, and genuine influence throughout all stages of the policymaking process.<sup>43</sup>

Across the nineteen countries covered by EAPN experts, efforts to involve civil society organisation or PeP are evident. However, significant challenges remain in ensuring their participation is **meaningful and sustained**. In Greece, there is no provision for a continuous consultation process within the mechanism for development, monitoring, and evaluation involving civil society and people directly affected by poverty and social exclusion. There is no **institutionalised framework** for direct interaction with the responsible bodies and people experiencing poverty in the final version of the revised national strategy.<sup>44</sup> Participation in social policy in Latvia is currently inadequate and frequently only symbolic. According to **EAPN Latvia**, people living in poverty or facing social exclusion are often not heard, and their experiences are not taken into account in policy-making processes.

40 EAPN France, National 2025 Poverty Watch, <https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/eapn-Poverty-Watch-France-2025-EN-6306.pdf>

41 EAPN France, National 2025 Poverty Watch, <https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/eapn-Poverty-Watch-France-2025-EN-6306.pdf>

42 EAPN Czech Republic, National 2025 Poverty Watch, <https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/eapn-Czech-Republic-Poverty-Watch-6297.pdf>; EAPN Poland, National 2025 Poverty Watch, <https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/eapn-Poland-Poverty-Watch-2025-6238.pdf>

43 EAPN, Position Paper: Towards the Eradication of Poverty (2025), [https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/eapn-POSITION\\_PAPER\\_TOWARDS\\_ERADICATION\\_POVERTY\\_EAPN-6139.pdf](https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/eapn-POSITION_PAPER_TOWARDS_ERADICATION_POVERTY_EAPN-6139.pdf)

44 EAPN Greece, National 2025 Poverty Watch, <https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/eapn-POVERTY-WATCH-GREECE-2025-6241.pdf>

**EAPN France** states that participation of civil society exists but remains weakly institutionalised, and people experiencing poverty are not involved in a structured and **continuous way**.<sup>45</sup> According to **EAPN Spain**, participation of civil society in Spain and the inclusion of social partners and the civil society organisation is positively valued; however, there are no specific mechanisms for the direct participation of people experiencing poverty yet.<sup>46</sup>

## 2.6 BUDGETS AND LONG-TERM COMMITMENTS

In the assessment of the NAPS and LAPS a clear budget for anti-poverty measures is essential to ensure the plans can be implemented. However there is a **lack of transparency and fiscal commitment** to anti-poverty measures across most countries in Europe.

### Economic Crises

Several EAPN members outline how **austerity measures** have impacted the services and provision available to those in need and those at risk even in some countries that have well established welfare systems and social protection. The current competitiveness narrative are increasingly making the social rights relied on the **'neoliberal trickle down effect'**, where growth should enable social inclusion. However this ideology has been proved inefficient to address the systemic root cause of poverty and social exclusion. Moreover, the unequal sharing of wealth due to power imbalances is the foundation of poverty. EAPN members show there is no automatic link between economic growth, greater levels of employment, and poverty eradication.

While Poland has experienced income growth and a historic fall in overall income inequality, these positive macroeconomic trends mask a deepening structural crisis within the social safety net. Official poverty targets for children are being comprehensively missed. Economic growth in Lithuania has not been so impactful on the poverty rates for vulnerable groups.

Lithuania's economy is expected to continue growing, real GDP is projected to grow by 2.7% in 2025, 3.0% in 2026 and 2.1% in 2027. According to the State Data Agency, in 2024 the poverty risk threshold in Lithuania was €616 per month for a single person and €1,294 for a family of two adults with two children under the age of 14. Around 620,000 people - more than every fifth resident - lived below this threshold. The at-risk-of-poverty rate reached 21.5%, marking an increase of 0.9 percentage points compared to 2023. This upward trend stands in stark contrast to the EU average, which in 2024 was 16.2%, highlighting Lithuania's persistent struggle with poverty despite overall economic growth.<sup>48</sup>

45 EAPN France, National 2025 Poverty Watch, <https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/eapn-Poverty-Watch-France-2025-EN-6306.pdf>

46 EAPN Spain, National 2025 Poverty Watch, <https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/eapn-Spain-Poverty-Watch-Report-6296.pdf>

47 European Commission, Economic forecast for Lithuania, 2025: [https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/economic-surveillance-eu-member-states/country-pages/lithuania/economic-forecast-lithuania\\_en](https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/economic-surveillance-eu-member-states/country-pages/lithuania/economic-forecast-lithuania_en)

48 EAPN Lithuania, National 2025 Poverty Watch, <https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/eapn-Poverty-Watch-Lithuania-2025-EN-6305.pdf>

Economic growth in Europe has been slow for some time, so governments have had to face down political pressure to spend money on other domestic priorities.<sup>49</sup> For EAPN the MMF 2028-2034 negotiation and the European Semester mechanisms have normalised and pushed strongly for austerity and the compression of public spending, under fiscal rules and the push for **labour-market “flexibility”**. The growth driven model and trickle down mythology have, crises after crises, undermined social protection and deepened risks of in-work poverty. According to **EAPN Greece**, Greece has experienced a series of crises over the past 15 years up to today. The collapse of the financial system in 2009 created a huge problem of poverty, social exclusion, and high unemployment. Greek households have not returned to the pre-2009 conditions.<sup>50</sup>

Belgium offers a complex and disheartening example as the current Arizona Government is intent on reducing support to some measures in the NAPS and LAPS. Finland's NAPS and the government program are interconnected, and their implementation depends in particular on political decisions and resourcing. The planned tightening of minimum income schemes does not support the anti-poverty and social inclusion goals in the NAPS. For **EAPN Poland** the main barrier to

implementation of the NAPS is "weak governance, compounded by insufficient political commitment to establish systemic, automatic social protection mechanisms."

Social welfare budgets grounded in social rights, anti-poverty measures and equity based approaches **prioritise investment in marginalised groups** and are more targeted than universal provision in addressing structural poverty. Equity in distribution of resources through progressive wealth tax is one option that Member States present as a good basis to resource the budget for NAPS and LAPS. Ireland states that starting at 1% for individuals of the wealth over €3 million, and graduated as the wealth gets higher would provide resources that must be ringfenced for redistributive purposes, and developing public services and further tax reform would save money by ending the massive subsidisation of the private sector.<sup>52</sup> As EAPN has highlighted consistently in reports, poverty is not an issue of resource scarcity, rather it derives from inequity of wealth and resources. "The poorest half of the global population owns less wealth than the combined fortunes of just twelve billionaires. This stark concentration of wealth not only makes life increasingly unaffordable for most people, but also fuels deep and damaging social divides."<sup>53</sup>

49 European Commission. (2025). The cost of EU Member States' proximity to the war. Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs. [https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/cost-eu-member-states-proximity-war\\_en](https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/cost-eu-member-states-proximity-war_en)

50 EAPN Greece, National 2025 Poverty Watch, <https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/eapn-POVERTY-WATCH-GREECE-2025-6241.pdf>

51 EAPN, Position Paper: Towards the Eradication of Poverty (2025), [https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/eapn-POSITION\\_PAPER\\_TOWARDS\\_ERADICATION\\_POVERTY\\_EAPN-6139.pdf](https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/eapn-POSITION_PAPER_TOWARDS_ERADICATION_POVERTY_EAPN-6139.pdf)

52 For more discussion on tax and welfare, see EAPN EU 2023 POVERTY WATCH - Towards a Sustainable Social Welfare for the People? Poverty Watch 2023, [https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/eapn-643002\\_PovertyWatchReport\\_2023-6173.pdf](https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/eapn-643002_PovertyWatchReport_2023-6173.pdf)

53 Gómez-Carrera, Ricardo et al. (2024). "Global Inequality Update 2024: New Insights from Extended WID Macro Series". In: World Inequality Lab, Technical Notes 2024/11

## 2.7 INDICATORIZATION

Measurable objectives, monitoring and evaluation, the use of indicators are all key elements of a comprehensive NAPS and LAPS. **Indicators** legitimise public policy decisions and can be seen as public goods. Good use of indicators can generate **relevant knowledge** for social change beyond the implementation of policies.<sup>54</sup> It is significant that several Member States have put in place consecutive NAPS, strategies and roadmaps; It should be noted that a process of “indicatorization” is taking place, meaning, **policy implementation indicators are developed and measured** instead of specific poverty reduction targets and goals.

