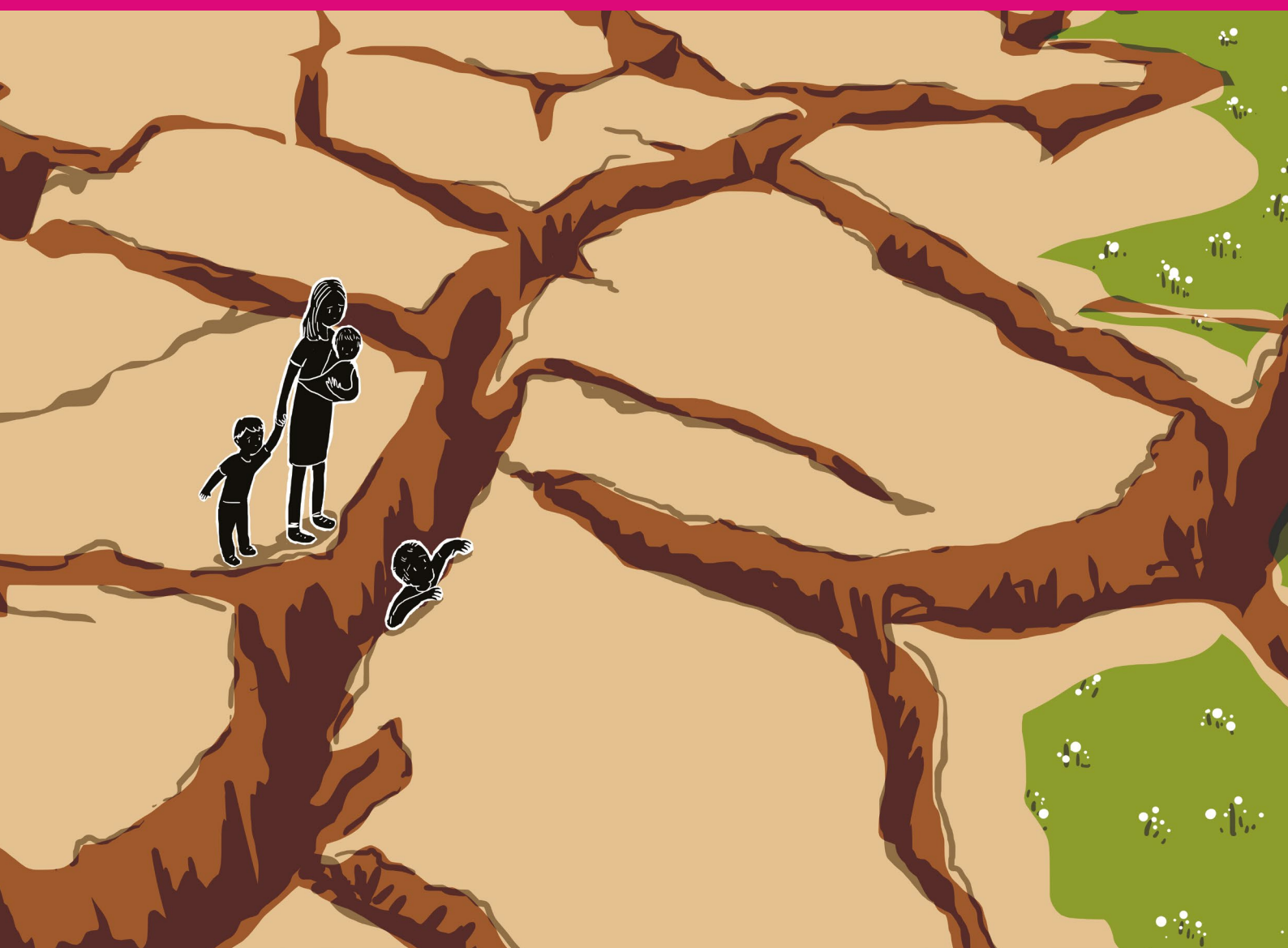


FALLING THROUGH THE CRACKS

EXPOSING INEQUALITIES IN THE EU AND BEYOND



This report is published by:

SDG Watch Europe, Make Europe Sustainable for All and Faces of Inequality

Coordinating organisations:

European Environmental Bureau, Global Call to Action Against Poverty, SOLIDAR and World Vision

Overall report coordination:

Ingo Ritz, Global Call to Action Against Poverty & Patrizia Heidegger and Sonia Goicoechea, European Environmental Bureau

Date of publication:

June 2019

Editors:

Sylvia Beales and George Gelber, BealesGelber Consult agency, and Tanja Gohlert, Global Call to Action Against Poverty

Graphic design:

Hearts & Minds - Brussels - www.heartsnminds.eu

Designer of cover illustration:

Gemma Bowcock, European Environmental Bureau

The views expressed in the different chapters are the sole responsibility of the authors.



This publication has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of "Make Europe Sustainable For All" project and can under no circumstances be taken as reflecting the position of the European Union.

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PREFACE

“As long as poverty, injustice and gross inequality persist in our world, none of us can truly rest.” Nelson Mandela

By Patrizia Heidegger, European Environmental Bureau | Ingo Ritz, Global Call to Action Against Poverty | Barbara Caracciolo, SOLIDAR | Jonathan Beger, World Vision

In September 2015, the international community adopted the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The 2030 Agenda’s transformative promise is to ‘leave no one behind’ with Goal 10, **“To reduce inequalities within and between countries”** at its core. The European Union and its Member States were a driving force in the process leading to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and its goals.

SDG 10 is being reviewed in 2019 in the UN-led process that monitors progress towards achieving the goals. As things stand now, Member States of the EU are not on track to achieve the goal to reduce inequalities by 2030.

Civil society has taken the opportunity to provide an analysis of the different dimensions of inequality that exist – and persist – across the European Union. We are using this moment to present concrete policy recommendations to the EU, its new political leadership and its Member States. Our purpose is to provide information and proposals to address inequalities effectively – a first and necessary step towards ensuring a just transition towards human well-being within the planet’s ecological limits, and to leave no one behind.

This report has been produced as part of the pan-European project *Make Europe Sustainable for All* in close collaboration with SDG Watch Europe, the European civil society coalition advocating for the complete implementation of the SDGs in and by the European Union and its Member States.

The report contains short summaries of issues of inequality in 15 different Member States. The summaries are based on fuller reports on inequalities in each country which are accessible via weblinks. Organisations from various sectors of civil society – including environmental, social and development organisations – wrote these reports according to their own perspectives and context in response to a shared set of guiding questions. The information provided by the national reports provided the basis for our analysis of main thematic concerns across the European Union.

The chapters on specific dimensions of inequality examine social protection, health, homelessness, debt and tax injustice, the environment, development cooperation and discrimination against particular groups including young people, older people, people with disabilities, women, and Roma communities. These chapters have been provided by European civil society networks with particular expertise on these issues.

While the report seeks to cover the most widespread forms of inequality in the European Union, and also looks at impacts made by the EU and Member States on other countries, the list of topics covered in the specific chapters is not exhaustive. The choice of thematic chapters reflects the expertise and capacity of the organisations within the SDG Watch Europe network that provided input for this report. These choices are not in any way meant to downplay the importance of other pressing concerns around inequality in the EU.

A note on data and sources: there are many and varied sources of data available on the SDGs in general and inequalities in particular. Even so, one finding of our report is that there are important gaps in the data that need to be filled to ensure inclusive measurement of steps to be taken to achieve SDG 10 and its targets. Member States use national data sets and indicators, while the EU and the UN use their own set of indicators, as do research institutions and civil society. We left it to the discretion of the authors to use the data and indicators of their choice. Different sections of the report, therefore, are not based on directly comparable data.

SDG Watch Europe and the partners of *Make Europe Sustainable for All* would like to thank all the organisations that contributed to this report. We also want to thank Sylvia Beales and George Gelber of BealesGelber Consult for editing and bringing together all the contributions to our report.

Let's continue to jointly fight inequalities in the EU and globally.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The European Union, the world's second largest economy and one of the wealthiest regions on the planet, prides itself on its egalitarianism and progressive social model. Despite this, different forms of inequalities are, at worst, widening and, at best, not narrowing nearly fast enough. If urgent action is not taken to address these gaping disparities, the EU is at risk of not meeting its commitments under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly the one related to narrowing inequalities within and between countries (SDG 10), by the 2030 deadline. It is high time for Europe to practise what it preaches to developing countries and get its own house in order.

'Falling through the cracks: Exposing Inequalities in the EU and beyond' shines a light on the impact of rising inequalities on people and planet. The report, which makes for sobering reading, maps the reality of various forms of inequality, both nationally and at the European level.

The report clearly shows that many forms of inequalities are on the rise, including economic inequality. As the gap widens between the highest and lowest earners, **20% of the EU population earns less than the poverty threshold in their country**, while the number of people living in income poverty in the EU has risen by over 8% since 2005.

'Falling through the cracks' charts visible interlinkages between economic inequalities, discrimination and social exclusion, both within and outside the EU, caused by unfair tax, investment and aid priorities. Discrimination attitudes and policies often prevent people lifting themselves out of poverty. Wealth inequality, measured by the accumulated assets owned by households, is greater than income inequality and ensures that privilege and advantage are passed down from generation to generation.

Inequalities within countries are often linked to the divide between rural and urban areas.

The country reports sound the alarm on the burgeoning ranks of the working poor as the rates in-work poverty climb due to the rise of precarious work and temporary contracts – having a job is not a guarantee for a decent life. **Social transfers are indispensable tools for reducing inequality and protecting the vulnerable, while social protection policies help countries recover from economic crises**, the report finds.

The power of prejudice

Gender pay gaps and the glass career ceiling persist across Europe. The **burden of unpaid household and caring responsibilities** falls disproportionately on women of all ages, often keeping them out of paid work. This places women at greater risk of poverty in later life as interrupted careers and part-time work erode their pension entitlements.

Discrimination is the core driver of the increasing poverty, inequality and disadvantage experienced by certain specific groups, including migrants, people with an immigrant background, the Roma minority and LGBTQI communities. Discrimination is also linked to unequal treatment of people based on age, ethnicity, disability, location, sexual orientation and gender. In addition, access to healthcare, education, quality housing and decent work for marginalised groups is seriously lacking. As the chapters on younger and older Europeans highlight, people face discrimination and exclusion from the workforce at both ends of the age spectrum.

The poverty ecosystem

Pollution and poor housing can be the product of inequalities and further exacerbate them. In some countries, air quality is far below the EU average and World Health Organisation guidelines. Poorer and more stigmatised groups, such as the Roma, are more likely to experience environmental inequality because they are forced to live close to busy roads and polluted areas, to burn wood for heating and to occupy substandard housing.

Homelessness, as well as the unaffordability and lack of availability of decent housing, are amongst the most challenging social policy issues facing Europe and are a visible manifestation of the failure of government policies. Tackling this requires both political will and specific financial instruments.

On the global level, despite the EU's commitment to help combat poverty and enhance development in its partner countries, **Europe's policies and actions sometimes widen inequalities.** This includes certain investments in developing countries, **the pursuit of advantageous trade deals, including arms sales, and aggressive tax planning for multinational companies, run counter to the objectives of the international development programmes of the EU.**

Moreover, EU development budgets are falling at a time when global needs are rising. Of the 15 countries featured in the report, **only Luxembourg's development assistance, at 0.98% of gross national income, meets the UN already low target of a minimum of 0.7% GNI.**

A call to action

The failures outlined above put at risk the EU's ability to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, of which the EU and its member states are signatories.

This is because tackling inequalities is not only a specific goal of the SDGs (SDG 10), but also because inequalities affect many of the other SDGs.

Ensuring that nobody is left behind and achieving this by the 2030 deadline requires robust and transformational policies.

Drawing on this wealth of evidence, the document presents specific policy recommendations to reverse the negative trends and to bolster positive ones. These include:

- Introducing a basic minimum income as a matter of priority.
- Ensuring equal pay for equal work for women and men.
- Getting more women into senior positions.
- The expansion of social transfer and social protection policies.
- Tougher standards reflecting human rights norms, to tackle discrimination based on age and disability, among other factors.
- Making investment and aid policies fairer to vulnerable populations in Europe and the rest of the world.
- Reforming taxation to reduce inequalities, to lower emissions, to encourage more sustainable lifestyles and to do no harm in third countries.
- Tackle discrimination through more robust legislation, such as the Equal Treatment Directive (proposed in 2008, but still not adopted by the Council).
- Bringing all EU laws and regulations in line with the provisions of the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CPRD).
- Creating greater coherence between the EU's international economic and development cooperation policies.

About this report

Eleven EU-wide networks highlighted key dimensions of inequality in thematic chapters on social protection, health, homelessness, gender, age, disability, youth, Roma, debt and tax injustice, the environment and environmental justice, and development cooperation.

This analysis and evidence is complemented by country-specific reports from 15 EU countries: France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Austria, Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovenia.

WHERE IS THE EU WITH FIGHTING INEQUALITY?

BY BARBARA CARACCILO AND ALISSA GHILS MENDOZA, SOLIDAR

With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015, the world's leaders – including all EU Member States – pledged to transform the current development model in such a way that poverty will be eliminated by 2030, “leaving no one behind” and respecting planetary boundaries.

Integral to the success of the 2030 Agenda is the fight against inequality. SDG 10 and its targets,¹ aim to ‘reduce inequality within and among countries’. The EU and its Member States have committed themselves to:

- Progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40% of the population at a rate higher than the national average (SDG 10.1);
- empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status (SDG 10.2);

- ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome (SDG 10.3);
- adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality (SDG 10.4).

In addition, the call to enhance policy coherence for sustainable development (SDG 17.14) requires the EU and its Member States to ensure that their policies neither contribute to the increase of inequality in Europe and elsewhere nor entrench its persistence.

In 2017, the EU reiterated its commitment to fight inequality through its development cooperation policy both with the adoption of the New European Consensus on Development,² and, in terms of social policy, with the adoption of the European Pillar of Social Rights³ (EPSR) at the 2017 Social Summit held in Gothenburg. Both policy frameworks have been supported by the European Parliament and the Council of the EU.

Walking the talk: is inequality being reduced?

Despite these global and regional commitments, the pace of progress on SDG 10 since 2015 has been partial and slow, both globally and at the European level. The EU itself has acknowledged that: “in 2017, income inequality in the EU Member States declined for the first time since the financial crisis. However, inequalities in earnings are still too large with a continued concentration of wealth at the top”.⁴

Inequality is multidimensional. Many Europeans experience unequal access to quality education, health care, employment, housing and social protection. Eurostat⁵ calculates that there are 112.8 million people living in households at risk of poverty and social exclusion, acknowledging that in-work poverty is a critical problem in many Member States; that extreme forms of poverty persist; that there is increasing homelessness in almost all EU Member States; and that young people are the age group at the highest risk of poverty or social exclusion.⁶

The 2017 OECD report *Understanding the socio-economic divide in Europe*⁷ identified “persisting or increasing forms of inequality – income inequality, unequal distribution of wealth, persisting gender pay gap and disadvantages for women in terms of the type of jobs and occupation they hold, significantly lower life expectancy for people from less educated backgrounds (in particular for men) or the persistent disadvantages faced by native born children of immigrants with a 50% higher unemployment rate than amongst young people with native born parents.”

