12 November 2020

Following the Council Conclusions on Minimum Income, it is time for the European Commission to respond with courage and propose a legally binding EU framework for Minimum Income

Before the coronavirus crisis, one in five people were at risk of poverty and social exclusion. That is nearly 110 million people without enough money to make ends meet and to live a dignified life. This failure to meet the Europe 2020 poverty target threatens the credibility of Social Europe, with millions more expected to be dragged into poverty as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. **This is no time for business as usual.**

One of the best ways to prevent people being dragged into poverty is to build individual and societal resilience – and **strong social protection systems** are the cornerstone of such resilience. In this context, **adequate, accessible and enabling Minimum Income schemes have an essential role to play as an ultimate safety net**. The EU Council recognised this on 12 October, issuing Council Conclusions on "Strengthening Minimum Income Protection to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion in the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond". These Conclusions invite the Commission to **"initiate an update of the Union framework to effectively support and complement the policies of Member States on national minimum income protection".**

This invitation is a recognition that EU soft policy mechanisms currently in place have had limited impact, failing to provide incomes at an adequate level to respect the rights and dignity of millions of people. Only two Member States currently pay benefits close to the poverty threshold, while schemes in many countries barely reach 20% of the threshold. **This is no time for business as usual.**

We add our voices to the Council's invitation. We know from our work that the lack of **adequate, accessible and enabling minimum incomes is a key priority for people experiencing poverty throughout Europe**. These Council Conclusions are the long-awaited springboard to move forward on a **legally binding Framework Directive on Minimum Income,** which would guarantee everyone's right to an adequate minimum income and enable their full participation in society across the whole life span. **We call on the European Commission, and specifically Commissioner Schmit, to respond to the Conclusions by making an ambitious proposal for an EU Framework Directive to guarantee an adequate, accessible, and enabling Minimum Income.**

This proposal would be one of the key EU initiatives in the upcoming Action Plan to implement the **European Pillar of Social Rights**, due to be launched early in 2021. It is a proposal which could **reunite the EU Member States around a shared political and moral commitment to end poverty and social exclusion,** to a Europe that promotes decent living, decent working conditions and social rights. It is a proposal which could help restore faith in the European project. It is a proposal which is legally and politically feasible, building on existing EU competencies in the social and cohesion policy fields, fully respecting principles of subsidiarity and proportionality and thus protecting national competencies.

The EU must find ways to ensure that the Social Pillar has a real impact on people's lives. **A Framework Directive on Minimum Income would be remembered as the new Commission's flagship initiative that** guarantees a right to an adequate income to the people in the poorest and most vulnerable situations, demonstrating to all that the EU delivers on its promises and prioritises protecting people as well as planet, in its commitment to a social, inclusive and sustainable recovery.

Further Resources

Caritas Europa: Position on Minimum Income

EAPN: Position paper on minimum income (summary), Expert study on a binding EU framework for adequate national minimum income schemes, Op Ed on Minimum Income, 2020 national Poverty Watch reports

ETUC: Resolution on Minimum Income, Discussion paper on Minimum Income, Action programme for welfare and social protection

Eurodiaconia: Adequate Minimum Income – Recommendations For An Active Inclusion Strategy

Social Platform: Position on a Framework Directive for Minimum Income

Supported by the following European level civil society organisations

No	Organisation
1	AGE Platform Europe
2	ATD Forth World
3	CEDAG
4	Civil Society Europe
5	ECDN European Consumer Debt Network
6	EFFAT
7	Emmaus Europe
8	ENSIE
9	ESAN
10	European Disability Forum
11	European Federation of Older Persons, EURAG
12	European federation of public service unions (EPSU)
13	European Network Against Racism (ENAR)
14	European Roma Grassroots Organisations (ERGO) Network
15	European Womens Lobby
16	European Youth Forum
17	Friends of the Earth Europe
18	International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW Europe)
19	Make Mothers Matter
20	Mental Health Europe
21	Observatoire social européen (OSE)
22	SMES-Europa Mental Health and Social Exclusion
23	SOLIDAR
24	The Good Lobby
25	The Salvation Army, Europe
26	Transgender Europe
27	Volonteurope
28	WeMove Europe

Supported by the following Members of the European Parliament

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2	Dennis Radtke	EPP
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4	Bricmont Saskia	Greens
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7	Claude Gruffat	Greens
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33	Marisa Matias	GUE
34	Agnes Jongerius	S+D
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36	Brando Benifei	S+D
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39	Estrella Dura Ferrandis	S+D
40	Gabriele Bischoff	S+D
41	Juozas Olekas	S+D
42	Manuel Pizarro	S+D
43	Marc Angel	S+D
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45	Pierfrancesco Majorino	S+D

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