Ireland provides a clear example. Although the current strategy is reviewed annually, with goals and targets monitored both nationally and in comparison with other EU countries, its overall impact has not been adequately evaluated. In particular, there has been no assessment of

whether the strategy achieved its central objective of reducing consistent poverty to 2% or less by 2025.<sup>55</sup> Poverty levels remained unchanged between the beginning and the end of the strategy period. Ireland’s current Roadmap illustrates how strategic documents can fall short of addressing the root causes of poverty and, in some cases, fail to include the key indicators necessary to measure success. **EAPN Bulgaria, Greece and Poland** report a systemic absence of regular, transparent, and impactful evaluation and monitoring.

There is clearly a struggle between developing NAPS and LAPS with a focus on eradicating poverty and eliminating social exclusion and finding the relevant indicators to capture the implementation of policies. EAPN has documented the systematic failure to fully address the complexity of poverty either through policies or statistics. **An effective strategy is one which monitors impact and has the flexibility to change in response to barriers or challenges.** A theory of change can support the development of impact measurements.

54 Paulo de Martino Jannuzzi, Indicators in Public Policy, January 2021, DOI:10.1007/978-3-319-31816-5\_3762-1, In book: In: Farazmand A. (eds) Global Encyclopedia of Public Administration, Public Policy, and Governance. Springer, Cham. (pp.1-6) Publisher: Springer: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/348735294\\_Indicators\\_in\\_Public\\_Policy](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/348735294_Indicators_in_Public_Policy)

55 EAPN Ireland. National 2025 Poverty Watch, <https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/eapn-IE-Poverty-Watch-2025-6233.pdf>

# 3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This Poverty Watch provided a mapping of NAPS/LAPS across nineteen countries in Europe to find that whilst there are many iterations or plans, strategies and roadmaps addressing poverty and social exclusion only a few countries have developed comprehensive strategies that aim to eradicate poverty. A comprehensive NAPS/LAPS will have up to 9 essential, integrated, and process elements that promote anti-poverty measures within a clear theory of change

Despite the long history of anti-poverty strategies, key indicators such as AROPE remain largely stagnant. This points to an urgent need to review existing plans and approaches, ensuring that **commitments are genuinely oriented towards the structural and systematic eradication of poverty, rather than its management**. It also points to a focus on **impact not simply implementation**.

Across Europe, there is a growing gap between what people need for basic survival and what is provided by the state. NAPS and LAPS across Europe are often developed without the meaningful involvement of people directly affected by poverty and intersecting structures of oppression. This exclusion undermines both democratic legitimacy and policy relevance. People experiencing poverty must be at the centre of developing the NAPS/LAPS and the evaluation of these strategies.

**Siloed policymaking** continues to undermine effective poverty reduction. The lack of social policy coherence between social protection, employment, housing, energy, climate, and equality policies limits the ability of governments to respond to the multidimensional nature of poverty and results in structurally induced poverty. EAPN members provide numerous

examples of countries struggling to address structural inequality precisely because of fragmented governance and poor coordination across policy fields. A comprehensive NAPS/LAPS, with social rights at its core, must therefore ensure the **coordination and mainstreaming** of social inclusion across all relevant policy areas.

To reach the targets set out by the European Commission and the Member States, a significant shift in approach to social justice must prevail. The effective realisation of social rights are essential components of any such NAPS/LAPS. **Rooting anti-poverty strategies firmly in social and fundamental rights** is key to addressing socio-economic discrimination, exclusion, and state-induced poverty.

Poverty reduction should not be treated as a by-product of economic growth; it must be recognised as a political choice that requires adequate social spending, stronger social protection, and policies that address structural and systemic inequalities. Crucially, this also means placing people's wellbeing at the centre of policymaking, going beyond a narrow focus on minimum income provision alone. **The only accurate measure of success is whether poverty is consistently reduced, including for the most marginalised groups and communities.**

Goals, targets and commitments can only be meaningful on that basis. The NAPS/LAPS evaluation process should focus on results, not on enlisting measures undertaken.

The recommendations below aim to ensure that NAPS/LAPS articulate a strong, rights-based vision focused on tackling the structural and systemic causes of poverty. As poverty and social exclusion are multidimensional, they require targeted measures, adequate resourcing, and responses proportionate to the scale and depth of inequality. Quality employment, affordable energy, climate justice are also part of the conditions for poverty eradication.

The recommendations are based on an analysis of national reports and are particularly relevant in light of the forthcoming EU Anti-Poverty Strategy. As outlined above, a clear theory of change is essential to clarify the policy framework, implementation pathways, and expected outcomes. Many existing NAPS and LAPS lack a coherent theory of change linking objectives, measures, and measurable impacts on poverty reduction, weakening both accountability and effectiveness.

# SOCIAL JUSTICE AND DEFINITION OF POVERTY

## Definition and Scope

In alignment with EU principles, National governments must adopt a **clear, comprehensive, and rights-based definition of poverty** that is applied consistently across all policy areas. This means adopting an **intersectional approach** that recognises how poverty intersects with historical injustice and imbalance with other forms of disadvantage, including residence status, gender, disability, ethnicity, and migration status. **Socio-economic status** must also be recognised as a protected ground of discrimination in law, enabling public authorities to more effectively address unequal treatment and structural exclusion towards people living in poverty.

## Specific Focus on Group Disproportionately at Risk of Poverty

An effective EU Anti-Poverty Strategy must prioritise those most exposed to poverty and social exclusion. Marginalised groups face compounded risks resulting from systemic and structural barriers. A one-size-fits-all approach to poverty eradication would therefore fail to break cycles of intergenerational and intersectional poverty.

### Child

- ▶ Introduce a dedicated and measurable objective on child poverty, in line with the European Child Guarantee and relevant EU commitments, including the Barcelona targets.

### Gender

- ▶ Support the economic independence of women, in all their diversity, support lifelong learning, reskilling, and training opportunities for women to increase their social mobility and economic security.
- ▶ End in-work poverty for all, ensuring adequate minimum income above the poverty threshold and strengthening collective bargaining and maintain closing the gender pension gap as a central priority.
- ▶ Invest sustainably in childcare and long-term care services to reduce the disproportionate unpaid care burden on women and enable their full participation in decent, stable, and well-paid employment.
- ▶ Offer women individualised social benefits (in particular, disability benefits which are often calculated based on the spouse's income), as well as adequate financial support to single parents' households.
- ▶ Target specific vulnerable groups of women with dedicated anti-poverty measures, such as trafficking victims, refugees, and ethnic minorities.
- ▶ Ensure effective implementation of Directive 2024/1385 on combating violence against women and domestic violence, guaranteeing that women experiencing poverty have adequate and unconditional access to shelters, survivor support services, legal aid, and social welfare, regardless of their residence or migration status.
- ▶ Provide sustainable funding and support to civil society organizations and grassroots women's organisations, which play a critical role in preventing GBV, supporting survivors, and promoting socio-economic empowerment.

### Roma

- ▶ Implement targeted measures to combat antigypsism and systemic discrimination.
- ▶ Commit to closing gaps in social and economic inclusion and achieving the anti-poverty targets set out in the Roma Strategic Framework.

### Undocumented migrants

- ▶ Ensure unconditional access to essential services, in particular healthcare, justice, and education, regardless of residence status. Undocumented migrants are systematically excluded from formal employment and social protection and may avoid public services due to fear of detection or deportation.