Rising inequality, together with the decline in social mobility, poses a risk to overall economic development and social cohesion in the region as people lose trust in democratic institutions and the EU, which are perceived as serving the interests of the few.

An Action Plan for the Future European Commission and the Next European Parliament

This sobering analysis should steer the action of the forthcoming European Commission, the new European Parliament as well as of EU Member States.

The SDG Multi-Stakeholder Platform to the Reflection Paper *Towards a sustainable Europe by 2030*⁸ notes that moving towards a sustainable Europe means:

- Minimising inequalities between countries and regions, within countries and different parts of society, including by ensuring universal access to essential public services and social protection, and
- tackling global income and wealth inequality by, among others, fighting corporate tax avoidance and fiscal dumping (the practice of using low corporate tax rates to attract investment and create jobs to the detriment of other countries).

General trends at EU level in the past years - Eurostat yearly reports on SDG 10

Since 2016, Eurostat has published an annual report to illustrate progress and challenges at the EU level with regard to Sustainable Development Goal implementation.

According to Eurostat, the EU indicator set, which will come into force in 2019, is the result of ‘a broad consultative process, with its indicators chosen according to their policy relevance and quality requirements’. The set is structured along the 17 SDGs and includes 100 different indicators, as well as 41 multi-purpose indicators (indicators primarily assigned to one goal, but used to monitor other goals).⁹ Of all the indicators, 68% are derived from European statistics while 32% come from other sources, and 56% are aligned with the UN SDG indicators.¹⁰

Eurostat reports in relation to SDG 10 clearly acknowledge that the EU has made limited progress on the reduction of inequalities.¹¹

Over the period 2016 to 2018, EU indicators measuring progress on inequalities have increased in number and have broadened in scope, as can be seen in the table below. UN indicators for Goal 10 targets are below the table.

2016 Eurostat report	2017 Eurostat report	2018 Eurostat report
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita	Disparities in purchasing power adjusted to GDP per capita	Inequality of income distribution
Household disposable income	Disparities in adjusted gross disposable income of households per capita in PPs	Income share of the bottom 40% of population
Inequality of income distribution	EU financing to developing countries	Relative median at-risk-of-poverty gap
	EU imports from developing countries	
	People at risk of income poverty after social transfers	Purchasing power adjusted GDP per capita
	Relative median at-risk-of-poverty gap	Adjusted gross disposable income of households per capita
	Gini coefficient of equivalised disposable income	EU financing to developing countries
	Income share of the bottom 40% of the population	EU imports from developing countries
	Asylum applications	Asylum applications

The current UN indicators for SDG 10 (more detailed than those of Eurostat) are:

- 10.1.1 Growth rates of household expenditure or income per capita among the bottom 40% of the population and the total population.
- 10.2.1 Proportion of people living below 50% of median income, by age, sex and persons with disabilities.
- 10.3.1 Proportion of the population reporting having personally felt discriminated against or harassed within the previous 12 months on the basis of a ground of discrimination prohibited under international human rights law.
- 10.4.1 Labour share of GDP, comprising wages and social protection transfers.
- 10.5.1 Financial soundness indicators.
- 10.6.1 Proportion of members and voting rights of developing countries in international organizations.
- 10.7.1 Proportion of members and voting rights of developing countries in international organizations.
- 10.7.2 Number of countries that have implemented well-managed migration policies.
- 10.a. 1 Proportion of tariff lines applied to imports from least developed countries and developing countries with zero-tariff.
- 10.b.1 Total resource flows for development, by recipient and donor countries and type of flow.
- 10.c.1 Remittance costs as a proportion of the amount remitted.

On 18 September 2018, Eurostat issued the 2018 version of *Sustainable Development in the European Union*, its monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context. The 2018 report and its narrative and statistics for Goal 10 confirms that while there is a decrease of inequalities between countries, inequalities within countries — measured in terms of

income inequality — have generally increased over the past few years in the EU.¹² The report also draws to attention to the fact that social inclusion goals for the EU have been challenged by an unprecedented surge of migration into the EU over the past few years.

Data from the indicator clusters¹³ show:

1. Inequalities within countries:

- In 2016, the income of the richest 20% of the households in the EU was 5.2 times higher than that of the poorest 20% and this ratio between the rich and the poor in the EU has increased by 0.2 points since 2005;
- Inequality in relation to the bottom 40% of the population has increased slightly over time, with their income share shrinking from 21.5% in 2005 to 20.9% in 2016;
- In 2016, 86.9 million people – 17.3% of the EU population – were at risk of poverty after social transfers.¹⁴ The number of people living in income poverty in the EU has risen substantially since 2005 (+ 8.3%), with the largest increases occurring in recent years. The average distance of those at risk of poverty from the poverty threshold has increased: in 2016, this gap amounted to 25% of the poverty threshold in the EU, an increase of 1.7 percentage points since 2005. In other words, the poor are even poorer, even further away from breaking through officially defined poverty lines. These figures demonstrate that the poor are becoming poorer in the EU and that the number of the poor is increasing.

2. Inequalities between countries:

- The difference between EU Member States in terms of average disposable household income decreased between 2001 and 2016. The coefficient of variation was 40.1% in 2001 and 25.8% in 2016, with Luxembourg, with the highest incomes at one end of the scale and Bulgaria with the lowest at the other, with all other Member States somewhere in between. There is a clear north–south and west–east divide when looking at the geographical distribution of GDP per capita and income of households in the EU in 2016.

3. Migration and social inclusion:

- In 2017, the EU received 654,610 first-time asylum applications (equalling 1,278 applications per million

inhabitants), which is almost 50% less than at the height of the refugee crisis in 2015 but still a 4.3 times more than in 2008.¹⁵

Comments/perspectives from civil society¹⁶

- The report does not include the critical data on social groups that is needed to address the 2030 Agenda principle of “*leave no one behind*”. It is also weak in measuring how inequalities within the EU can be reduced. Overall the indicators chosen present a partial picture of the magnitude of existing challenges, and does not address all the dimensions of inequalities.
- Only 56% of overall Eurostat indicators are aligned with the UN SDG indicators. In relation to SDG 10, very few Eurostat indicators are aligned to UN SDG indicators, which are more comprehensive and cover more dimensions of inequalities, in line with principles of the 2030 Agenda.¹⁷[3].
- In the Eurostat reports, inequalities between countries are measured by indicators such as the value of EU imports from developing countries or EU financing to developing countries. This is a limited approach and does not show the extent of inequalities between countries and also fails to capture an assessment of the external dimension of inequalities. The EU indicators fall short of the UN’s integrated approach to Agenda 2030.
- The methodology does not help to assess how far and how fast we need to move in order for the EU to achieve the SDGs by 2030. The report does not take into account the level of achievement. The slow pace of change (1% of change per year) is rewarded with a sun symbol, even though with such slow progress the EU will fail to reach the targets by 2030.
- The report does not measure the EU’s impact on the fight against inequalities globally or in its partner countries. It only provides figures related to EU financing to developing countries. Nor is it able to demonstrate whether European efforts in development cooperation are effective in reducing poverty and inequality, or whether the EU is able to reduce its negative impact on the rest of the world due to over-consumption, resource depletion, its large ecological footprint together with neglect of human rights, tax avoidance by European companies¹⁸ and exploitation of cheap labour – one of the biggest SDG challenges of the EU.¹⁹
- There is a gap in disaggregated data for inequalities, both with regard to SDG 10 and the other SDGs. The SDGs acknowledge the interlinkages between goals, and call for disaggregated data to measure achievement of all of them.²⁰
- The intersect of gender and inequality - one of the major forms of inequality - can be more clearly factored into SDGs. For example:
 - SDG 10: data disaggregated data by sex, as up to 30% of income inequality is due to inequality within households, including between women and men. Women are also more likely than men to live below 60% of the median income;²¹
 - SDG 2: disaggregated data by sex showing the number of women reporting food insecurity, given the fact that women are up to 11 percentage points more likely than men to report food insecurity;²²
 - SDG 6: disaggregated data by sex, as women and girls are responsible for water collection in 80% of households without access to water on premises.²³[5].
- Incorporate more qualitative data into inequality measurement.
- Broaden consultations on inequality indicators to include civil society and academia, and consider non-institutional sources whenever relevant.

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INEQUALITIES IN AUSTRIA

REDUCING RISING INEQUALITIES REQUIRES POLICY COHERENCE AND STRONG POLITICAL MEASURES

Lisa Maria Weinberger, ÖKOBÜRO - Alliance of the Environmental Movement

Income and wealth

Austria ranks 8th among OECD countries in terms of GDP per capita (2015)²⁴ and 10th among 38 countries in the OECD income inequality index.²⁵ With a Gini coefficient of 0.28%, the top 20% of the population earns about four times as much as the bottom 20%.²⁶

18% of the Austrian population (around 1.5 million people) are at risk of poverty or marginalization²⁷ and 4% are "significantly materially deprived"²⁸. Women (especially over 65 years) are more at risk of poverty than men.²⁹ A quarter of the population in poverty are children.³⁰ They tend to be the children of non-national migrants, unemployed people, single (female) parents or people on precarious incomes. These are the groups most left behind and also the most underrepresented, both politically and economically.

Gender

Women are at the highest risk of poverty. In Austria, where people are living longer and having fewer children, long-term care falls mainly on women, with four fifths of older persons cared for in family environments.³¹ In 2017, 29% of women, in comparison to 3% of men, were not in employment because of caring responsibilities.³²

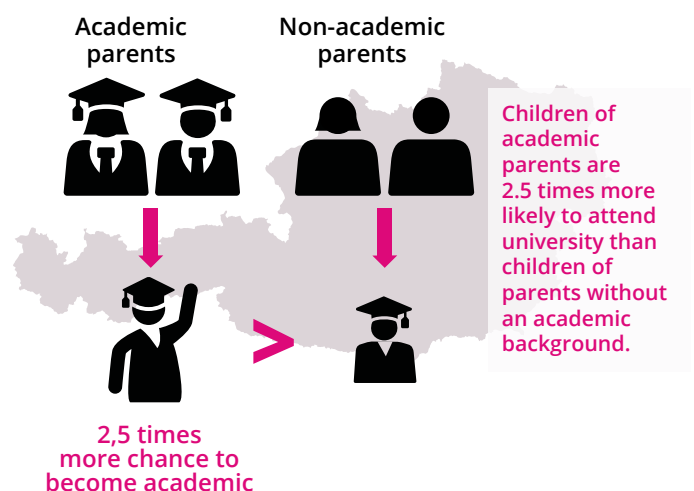
Working women parents also have the greatest difficulty maintaining a work-life balance. 48% of women, in comparison to 12% of men, worked part-time in 2017.³³ This has a significant effect on women's pensions and leads to inequality of income and wealth between men and women, leaving women with less political and economic power.

Cuts in government budgets for social services disproportionately affect women. In 2017 and 2018 the government substantially cut funding for protection against domestic violence such as advice and protection centres.³⁴

Inequality at the international level

Austria's Official Development Assistance (ODA) currently stands at 0.3% (€1.11 billion) of GDP³⁵ with only 0.22% counting as "genuine aid"³⁶. Reallocations within the aid budget, with greater emphasis on disaster relief,³⁷ results in less aid reaching the poorest countries. Austria has been criticised for its banking secrecy and tax treaties with potentially negative impacts on developing country partners.³⁸ There has been limited enforcement of prohibitions on foreign bribery.³⁹

EDUCATION INEQUALITY IN AUSTRIA



Refugees and asylum

Since the height of the so-called refugee crisis in 2015, when 88.349 asylum applications were filed,⁴⁰ Austria has taken measures to reduce the inflow of refugees, has cut refugee benefits and has increased forcible returns of refugees. Positive decisions on applications for refugee status rose from 500 cases per year in 2013 to 3.500 in 2016 and 2.900 in 2017⁴¹ but are now falling. Austria did not sign the UN Global Compact on migration,⁴² agreed in July 2018 by all UN member states with the exception of the United States, which aims to improve global co-operation on migration.⁴³

Causes

Structural causes for inequality in Austria are strongly linked to education and employment, disadvantaging women and minorities the most. Although young Austrian women have a better education than their male peers, women earn 23% less than men and own around 40% less private wealth than the comparable male single household.⁴⁴

Asylum seekers and migrants from outside the European Union are significantly disadvantaged.

Asylum-seekers have limited access to employment until they are granted asylum.⁴⁵ The recognition of qualifications of non-EU migrants is very restrictive. From 2020, non-national children will be separated at school if they do not meet language requirements.⁴⁶ As the Austrian welfare system is employment-centred, this doubles the risks of poverty and social exclusion for migrants.⁴⁷

Good practices

The risk of poverty and/or social exclusion decreased in Austria between 2011 and 2016 and is currently at 18%, below EU average of 22%.⁴⁸ Austria has a well-developed social market economy with a

comprehensive system of social security and welfare which reduce the risk of poverty from 44% to 14%.⁴⁹ There is high-quality social housing,⁵⁰ a free and public school system as well as affordable public transportation. Austria has one of the highest rates of financial expenditure on health among OECD countries and ensures access to health care for all residents of Austria and other EU countries.⁵¹

Recommendations

Austria should have a whole-of-government strategy to implement the SDGs, addressing policy coherence for sustainable development and including the broad participation of civil society.⁵² Political measures, especially regarding gender equality, minority rights, the promotion of diversity, redistribution of wealth and power and social protection, need to be encouraged and implemented.

Specific measures include:

- Extend social benefits to all Austrian residents including vulnerable groups such as non-EU migrants
- Raise ODA to 0.7% and allocate to the poorest countries
- Increase representation of women and other vulnerable groups in politics and private sector
- Protection against prejudice, discrimination and marginalization of vulnerable groups and minorities, in particular refugees
- Increase diversity in the education sector
- Introduce gender-specific statistics on violent offenses and increase prevention measures for victims of domestic violence
- Introduce alternative living facilities and case and care management arrangements
- Extend affordable high-quality childcare

To read the full national report please visit: www.sdgwatcheurope.org/SDG10

INEQUALITIES IN CZECH REPUBLIC

INTERSECTING INEQUALITIES DUE TO LONG-TERM MANIFESTATIONS AND IMPACTS OF INCOME INEQUALITY, EMBEDDED STRUCTURAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF WOMEN AND ETHNIC MINORITIES

Ondřej Lánský, Social Watch
Stanislava Tomková, Czechia Against Poverty and Inequalities

Income and wealth

The Czech Republic has enjoyed steady economic growth, low inflation and low unemployment in recent years. Income inequality (Gini coefficient 0.25) is the third lowest among OECD countries. In 2018 the proportion of citizens at risk of income poverty (relative poverty - with an income of 60% or less of the national median) were about 10% of the population, while those in absolute poverty ('materially deprived') were 8% of the population. Older citizens (65+ years) are worse off than other age groups. In 2018, 10% of households with children (30% of which were single-adult households - single mother or single father) found themselves in income poverty. Furthermore, the Czech Republic has one of the highest proportions of homeless people in the European Union (0.65 % of the population).

