



Riga, 18 September 2020

**To: Mrs. Ramona Petravica,
Minister of Welfare of the Republic of Latvia**

Dear Mrs. Petravica,

Re: EAPN-Latvia calls your government to support the Council Conclusions on Minimum Income Protection

We are writing to you as part of the [European Anti-Poverty Network](#) (EAPN), the largest platform of anti-poverty organisations in Europe, representing more than 6,000 organisations across 32 countries, working with and for people with direct experience of poverty. With this letter **we ask you and your government to support an agreement on [Council Conclusions on Strengthening Minimum Income Protection to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion in the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond](#)** which will help to make progress with an effective fight against poverty and social exclusion and to ensure the right to adequate minimum income for all in Europe. **EAPN strongly believes that an ambitious EU framework is necessary to guarantee this progress for all and would encourage you to back these conclusions and a call for EU action.**

In 2018 still about 110 million people were at risk of poverty and social exclusion in the EU. Based on these data the poverty reduction objective of the Europe 2020 Strategy would have been failed by about 12 million. **The COVID-19 pandemic has and will put millions of people's jobs and income at risk.** It has clearly shown the strong links between low income and various forms of vulnerability¹. **For the near future the risk of falling into poverty is likely to significantly increase. Strong and decisive action at different levels is thus needed!**

Coordinated by EAPN Europe and in close exchange with the other national networks of EAPN and our partner organisations at national and EU-level **we are following with high interest and strong hope the ongoing exchange on these Council Conclusions.** We have analysed the [proposal made by the German EU Council Presidency in early July](#). Plans are to endorse them on 13 October. **We could identify several key points and helpful calls upon EU MS and the European Commission we ask your government to support:**

- Minimum income schemes constitute an integral part of national social protection systems. They help to guarantee a minimum standard of living and a decent life for all and enable people to fully participate in society. The Draft Council Conclusions highlights several **positive functions of minimum income schemes:** They serve as economic stabilisers and help combatting (income) inequality and social exclusion, alleviating poverty and ensuring a life in dignity for those in need. We also fully share the idea that **an EU framework to guide policies on minimum income would positively influence social and economic upwards convergence,** much expected by EU citizens!
- They refer to the **three main EU-level and international instruments to build further action on,** the Council Recommendation on common criteria concerning sufficient resources and social assistance in social protection systems (92/441/EEC), the Commission Recommendation on active inclusion of

¹ See also the [EAPN Report "The impact of Covid-19 on people experiencing poverty and vulnerability – Rebuilding Europe with a social heart"](#), issued in July 2020. It includes an Annex 2 with detailed information on many European countries.

people excluded from the labour market (2008/867/EC) and the ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation (2012, No. 202). **We fully support the call (cf. 19.) to the European Commission for any future EU-level initiative to build upon these instruments and to further develop them and to propose EU action.**

- The Draft Council Conclusions contain the **three key design parameters for minimum income schemes, namely access, adequacy, and their enabling character** (cf. 8.a.-c.)². Having accessible, adequate, and enabling minimum income schemes also for EAPN is a precondition to realise a rights-based approach for all those in need across their lifetime. In this context we also support an **EU monitoring and benchmarking framework** (cf. 22.) and the **use of the European Semester** for policy coordination through the Joint Employment Report and Country-Specific Recommendations if they aim to improve the effectiveness and coverage of minimum income protection (cf. 9.).
- They rightfully call on the EU MS for **making best use of the targeted support from the structural funds, notably the European Social Fund Plus** to promote social inclusion and tackle poverty (cf. 18.).
- The Draft Council Conclusions refers to the Action Plan for the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights³ building and asks both EU MS and EC to **commit themselves to addressing the remaining gaps in minimum income protection in combating poverty and social exclusion** (cf. 16.)
- They invite the EU MS to **“engage with relevant authorities, social partners and welfare associations in the development and implementation of respective schemes”** (cf. 13.). This call - **extended to also include people experiencing poverty and the organisations representing them** - was repeated by [EAPN, together with three key EU-level partner organisations](#), at the occasion of the [Workshop “Adequate, accessible & enabling minimum income schemes across Europe – The time for action is now!”](#) in the context of the German EU Council Presidency Conference “Our Social Europe” last week.

EAPN-Latvia welcomes this initiative taken by the German EU Council Presidency and the priority given to minimum income. **We would like to see the adoption by the EPSCO of Council Conclusions that promote national minimum income protection schemes in line with the above-mentioned recommendations. They should also strengthen the effective fight against poverty by means of national minimum income schemes** which are accessible, adequate, and enable beneficiaries’ social and labour market inclusion, support the call for EU Action and progress towards a **binding European framework which integrates the elements mentioned above.**

We strongly hope that we can count on your support to achieve this result. **We are ready and interested to also further exchange with you in a meeting or phone call** and are looking forward to receiving your reply.

Yours sincerely,

Laila Balga, Chairperson of the Board, EAPN Europe EXCO member

² For more information on the three design parameters of national minimum income schemes please see [“EAPN Position Paper on Adequate Income”](#) (May 2020) and [“EAPN Summary Document on Minimum Income”](#) (September 2020), but also the [Final Report of the EMIN 2 Project](#) (January 2018).

³ EAPN in June 2020 did a [reply/input into the EC consultation](#), with one focus on minimum income, you can read here.