### Youth

- ▶ Prohibit sub-minimum wages for young adults and guarantee equal pay for equal work. Age-based wage discrimination entrenches early-life poverty and reinforces labour market inequality.
- ▶ Strengthen labour protections and working conditions for young workers, including those in temporary, platform-based, or part-time employment, to prevent precarious entry into the labour market from translating into long-term economic insecurity.

### Elderly

- ▶ Provide an adequate and accessible minimum pension scheme that guarantees a life in dignity. Pension systems must account for career interruptions and unpaid care work, which disproportionately affect women and contribute to persistent gender pension gaps.
- ▶ Provide adequate protection and support to informal carers, including financial compensation, social protection coverage, and pension credits.

## STATISTICS, INDICATORS, AND TARGETS

Adequate, disaggregated, and intersectional data are essential for effective policies for aimed to eradicate poverty. What is measured shapes political priorities, resource allocation, and policy design. Incomplete indicators, binary data systems, and insufficient disaggregation risk rendering entire groups invisible in poverty monitoring frameworks.

- ▶ Undertake a rigorous review of existing poverty indicators to ensure they are meaningful, rights-based, and policy-relevant, and that they capture structural drivers of poverty rather than only income-based deprivation.
- ▶ Revise poverty monitoring databases to reflect the reality of the “missing poor”, including groups currently underrepresented or invisible in datasets (in particular LGBTQI+ persons, religious minorities, ethnic and racial minorities, and people deprived of liberty).
- ▶ Invest in research on the lived experience of poverty through an intersectional lens, capturing how gender intersects with race, disability, migration status, age, sexual orientation, and other grounds of discrimination.
- ▶ Ensure long-term, comparable, and disaggregated data collection to enable effective monitoring of poverty trends and the impact of policies over time, including intra-household inequalities and non-standard forms of employment.
- ▶ Provide transparency on how indicators are combined and weighted, and how they contribute to achieving concrete poverty reduction targets, in order to strengthen democratic accountability.
- ▶ Avoid replacing substantive poverty reduction targets with an overreliance on indicators alone (“indicatorisation”), ensuring that monitoring frameworks remain anchored in measurable social outcomes and rights-based commitments.

# ACTIVE INCLUSION APPROACH

## PILLAR 1: ACCESS TO MINIMUM INCOME

Adequate, accessible, and rights-based minimum income schemes (MIS) are essential to prevent and reduce poverty, particularly for marginalised groups who are disproportionately exposed to precarious employment, unpaid care responsibilities, and interrupted careers. Minimum income must function as a genuine safety net that guarantees a life in dignity. This requires ensuring adequacy, accessibility, and enabling support mechanisms, in line with the Council Recommendation on adequate minimum income ensuring active inclusion. As EAPN has claimed for decades, a Directive for Minimum Income it is a stepstone towards the harmonisation of social rights in the EU.

- ▶ Refrain from restricting the eligibility criteria of MIS, i.e. their coverage, and/or reducing the duration of minimum income benefits.
- ▶ Simplify administrative and implementation procedures, reducing bureaucratic burdens that disproportionately affect people with limited resources, digital access, or language proficiency.
- ▶ Address non-take-up of minimum income benefits, including through proactive outreach, accessible information, and systematic review of restrictive eligibility conditions.
- ▶ Ensure explicit non-discrimination provisions, guaranteeing equal access to minimum income for all actual and potential beneficiaries, regardless of gender identity, migration status, disability, family situation, or other grounds.

### Enabling Characteristics

- ▶ Refrain from imposing punitive conditionality, including mandatory participation in labour market activation schemes, forced public work, enforced volunteering, or the obligation to accept any job or training offer regardless of quality, under threat of benefit reduction.
- ▶ Adopt a supportive, rights-based activation approach, focused on individualised case management that addresses social, health, and structural barriers to labour market participation.
- ▶ Combine supportive activation measures with guaranteed access to essential services, including housing, healthcare, childcare, social protection, and adequate income support, ensuring that labour market integration does not come at the expense of dignity or rights.

## PILLAR 2: ACCESS TO INCLUSIVE LABOUR MARKET

Inclusive labour markets are central to poverty reduction, yet employment alone no longer guarantees protection from poverty. Marginalized groups are disproportionately represented in low-paid, precarious, and undervalued sectors, while non-standard employment and fragmented careers undermine income security and social protection. Labour market policies must therefore move beyond activation-centred approaches and address the quality, stability, and fairness of work, as well as equal access to labour rights and social protection.

### Fair Working Conditions

- ▶ Guarantee fair working conditions for all workers, including equal pay and pay transparency, full transposition of work-life balance measures, and enforcement of health and safety standards.
- ▶ Move beyond an activation-centred approach to poverty reduction. While access to decent work remains essential, national strategies must acknowledge that employment alone no longer guarantees protection from poverty.
- ▶ Integrate quality of employment, wage adequacy, and social protection coverage as core indicators of labour market inclusion.
- ▶ Rebalance labour market integration policies, moving away from subsidies that incentivise low-hour, low-quality work, and instead investing in sustainable integration measures such as training, workplace adaptation, and quality job creation.

### Wage Adequacy

- ▶ Fully transpose and effectively implement the Minimum Wages Directive, to ensure statutory minimum wages reach at least 60% of median equivalised income and/or are set according to a

living wage approach based on real cost-of-living benchmarks.

- ▶ Ensure minimum wages are regularly updated, inflation-adjusted, monitored, and enforced, including through price indices reflecting the consumption patterns of low-paid households and independent living wage commissions where appropriate.
- ▶ Strengthen collective bargaining systems, aiming for high collective agreement coverage, institutionalised sectoral bargaining, and effective support for social dialogue, including in sectors dominated by small enterprises.

### Inclusive Social Protection for All Workers

- ▶ Strengthen social protection for non-standard and atypical workers, including temporary, part-time, solo self-employed, platform, and on-call workers, by adapting eligibility rules (longer reference periods, hours aggregation) to ensure effective access to benefits.
- ▶ Reform unemployment and income-replacement systems to ensure minimum threshold replacement rates and prevent income from falling below 60% of median equivalised income, with benefit uprating linked to wage growth and adequacy benchmarks.
- ▶ Remove discriminatory waiting periods and access barriers to benefits, including distinctions between employment statuses, benefit types, and insurance-based versus assistance-based schemes.
- ▶ Ensure equal access to labour rights and social protection for third-country nationals, preventing exclusion that increases exploitation, undeclared work, and unfair labour market competition.

### Preventing Regulatory Avoidance and Market Segmentation

- ▶ Reassess and regulate outsourcing and subcontracting practices, preventing their use as regulatory avoidance mechanisms and ensuring equal treatment between directly employed and subcontracted workers.
- ▶ Prevent misclassification of subordinate workers as self-employed, by aligning legal definitions with material working conditions and removing tax and contribution incentives that encourage reclassification.

## PILLAR 3: ACCESS TO QUALITY SERVICES

Access to comprehensive, high-quality services is a central pillar of poverty reduction and social inclusion. Services must be rights-based, person-centred, and adequately funded, addressing structural and territorial inequalities. Beyond mere provision, quality services require engagement with users, integrated delivery across sectors, decent working conditions for service providers, and strong monitoring mechanisms to ensure accessibility, effectiveness, and social outcomes. Adequate minimum income and social protection are preconditions for meaningful access, enabling individuals to exercise their rights fully.