Debt enforcement and its impacts on poverty and deprivation is a particular manifestation of income inequality. It is further a consequence of bad political decisions made by previous governments. Overall, a combination of several factors, in particular the transfer of enforcement of court decisions to private bailiffs and the emergence of completely unregulated non-banking companies has resulted in almost 10% of the Czech population somehow affected by enforcement proceedings. If we include family members, around 2.5 million people – a quarter of the population are affected by these proceedings.

In 2017, 863,000 citizens faced enforcement proceedings (a year-on-year increase of almost 3.5 %), with 493,000 people facing three or more enforcement proceedings. 6,000 children under

18 have been subject to enforcement proceedings as well as more than 120,000 older persons over 60 leaving receiving minimum income despite the fact that it is stipulated by law they cannot be subject to enforcement.

Researchers have identified 606 socially excluded localities and 700 shelters in 297 cities and municipalities (small areas with a total population ranging from 95,000 and 115,000) with heavy concentrations of unemployment and indebted people. The majority of people living in the excluded localities are Roma, which proves the interlinkages of poverty, social exclusion and indebtedness to ethnic discrimination.

GENDER PAY GAP IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC



Gender

Women are worse off than men in almost all aspects of life – with the exception of longevity. Women in the Czech Republic earn on average 21.8 % less than men; 64 % of women are in paid work, compared to 79 % of men. Women take on a disproportionate share of caring responsibilities, accounting for nearly three quarters of persons who are economically inactive because they are caring for someone else. Very few men stay at home to look after children or other family members. In addition, women are more likely than men to be in part-time employment – 11 % of employed women work part-time compared to 2 % of men. Women have smaller pensions than men – CZK 10,756 compared to CZK 13,076 (82 %). Men outnumber women by five to one on the boards of publicly owned companies. There is a slight imbalance in education with 95 % of men having completed upper secondary level education compared to 92 % of women. Female university graduates find it harder to find work than men – in 2017 85.5 % of female graduates were in employment compared to 95.2 % of male graduates.

Health

The Czech health-care system, based on compulsory statutory health insurance, provides virtually universal coverage and a broad range of benefits. It does so at 7.7 % of GDP (2012) – well below the EU average – of which 85 % was publicly funded. Life expectancy at birth has been steadily rising over the past two decades: rates are now 76 years for men and almost 82 years for women. One challenge for the future is the Czech Republic's heavy dependence on coal as it has several negative environmental and health effects such as on air quality.

Development cooperation

Official Development Assistance of the Czech Republic (2016) accounted for around 0.14 % of the GDP which is below the target of 0.33 % set for European member states that joined after 2002. There are further concerns about the aid quality as well as the lack of a monitoring system for aid effectiveness.

Structural causes

The structural causes of inequalities in the Czech Republic are strongly related to the unequal status of women, ethnic discrimination and the education system and employment in general. The debt enforcement system, with hundreds of unregulated companies providing consumer credit to the public, has contributed significantly to income inequality.

Example of good practice

Rapid Rehousing project of Brno city council provides apartments for homeless people or families previously living in hostels. The project favours Roma families but was recently stopped by the newly elected mayor of Brno.

Recommendations

- Reduce gender inequalities, in particular, unfair remuneration and inequitable old-age retirement pensions.
- Protect marginalised and disadvantaged groups against discrimination and prejudices.
- Introduce legislation to reform debt enforcement proceedings with an emphasis on 'child debtors'.
- Adopt legislation to address social housing needs.
- Reinstate a ministry dealing with human rights and equal opportunities.
- Increase the Czech ODA to at least 0.33 % of GDP.

To read the full national report please visit: www.sdgwatcheurope.org/SDG10

INEQUALITIES IN FRANCE

RESPONDING TO INEQUALITIES SCEPTICS: AN ASSESSMENT OF INEQUALITIES IN FRANCE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Alexandre Pasche for SDSN France | 4D | wecf France | ATD Fourth World | French Committee for International Solidarity (CFSI) | Les Petits Débrouillards (Resourceful youth) | Water Coalition | CLER Réseau pour la transition énergétique (Energy Transition Network) | French Democratic Confederation of Labour (CFDT) | Fondation Internet Nouvelle Génération (FING) | Max Havelaar France | Notre Affaire à Tous (Our shared responsibility) | Surfrider Foundation Europe | Humanité et Biodiversité (Humanity and Biodiversity) | Human Rights League (LDH) | Coordination SUD (Southern Coordination)

Income and wealth

Inequalities are on the rise in France.⁵³ There are now 8.8 million people below the poverty line,⁵⁴ receiving a net income of less than €1,026 per month; two million people are living on less than €700 per month; nearly five million are receiving food aid; and over 200,000 are living on the street or in dwellings unfit for habitation. CFTD estimate the number of workers in poverty and insecurity to be 400,000. 30% of farmers have an income of less than €350/month.⁵⁵

Housing benefits have been cut for the poorest 5% and there have been increases in indirect taxation. Prices of basic necessities and housing, heating, electricity, transport, vehicle fuel, food and services have all increased.

The rich have not increased in number, but in 20 years they have seen their wealth increase sevenfold. The five richest people in France are worth €156 billion.⁵⁶ Opinion polls show that 9 out of 10 French people believe that there has been no reduction in inequality in the past year and report keen feelings of injustice⁵⁷.

Gender

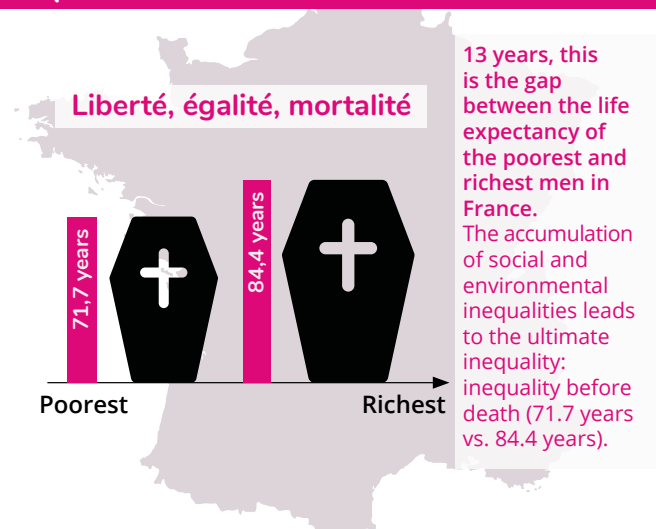
The salary differential between men and women is 9% for equal status and work. More women are part-time workers (1,241,800 women as opposed to 471,800 men – 2015). In addition to being paid less than men and having less job security, women spend longer on household tasks – 3.5 hours a day as opposed to 2 for men (2012). 84% of single parent households are headed by women.

Women's health is adversely affected by exposure to chemicals in occupations where women predominate, such as beauty salons, and there is particular concern regarding foetal exposure to environmental toxins.⁵⁸ In the health system women experience delayed diagnoses and inferior care: for example, on average, female heart attack victims receive treatment an hour and a half later than males.

Health

Life expectancy at birth in France is very high, 82.8 years as opposed to the EU average of 80.9 years. France has universal health coverage and obligatory social health insurance but high rates of social inequality in health. Social and environmental factors account for 80 % of health inequalities.⁵⁹

INEQUALITY IN THE FACE OF DEATH IN FRANCE



Source: ATD Fourth World

In 2018, 20% of French people found it hard to feed themselves⁶⁰ and 5.5 million people used food aid, and of these only 1.2% were consuming the recommended five portions of fruit and vegetables per day.⁶¹ The lack of nutritious food compounds health inequalities, as does the lack of access to affordable and safe drinking water and sanitation. 650,000 French citizens are not connected to drinking water mains⁶² and one million households only have access to water at a price that is considered excessive relative to their incomes. In 2016, 5.6 million households were described as living in poor housing and experiencing energy poverty.⁶³ Those most affected were single people, single-parent families, people of foreign origin, job seekers, pensioners, students and rental tenants. These inequalities are reflected in differing life expectancies: overall life expectancy of the poorest French men is 13 years less than that of the richest, while at the age of 35 a middle class male can expect to live six years longer than a manual worker. For women the figure is 3.2 years.⁶⁴ Countries with the greatest inequalities are also those with the highest rates of chronic illness.⁶⁵

Environment

In France, the richest emit 40 times more carbon than the poorest, although the latter pay four times more carbon tax as a percentage of their incomes. Climate change accentuates social vulnerabilities⁶⁶ with those working in climate sensitive occupations, such as agriculture, being the most exposed.

Inequality and development cooperation

In response to the strong demands made by developing countries, France made the fight against inequality the main pillar of its presidency of the G7 in 2019. France should now complement its commitment to aid with action on tax justice to release resources for investment in developing countries.

Conclusions

France presents a complex picture of the multi-dimensional and mutually reinforcing challenges of inequality which are dragging the most vulnerable into a downward spiral from which it is difficult to escape. Civil society organisations can shed light on the different ways in which inequalities are manifested and help develop and advocate proposals to reduce or eliminate them, which are needed to advance implementation of the SDGs by 2030.

Recommendations

- Expand the scope of welfare provision to incorporate protections against environmental risk, potentially through the creation of an ecological vulnerability branch of the social security system
- Restructure the taxation system so that those affected by the consumption of fossil fuels and the emission of CO₂ can be fairly compensated
- Eliminate tax loopholes and subsidies on fossil fuels
- Increase public investment in priority sectors including education, transport, sustainable agriculture and energy renewal

To read the full national report please visit: www.sdgwatcheurope.org/SDG10

INEQUALITIES IN GERMANY

INEQUALITIES ARE RISING, THE GENDER GAP IS HIGHER THAN THE EU AVERAGE, SOCIAL SYSTEMS ARE BEING DISMANTLED AND GERMANY IS DRIVING INTERNATIONAL INEQUALITIES

AWO International, FUE, WECEF

Income and wealth

Despite its wealth, Germany is facing entrenched poverty and increasing inequalities. The top 1% of earners receive nearly as much as the bottom 50% and over 20% of employees earn less than two thirds of the median income.⁶⁷ One half of the population share 1% of the country's assets between them while the wealthiest 10% of German households own approximately 65% of assets,⁶⁸ one of the highest concentrations of wealth among OECD countries.

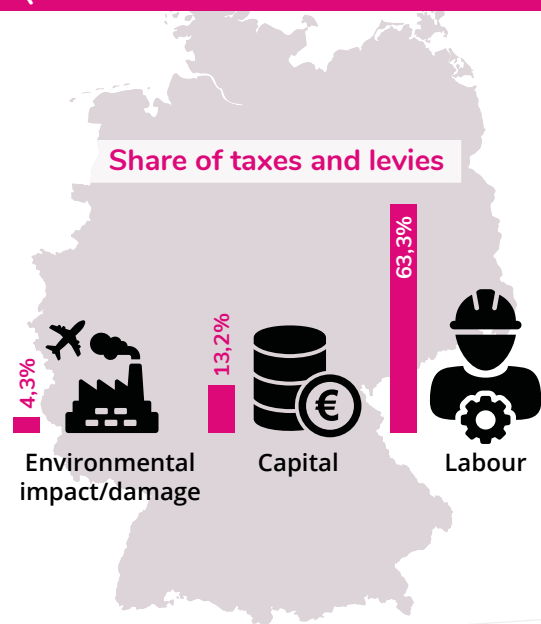
Although Income inequality is reduced by taxation and transfers,⁶⁹ most of the gains from economic growth go to higher income earners. Childless working couples and singles earn the most, followed by couples staggered by the number of children. The earning potential of single parents is lowest of all, again graduated according to the number of children.

Employment in Germany is at a record high (45 million)⁷⁰ and unemployment (2.2 million) at a record low.⁷¹ However, nearly half of all employed people have 'atypical' employment (21.7 million, of whom two thirds are women),⁷² because they work part-time, are subcontracted, are freelancers, have fixed term contracts or are marginally remunerated.⁷³ Today employment is not an escape from poverty:⁷⁴ one third of all people in poverty in Germany are employed, 40% of them working full-time. Regressive tax reforms over the last 20 years have reduced the redistributive impact of government policy while basic social security benefits, received by about 7.6 million people, are barely sufficient to keep households above the poverty line.⁷⁵ Currently 15.8% of the population (approximately 13m people) live at or below the poverty line,⁷⁶ compared to 14.4% in 2008.⁷⁷

Gender

Recent legislation is narrowing the gender gap in pay and political participation. However, women earn approximately 20% less than men⁷⁸ and almost 50% of women in employment work part-time owing to the lack of support schemes and care infrastructure. Only 12% of men work part-time.⁷⁹ 90% of single parents are single mothers, earning 71.5% less than male single parents.⁸⁰ One consequence of women's inferior earning power is that the pensions of retired women are 46% less than those of their male counterparts.⁸¹ Recent legislation is beginning to bridge the gender gap in terms of representation. The state of Brandenburg now requires that there should be equal numbers of female and male election candidates; federal law stipulates that 30% of the boards of large companies should be women;⁸² and in large

INEQUALITIES IN TAX REVENUE IN GERMANY



companies⁸³ women and men must be paid equally and women have the right to see how much their male counterparts are paid. However, pay structures can only be revealed in organisations with more than 200 employees as well as for positions that can be compared to the average salary of at least six colleagues of the opposite sex holding a similar position - a comparatively large group, in particular for higher positions. Despite some progress there is still a long way to go until gender equality is enforced and realised.

International inequalities

Globalisation has opened up opportunities for German companies in developing countries, allowing them to benefit from low wages and lax regulations. Their activities, including large-scale land investment, which can have damaging impacts on local communities and the environment, have been of questionable benefit to countries of the Global South. Germany is the fourth largest arms exporter,⁸⁴ with over half of the arms exports going to countries outside the EU and NATO – including to countries in crisis regions, such as the Middle East and North Africa⁸⁵ – helping to fuel conflicts, displacement and migration. At the same time in 2015 and 2016 Germany accepted over one million migrants⁸⁶ and was the second-largest donor country, spending US\$25 billion on net ODA 2017 - 0.67% of GNI.⁸⁷

Despite some progress in fighting tax evasion and money laundering both internationally and nationally, there are loopholes in national legislation. Lax enforcement of tax and anti-money laundering regulations undermines their effectiveness.

