

# Implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights in Latvia: Governmental Position vs. NGO commitment



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Project No. 1020370

Strengthening the NGO network – a tool for social security

Rzeszow, Poland

February 23, 2022

# Outline of Presentation

- 1. An overview of EPSR.
- 2. Position of Latvian Ministry of Welfare.
- 3. Overview of input of EAPN - Latvia member organizations to strengthen and implement principles of EPSR.
- 4. Next steps to strengthen implementation of EPSR in Latvia.

# EPSR – general facts

- Officially adopted on 17 November 2017 in Gothenburg, Sweden, by the Council of EU
- Endorsed by Council of EU on 14-15 December 2017
- Strengthens the philosophy that Europe must be more social and individual – focused
- An instrument to assess progress in social area in the EU Member States – Social Scoreboard
- Assessment of the progress reflected in Country Specific Recommendations
- Weakness of EPSR – it is mainly declarative and thus not legally binding for EU Member States
- Unfortunately Latvia by years shows insufficient progress on implementation of CSRs

# European Pillar of Social Rights - outline

- Preamble declaring political will of the European Union to contribute to strengthening more social Europe
- 3 chapters, 20 principles
  - Equal opportunities and access to the labour market
  - Fair working conditions
  - Social protection and inclusion
- **Weakness of the EPSR: though of super importance, there is too much focus on employment issues**

# EPSR: Social Protection and Inclusion

- Childcare and support to children
- Social protection
- Unemployment benefits
- Minimum Income
- Old age income and pensions
- Health care
- Inclusion of people with disabilities
- Long - term care
- Housing and assistance for the homeless
- Access to essential services

**KEY WORDS: ADEQUACY AND HUMAN DIGNITY**

# Action plan of the EU for implementation of EPSR

- On March 4, 2021 European Commission presented a target to create the goal of building a strong social Europe that focuses on the jobs and skills needed for the future and paves the way for a fair, inclusive and sustainable socio-economic recovery.
- EPSR Action Plan sets out concrete actions to further implement the principles of the EPSR, a joint effort of the Member States and the EU, with the active involvement of the social partners and civil society. It also proposes headline targets for employment, skills and social protection in the EU by 2030.

# Action plan of the EU for implementation of EPSR

The Action Plan sets out three key EU goals to be achieved by 2030:  
at least 78% of the population aged 20-64 should be employed;

- at least 60% of adults should take part in training each year;
- the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion should be reduced by at least 15 million

**AND AGAIN – TOO MUCH FOCUS ON EMPLOYMENT!!!**

- **MORE QUALITY JOBS NEEDED!**



# Position of the Ministry of Welfare – weaknesses

- Insufficient actions from the Ministry of Welfare, the implementation process is too slow
- No holistic approach on implementation of the EPSR due to lack of unified social policy strategies; approach of the MW too formal and fragmented, like “fire fighting”
- Work on challenges is a **political will**, unfortunately limited to governmental budget which subsequently leads to ill-considered decisions (eg. social protection and taxation for self-employed in 2021)
- Lack of understanding what “adequacy” means, especially regarding Minimum Income and adequate pensions. Some activity started after decisions of the Constitutional Court in June / July 2021
- Bureaucratic obstacles in decision making, there should be immediate actions to improve people’s social and living conditions
- Good news – Ministry of Welfare can not ignore declared positions stated in the EPSR

# Input of EAPN - Latvia member organizations to strengthen and implement the principles of EPSR

- EAPN-Latvia consists of 28 full member organizations and 9 associated members
- **EAPN-Latvia itself** is an umbrella advocacy organization in social inclusion and fight against poverty
- Part of the member organizations are advocacy NGOs, other are service providers, and some are a mixture of both
- EAPN-Latvia member organizations majorly work in the areas of social inclusion and education of persons with special needs, organizations of seniors, youth organizations (eg. “Aicinājums Tev”, Dobeles Association for People with Special Needs, “Sartorius” and others, People’s Aid Fund, Latvia’s Children Forum, and many many others)
- **One of the most important programs implemented in the area of social inclusion with the support of EAPN-Europe is the annual PeP (People Experiencing Poverty) program, which provides direct link between vulnerable social groups and decision makers both at national and European levels**

# Strengthening of NGO network – a tool for social security – next steps

- In Latvia there are plenty of proactive organizations working on social inclusion and poverty reduction
- Unfortunately quite often they show initiative on activities, for example aid for the most deprived persons in crises or education which should be responsibility of government or municipalities
- Distribution of funding from government and municipalities – often irregular, there must be long-term permanent funding for social NGOs, to ensure sustainability (eg. employment programs for unemployed persons with disabilities, youth employment etc. - often they are terminated without any continuation).

# NGO input – good practices

- **Association “Aicinājums Tev” (“A Call for You”)**

- Aicinājums Tev is a non-governmental organization which unites people with different kind of disability, the family members, friends and supporters.
- The activities of the association are aimed at the socially vulnerable groups of people (people with disabilities, young people and seniors) and their family improving the quality of social, information, education and employment
- The Association offers a large spectrum of activities, including social services, employment, education, leisure activities and voluntary work.



# NGO input – good practices

## People's Aid Foundation

The Foundation protects and supports deprived persons and families by extending recurrent or emergency financial and other assistance and support, **including to those in temporary difficulties.**

The Foundation provides employment and production, service provision opportunities for an individual or family in order to promote and support their professional or physical rehabilitation

Moreover, the Foundation carries out scientific and field research related to the Foundation and its fields of activity.



Thank you for your attention!

Any questions?