### Integrated Social Services

- ▶ Support “one-stop-shop” service models that integrate social, employment, health, and housing support, reducing bureaucratic burdens and improving outcomes for people experiencing poverty. Engage service users in design, delivery, and monitoring to ensure unmet needs are addressed.
- ▶ Promote universal, non-discriminatory access to affordable, high-quality essential services, prioritising a rights-based and person-centred approach over market-driven models.
- ▶ Recognise social services as essential services within transformational social protection systems, ensuring preventive support, adequate funding, and decent working conditions for social workers, including fair wages, social protection, training, and social dialogue.
- ▶ Adopt clear minimum service provision standards, aligned with the 2010 European Framework for Quality in Social Services, extending quality criteria to all essential services,

including respect for users’ rights, service proximity, integration, and active participation of

- ▶ users.
- ▶ Ensure digitalisation is optional, accessible, and complementary to face-to-face support, preventing exclusion due to digital divides or rapid technological changes.
- ▶ Integrate social considerations in public procurement, including minimum working conditions for providers, social integration of disadvantaged people, and measurement of social outcomes beyond price-quality ratios.

### Public Employment Services

- ▶ Provide comprehensive coverage and seamless transitions to other benefits at all stages.
- ▶ Support person-centred, integrated support as part of an “active inclusion approach” which is based on case-management approaches and personalised planning.
- ▶ Ensure access to other key social rights for minimum income beneficiaries, e.g. decent housing, education, affordable healthcare, and not just as a “condition” or an “instrument” to get them into work.
- ▶ Promote transparent and accessible pathways for recognition of skills, certifications, and diplomas, particularly for migrants and third-country nationals, to enable labour market inclusion and personal development.

### Housing

- ▶ Increase the supply of quality, affordable, and non-segregated housing by scaling up public and social housing construction, particularly in high-demand areas with rapidly rising prices, while avoiding spatial segregation that reproduces poverty and exclusion.
- ▶ Regulate private rental markets including through rent control mechanisms benchmarked to real costs of living and indexed to inflation, to prevent excessive rent increases and ensure long-term affordability for low-income households.
- ▶ Strengthen housing-related social protection systems, ensuring income support and housing benefits adequately cover real housing and energy costs for low-income households and other groups at risk of poverty.
- ▶ Provide direct, upfront financial support for

housing renovation and energy efficiency, prioritising households experiencing energy poverty and ensuring that renovation costs do not result in rent increases, higher bills, or

- ▶ displacement.
- ▶ Guarantee the right to energy as an integral part of the right to housing, including by banning energy disconnections for vulnerable households, maintaining regulated energy prices for domestic users, and expanding social tariffs.
- ▶ Adopt and scale up Housing First programmes as the primary response to homelessness, recognising housing as a fundamental human right and guaranteeing immediate, unconditional access to permanent housing with appropriate support services.
- ▶ End forced evictions, Roma expulsions, and housing demolitions without adequate rehousing, ensuring that no displacement occurs without safe, dignified, and appropriate alternative accommodation.

### ▶ Healthcare

- ▶ Invest in accessible, affordable, and quality healthcare, including mental health and dental care, for people living in poverty and vulnerable populations.
- ▶ Increase availability of affordable medicines, public health centres, and trained health professionals, ensuring decent working conditions for providers and adequate resources for service delivery.

### ▶ Long Term Care

- ▶ Establish comprehensive national long-term care frameworks grounded in quality principles, including continuity and integration of services, prevention, person-centredness, and an outcomes-based approach that prioritises quality of life, autonomy, and independent living alongside clinical outcomes.
- ▶ Develop and adequately resource quality assurance systems covering all forms of care, including residential, home-based, community-based, and informal care, ensuring regular monitoring, transparent reporting, and accountability mechanisms.
- ▶ Guarantee equal access to quality long-term care services, including by mainstreaming mental

health within public health and care systems, adopting comprehensive quality standards for both formal and informal care, and using outcome-based indicators such as unmet care

- ▶ needs.
- ▶ Strengthen the link between public procurement and quality in long-term care provision, ensuring that contracting prioritises universal accessibility, continuity, integration between health and social services, affordability, and measurable social outcomes over cost-efficiency alone.
- ▶ Ensure the availability of a diversified range of long-term care options, including home care, community-based care, residential services, and personal assistance, based on identified unmet needs and safeguarding the right of care recipients to freely choose their care arrangements.
- ▶ Protect and advance the right of persons with disabilities to independent living, ensuring access to personal assistance and community-based services in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and preventing institutionalisation.
- ▶ Close territorial gaps in long-term care provision, particularly in rural, remote, and depopulating areas.
- ▶ Create pathways to regularisation for undeclared long-term care workers, alongside safe and non-discriminatory legal migration pathways, while addressing racial and gender inequalities embedded in the care workforce.
- ▶ Ensure digitalisation in long-term care complements, rather than replaces, human care, and does not undermine the rights of vulnerable people to receive personalised, rights-based assistance.

# DIGITALISATION AND DATA DRIVEN WELFARE SYSTEM

Digitalisation and data-driven technologies have the potential to improve efficiency and accessibility in social protection systems. However, if poorly designed, they can exacerbate inequality, entrench discrimination, and create new barriers for people experiencing poverty. A rights-based approach requires transparency, accessibility, user participation, and safeguards against automated discrimination, ensuring that technology supports inclusion rather than replacing essential human-centered services.

## Automated Discrimination

- ▶ Conduct thorough assessments of AI and data-driven welfare policies, evaluating potential risks of surveillance, control, and discrimination against people experiencing poverty and other vulnerable groups.
- ▶ Prioritise internally managed, secure, and interoperable digital solutions under state sovereignty to protect privacy and reduce reliance on private actors that may misuse data.
- ▶ Ensure transparency in AI deployment and data collection, including clear communication to users and workers about the purpose, functioning, and potential impact of digital tools.

## Digitally Induced Poverty

- ▶ Keep digital services optional, providing physical, accessible, affordable, and high-quality alternatives. Telephone and in-person services must remain adequately resourced and of equivalent quality.
- ▶ Avoid preferential treatment for digital users that disadvantages those who rely on non-digital channels, preventing further marginalisation.

## Accessibility and inclusion

- ▶ Guarantee accessibility of digital tools for all, including persons with disabilities, older adults, and low-income households experiencing digital poverty. This includes provision of devices, internet access, and inclusion in social tariffs or income support measures.
- ▶ Expand internet coverage in rural, remote, and underserved areas to ensure equitable access to digital services.
- ▶ Provide robust digital literacy and skills programs across all age groups, including training on AI advantages, risks, and safe use in social protection contexts.
- ▶ Design online application processes in cooperation with civil society and beneficiaries, ensuring user-friendly interfaces, reducing errors, and supporting effective access to benefits.

## Monitoring and Impact Assessment

- ▶ Conduct comprehensive impact assessments of digitalisation and AI on social protection, evaluating effects on societal inclusion, equity, well-being, and the work conditions of social service staff.
- ▶ Ensure that digitalisation complements rather than replaces human-centered support, preserving personalised, rights-based interactions and the professional mission of social workers.

## CLIMATE

Climate and environmental policies have direct social and economic impacts, particularly on people experiencing poverty and other marginalised groups. A socially just transition requires that climate action, energy policies, and decarbonisation measures actively reduce inequalities rather than exacerbate them. National strategies must integrate poverty and social inclusion objectives, ensure equitable access to clean energy and sustainable mobility, and link climate action with strengthened social protection and support for affected communities.

### National Social Climate Plans and Participation

- ▶ Ensure National Social Climate Plans explicitly address poverty and social exclusion, including mandatory poverty impact assessments for all climate policies.
- ▶ Meaningfully involve people experiencing poverty and civil society organisations in the design, implementation, and monitoring of climate and energy policies.

### Energy Access and Affordability

- ▶ Guarantee access to clean, affordable, and reliable energy for all, prioritising low-income households, renters, and marginalised communities in energy transition measures and subsidies.
- ▶ Introduce a ban on energy disconnections, ensuring that no household is cut off from electricity, heating, or cooling due to inability to pay, particularly during extreme weather events.
- ▶ Allocate dedicated funds to address energy poverty and support households affected by just transition measures, including financial assistance for renovations and energy efficiency improvements.