Structural issues

Taxation on capital accounts is 13.2% of the total tax take, while taxation on labour contributes two thirds,⁸⁸ with social security contributions, in turn constituting two thirds of individual taxes. Contribution rates and thresholds favour higher income earners. Most employees are not guaranteed a fixed pension because the value of their accumulated contributions depends on capital markets.⁸⁹

Future retirees can now expect pensions worth about half of average earnings.⁹⁰ Public revenues from taxes on environmental pollution have declined. In 2017 they were 4.3% of all tax revenue.⁹¹

Recommendations

Implementation of the 2030 agenda requires a holistic approach across government. It should give less emphasis to economic growth; greater priority to affordable education, health, care, and sustainable (public) infrastructures; and compliance with international human rights obligations and the Aarhus Convention.

Transparency and taxation

- Ensure greater data transparency and determined action by the EU on money laundering.
- Implement a more progressive tax structure, including taxation of socially and environmentally harmful products/activities.
- Enact fair corporation taxation in Germany and the EU.
- Assist low-income countries on issues of taxation and repatriation of illegal assets.
- Put in place a financial transaction tax.

Pay and benefits

- Ensure that pay for any employment, social benefits and pensions are sufficient to provide a living above the poverty line.
- Enhance parental leave and allowances.
- Enable partnership-based work-sharing in the care of relatives.

Environment

- Integrate environment, conservation, health and social considerations in all decisions.
- Promote decentralised (energy) structures and expand renewable energies.
- Increase sustainable and affordable public infrastructure.

To read the full national report please visit: www.sdgwatcheurope.org/SDG10



International



INEQUALITIES IN GREECE

HIGH YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT, TAX EVASION AND THE ONGOING IMPACTS OF THE ECONOMIC CRISIS ON VULNERABLE PEOPLE HOLD BACK GREECE'S PROGRESSIVE LEGISLATION TO TACKLE INEQUALITIES

Marianella Kloka, World Without Wars and Violence

Income and employment

Greece is recovering from its deep recession,⁹² with rising employment and reforms which have returned national accounts to surplus. But this is progress from a very low base and all social indicators show that there is still a long way to go. In 2018 unemployment was 20.8% (down from 28% in 2013 – one of the fastest rates of unemployment reduction in the EU) but unemployment among young people, at 40%, remains distressingly high.⁹³ Wages are low: the rate of in-work poverty in Greece is 14.1%,⁹⁴ the second highest in the European Union, and 34.8% of the population are at risk of poverty or social exclusion.⁹⁵ Income inequality is fourth highest in the EU with the top 20% of earners receiving more than six times the bottom 20%.⁹⁶ High rates of taxation and high levels of tax evasion create inequalities and are obstacles for growth. Labour market reforms have boosted employment, but at the expense of fair wages and productivity. Workers are trapped in low-skill and low-wage jobs which do not match their skills. Lack of opportunity drives young people to emigrate, accelerating the brain drain.^{97 98}

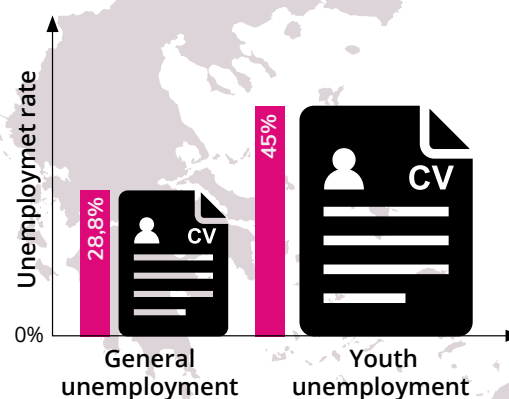
Gender

The employment rate of women is 49%, markedly below the EU average (67.4%), while that of men is 70.1%.⁹⁹ One in four managers are women, the second lowest proportion in Europe (average – one in three). In all occupations women are paid less than men, but the gender pay gap is 12.5%, which is below the EU average (16%).¹⁰⁰ On the other hand, Greece has the widest household and childcare gaps in the EU: 95% of women, compared with 53% of men, take care of their children on a daily basis and the gap is even larger for cooking and housework – 85% of women compared with 16% of men.¹⁰¹

Social protection

The economic crisis, together with an ineffective social protection system has driven up poverty levels, especially among families with children, the young and the unemployed. The high in-work poverty rate prompted the government to raise the minimum wage in early 2019 to €650 euros a month and to abolish the sub-minimum wage (a lower wage paid those under 25 years of age).¹⁰² Two million households benefit from social security allowances and policies,¹⁰³ but there are gaps in coverage and delays caused by the complexities of the system. There is a simpler system for disability benefits which are provided at regular intervals and without delays.

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN GREECE



Legislation

In the past four years the government has taken steps to reduce inequalities. It has passed legislation to support asylum seekers;¹⁰⁴ to recognize the rights of LGBTIQ+ persons with civil-partnerships¹⁰⁵ and gender identity;¹⁰⁶ to ratify the **Istanbul Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence**;¹⁰⁷ to provide health services to people excluded from the welfare system;¹⁰⁸ to increase access to medicines;¹⁰⁹ and to support people using psychoactive substances provided they are under supervision.¹¹⁰ Additionally, laws have been passed to set up and support cooperative enterprises assisting vulnerable people into employment.¹¹¹

Conclusions

Greater progress on SDG10, in particular, targets 10.1, 10.2, 10.3 and 10.4, is needed to tackle the causes of inequalities and to support populations affected by economic crisis, discrimination and inequalities. Civil society should monitor SDG10 implementation to see who is being left behind, and why. In July 2018, Greece published its Voluntary National Review on SDG progress,¹¹² but a national Strategy and National Action Plan for the Agenda 2030 has yet to be agreed.

The Hellenic Network to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion¹¹³ and the Basic Income Initiative¹¹⁴ are assessing inequalities, good practices and proposals for better implementation of SDG 10 in Greece. We are looking at the impact on vulnerable groups of the various legislative initiatives described, always with a gender lens, and considering what still needs to be done to make a difference. We are looking in particular at asylum seekers, LGBTI people and people who use psychoactive substances.

Recommendations

- Formulate a legal definition of, and establish the right to, an 'adequate standard of living', taking into account the work being done within the European campaign to establish a minimum guaranteed income.
- Ensure the right to temporary or permanent accommodation for the homeless.
- Restructure the taxation system so that it is redistributive.
- Launch pilot projects of Universal Basic Income across Greece, governed by principles of universality, unconditionality and adequacy. It will be important to use the pilots to assess the impact of Basic Income on both recipients and on the community in which they live.
- Continue to support vulnerable populations with monthly benefits until there is national coverage of the Basic Income Grant.

To read the full national report please visit: www.sdgwatcheurope.org/SDG10

INEQUALITIES IN IRELAND

GREATER POLICY COHERENCE NEEDED TO TACKLE STARK WEALTH INEQUALITIES WHICH CO-EXIST ALONGSIDE WIDESPREAD SOCIAL DISCRIMINATION

Deirdre Carolan, World Vision Ireland

Income and wealth

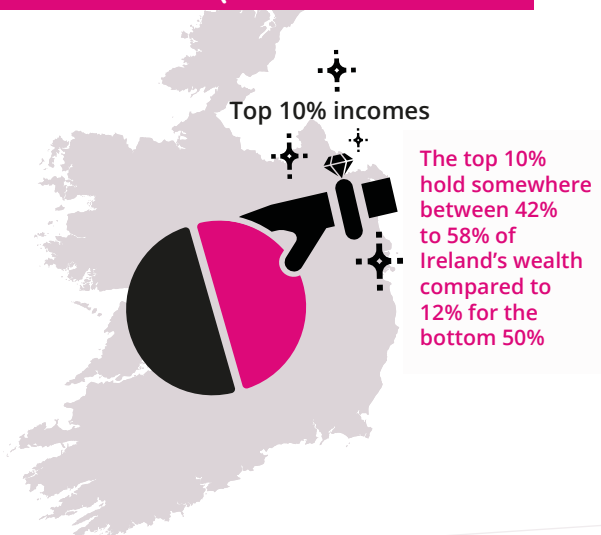
Gross income inequality is higher in Ireland than any other EU country. However, the impact of low taxation and social transfers is significant, bringing Ireland's net income inequality close to the EU average.¹¹⁵ Economic policies since the 2008 financial crash have exacerbated wealth inequalities, with a shift in income towards the top 10%.¹¹⁶ Between 2015 and 2017 the bottom 50% of people experienced a 2% fall in their share of gross income, while the top 1% saw their share increase by 27%.¹¹⁷ Between 2010 and 2015 average household expenditure among the bottom 40% rose by 3.3%, while incomes rose by barely 1.1%,¹¹⁸ indicating that Ireland is moving backwards on Target 10.1.

The statutory minimum wage in Ireland is €9.25 per hour but the minimum acceptable standard of living rate is €11.50. Eurostat defines low-pay as two-thirds of median hourly earnings. For 2010 this was €12.20. In 2013, 5.5% of employees had hourly earnings below the national minimum wage, 25.6% earned less than €11.45 an hour and 30.3% less than €12.20. The low paid are disproportionately part-time, female, young and working in retail and hospitality.¹¹⁹ Meanwhile the growing number of workers in precarious employment, such as couriers and fast-food delivery workers, are placed on self-employment contracts. As self-employed workers, rather than employees, they have minimal rights, no collective representation and are excluded from social insurance benefits, such as Jobseekers Benefit.¹²⁰

Discrimination and employment

Stark wealth inequalities exist alongside persistent social discrimination and low wages. This in particular affects members of the Traveller community, women, persons with disabilities, older persons and people who identified as 'black' in the study.¹²¹ One in eight people experience some form of discrimination.¹²² Members of the Traveller community are ten times more likely to suffer discrimination while seeking work, and 22 times more likely to face difficulties in accessing private services, than people who identify as 'white Irish'.¹²³ Women are twice as likely as men to face discrimination at work, while persons with disabilities are twice as likely to experience discrimination at work or while accessing private and public services. People who identify as 'black' are three times more likely than 'white Irish' people to experience discrimination at work and in accessing private services, and four times more likely in public services.¹²⁴

WEALTH INEQUALITY IN IRELAND



Source: TASC

Housing

Inequalities have been a strong characteristic of Ireland's housing system, both historically and more recently. Key features of this are disproportionately high unemployment in disadvantaged areas, high house prices and reduced state provision of social housing. This has resulted in a shortage of available accommodation, high costs to both buy or rent properties and high levels of homelessness, with 10,264 people homeless in February 2019.¹²⁵ Homelessness disproportionately affects the young, single parents, non-EU migrants, members of the Traveller community and persons with disabilities. More than one in four homeless people have a disability, while members of the Traveller community (comprising 1% of the population) make up 9% of the homeless.¹²⁶ At the same time, housing and property are a source of wealth for Ireland's richest. A quarter of Ireland's wealthiest 100 people amassed their wealth through construction, property and building.¹²⁷

International inequalities

While Ireland's new international Development Policy, *A Better World*,¹²⁸ maintains a strong focus on poverty reduction and prioritises the most vulnerable, greater action towards reducing global inequalities is essential. Ireland's facilitation of aggressive tax planning by multinational companies, for example, undermines developing countries' tax base, eroding much needed government income that could go towards essential services, such as healthcare and education.¹²⁹ This exacerbates inequality between countries even as Ireland's aid programme seeks to narrow the gap.¹³⁰ Likewise, *A Better World* aims to 'future proof' Ireland's development cooperation by integrating climate action across all its work.

While welcome, this is undercut by the high levels of greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) domestically. Ireland's GHGs have increased rapidly with economic recovery and the country is forecast to miss all reduction targets to which it is committed under Europe 2020 plans.¹³¹ Total emissions from Ireland are in fact projected to increase from current levels by 1% and 4% by 2020 and 2030 respectively,¹³² with those most vulnerable globally, who have contributed least to climate change, likely to suffer the most devastating impacts.

Conclusions

Greater effort to reduce domestic and global inequalities is essential. Effective implementation of SDG10 and all 17 Goals is needed to ensure a more equal Ireland. To achieve this, policy coherence across all government departments is crucial. Enforcement of equality legislation, determined action on workplace inequalities and discrimination, with gender- and equality-proofed budgets is further required, alongside recognition within the Constitution of economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to an adequate standard of living. Removing the loopholes in Ireland's tax system is imperative to address corporate tax avoidance.

Recommendations

- Strengthen a whole-of-government approach to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with SDG oversight transferred to the Office of the Taoiseach.
- Benchmark social welfare payments at a level sufficient to lift people above the poverty line and provide a minimal essential standard of living.
- Enact and enforce equality and anti-discrimination legislation and ensure access to free legal support.
- Develop a well-resourced Policy Coherence for Development mechanism to address inconsistencies, most notably in fiscal policies, climate change policies, migration and trade.

To read the full national report please visit: www.sdgwatcheurope.org/SDG10

INEQUALITIES IN ITALY

SOCIAL FRAGMENTATION, REGIONAL DIFFERENCES, PERSISTENT GENDER AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND THE POWER OF ORGANISED CRIME CALL FOR A NEW EQUITABLE SOCIAL MODEL

By Eva Pastorelli and Andrea Stocchiero (Engim/Focsiv for GCAP Italia). With the contribution of Misha Maslennikov and Francesco Petrelli (Oxfam/GCAP Italia), Mariagrazia Midulla (WWF/GCAP Italia), Maria Maranò and Vittorio Cogliati Dezza (Lagambiente/GCAP Italia), and the Inequalities Forum.

Income and Wealth

Inequality has intensified in Italy in the past ten years. The gaps between the rich and the poor have widened and there are more people in extreme poverty. Lower income groups do not appear to have benefited from the sluggish economic recovery of recent years. Nationally, the proportion of families living in extreme poverty has nearly doubled to 6.9% (2017), with the worst figures (10.3%) being recorded in southern Italy.¹³³ Average net wealth per capita has declined to €87.451 from €88.625 in 2014. 20.3% of the population, about 12,235,000 people, are at risk of poverty (2017).¹³⁴ In 2018 the wealth of the 21 richest Italian billionaires listed by Forbes was equal to the all the assets held by the poorest 20% of the population.

There are sharp differences between northern and southern Italy: the female employment rate in the north of 59.4% is close to the EU average while that of the south, 32.3%, is far below.¹³⁵ 85% of single-parent families in conditions of extreme poverty are headed by a female wage-earner. Employed women earn 24% less than their male counterparts and self-employed women earn 44% less (2014).¹³⁶

International Cooperation

In 2018 ODA in Italy was 0.24%¹³⁷ - a decline from 0.3%¹³⁸, with nearly a third of total ODA being spent on refugees within Italy. Only 0.06% of Italian ODA was spent in Least Developed Countries.

