

POLITICAL DECLARATION GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2018

Vienna, 29 Sept 2018

MAKE EUROPE POVERTY FREE

The General Assembly of the [European Anti-Poverty Network](#) met in Vienna today, just one week after the [Post-growth Conference](#) at the European Parliament ~~and~~, two weeks after [President Juncker's State of the Union address](#). ~~The meeting took place a time of rapid political and social change, with the coming European Parliamentary Elections, a new President of the Commission, a new commission and the appointment of a new president of the European Council in 2019. Other factors such as rising far right populism, climate change, and the UK's departure from the EU - which is symptomatic of disaffection with political institutions and the prevailing economic model - also provide significant and shifting challenges, eight months before the European Parliamentary Elections and (potentially) the new EU budget, and just over a year before the choice of the new President of the Commission (and of a new Commission), as well as the appointment of a new president of the European Council. 2019 will be a year of political changes.~~

~~At this time of change,~~ we, delegates of EAPN members from **31 national networks** and **13 European Organisations**, representing thousands of NGOs throughout Europe, believe that the eradication of poverty and social exclusion is a public good, and is beneficial for everyone in society. The fact that ~~already nearly 120 million EU citizens~~ **Europeans** (including 21.6 million children) ~~—, meaning almost 25% of the EU population and, not even counting people in other countries of Europe -~~ are **still living at risk of poverty or social exclusion**, represents a **failure of our political and economic systems**, which need a radical reprogramming in order to tackle poverty and social exclusion.

We know that **change is possible**, at local, national and European levels. We see important political commitments to tackling poverty, via the Europe 2020 targets, via the Sustainable Development Goals, ~~and~~ via the Social Pillar - although these are not visible enough at national and local levels. What we need most in 2019 is the ~~transformativemeaningful~~ **implementation of these high-level political commitments**, to ensure meaningful changes to the lives of people experiencing poverty on the ground.

Vera Hinterdorfer, EAPN Die Armutskonferenz - EAPN Austria activist with direct experience of poverty:

"When I first heard about the Pillar of Social Rights, I thought 'Great, another letter of intent'. But I was wrong; if we don't believe in it, why would anyone else? How would we be able to motivate people? Together we have the power to change things, we have to use it! #EUPovertyFree. Then that's what we have."

Today, we call upon all political parties and all candidates for the European Parliamentary Elections to commit to securing a **Social and Sustainable Europe, a Europe free of Poverty**, characterised by **equal rights, opportunities and social cohesion**. This means a political commitment to **make the "EU Poverty Free"** - which should be included in all electoral programs. This will guarantee the continuation of high-level political commitment to the eradication of poverty. **Making Europe Poverty Free** is a political choice which recognises citizens' rights, ensures access to those rights, and reflects the solidarity felt by **ordinary** Europeans.

Concretely, this would mean political parties and candidates to the European Parliamentary Elections:

1. Recognising the limits of the EU's development model on social cohesion (~~85 million people at risk of Poverty in 2008~~), and the **negative impact of 10 years of austerity, 'trickle down' economics**, and decades of **unbridled relentless pursuit of economic growth on our societies**, ~~and the need to reprogramme our economic and political system to favour at the expense of people and the environment, over business and growth at any cost:~~
 - a. European macroeconomic policies must be reoriented to reduce inequality, ensure a more even redistribution of resources throughout society, and **guarantee promote wellbeing**
 - b. In-work poverty must be recognised as a major challenge to society ~~and, with a political commitment is needed for~~ the creation of **quality jobs and inclusive labour markets**
 - c. The Stability and Growth Pact must be redesigned as the **Stability and Wellbeing Pact**.
2. Ensuring all European countries have **strong social protection systems**, including **Decent Minimum Income schemes** and appropriate living wage legislation, ~~in place. A good way to make this a reality is for the EU to adopt a Minimum Income Framework Directive, guaranteeing income support for everybody who needs it, for as long as they need it, enough to live a life in dignity and fully participate in society, adapted to the cost of living in every European country, so that no one lacks the basic means for a decent life.~~
3. Ensuring that the **next EU budget 'empowers and protects' the 25% of Europeans living at risk of poverty and social exclusion** ~~rather than our security, borders and defence industries. Concretely, this means prioritising the fight against poverty and social exclusion, rather than cutting cohesion funds to pay for a 22-fold increase to the defence budget (now at 13 billion euros), security (40% increase) and large increases to border management, funding 10.000 border guards.~~
4. Ensuring **meaningful space for the participation of civil society and of people experiencing poverty** in national and European processes which impact on poverty and social exclusion.
5. Respecting **human rights and equal opportunities legislation** in all electoral programs and future actions, as required by European and international treaties. ~~All European Member States are bound to comply with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and, endowed with reason and conscience, must behave fraternally with each other." This means that 'hate speech' and confrontation with those of non-EU origin, immigrants and refugees promoted by governments and politicians must cease immediately.~~
6. Recognising that **European economic development must not sustain, generate or promote conflicts, poverty and pollution elsewhere**. ~~Eradicating poverty in Europe depends on progress on fighting poverty in other parts of the world. EAPN is committed to~~

~~working with the European leaders to eradicate poverty in Europe and achieve a socially cohesive society, but we also promote peace, well-being and sustainability in the rest of the world. Europe must embrace the 2030 Agenda as the only way to build a better world for us and future generations.~~

Sergio Aires, EAPN President, said:

'We are committed to being the change that we need. We know that to truly eradicate poverty, we need a stronger anti-poverty movement in Europe, and throughout the world. Today, we reaffirm our commitment to strengthening the anti-poverty movement, reinforcing our collective beliefs and working to truly become a social movement of, with and for people experiencing poverty. We invite all anti-poverty organisations and activists to [join our movement!](#) Together, we are stronger.'

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