### Housing and Renovation

- ▶ Fully implement and enforce the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) and Energy Efficiency Directive (EED), prioritising households experiencing poverty through targeted renovation schemes, tenant protections, and safeguards against rent increases or displacement.
- ▶ Ensure climate policies do not deepen inequalities, avoiding regressive pricing mechanisms and ensuring that compensation measures effectively reach low-income and marginalised populations.

### Sustainability Mobility and Transport

- ▶ Invest in clean, affordable, and accessible public transport, particularly in underserved, rural, and disadvantaged areas, powered by renewable energy.
- ▶ Ensure universal affordability and accessibility of sustainable mobility, including reduced or free fares for low-income users and accessible infrastructure for people with disabilities.

### Social Protection and Just Transition

- ▶ Adapt social protection frameworks to the challenges posed by decarbonisation and the green transition, including support for workers and communities affected by industrial restructuring or job displacement.
- ▶ Integrate climate action with poverty reduction, ensuring that environmental policies strengthen social resilience, protect vulnerable groups, and contribute to inclusive economic opportunities.

## LAPS, NAPS AND VERTICAL GOVERNANCE

Member States should establish appropriate vertical governance frameworks to support strong, coherent LAPS aligned with NAPS, while complementing action taken at EU level under the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy:

- ▶ Set clear indicators, targets, and objectives for LAPS, ensuring coherence and complementarity with NAPS and the EU APS.
- ▶ Reinforce coordination across policy sectors at local level and between national, regional, and municipal authorities, ensuring that national guidance on LAPS is consistently applied while allowing flexibility to respond to local needs.
- ▶ Provide targeted technical assistance, training, and adequate staffing to small and under-resourced municipalities to enable the design and implementation of effective, needs-based Local Anti-Poverty Strategies.
- ▶ Ensure effective coordination between LAPS, NAPS, and EU-level action, including clear coordination mechanisms and designated coordinators at each level.
- ▶ Embed poverty eradication objectives across relevant policy areas, ensuring they are systematically integrated into local planning and decision-making.
- ▶ Ensure the meaningful participation of people experiencing poverty (PeP) in decision-making processes at local, national, and EU levels, and coordination among them.

## LAPS AND HORIZONTAL GOVERNANCE

- ▶ Ensure LAPS are planned independently of political cycles, based on long-term objectives and ensuring their continuity beyond election results.
- ▶ Carry out ex-ante and mid-term impact assessments to monitor progress and adjust policies as needed.
- ▶ Establish strong coordination mechanisms, with a designated coordinator holding a clear, defined mandate, sufficient authority, and an appropriate set of powers to ensure cross-sectoral coherence.
- ▶ Ensure the meaningful participation of PEP in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies.

## PARTICIPATION

People experiencing poverty should be involved from the outset in designing the National and Local Action Plans against Poverty. The participation process, including its modalities and objectives, should be transparent from the beginning and accessible to all contributors. Their lived experience and participation should be also considerate as deserving labour contribution with financial support. Consultative meetings, at national and local levels, with people experiencing poverty should be held in all EU Member States, not just in capital cities. For EAPN, participation is not an add-on or a procedural requirement. It is a political principle grounded in the recognition of people experiencing poverty as rights-holders and experts of their own lives. Participation, in this sense, is about power: the power to influence agendas, shape policies, and hold institutions accountable.

- ▶ Provide dedicated funding to support meaningful participatory processes, ensuring the systematic involvement of people experiencing poverty in the design, implementation, and evaluation of economic and social policies.
- ▶ Strengthen mechanisms for civil society participation in decision-making and ensure independent evaluation of anti-poverty measures with the involvement of social partners and people experiencing poverty.
- ▶ Evaluation outcomes should be communicated transparently, including progress towards poverty targets and the identified positive or negative impacts of specific measures.
- ▶ PEP in all stage of governance, co-creation, monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment,
- ▶ Accessible safe spaces for all people experiencing poverty, regardless with their limitations to digital literacy, handicap, family context, language support amongst others.
- ▶ Access to essential services is a human rights obligation, not a discretionary policy choice. Denial of access to healthcare, mental health and addiction services, dentistry, childcare, or food support constitutes a violation of fundamental rights.
- ▶ Multi-level governance must be strengthened, funded and clarified, with clear responsibilities across EU, national, regional, and local levels, and with particular support to municipalities as key access points for services. Funding should ensure that some services can be accessible for free.
- ▶ Lived experience and peer-led initiatives must be sustainably funded and recognised as key actors and service providers, rather than being treated solely as short-term, crisis-response or gap-filling actors when public systems fail.
- ▶ Digitalisation must complement, not replace, human support, and safeguards must be put in place to prevent increased non-take-up and exclusion.
- ▶ Clear rights-based legal frameworks, accompanied by mandatory professional training and operational guidance for front-line workers, to avoid arbitrary interpretation of rules and ensure that people are not “lost in the system”.

## CRIMINALISATION OF POVERTY AND OF SOLIDARITY

People living in poverty are disproportionately affected by criminal law and policies, which contribute to maintaining them trapped in a social exclusion cycle. In the case of homeless people, this can take the form of legislation banning activities such as sleeping rough or begging. The criminalisation of poverty can also happen indirectly, for instance, through fines for minor offences such as fare evasion on public transport. Racialised people, Roma people, and other ethnic minorities are more frequently stopped, searched, arrested and subjected to police brutality, especially in disadvantaged areas. People from disadvantaged backgrounds who use drugs are also more likely to be criminalised than others. This leads to disproportionate targeting and criminal records for minor offences, further entrenching poverty and social exclusion. The criminalisation of solidarity also impacts migrants, asylum seekers, and undocumented people.

- ▶ Shift from punitive to harm-reduction approaches by adopting health, rights and rehabilitation-based drug policies, and ending criminal sanctions for drug use linked to poverty, homelessness, or social exclusion.
- ▶ End the criminalisation of minor survival-related offences, such as fare evasion, loitering, begging, or sleeping rough, by replacing fines and sanctions with social support and access to public services.
- ▶ Address discriminatory policing practices by introducing safeguards against racial profiling, strengthening independent oversight mechanisms, and ensuring accountability for disproportionate stops, searches, arrests, and police violence in disadvantaged areas.
- ▶ Prevent the disproportionate criminalisation of people who use drugs from disadvantaged backgrounds, including by limiting criminal records for minor offences and prioritising social, health, and community-based interventions.
- ▶ Decriminalise solidarity and humanitarian assistance, ensuring that individuals and organisations providing support to migrants, asylum seekers, and undocumented people are not penalised under criminal or administrative law.
- ▶ End the use of criminal and administrative detention as a migration deterrent, and restrict the use of surveillance technologies and digital enforcement tools in migration management in line with fundamental rights obligations.
- ▶ Repeal laws and local regulations that penalise homelessness, including bans on sleeping rough, begging, or using public space, and replace them with housing-led, rights-based homelessness strategies.
- ▶ Embed an anti-poverty and anti-discrimination lens across criminal justice, digitalisation, and migration policies, ensuring that poverty eradication, social inclusion, and equality are treated as core policy objectives rather than security concerns.
- ▶ Ban predictive and data-driven policing practices that disproportionately target people experiencing poverty, including algorithmic risk profiling based on location, socio-economic status, or proxy indicators of deprivation.
- ▶ Prohibit the use of AI systems in law enforcement that reinforce systemic discrimination, particularly against racialised communities, Roma people, migrants, homeless people, and people who use drugs.
- ▶ Prevent the use of welfare, housing, migration, or health data for policing and law-enforcement purposes and enforce clear firewalls between social services and law enforcement authorities.
- ▶ Strengthen democratic oversight of policing technologies, including parliamentary scrutiny, independent monitoring bodies, and meaningful involvement of civil society and affected communities.