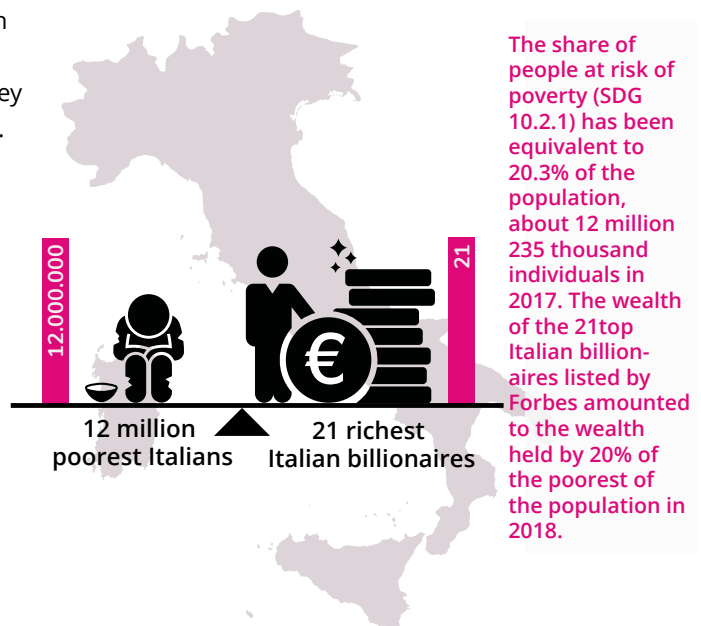
Intergenerational inequality

Inter-generational inequality has also deteriorated: for the first time since the beginning of the twentieth century, individuals aged between 25 and 40 will be worse off than their parents, in spite of the fact that they are the best educated generation in the history of Italy.

Gender

Gender inequalities are persistent: only 38.7% of young women with a high school diploma are employed, compared to 50.8% of men; only 43.3% women receive an income from work (employed or self-employed) compared to 62% of men - the difference of 18 points is the third highest in the EU after Malta and Greece.

POOR VS RICH IN ITALY



Regional differences

All these indicators are worse in southern Italy. The historical divide between the *Mezzogiorno* and the North remains deep and structural. Other geographical inequalities are also important, between rural areas and small villages and urban centres. Territorial inequalities go hand in hand with environmental ones, especially in areas where weaker social groups are more exposed to agricultural and industrial pollution. Several locations are affected – the most notorious being Taranto with the pollution of the steel plant ex-ILVA and Terre dei Fuochi (Land of Fires – waste-burning areas in Campania region). Migrants and minorities, such as Roma people, experience daily discrimination.

Causes

Today's inequalities are the consequence of political decisions which have brought about radical changes in the distribution of economic and social power between south and north Italy, urban and rural areas, male and female populations, new and old generations, trade unions and companies and within companies. The weakening and fragmentation of the labour force and of the social fabric has gone hand-in-hand with the liberalisation of international trade and investment without any harmonisation of labour rights and binding regulation of multinational corporations. In the absence of a new, more equitable social model, this social fragmentation could deteriorate further as digitalisation and automation processes take hold. Other significant factors are the power of organised crime and its collusion with economic and political power, which has spread from the south of Italy to the north and beyond; a patriarchal social culture which entrenches discrimination on the basis of gender

and also leads to the tragic and sadly widespread phenomenon of femicide; the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources.

There is a growing resentment and hate towards migrants and minority groups. Policies, such as the new Security Decree, are intensifying social discrimination against migrants. There are some attempts to reduce inequalities (for example, new laws for strengthening the labour sector and for distribution of a citizens' income) but there is no systematic effort to address inequalities.

Recommendations¹³⁹

- A coherent SDG implementation plan focusing on inequalities which goes beyond simplistic redistribution measures.
- A guaranteed minimum wage with greater labour and female power.
- An inheritance tax, a tax on gifts and the establishment of a universal youth fund to transfer wealth to younger generations.
- New models of participation – wider, more democratic, inclusive of local communities and representatives of the rights of nature should be introduced to address territorial and environmental inequalities.
- Transition plans for more sustainable energy.
- Human rights and the rights of nature should be included in international trade and investment treaties.
- ODA should be increased, focusing on social and environmental investments in developing countries.
- Technological innovation should focus social and sustainable wellbeing.

To read the full national report please visit: www.sdgwatcheurope.org/SDG10

INEQUALITIES IN LITHUANIA

HIGH LEVELS OF INEQUALITY IN A CONTEXT OF RAPID ECONOMIC GROWTH

Gintarė Jankauskaitė, Lithuanian Non-governmental Development Cooperation Organisation Platform

Income and wealth

Lithuania is one of the fastest growing economies in Europe but, with a Gini coefficient of 37.6 (2017),¹⁴⁰ income inequality in the country is now the highest in the European Union. Inequality has increased rapidly: in 2012 the income of the richest 20% of the population was five times that of the poorest 20%, now it is seven times. This is a result of limited progressivity of the tax system, wide gaps between low-skilled and high-skilled workers and an inadequate benefit system.¹⁴¹

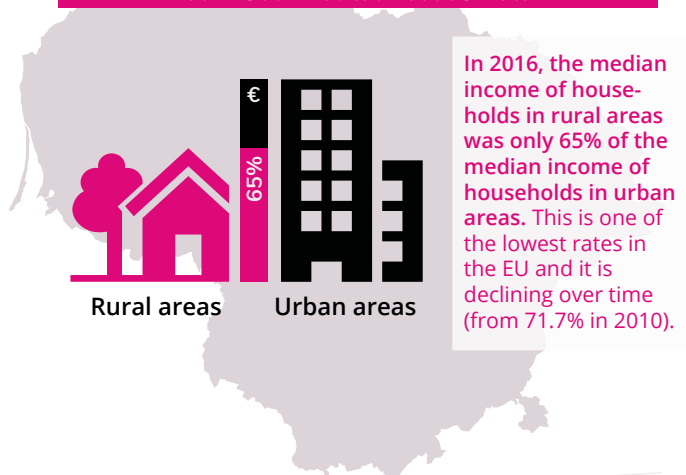
The proportion of the population at risk of poverty¹⁴² in 2016-17 was 29.6%.¹⁴³ The rate has remained roughly stable over the past five years, with a significant difference between the urban (24.7%) and rural (39.5%) populations.¹⁴⁴ Children (0-17 years old) were slightly more at risk of poverty than the general population (31.6%) and over-65s significantly so (40.3%).¹⁴⁵

To address these issues, in 2017-2018, the government increased the minimum wage and raised the threshold for non-taxable income; increased social insurance pensions; introduced a universal child benefit; and ruled that the 'state supported income' cannot be less than 50% of minimum consumption needs. This means that from now on certain benefits will be indexed, updated annually and no longer determined by arbitrary political decisions.¹⁴⁶ This also means, however, that the state supported income (€245 per month in 2018), which is used as a threshold for social assistance, is still very low.¹⁴⁷

Gender

In 2016-2017 the gender wage gap increased from 14.4% to 15.2%.¹⁴⁸ Women are also more exposed to poverty, poverty risk or material deprivation than men. Women's retirement pensions, are smaller than men's, partly because their salaries and wages are lower, and partly because caring responsibilities force many women to withdraw from remunerated work.¹⁴⁹ Women spend more time on family care and housework – 41% of women and 24 % of men spend at least one hour per day on caring activities; 90% of women in a couple with children take care of their family on a daily basis, compared to 73% of men. There are larger differences for the time spent on housework: 79% of women compared to 29% of men do the cooking and housework every day for at least one hour.

INCOME GAP BETWEEN RURAL AND URBAN IN LITHUANIA



This gap has also increased and is greater in couples with children, where 97% of women do the cooking compared to 23% of men.¹⁵⁰ The burden of childcare and other dependent family members, as well as housekeeping, restricts women's access to economic welfare and independence.¹⁵¹ Women are under-represented in political decision making: fewer than 40% of the Lithuania's Members of Parliament are women; 22% of heads of diplomatic missions are women (fewer than in 2017); and all government ministers are men.

Prejudice

In a 2019 survey on attitudes 63% of respondents said they would not like to live next to Roma people; the figures for ex-prisoners, homosexuals¹⁵² and people with mental disabilities were 44%, 37% and 48% respectively. The survey¹⁵³ indicated that levels of prejudice have intensified in the last five years and seem unlikely to improve.

Migration¹⁵⁴

Treatment of refugees is poor:¹⁵⁵ financial support is not sufficient for basic needs; language courses are inadequate; and psychological assistance is mostly unavailable due to language restrictions. While on paper it would appear that national migration, asylum and integration policies satisfy the guidelines of the SDGs, in reality, implementation and a lack of consideration of migrants' rights mean that Lithuania is not meeting the standards of the 2030 Agenda.¹⁵⁶ The great majority of Lithuanians are unlikely to have ever encountered a refugee: in 2018, just 385 refugee asylum seekers arrived in Lithuania; in 2017 there were 520.¹⁵⁷ Nevertheless Lithuanians have a negative view of immigration from third countries and attitudes are especially hostile to migrants from North Africa and Middle East.

International cooperation

In 2018 Lithuania's ODA was 0.11% of GNI, a slight decline from 2017. The government has set a target of reaching 0.33% by 2030.¹⁵⁸ In 2018 the Lithuanian parliament (Seimas) approved a resolution outlining the importance of international cooperation and development.¹⁵⁹ In July 2018, Lithuania officially became the 36th member of the OECD.¹⁶⁰

Recommendations

Income and wealth:

- Develop a realistic poverty reduction strategy that includes an overview of poverty indicators and identifies key policies with ambitious goals.
- Increase the incomes of pensioners, single parents and large families, people with disabilities. Fix deduction from wages at no more than 20% of the minimum wage to stop people falling into debt.

Migration:

- Migration policy should be holistic, encompassing all aspects of immigration.¹⁶¹
- Improve cooperation between governmental agencies and CSOs.

Gender:

- Recognise gender equality as a priority at national political level and implement gender mainstreaming at all levels. Eliminate gender stereotypes in education; take steps to overcome gender gaps; and develop gender-friendly public attitudes.

International cooperation:

- Develop realistic plans for ODA. Active participation in international committees and networks should be a cross-sectoral priority.

To read the full national report please visit: www.sdgwatcheurope.org/SDG10

INEQUALITIES IN LUXEMBOURG

RICH COUNTRY, WITH AN ALARMING INCREASE OF PEOPLE LIVING IN POVERTY AND NEED

Income and Wealth: Julia Georgi, Caritas Luxembourg

Gender: Isabelle Schmoetten, CID Fraen a Gender

Trafficking: Rosa Brignone, Time for Equality

Policy coherence for development: Véronique Faber, Cercle de Coopération

Income and Wealth

Although Luxembourg has the highest disposable income per capita in the EU, poverty has risen steadily since 2000, and at a faster rate than in any other EU member state. Without social transfers 47% of the population would fall below the poverty line but, even with income inequality at 0.30 after transfers (2016 Gini ranking), slightly below the EU average,¹⁶² 21.5% of people in Luxembourg are living at risk of poverty or social exclusion,¹⁶³ with children and adolescents especially at risk (23.6%), as well as single-parent families. 18.7% of working people in Luxembourg are considered as working poor.¹⁶⁴ This proportion is one of the highest in EU. The working poor, mainly people aged 18-24, are increasing faster than in any other EU Member state. This generation risks being the first generation in Luxembourg's history to be worse off than the previous one.

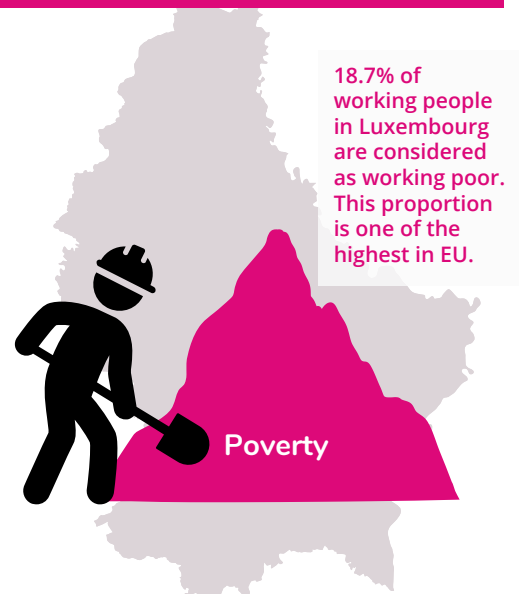
The cost of housing is a major factor in inequality. On average, housing accounts for 36% of household budgets, a figure which rises to 42% for low-income households. The insufficient provision of social housing, currently only 5,000 units, makes Luxembourg the worst performer in the European Union and creates huge difficulties for the 40,000 households who are already below the risk-of-poverty threshold and unable to compete in the housing market.¹⁶⁵

Gender

In terms of gender and employment Luxembourg, with a gender pay gap of 5.4%, performs well. The record in politics is not as good: there are only 15 female deputies in the 60 seat national parliament and five women out of 17 cabinet ministers.

Single mothers provide an example of inequality at the other end of the spectrum: nearly half of all single parent families in Luxembourg live below the poverty line, above the EU average of 33%. Eight out of ten single parents are women. High rates of taxation of single parents, together with the high housing costs, push them near or below the poverty line. Being a single parent is one the main poverty risks in Luxembourg, along with being unemployed and/or having a low level of education. 35.5% of women work in part time jobs (compared to 6.1% of men). Women also spend on average four hours a day doing unremunerated domestic work and childcare, twice as much as men.¹⁶⁶

WORKING POOR IN LUXEMBURG



Source: EU-SILC

Trafficking in human beings

Luxembourg is a destination and transit country for men, women and children subjected to trafficking for sexual exploitation and forced labour. Groups vulnerable to trafficking include migrant workers in domestic work, catering, construction, and beggars as well as unaccompanied foreign children and people working in Luxembourg's legal and illegal commercial sex industry. There is a lack of accurate and reliable data on the dimensions of trafficking but between 2013 and 2017, 65 trafficking victims were identified - 42 women, 14 men and 9 children. The appointment of the Advisory Committee on Human Rights (CCDH) as an independent national rapporteur for human trafficking is a positive development, together with the establishment of an inter-ministerial committee for coordinating anti-trafficking activities. This includes a national action plan.¹⁶⁷

Policy coherence for development

Luxembourg, with ODA of USD 470 million (0.98% of GNI) is one of five industrialised economies to achieve the 0.7% UN target. More than half is spent in Least Developed Countries. Luxembourg, however, besides being a generous aid donor, is also a financial centre which has attracted criticism because of its generous tax treatment of corporations and high net worth individuals from around the world. It has been described as a pass-through economy with special purpose investment entities that are mainly set up for tax reasons. Luxembourg in this way plays a part in diverting billions of dollars in tax income from developing countries which could be invested in social protection and public services like health care, education and infrastructure – essential services to reduce inequalities. Those most affected by this

situation are marginalized and low-income populations in developing countries who would benefit most from social protection programmes and public services, especially women and children, and people who are heavily dependent on the land and natural resources – such as indigenous people.¹⁶⁸

Recommendations

- Improve existing measures to combat poverty, including state support for childcare, a dependency insurance system focusing on older and vulnerable persons, social housing and social groceries.
- Government should work towards a better primary distribution of benefits (tax justice).
- Luxembourg authorities should put human trafficking and all forms of exploitation higher on its political agenda, drawing on the analysis and recommendations made by the national rapporteur and international bodies.
- Ratify and implement the ILO Protocol on Forced Labour.
- The Government's ongoing reassessment of its policies on sustainable development should look at issues of policy coherence for development. The Government should complete this reassessment and implement its conclusions.
- Luxembourg should be vigorous in holding Luxembourg-based companies to account for human rights violations, and be effective in protecting human rights defenders.
- Luxembourg should commit to the BEPS (base erosion and profit shifting) process and review its fiduciary practices based on equality and global impact.