# FUNDING, TAXATION, AND ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

Social welfare policies aim to protect citizens against the risks - associated with old age, unemployment, sickness, etc. - that they might face in their lives and therefore enable the exercise of their basic rights. As a result, it is key for the social welfare state to have the necessary resources to fulfil its objectives and redistribute the resources between the richer and the poorer. In this scenario of economic contraction, the question is how to develop a sustainable welfare state. According to the EC - Annual report on taxation 2023, just and progressive tax systems can ensure the necessary resources and contribute to equality (including gender equality), thanks to the redistribution of resources between the richer and the poorer.

## Funding

- ▶ Both the EU and Member States must commit to avoiding austerity that damages the social security systems and are paid by the poorest part of the population. Instead, we need a fair tax system that not only helps to reduce the states debts, but also reinforces social security systems and leads to an adequate and accessible minimum income for citizens by using the new money coming in.
- ▶ Ensure adequate, predictable, and long-term funding for social protection measures, preventing reliance on short-term or project-based financing.
- ▶ Public subsidies to private companies must be made conditional on investments that promote sustainable, socially just, and environmentally responsible modes of production.
- ▶ Ensure that the National and Regional Partnership Plans of the 2028–2034 MFF prioritise the implementation of NAPs and LAPs through adequate funding as well as with the support of the ESF+.
- ▶ The EU and its Member States should make sure that public spending on social protection never falls below 35% of the GDP of a country as advocated by EAPN with the "Golden Rule".

## Taxation

- ▶ Implement progressive taxation of wealth, capital, and high incomes to secure sustainable funding for National and Local Anti-Poverty Strategies, including Minimum Income Schemes and broader social protection systems.
- ▶ Introduce a legal requirement for Poverty and Social Impact Assessments for all major draft legislation, particularly annual state budgets and significant tax reforms.
- ▶ Ensure tax justice by:
  - Increasing the level of taxation on wealth and capital.
  - Abolishing taxes that are regressive on low-income people, including value added and other consumer taxes as well as regressive charges for medicines, public transport and learning, culture and leisure services.
  - Reforming the inheritance tax which favours the richest and wealthiest.
  - Taxing the so-called Big Tech. Those companies who do not pay profit tax in the countries they make their profit. Both the European Parliament and the OECD have called for a tax of at least 4%.
  - Taxing the financial transactions on the markets.

## Economic Resilience

- ▶ Social protection levels must reflect real cost-of-living changes, particularly the price of basic goods and essential services.
- ▶ Develop crisis-response mechanisms that prevent further marginalisation of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion (ARPE). When inflation reaches defined thresholds, automatic stabilisers should be triggered, including price ceilings for essential goods and heating.

# APPENDIX – COMPARATIVE TABLE OF NAPS AND LAPS ACROSS 19 EAPN MEMBERS

## COMPREHENSIVE ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGIES

(Bulgaria, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain)

### Bulgaria has a National Strategy for Reducing Poverty and Promoting Social Inclusion 2030



<b>Essential elements</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Bulgarian NAPS follow the EU concept of poverty, the Strategy 2030 focuses on people at risk of poverty or social exclusion and respectively its three dimensions: people at risk of poverty; in severe material deprivation and living in households with low work intensity. The working definition of poverty in the NAPS is broader.</li> <li>2. Main policy areas addressed and priorities and integrated with other relevant national strategies and frameworks.</li> </ol>
<b>Extended elements</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. At local, municipal and/or regional level, strategies were adopted on an annual basis.</li> <li>4. EU and international documents are noted in the NAPS 2030. They include the European Pillar of Social Rights; Sustainable Development Goals and others but it is not clear how aligned they are.</li> <li>5. CSO and PeP consultation and participation.</li> </ol>
<b>Processes</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Budget potentially from The Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP) but this is not clear and a 10 year duration following the EU strategies.</li> <li>7. Interim goals and Indicators set in the Action Plan for the period 2023-2024.</li> <li>8. Clear reporting schedule.</li> </ol>
<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of understanding of social rights as real rights.</li> <li>- Targets some marginal/vulnerable groups in or outside the labour market, members of vulnerable ethnic groups, people with disabilities; homeless and people living in poor housing conditions and the working poor but not an intersectional approach</li> <li>- Limited or inadequate approaches and instruments specifically related to poverty reduction.</li> <li>- Housing policy is limited.</li> </ul>



**Portugal has a National Strategy to Combat Poverty 2021-2030**

<p><b>Essential elements</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Multidimensional approach to combating the structural causes of poverty, a theory of change and an Action Plan includes more than 270 measures.</li> <li>2. Intersectional approach and protection of vulnerable to poverty (inc migrants).</li> <li>3. An integrated approach to other national strategies is also assumed (Recovery and Resilience Plan).</li> </ol>
<p><b>Extended elements</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Aligned with international and EU commitments including the European Pillar of Social Rights.</li> <li>5. Strengthened national-local alignment and LAPs.</li> <li>6. Participation of CSOs, PePs and structures such as Participatory Forums, Coordination Committee.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Processes</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Defines 5 targets and 5 indicators to be met by 2030.</li> <li>8. The theory of change supports the process chosen to evaluate and monitor the current Action Plan.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Challenges</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The municipal approach is not totally effective and this has an impact in the design of local strategies to fight poverty.</li> <li>- The budget is unclear and the investment made remains insufficient to reduce the indicators significantly or impact the structural causes of poverty.</li> <li>- Participative actions for civil society organisations and people experiencing poverty need to be reinforced, consolidated and continuous over time.</li> <li>- The absence of public implementation reports as well as the scarcity of disaggregated data, compromise the ability to monitor results and adjust policies effectively.</li> </ul>



## Slovakia has a National Framework Strategy for Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction (updated 2020)

<b>Essential elements</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Slovakia's National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAPS) and Local Action Plans for Social Inclusion (LAPS) define poverty not only as a lack of income but as a multi-dimensional phenomenon involving limited access to resources necessary for living a dignified life. This includes material deprivation, low work intensity, and at-risk-of-poverty income levels, in line with the EU's AROPE (At Risk of Poverty or Social Exclusion) indicators. The strategy views poverty as both a cause and consequence of social exclusion, placing strong emphasis on long-term structural issues like education inequality, housing segregation, and unemployment.</li> <li>2. Slovakia's strategy acknowledges the intersecting forms of disadvantage experienced by specific groups, such as women, children, Roma communities, persons with disabilities, the elderly, and single-parent families. It emphasizes targeted interventions that address structural discrimination and systemic barriers.</li> <li>3. The Slovak anti-poverty strategy addresses poverty through comprehensive, cross-sectoral policies, with an emphasis on both preventive and corrective measures.</li> </ol>
<b>Extended elements</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Many small municipalities lack expertise or staff to design and deliver effective LAPS. Some local plans are highly specific and needs-based, others are vague or formalistic.</li> <li>5. Slovakia's anti-poverty policies are closely aligned with international commitments and EU strategic goals including: EPSR, SDGs, EU Roma Strategic Framework 2020–2030 and EU Child Guarantee.</li> <li>6. The Slovak Anti-Poverty Network (SAPN) was involved in the drafting and monitoring processes of Slovakia's NAPS and to a limited extent LAPS.</li> </ol>
<b>Processes</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. The NAPS is designed to run in multiannual cycles of around 7 years, linked to EU funding periods. LAPS have cycles of about 3 to 5 years.</li> <li>8. The implementation of Slovakia's NAPS/LAPS has included formal monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, but these have been uneven in practice. National strategies typically set out planned annual or biennial reporting requirements.</li> </ol>
<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of data across the board and specifically underreporting in Roma settlements.</li> <li>- Capacity gaps in municipalities: many small municipalities lack expertise or staff to design and deliver effective LAPS. Some local plans are highly specific and needs-based, others are vague or formalistic.</li> <li>- Horizontal coordination between sectors and vertical coordination with municipalities can be fragmented even though there is national guidance.</li> <li>- The direct participation of people experiencing poverty in policymaking and monitoring is minimal, particularly at the national level.</li> <li>- Many measures are described in general terms, without clear timeframes, targets, or guaranteed funding.</li> <li>- The heavy reliance on EU funds can create vulnerability and that co-financing is often insufficient, limiting the scale and sustainability of services.</li> </ul>

**Spain has National Strategy for the Prevention and Fight Against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2024-2030**



<p><b>Essential elements</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Definitions of poverty and social exclusion (i.e. the AROPE, the Severe Material and Social Deprivation rate, and the Low Employment Intensity).</li> <li>2. Specific attention to marginalised communities and intersection in the sense that there is some integration with other strategies for example on gender and women.</li> <li>3. The strategy includes 4 strategic challenges, of which 3 are vertical and 1 is transversal. A multidimensional approach linked to - National Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan, National Housing Plan, Energy Poverty Strategy, Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma people, National Homelessness Strategy.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Extended elements</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Aligned with international commitments and EU strategic goals including: European Pillar of Social Rights, European Semester, Structural and Investment Funds, Sustainable Development Goals.</li> <li>5. Regional, LAPs and Specific attention to urban, rural, and remote areas, geographical cohesion.</li> <li>6. Participation of CSO and social partners. It is not clear if there is involvement with PeP.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Processes</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Some indicators of poverty, social exclusion, and inequality</li> <li>8. 12 specific objectives and 54 action lines.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Challenges</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Considering the characteristics of the current political cycle in Spain, it's unclear if the strategy will end up being synchronised with elections.</li> <li>- No information on the long-term guarantee of continuation of NAPS and LAPS after this policy cycle.</li> </ul>

# POVERTY IS ADDRESSED THROUGH LIMITED STRATEGIES, PLANS AND ROADMAPS

(Belgium, Czech Republic, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Sweden)



## Belgium has a federal Plan against Poverty and Inequality (2022)

<b>Essential elements</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Definition of poverty as a network of social exclusions that extends across multiple areas of individual and collective existence. The Act of 9 October, 2023 further elaborates on Article 23 of the Belgian Constitution, which guarantees the right to a dignified life. The definition of poverty has been refined by scientific research over decades.</li> <li>2. A multidimensional and structural approach including social security, social integration, the fight against debt, consumer protection, employment, health, justice, migration, taxation, climate, energy, etc.</li> </ol>
<b>Extended elements</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Aligned to the European poverty target of the European Pillar of Social Rights.</li> <li>4. Poverty plans are adopted at both federal, regional level and level several cities and municipalities are taking the initiative to draw up local plans to combat poverty. The Interministerial Conference is responsible for coordinating between the different levels.</li> <li>5. BAPN in its capacity as representative of people living in poverty, were given more say in the development, monitoring and evaluation of the plan.</li> </ol>
<b>Processes</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Each measure in the Belgium federal plan must include a quantitative target and budget estimate, as well as the deadline for implementation of the measure. Where necessary, the gender and disability dimensions must be specified for each measure.</li> <li>7. Plans for an independent evaluation of the plan by the Federal Planning Bureau, as provided for in the 2023 Act.</li> </ol>
<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The new policy of the Arizona government, the federal government that has been officially in office since 3 February 2025, presents itself as a reformist government that wants to tackle major challenges.</li> <li>- Lacks an intersectional approach and planned evaluations.</li> </ul>

**Czech Republic has a Social Inclusion Strategy 2021–2030**



<b>Essential elements</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Social work as a basic tool for the social inclusion of individuals and sets goals related to debt and over-indebtedness, access to employment, social services, family support, access to education and housing, health care, ensuring decent living conditions, safety and public order, the prevention and reduction of harm related to substance use and addictive behavior.</li> <li>2. Cooperation with other ministries, the Office of the Government, and other actors, such as non-governmental non-profit organisations.</li> </ol>
<b>Extended elements</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. The strategy declares compliance with the European Pillar of Social Rights and Sustainable Development Goals.</li> <li>4. Strategic frameworks or action plans are developed and implemented locally.</li> <li>5. Participatory budgeting, funds for community activities and other participatory activities.</li> </ol>
<b>Processes</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Strategy performance indicators.</li> <li>7. Annual reports on the implementation.</li> </ol>
<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There is no clear definition of poverty or poverty reduction initiatives as the focus is on social inclusion.</li> <li>- No mention of intersectionality and does not 'account' for ethnicity.</li> <li>- The approach to planning varies greatly between regions and municipalities.</li> </ul>

**Finland has a National action plan for Reducing Poverty and Social Exclusion by 2030**



<b>Essential elements</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Finland's national anti-poverty action plan is defined by its social security approach and is limited to the reconciliation of work and social security in changing life situations. The government programs are interconnected.</li> </ol>
<b>Extended elements</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Local Anti-Poverty Strategies (LAPS) are locally developed and implemented frameworks or action plans aimed at reducing and ultimately eradicating poverty within a specific geographic area, such as a city, municipality, or region.</li> <li>3. Stakeholders and non-governmental organisations were consulted during the preparation of the action plan.</li> </ol>
<b>Processes</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Finland has set itself the target of reducing the number of people living at risk of poverty, one third of these people should be children and has indicators for measuring poverty.</li> <li>5. Mid-term review and assessment.</li> </ol>
<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The current government's proposed amendment to the law on income support (the planned tightening of basic income support) is in great conflict with Finland's international commitments to reduce poverty.</li> <li>- Limited consultation has been held with service users and people who have experienced poverty.</li> <li>- No mention of intersectionality.</li> </ul>



## Ireland has a Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025

<b>Essential elements</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The present Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025, adopted a different approach than its predecessors.</li> <li>2. The emphasis was placed on acknowledging sectoral plans already in place in areas such as education, health, children, childcare, community development and housing, and strategies for specific groups in society, which they stated all aimed to put social inclusion at the core of public policy across all government departments and services.</li> </ol>
<b>Extended elements</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. UN Sustainable Development Goals and the European Pillar of Social Rights in November 2017.</li> </ol>
<b>Processes</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. The present anti-poverty strategy, the Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025, again set the target to “reduce consistent poverty to 2% or less” and added a target “to make Ireland one of the most socially inclusive countries in the EU”.<sup>32</sup> This is the ambition to be achieved by 2025.</li> <li>5. Targets covering: Poverty (including child poverty); deprivation; income distribution, housing, health, early learning and care, social Participation/Active Citizenship</li> <li>6. Process indicators and evaluation.</li> </ol>
<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ireland’s current Roadmap highlights how documents can fall short of tackling the root cause and in some instances miss the key indicators for success.</li> </ul>



**Italy has a National Social Plan 2024-26 and the National Plan for Combating Poverty ref: The Third National Poverty Alleviation Plan, 2024-2026**

<b>Essential elements</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Italian Constitution places social rights at the center of the legal system: Articles 2 and 3 aim to remove economic and social obstacles that limit human freedom and dignity, ensuring the full development of the individual.</li> <li>2. The holistic approach is used in two types of macro-actions: Inclusion Allowance and Housing First. For the implementation of the Inclusion Allowance, institutional service networks are essential for a holistic approach to managing take-ups. Institutional networks refer to those within the territorial governance system, formed by public actors (primarily local authorities) responsible for providing services to citizens.</li> </ol>
<b>Extended elements</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. In Italy, the connection between NAPs and LAPS exists because the Essential Levels of Performance (LEPS/Social Standards) have been defined and are active in all Local Social Units. The Plan highlights the role of the Regions.</li> </ol>
<b>Processes</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. The resources of the Poverty Fund budget and (516,734,439.08 euros for 2024, 492,781,920.64 euros for 2025 and 437,000. 000.00 euros for 2026) will be used in accordance with the articulation of the Plan's priorities as updated in light of current regulatory interventions that have concerns.</li> <li>5. Measuring the impact of the National Plan (PN) for Inclusion and the Fight against Poverty 2021-2027, with over €4 billion in resources, is based on qualitative and quantitative assessments, monitoring absolute poverty indicators and the effectiveness of the LEPS (Educational and Social Impact Assessment).</li> <li>6. The monitoring program, managed by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policies, analyzes the intensity of poverty (stable at 18.7% in 2021) and the effectiveness of local services.</li> </ol>
<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The participation of people experiencing poverty, this is not envisaged in the Plans</li> <li>- Limited duration - three-year plans.</li> </ul>