To read the full national report please visit: www.sdgwatcheurope.org/SDG10

INEQUALITIES IN THE NETHERLANDS

NETHERLANDS – ABOVE AVERAGE IN THE EU BUT THERE ARE WORRYING TRENDS

Chantal Van den Bossche, Women Engage for a Common Future (WECF)

Introduction

The first Netherlands national report on the SDGs paints a mixed picture. There is positive progress on several goals – decent work and economic growth; responsible consumption and production; and peace, justice and strong institutions. In contrast, the trends for SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) are not so encouraging.

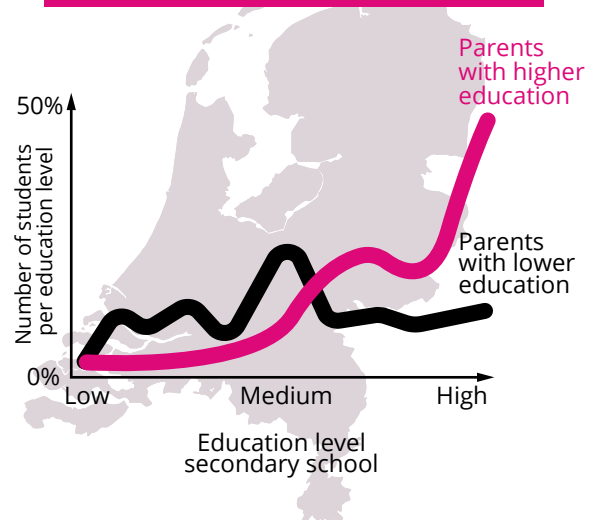
Poverty, income inequality, employment

Netherlands' per capita income of USD 51,340, the ninth highest among OECD countries.¹⁶⁹ This prosperity is not equally shared, however: the top 20% of the population earn four times as much as the bottom 20% (Gini coefficient is 0.28,¹⁷⁰ slightly below, and therefore better than, the EU average of 0.30);¹⁷¹ over 1.4 million people (8.8% of the population) live below the poverty line; and 125,000 children (7% of all children) are growing up in long-term poverty. There is low unemployment overall – 3.3%¹⁷² (down from 7.9% in 2014) but rates are higher or lower for different groups of workers/employees. People with a migrant background are more likely to be unemployed, and it is worse if they are from a non-western background.¹⁷³ However, in 2017, having a job is no longer a guarantee of that a household is not at risk of poverty – the number of working poor has risen by 60% since 2000, from 210,00 to 320,000,¹⁷⁴ but this is still low compared to other European countries.¹⁷⁵

Gender

The hourly wage rate is 5% higher for men in the public sector and 7% higher in the private sector. Netherlands has by far the highest rates of part-time work in the European Union for both women and men: more than three-quarters of the 61% of women who have paid employment work part-time; more than a quarter of men work part-time.¹⁷⁶ The proportion of women in the national parliament and local government in the Netherlands is high (38%, 57 seats) and stable. The proportion of women in top positions and on supervisory boards has not yet reached the 30% target set by the government.

EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITIES IN THE NETHERLANDS



Source: <https://www.onderwijsinspectie.nl/binaries/onderwijsinspectie/documenten/rapporten/2019/04/10/rapport-de-staat-van-het-onderwijs-2019/Rapport+De+Staat+van+het+Onderwijs+2019+.pdf>

Education

Children of professionals and university educated parents more likely to go to university and enjoy better opportunities in life. Teachers appear to have lower expectations of children of parents of lower educational achievement or of parents with a migration background and as a consequence they receive less support from schools in their attempts to access tertiary education, even when they have satisfactory test scores.¹⁷⁷ Changes in the loan system, selection in education and internationalization may exacerbate these differences.

Environment

The level of atmospheric PM2.5 particles that are small enough to enter and damage the lungs, is 14.0 micrograms per cubic metre, exceeding the 10 micrograms limit set by the World Health Organisation. Negotiations are under way to agree to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 49% by 2030 with the target to be underpinned by law.

International cooperation

The Netherlands' large agro-food sector has an unsustainable carbon footprint with negative impacts in third countries. The 2017 VNR¹⁷⁸ stated that 'high environmental pressures are placed on low-income countries and middle-income countries to meet the Netherlands' food production needs.'¹⁷⁹ Netherlands is the eighth-largest donor country, spending US\$5 billion on net ODA in 2017 (0.6% of GNI, down from 0.65% in 2016). Its four priorities are security and the rule of law; water management; food security; and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR, including HIV/AIDS).

Migration, young people and discrimination

The Netherlands has a higher than average population of people born outside the EU, 11.5%¹⁸⁰ (EU average is 4.1%).¹⁸¹ With regard to migration generally the Netherlands is performing less well, falling from a score of 69/100 in 2010 in the Migration Policy Index to 60/100 in 2014.¹⁸²

Life is becoming more difficult for young people. Increases in flexible working practices and precarious work means that gap in income and wealth between generations is growing.

Recommendations

- Make agriculture and agro-food business sustainable and reduce Netherlands' carbon footprint.
- Speed up climate adaptation.
- Do more to promote emancipation – provide social security and equal treatment for every individual; advance the economic independence of women and promote them to higher positions.
- Do more to narrow the growing opportunity gap in Dutch education, based on ethnicity and socio-economic class - this is a cause for concern and demands action.
- Invest in achieving the SDGs, both in the Netherlands and in developing countries.

To read the full national report please visit: www.sdgwatcheurope.org/SDG10

INEQUALITIES IN POLAND

RAISING INCOMES THROUGH SOCIAL PROTECTION AND DECENT WORK KEY TO REDUCING INEQUALITIES

Dominik Owczarek, Institute of Public Affairs
Wojciech Szymalski, Institute for Sustainable Development

Income

Poland has experienced unprecedented economic growth in the three decades since the collapse of the Soviet bloc. From 1991 to 2016, GDP grew by 170%, the highest growth rate among all post-socialist countries, and is now starting to converge with the Western European countries. Poverty and labour market indicators have improved significantly – especially after accession to the EU in 2004. Today's unemployment rate is significantly lower (4%) than the EU average of 8% and the employment rate (71%) is almost equal to the EU average (72%).

After the difficult years immediately after 1989, real wages started to grow in 1996. Productivity grew much faster, however,¹⁸³ and consequently the share of wages in GDP fell from 62.8% in 1992 to 48.5% in 2006 and has remained stable since then (47.5% in 2016). In nominal terms, the average hourly wage rate in Poland was €5.66 in 2014 as compared to the EU average of €15.23.

Poverty

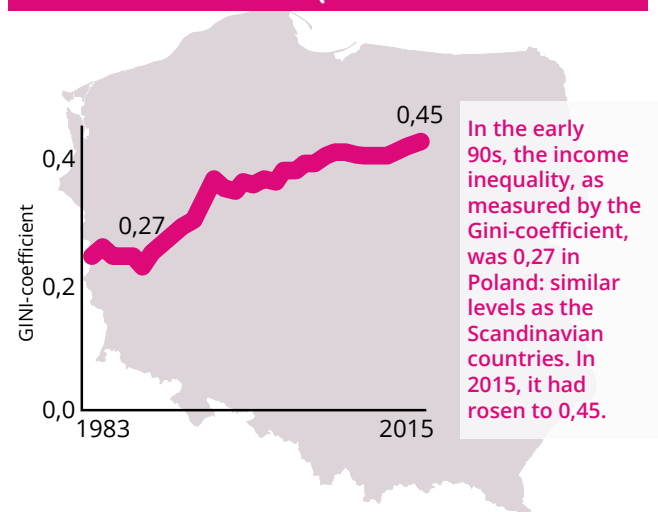
Poland's relative poverty rate peaked in 2003 at 20% of the total population. By 2017 it had dropped to 13.4%, while extreme poverty fell from a peak of 12.3% in 2005 to 4.3% in 2017 – a reduction in real terms of 4.2 million people. Not everyone has benefited to the same extent, however. In 2016 19.5% of the population (7.3 million people) were still living in poverty.¹⁸⁴ Transition to a market economy has also resulted in higher inequality, which increased from a Gini coefficient 0.27 in 1990 (equivalent to income inequality in Scandinavia) to 0.4 in 1995 and 0.45 in 2015, above the EU average.

Income poverty is the most significant component of inequality. Families with children aged 0-17 are at the highest risk of extreme poverty: 5.9% of this group, as against the average of 4.9% for all Polish families, were living in extreme poverty in 2016. Thresholds for social assistance were raised between 2012 and 2018 in response to pressure from the European Commission. The introduction in 2016 of the Family 500+ programme, a generous child benefit which is not means tested, has further reduced extreme poverty.¹⁸⁵

Employment

Poland's employment rate for the 20-64 age group is 71%. Some groups, however, fall far below this average: labour force participation rates for persons

RIISING INCOME INEQUALITIES IN POLAND



with disabilities are 21%; young people, 28.4% (20-24 years old); people aged 55-64, 44.3%; and women 62.2%. The in-work poverty rate is 10.9% for workers and employees aged 18-64 (2016). 26% of employees have temporary contracts under which they have no rights to holidays or statutory notice periods and make no or only partial social contributions. In the last two years, however, the government has raised minimum standards of remuneration and the minimum wage, bringing it to roughly 48% of the average wage, thus making a significant contribution to reducing in-work poverty.

Retirement and Pensions

Today income poverty among older persons is relatively low, amounting to 3.9% of pensioner households, equal to that of employee households. However, in October 2017 the retirement age was reduced by the current government to 65 years for men and 60 for women from 67 for both sexes. In years to come, if a woman chooses to retire at or near the age of 60, she will lose a significant part of her retirement income. Depending on the degree of indexation, her pension income is likely to fall below the poverty threshold.

Energy poverty

Energy poverty, a relatively new phenomenon, affects about 6.44 million people (17% of Poles).¹⁸⁶ It also has a gender dimension since there are more energy-poor women than men.¹⁸⁷ The government has introduced an energy benefit for vulnerable customers but these benefits reach only 7% of energy poor households.

Migration

In 2016, some 2.5 million Poles, 7% of the population, were living and working abroad, sending home remittances of USD 7.5 billion, 1.7% of GDP.¹⁸⁸

Domestic labour market participation did not increase to compensate for the vacuum created by their emigration but was filled by an inward flow of migrants, 1.3 million in 2017, 96% of whom are Ukrainian. This indicates a low ability of government to increase labour market participation of certain groups.

Recommendations

- Introducing a more progressive system tax system e.g. by increasing the tax-free allowance.
- Improvement of working conditions, e.g. by combatting bogus self-employment.
- Strengthening demographic policy, e.g. by developing care services for children, for persons with disabilities and for older persons, to free women to take up paid employment.
- Developing regional policy, e.g. by sustaining community public institutions.
- More democracy and social dialogue, e.g. by fortifying collective bargaining.

To read the full national report please visit: www.sdgwatcheurope.org/SDG10

INEQUALITIES AND DEVELOPMENT IN PORTUGAL

RECOVERING FROM CRISIS, MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION, BUT THERE IS MUCH TO DO

Portuguese NGDO Platform, CPADA - Portuguese Confederation of Environmental Defense Associations

Income and wealth¹⁸⁹

Income per head in Portugal is €17,900 (2018);¹⁹⁰ the minimum wage is €600 a month; 2.2 million people, over a fifth of the population are at risk of poverty or social exclusion. The economic crisis and structural adjustment (2011-2014) significantly reduced living standards, widened inequalities, increased unemployment and extended and intensified poverty. The economy is now recovering and income inequality has reduced slightly, with the Gini coefficient at 0.33,¹⁹¹ close to the EU average of 0.30. This reduction in income inequality was brought about by redistribution measures taken since 2015, reversing to some extent the severe cutbacks made in 2010-2014.¹⁹²

Unemployment, currently below 7%, is less than half that of 2013 (16.2%). Having a job, however, does not guarantee a decent and dignified life: in 2017, about one out of every five people employed was earning the national minimum wage, with the proportion of women being double that of men. Those most at risk of poverty and social exclusion are children, older persons, single parent families and unemployed people (45.7% is the poverty rate among unemployed).

Regional asymmetries are also significant, as the interior is increasingly depopulated, aged and poorer. 83% of the wealth produced in Portugal is concentrated in coastal areas, as are 82.4% of young people and 89% of students in higher education.

Education

Education is improving in Portugal: school drop-out rates have fallen and girls education has risen sharply – but this is progress from a low starting point. Portugal is still one of the least educated countries in Europe: 22% of the population completed only the first cycle of compulsory education.

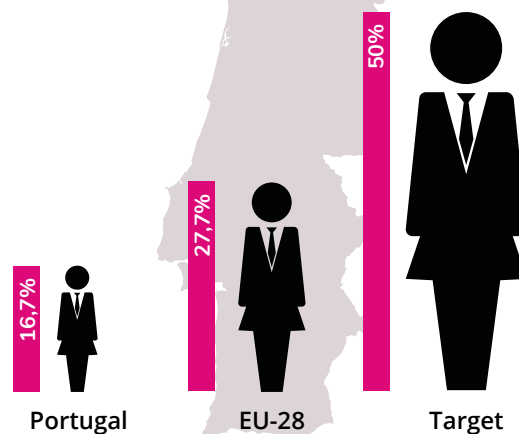
The older generation, particularly women, are markedly less well educated than younger people. Years of education are a key factor in access to employment, in wages and income earned. School exam results correlate closely with regional and socioeconomic inequality and indicators for poverty and social exclusion vary according to the level of education.¹⁹³

Gender

Poverty, unemployment and job insecurity are higher among women; the gender pay gap (16.3% in Portugal¹⁹⁴) is present in all ages, levels of education and occupations and unpaid work is shared very unequally between women and men. The high participation of women in the labour force (above EU average) and low part-time employment rates (below EU average) in Portugal reflect prevailing low wages.

GENDER INEQUALITY IN PORTUGAL

Percentage of women, taking part in government



Source: European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)

The significant advances made by women in recent decades are not matched by a proportional share of women in managerial positions and decision-making bodies.

Gender equality is now more prominent in public policy. The government is trialling gender budgeting in seven ministries; there is a law to reduce the gender pay gap (2018); legislation to ensure a balanced representation of men and women in the biggest companies (since 2017); and a law stipulating that 40% of candidates in electoral lists should be women. Parental leave has been extended and the National Network for Supporting Victims of Domestic Violence has been enlarged. There is also a law on gender identity. Nevertheless, challenges remain in the implementation and monitoring of all these measures, as the coordination between stakeholders could be much improved, and accountability/sanctioning mechanisms are still weak (e.g. gender equality in labour).

External

Portugal generally supports the voices of the most vulnerable and fragile countries in international and multilateral forums, and is regarded as an honest broker. Regarding migration, Portugal is a country of emigration,¹⁹⁵ but its good practices in the integration of migrants and refugees are recognised – Portugal comes second, after Sweden, in the Migrant Integration Policy Index.¹⁹⁶ In fact, with a population that has been falling for the last 20 years, Portugal is keen to attract migrants.

ODA levels are low (0.17% of GNI in 2018), and mainly allocated to the Portuguese-speaking countries of Africa and Timor-Leste.

Recommendations

- Focus on more inclusive growth through policies of income and wealth redistribution, including fairer, more progressive taxation.
- Put the fight against poverty and inequalities higher on the political agenda.
- Strengthen the social protection and the benefits system, to make it more coherent, fair and effective.
- Promote employment policies, which include increased integration of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in the labour market; invest in quality training; reinforce decent work.
- Pay particular attention to policies and measures to combat the intersection between multiple inequalities and discrimination - regional, gender, racial/ethnic, income, age - that reinforce each other and perpetuate poverty and social exclusion.
- Strengthen dialogue and the participation of citizens (particularly the most vulnerable groups facing poverty and social exclusion) and engage with civil society as an effective partner.
- Correct regional asymmetries with positive discrimination in favour of the most disadvantaged regions and the interior.
- Reinforce EU competences in the social field.
- Enforce and monitor the impact of gender legislation; raise parity laws on representation to 50%; develop strong governance on women's rights; strictly enforce laws on gender violence; strengthen collection and availability of gender-disaggregated statistics.
- Draw up a realistic timetable for a sustainable increase in Portuguese ODA and implement the commitments on policy coherence for development.
- Do not downgrade the external dimension the 2030 Agenda vis-à-vis the internal/national dimension.

To read the full national report please visit: www.sdgwatcheurope.org/SDG10

INEQUALITIES IN ROMANIA

DESPITE RECENT IMPROVEMENTS IN ROMANIA, POVERTY AND INCOME INEQUALITY REMAIN HIGH, AND REGIONAL DISPARITIES ARE DEEPENING

Manuela Gazibar and Loredana Giuglea, World Vision Romania

Income and wealth

One in three Romanians is at risk of poverty and social exclusion. Despite falling slightly in the last two years, monetary poverty is one of the highest in the EU, affecting 23.6% of the total population in 2017. 35.7% of the population¹⁹⁷ and 41.7% of children¹⁹⁸ are at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Causes of poverty include inactivity, low educational attainment, intergenerational transmission of poverty and lack of inter-regional mobility. At 18.1% in 2017, the rate of early leavers from education and training (ages 18-24) remains one of the highest in the EU. In rural areas the rate is 27.1% and among the Roma 77%.¹⁹⁹ 38.7% of children up to 15 years old are functionally illiterate.²⁰⁰ In 2014, 72% of families could not provide a minimum acceptable diet to their children under 5 years old.²⁰¹ Poverty and social exclusion levels in rural areas are more than twice as high as those in cities.

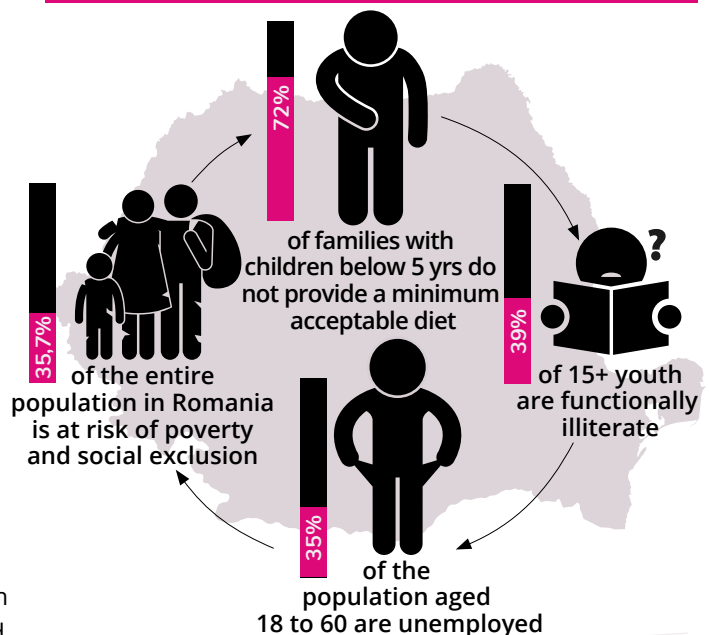
The income of the top 20 % of the population is 6.5 times greater than the income of the bottom 20%.²⁰² High income inequality levels are more the consequence of the poorer being relatively poorer rather than the richer getting relatively richer. Romania has the highest rate of in-work poverty in the EU (17.4 %).²⁰³ The rate of in-work poverty is five times higher for low-educated workers than for university graduates. While women are twice as likely as men to be inactive,²⁰⁴ Romania's gender pay gap, at 3.5%, is the lowest in the EU.²⁰⁵

While labour market performance has improved, overall inactivity and especially inactivity of women remain a concern. There are not enough people with the skills that the labour market needs and will need in the future.

The design of social inclusion policies, the availability of social services and social transfers are still not fully effective at getting people out of poverty and lack an integrated approach combining employment, health and education measures.²⁰⁶

Although Romania has a national plan on social inclusion and poverty reduction for 2015-2020, and has passed a comprehensive package of 47 measures to combat poverty, some key measures, including increasing the employment rate, reducing early school leaving rate, scaling-up of national health programs have been delayed.

ROMANIA - THE CYCLE OF RURAL POVERTY



Source: WorldVision

Gender

The employment rate for women aged 20-64 is 60.6% compared to 78.9% for men.²⁰⁷ The difference is greater for middle-aged women whose inactivity rate is 5% higher than the EU average,²⁰⁸ mainly due to childcare responsibilities.

Patriarchal attitudes, though changing, still persist. 12% of respondents to a World Vision survey²⁰⁹ said that women who work cannot care for their children as well as non-working women; 36% believe that women do not need to be fulfilled both personally and professionally; 16% think that men cannot take care of children as well as women; and 16% believe that men can manage businesses better than women.

Roma

3.3% of the Romanian population are Roma (2011 Census).²¹⁰ Their living conditions are markedly worse than average, characterised by informal, unhygienic and irregular settlements. 78% of Roma are at risk of poverty (35% for non-Roma); over 60% of Roma went to bed hungry at least once a month (less than 20% for non-Roma); 84% of Roma households have no water, sewage or electricity (52% for non-Roma).²¹¹ Lack of identification documents and/or property deeds precludes some Roma from accessing public services and claiming their rights. The sustainability of programmes to boost inclusion and raise living standards is challenging as existing projects are fragmented and rely heavily on external funding.²¹²

Migration

In almost three decades Romania has lost 23.3 % of its working-age population due to emigration,²¹³ causing a 0.6% to 0.9% drop in annual GDP growth. Over 3 million people are estimated to have left the country, with a large proportion of highly qualified

among them. The Ministry of Health estimates that 43,000 doctors left the country in the decade after accession to the EU,²¹⁴ while demographers estimate that Romania's population will fall by 22% by 2050, the steepest projected global decline, due to a combination of emigration, high mortality and low birth rates.²¹⁵

Recommendations

- Strengthen targeted activation policies and integrated public services, focusing on those furthest from the labour market.
- Give special priority to education. Allocate 6% of GDP to education instead of the current 3.7%.
- Improve access to quality mainstream education, especially for Roma and children in rural areas.
- Increase the efficiency and effectiveness of social transfers, particularly for children, and continue social assistance reform.
- Integrated social services should be made available for rural communities.
- Ensure stronger commitment to cooperation and multi-stakeholder partnerships, especially at grassroots level.
- Improve the efficiency of the health system, with increased funding and better outpatient care, focusing on rural areas and the most vulnerable.
- Develop the action plan for Sustainable Development Strategy 2030 as soon as possible, involving CSOs at all stages.
- The "Leave no one behind" principle should identify and address the causes of vulnerabilities and inequalities and promote respect for human rights.

To read the full national report please visit: www.sdgwatcheurope.org/SDG10

INEQUALITIES IN SLOVENIA

THE LOW LEVEL OF TRUST IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS CAN FUEL POPULISM AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION THREATENS CIVIC LIFE AND SIGNIFICANT GAINS TO REDUCE INEQUALITIES

Albin Keuc, SLOGA Slovenian Global Action, with assistance from Robert Križanič, Institute Povod

Income and wealth

Slovenia has one of the lowest income inequalities in the EU. The 2018 Global SDG Index²¹⁶ has ranked Slovenia 8th and awarded 100,00 points for SDG10. The CIVICUS civic space tracker²¹⁷ puts Slovenia in the 'open' category for civic space. Slovenia is ranked 11th in the World Economic Forum Gender Equality Index.²¹⁸ Slovenia has a track record of strong income redistribution through taxation and significant social transfers²¹⁹ which support women, older persons, minorities and marginalized people.

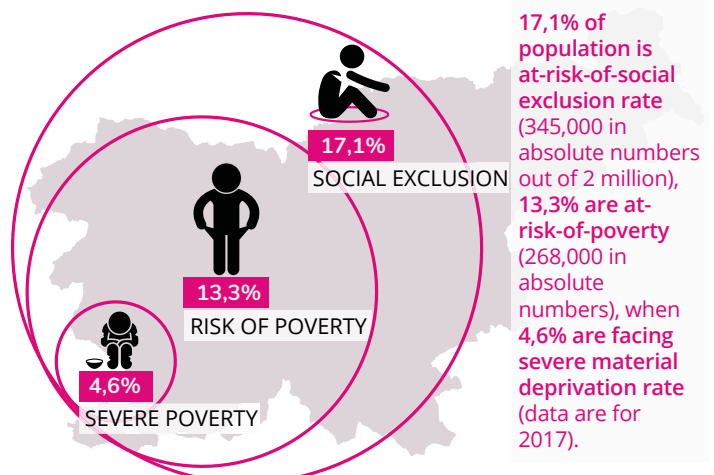
However, in 2017, 17.1% of population was at risk of social exclusion - some 345,000 out of two million; 286,000 (13.3%) were at risk of poverty; and 4.6% were facing severe material deprivation.²²⁰ Among the 268,000²²¹ persons below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold, 78,000 were retired (15.9% of all retired persons - 54,000 women and 23,000 men); 56,000 were persons in employment (6.6% of all employed persons); and 51,000 were unemployed (41.8% of all unemployed persons); 49,000 were children (12.8% of all children); and 34,000 were 'other persons'.²²² In 2016 a quarter of the population had housing problems. Those being left behind are people aged 55+ years, younger people up to 30, migrant workers and members of the Roma community.²²³

The income share of the 1% with the highest incomes increased from 3.3% in 2005 to 3.7% in 2016. Although this growth rate is lower than the EU average (5.0%), it is nevertheless one of the fastest in the EU.

Gender

The WEF²²⁴ Gender Gap Report ranks Slovenia 15th in economic participation and opportunity; 29th in educational attainment; and 22nd in political empowerment. The 2017 European Gender Equality Index²²⁵ ranked Slovenia 10th overall in the EU²²⁶ and 13th for health.²²⁷ The biggest improvement relates to power: women's membership on the board of the Central Bank makes Slovenia's score for economic power the second highest in the EU (due to the changes in the Board this will be lower for 2019). Gender equality ratings have also improved in relation to earnings and income. However, the demands made on women in relation to care mean that Slovenia's scores in the domains of work and time have not improved, although Slovenia still scores the fourth highest in the EU for this subdomain. Access to knowledge is a major challenge with Slovenia ranking 25th in the European Union.²²⁸

SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND POVERTY IN SLOVENIA



Environment

Urban areas are increasingly polluted, owing to greater use of private cars, neglected public transport and high energy prices which have led to increasing use of wood, which accounts for 57% of energy used for space heating in households.²²⁹ Particle emissions from industry and diesel-fuelled vehicles are rising, with particulate matter concentrations highest in poorly ventilated low-lying areas, where even relatively low emissions can cause excessive pollution. Average annual PM10 and PM2.5 concentrations are significantly higher than the EU average.²³⁰

International Cooperation

In 2017 Slovenian ODA was €68.05 million (0.16% of GNI), a decrease from 0.19% in 2016. ODA increased for 2,9% in 2018, reaching ca. €70 million. 12% of bilateral ODA financed costs of undergraduate students from Western Balkan countries, but there is no monitoring process to assess their progress and the contribution they subsequently make to their countries of origin. Slovenia's Third Biennial report on UN Climate Change in 2018 shows an increase of 26% in climate finance between 2015 and 2016, but NGOs say that this figure is inflated by double counting resulting from unclear international reporting guidelines.

Structural causes of inequalities

Despite the positive picture described above, Slovenia is not making sufficient progress. Slovenia does not have a clear development strategy, and this affects political decision-making, with too many competing policy priorities without clear allocation of financial and human resources. Consequently, public administration is over-stretched and this negatively affects administrative efficiency and public confidence in institutions.

Public perception of corruption is one of the highest in the EU.²³¹ Several high profile cases of corruption without satisfactory judicial resolution have increased resentment and radicalisation, and undermined belief in institutions and civic engagement in political and social processes. To maintain progress on inequality Slovenia will need to regain public confidence and strengthen policies for redistribution. This means minimising tax avoidance; strengthening taxation and social transfers; making progress on gender mainstreaming across all policy fields; and increasing investment to tackle energy poverty.²³²

Recommendations

- Improve effectiveness of the administration through monitoring and accountability.
- Reinforce efforts to reduce poverty and income inequalities, through taxation, closure of tax loopholes, raising minimum income levels and ensuring compliance with decent work standards.
- Use of gender quotas to ensure 50/50 representation.
- Invest in energy efficiency, targeting those in energy poverty.
- Increase ODA to 0.33 % and ensure 50% of this is invested in reducing poverty and upholding human rights.
- Strengthen support to NGOs working in development cooperation and ensure safeguards and guidelines for including the private sector in international cooperation and strengthening its contribution to poverty reduction.
- Monitor and assist foreign students to help them contribute to their countries of origin.