**The National Action Plan on Poverty and Debt**

<b>Essential elements</b>	<p>Given recent political developments, the status of the Plan is unclear. What was proposed had focused on debt, defense and disability, energy inequality, addressing the working poor (i.e. minimum income policy). There are poverty reduction measures such as the plan to abolish zero-hours contracts, provide faster security for temporary agency work, and eliminate revolving door contracts. There is a local poverty policy. Ministries and municipalities consulted with experts by experience, including children and young people in the development of plans.</p>
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## Poland has a National Program for Counteracting Poverty and Social Exclusion. Update 2021–2027



<b>Essential elements</b>	1. Comprehensive policy framework that functions within a broader national strategic architecture. Its primary purpose is to coordinate action and operationalise the high-level social objectives of Poland's key national development strategies.
<b>Extended elements</b>	<p>2. Aligned with major European and international social rights frameworks but systemic choice to avoid international instruments that would legally compel a more inclusive approach.</p> <p>3. 2,400 independent municipalities and counties are legally obligated to develop their own Local Strategies for Solving Social Problems (LAPS).</p>
<b>Processes</b>	4. By aligning its 2021–2027 operational cycle with the European Union's seven-year budget framework rather than Poland's four-year national election cycle, the NAPS is insulated from short-term political shifts.
<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Poland is failing its commitment under the European Pillar of Social Rights to lift 300,000 children out of poverty by 2030; with half the decade gone, only 6% of this target has been met, leaving a gap of 281,000 children.</li> <li>- Lack of meaningful participation from civil society and a complete absence of people with lived experience of poverty (PeP).</li> <li>- Lack of intersectional analysis, approach and understanding of marginalised groups needs.</li> <li>- a critical gap in the employment-related actions is the limited attention given to in-work poverty.</li> <li>- Reluctance to commit to binding frameworks is the strategy's most profound limitation from a social rights perspective.</li> <li>- This lack of a functioning evaluation mechanism means that stakeholder involvement in the process has been, by extension, non-existent.</li> </ul>

# POVERTY IS ADDRESSED THROUGH A BROAD WELFARE AND SOCIAL INCLUSION APPROACH

(Austria, France, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Serbia, Sweden)



## Austria has no comprehensive national anti-poverty strategy

Currently, Austria does not have a formally designated comprehensive national anti-poverty strategy (NAPS), nor have they agreed upon minimum standards regarding the design or content of such strategies. Austria's ongoing difficulties to establish a comprehensive and coherent national anti-poverty strategy point to fundamental shortcomings: although poverty is a critical social, health, and education policy challenge, it has not been given sufficient political priority. The Ministry of Social Affairs - with the support of civil society organisations active in the social field - has pursued its agenda within the limited scope available.



## France has no comprehensive national anti-poverty strategy

**The Pacte des Solidarités 2023–2027**

Pacte des solidarités is structured around four main pillars: preventing poverty and combating inequality from early childhood; expanding access to employment for all; combating severe exclusion through access to rights; building a socially just ecological transition. The document only refers to certain specific groups (vulnerable women, single-parent families, disconnected youth), without establishing an analytical framework that combines multiple dimensions of vulnerability simultaneously. In the official Pacte des Solidarités document, the government does not provide an operational or quantified definition of poverty. It does not mention any monetary threshold, statistical indicator, or formal qualitative definition. The term appears to be used in an implicit and commonly understood way, which weakens the conceptual clarity of the text.

The Pacte des Solidarités 2023–2027 is better described as a broad welfare and social inclusion framework, structured around four pillars, but lacking key elements of a NAPS: no operational or quantified definition of poverty, no clear national targets or long-term budgetary guarantees, no independent evaluation framework, and no institutionalised participation of CSOs and people experiencing poverty.



### Latvia has no comprehensive national anti-poverty strategy

Latvia still has not developed a National or Local Anti-Poverty Strategy or Plan (NAPS and LAPS) and lacks a unified, targeted and sustainable approach to poverty reduction. There is no document outlining specific goals, objectives, deadlines, and budget, that is specifically targeted at reducing poverty.



### Lithuania has no comprehensive national anti-poverty strategy

#### National Progress Plan (NPP) 2021–2030

Poverty reduction goals are embedded in Lithuania's National Progress Plan (NPP) 2021–2030, the country's main strategic planning document outlining key development priorities. The NPP includes commitments to reducing social exclusion, promoting wellbeing, and strengthening societal resilience, and its development involved a high degree of stakeholder consultation. However, as noted in the Lithuanian Poverty Watch, poverty reduction is treated as a cross-cutting issue rather than a central strategic priority, resulting in a policy response that does not match the scale or persistence of poverty in Lithuania.

The original NPP set relatively ambitious poverty and inequality targets, including reducing the at-risk-of-poverty rate to 14% by 2030. These ambitions were significantly weakened in the 2024 mid-term revision, which removed or diluted key targets and revised others upwards, raising the poverty target to 16%. The revision also reduced the number and quality of social indicators: several areas, including income inequality, energy poverty, and social housing, are no longer supported by measurable targets, while many remaining indicators are merely directional. The removal of horizontal indicators, such as the Gender Equality Index, has further limited the Plan's capacity to address poverty as a multidimensional issue.

Although civil society organisations were consulted during the NPP's preparation, people experiencing poverty were not systematically involved, and no institutionalised mechanisms exist to ensure their meaningful participation in planning, implementation, or monitoring. In the absence of strong targets, clear accountability, adequate funding, and robust monitoring, the NPP currently lacks the operational strength required to function as an effective national anti-poverty framework.



**Norway has no comprehensive national anti-poverty strategy**

Social security, educational grants, labour market initiatives, healthcare, and other services. While many measures work well, there is no single holistic and comprehensive approach at national level. There are local broader, more integrated cross-sectoral poverty action plans. Under the obligations to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Norway submits an annual parliamentary report on status and progress.



**Serbia has no comprehensive national anti-poverty strategy**

At present, the Republic of Serbia does not have an active National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS), nor have any local governments adopted Local Anti-Poverty Strategies (LAPS). There are no official announcements or concrete plans to develop a new NAPS, although some poverty-reduction measures are included within existing sectoral strategies.



**Sweden has a Strategy for Social Inclusion 2018-2030**

<p><b>Essential elements</b></p>	<p>Sweden, lauded for its robust universal welfare state, currently operates without a dedicated National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) or Local Anti-Poverty Strategy (LAPS). Efforts to combat poverty and social exclusion are integrated within broader social inclusion policies, such as the "Strategy for Social Inclusion 2018-2030," and its comprehensive social protection system.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. While this integrated and multidimensional approach aims for universality, emerging data indicates persistent and, in some areas, increasing rates of relative poverty, particularly among vulnerable groups such as first-generation immigrants, single parents, and pensioners.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Extended elements</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. A notable aspect of Sweden's current approach is its significant focus on international development cooperation in combating poverty. Aligned with EPSR, SDG's as well as substantial financial contributions to the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).</li> <li>3. The involvement of people experiencing poverty in Sweden largely relies on indirect mechanisms and the efforts of civil society.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Processes</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. There are key poverty and social exclusion indicators in Sweden (2024-2025)</li> </ol>
<p><b>Challenges</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of intersectional approach and the discussion of Sweden's social welfare system reveals a complex situation where the "universal" promise of the welfare state is being challenged for certain vulnerable groups.</li> <li>- No explicit budget allocation for anti-poverty strategy.</li> </ul>



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