To read the full national report please visit: www.sdgwatcheurope.org/SDG10

INEQUALITIES IN SPAIN

IMPLEMENT STRONG AND EQUITABLE PUBLIC POLICIES TO REVERSE THE UPWARD TREND OF INEQUALITY, POVERTY AND EXCLUSION

Futuro en Común - Coordinated by ECODES

Income and poverty

Ranked fourth most unequal country in Europe²³³, with a GINI coefficient of 34.1 in 2017 Spain is experiencing increasing rates of inequality, poverty and exclusion. Since the 2008 economic crisis, the poverty rate has risen by over 3% to 26.8% - some 12 million people.²³⁴ In 2017, 70% of households had seen no benefit from economic recovery, with this figure rising to 91% for households already below the poverty threshold.²³⁵ A third of all children are affected, two thirds in the case of those with non-Spanish parents,²³⁶ half of all single-parent households,²³⁷ three out of four Roma households²³⁸, one out of three persons with disabilities²³⁹ and more than half of non-EU foreigners. Spain's labour market is unstable, disadvantaging women and young people especially. Social security payments are inadequate and do not reach those whom they are supposed to benefit: during 2017 more than 100 people died every day without having received the assistance to which they were entitled.⁸ Rates of child support are almost half of the European average.²⁴⁰ Spain lags behind on pensions and on minimum income.

Gender

The gender wage gap is calculated at 12.7 (2018).²⁴¹ Single parent households – 83% of which are headed by women – are those most likely to experience poverty.

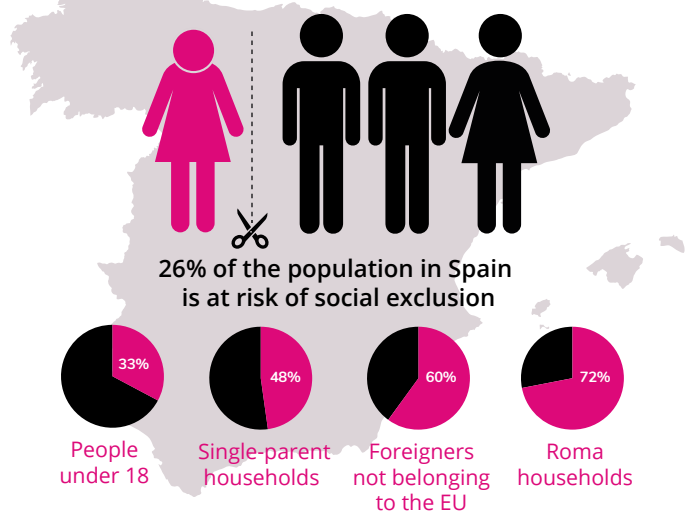
Gender violence is widespread and, despite improvements in recent years, there is insufficient recognition of the issue on the part of government. Between 2003 and 2018, 937 women were murdered by partners and ex-partners.²⁴² 12.5% of women reported having experienced physical or sexual violence during their lifetimes.²⁴³

Between 2016 and March 2019 in Spain, 104 have recorded multiple sexual assaults, more than 111 women, 36% minors, by 356 sexual aggressors, 87 of them (24.4%) minors.²⁴⁴ The justice system does not do enough to protect female victims of sexual violence and deters migrant women from reporting violence with the threat of expulsion.

Education, health and housing

Spain's school drop-out rate of 18.3% (2017) is the third highest in the EU.²⁴⁵ Children from non-EU, Roma and poorer Spanish families have the highest drop-out rates. Migrants without residency lost the right to treatment in the public health system in 2012, and though the situation was partially reversed by a legislative modification in 2018, it still needs the approval of a regulation to fully enter into force.

POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN SPAIN



There are no guarantees of universal access to essential services, including the right to affordable housing.²⁴⁶ In 2016, 9.8% of people had difficulties with mortgage payments or rent.²⁴⁷ Energy poverty²⁴⁸ and evictions remain high,²⁴⁹ sub-standard housing is common and the number of homeless people is on the rise.

Environment

In 2016 72.3% of all energy was derived from imported fossil fuels, with only 17.3% of primary energy coming from renewable sources.²⁵⁰ Misuse of irrigation systems, hydroelectric dams²⁵¹ and habitat destruction have adversely affected water quality.²⁵² In 2016, 43% of rivers and wetlands and 44% of Spanish aquifers were in bad condition. Spain is the heaviest user of agrochemicals in the EU.²⁵³ 59% of agricultural land has less than acceptable content of organic matter.²⁵⁴

Civil liberties

The so-called 'Gag Law' of 2015 is threatening freedom of peaceful assembly, expression and information, and is leading to the criminalisation of the poor in public spaces, affecting sex workers, street traders and homeless people. In 18 months alone the law was used to impose 25,000 penalties.

Migrants

Victims of human trafficking are seen first and foremost as illegal migrants. Finding and protecting them should not be seen as an issue for migration control but should be handled by a specialist body. Migrants' rights are violated before and after they arrive in Spain, they are mistreated by officialdom and experience harsh detention regimes and delays in the handling of applications for asylum. The "immediate returns" policy and collective expulsions in Ceuta and Melilla make it impossible to identify people seeking protection and intensify the difficulties faced by unaccompanied minors for whom there are no special safeguards. 400,000 people and their families are held in reception centres waiting for decisions on their nationality approval on the basis of their residency.²⁵⁵

Inequalities at the international level

Since 2012, Spain's ODA has been below 0.2% of GNI, against the EU average of 0.5%,²⁵⁶ and is not on course to achieve the target of 0.4% set for 2020. Aid quality has also declined. The use of aid in non-genuine goals as security and migration control or businesses international promotion of national companies, or the use of aid as concessional loans and other financial instruments, distorts its essential purpose of combatting inequality and poverty within and between countries. On the other hand, tax evasion and fraud of some Spanish companies overseas is the result of a very permissive law that affect developing countries. The IBEX-35 companies – main stock market – has 1285 subsidiary companies in tax heavens.²⁵⁷

Conclusions and recommendations

To reverse the upward trend of inequality, poverty and exclusion, Spain must:

- Legislate and guarantee enough public social investment to ensure universal social protection, health, housing and education for all.
- Demonstrate national and global leadership to uphold human rights, curb the powers of transnational corporations and support distributive taxation measures such as the financial transaction tax.
- Implement reforms to end violence against women and children, discrimination and racism, and repeal the Gag Law.
- Exercise positive leadership on the global issues of migration, the arms trade, climate change and foreign trade.
- Establish a credible roadmap for achieving 0.5% in the short term and ensure that fighting poverty and inequality and upholding human rights remain the focus of the Cooperation Policy. Promote a more robust business and human rights framework.

To read the full national report please visit: www.sdgwatcheurope.org/SDG10

REFLECTIONS ON HOW ACTION ON SDG 10 IS INCLUDED IN THE VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEWS (VNRS) SINCE 2016

BY CRISTINA NEGOIESCU, WORLD VISION

Integral to the intergovernmental follow-up and review mechanisms of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the encouragement to Member States to "conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels, which are country-led and country-driven" (paragraph 79).²⁵⁸ These regular reviews are presented to the annual High Level Political Forum (HLPF). They are voluntary, state-led, undertaken by both developed and developing countries, and involve multiple stakeholders. They are intended to facilitate the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, with a view to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

By the time of the 2019 High Level Political Forum, most EU countries will have submitted VNRs focussing on achievements and challenges from their national perspectives.²⁵⁹ The reports to date have outlined national priorities and approaches, and how they have included the SDGs into national development plans and strategies.²⁶⁰ However, it is noteworthy that civil society organisations worldwide have been questioning the VNR process, the rigor and relevance of the reporting, as well as the degree of impact of the reporting to better monitor the implementation of the SDG targets.²⁶¹

The following section examines how SDG 10 and action to tackle inequalities are being reported on by countries who have already submitted their VNRs: France, Germany, Italy, Greece, Ireland, Lithuania, Poland, Spain and Romania.

France

In its 2016, VNR the French government committed to the following actions to reduce inequalities within and among countries: (a) combating all forms of discrimination in France and elsewhere; (b) ensuring equal opportunity and the reduction of inequality,

in particular through social protection; (c) improving the reception and integration of foreigners who are legal residents; (d) stepping up the regulation and supervision of global financial institutions and markets; and (e) approaching the economic and environmental transition from the standpoint of solidarity.²⁶² The report showcased good practices that look at tax redistribution, discrimination/tackling hate speech, reception and integration of migrants, as well as combating inequality overseas. The overall tone of the VNR highlighted France's commitment to equality and the protection of human rights, while acknowledging the importance of a national system both for the redistribution of wealth to combat inequality between individuals and also for inter-regional solidarity mechanisms linked to wealth-producing areas. The recognised challenges and shortcomings were mainly focused around the issue of migration.

Germany

The German government reported in its 2016 VNR that the redistribution of taxes and social transfers had had the greatest impact on income inequality lowering the poverty risk by 74%, while in the past decade income distribution in Germany has remained almost unchanged. Nonetheless, the government recognised that Germany needs to strengthen further opportunities for participation of all social groups. To accomplish this, the German VNR highlighted upcoming measures that will be put in place to achieve SDG 10. These are: improving educational equality by creating more opportunities for access and participation for all children and young people across all education sectors; introducing a statutory minimum wage - shown to be an effective means of raising lower earners' incomes; drafting work-related legislation such as on temporary employment; and adopting a national action plan to implement the UN convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Italy

While Italy did not specifically focus on every SDG in its 2017 VNR, under the 'People' section of the report, the Italian government made a list of the ways it will implement the overall Agenda 2030, including SDG 10. The VNR specifies a number of 'strategic choices' supported by national strategic goals as follows:

- Fight poverty and social exclusion by: eliminating territorial gaps, reducing the intensity of poverty, combatting food and material deprivation, and reducing inadequate housing
- Guarantee conditions for the development of human potential by: reducing unemployment for the weakest segments of the population; ensuring the effectiveness of the social protection and security system; reducing the school drop-out rate and enhancing the education system; and combatting deviance through prevention and social integration of vulnerable individuals
- Promote health and welfare by: reducing population exposure to anthropogenic and environmental risks; promoting healthy lifestyles and strengthening preventive healthcare systems; guaranteeing access to effective healthcare services and reducing territorial gaps in access.

Greece

The VNR presented by Greece in 2018 states that in the last decade, since the onset of the economic crisis, Greeks have faced lower living standards, while social and income inequalities have increased. To tackle these challenges and to achieve the SDG 10 targets in particular, the Greek government has set as its prime objectives universal access to health care, education and social protection. Meanwhile, the report gives special attention to the elimination of gender inequalities, the smooth integration into Greek society of immigrants and other population groups, and the reduction of regional disparities.

Ireland

As a means to address inequality at the national level, Ireland has developed a national action plan on inclusion, whose primary focus is to reduce consistent poverty. This is to be achieved through improved and supported incomes to reduce the percentage of the population at-risk-of-poverty, and increased access to quality services both to reduce the percentage of the population experiencing deprivation and to reduce overall poverty risk. The Irish government's 2018 VNR states that national strategies are adopting a comprehensive approach towards tackling inequalities. These strategies include the National Strategy for Women and Girls, the National Disability Inclusion Strategy, the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy and the Migrant Integration Strategy. Meanwhile, in development cooperation, Ireland is promoting social protection as an important policy instrument to reduce poverty and inequality, as well as to promote gender equality, better nutrition, and improved education and health outcomes.

Lithuania

The Lithuanian 2018 VNR states that the government has been making efforts to ensure equal opportunities and support to each resident of the country. It also highlights that the greatest challenge for Lithuania is income inequality, which often determines the inadequate safeguarding of other rights as well. Therefore, to achieve SDG 10, Lithuania has set an objective of reducing poverty and income inequality in all of its strategic documents. Essential policy and fiscal measures are looking at increasing income, retirement pensions and social benefits, reducing the tax burden for those earning the lowest incomes and enhancing the social responsibility of people with the highest incomes.

Poland

The Polish 2018 VNR defines measures to implement SDG 10 in terms of addressing inequalities and disparities among regions in the country. Thus, to achieve SDG 10, the Polish government has adopted the following two priorities: the first to bridge differences in the social and economic development of regions, and the second to prevent the creation of new development disparities and challenges related to the development of regions. In this regard, regional policy is meant to deliver greater equality in the country by strengthening regional competitiveness, mainly in relation to economic activation, development of regional specialisations, development of local labour markets and professional mobilisation of inhabitants. Policies are being adopted to lessen entrenched intra-regional differences and to reduce disparities in the development of individual regional territories. Equal access to the labour market and making living standards of communities more equitable through improved access to social and health services are considered key pillars to enhance social equality.

Spain

The Spanish 2018 VNR recognizes the problem of growing inequalities and highlights governmental efforts to leave no one behind. The implementation of SDG 10 is linked to a number of reforms and measures, including combatting job insecurity and

enabling the jobless to enter the labour market – considered to be the most effective means of combating poverty and social exclusion; combatting poverty and exclusion – with a special emphasis on tackling severe poverty and child poverty, and action on gender discrimination; and developing and implementing guidelines for a safe, orderly and regular migration that takes into account the needs of the Spanish labour market. The report promises special attention to persons with disabilities, recognized as experiencing significant financial inequality.

Romania

The Romanian 2018 VNR addresses some SDG targets while ignoring many others, including SDG 10 and inequalities overall. Under the catch-all wording of the ‘leave no one behind principle’ the report presents facts and figures linked to education and health. The report mostly overlooks the social dimension of development focusing solely on the economic factors of growth. The report states that *“the progress in achieving the national targets of Europe 2020 Strategy, Romania has attained and overcome the target on reducing the number of people exposed to the risk of poverty or social exclusion.”* The link to addressing inequalities is missing, and achieving equality is to be achieved through economic development.

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UNIVERSAL DELIVERY OF SOCIAL PROTECTION ESSENTIAL TO TACKLE INEQUALITIES

BY ALISSA GHILS MENDOZA, SOLIDAR

1. Social protection – which contribution to the fight against inequalities?

The Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development reflects the international community's commitment to *"implement nationally appropriate social protection systems for all, including floors"* for reducing and preventing poverty. Indeed, SDG 1.3. builds on the Social Protection Floors Recommendation No. 202,²⁶³ adopted in 2012 by the members of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The EU supported the inclusion of SDG 1.3 in the 2030 Agenda.

What is the social protection floor (SPF)?

The Social Protection Floor²⁶⁴ is defined as a set of guarantees that all people should have at every stage of their lives:

- Access to essential health care, including maternity care
- Basic income security for children (e.g. family allowances)
- Basic income security for persons in active age who are unable to work (e.g. social protection benefits for persons with disabilities, unemployed, maternity)
- Basic income security for older persons (e.g. pensions)

Social protection is anchored in the universal rights of all people to social security, and is a central element of a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of themselves and their families, as laid down in international human rights instruments.²⁶⁵ The core idea is that no one should live below a minimum standard of living, and that everyone should have access to essential services. As such, SPFs are the backbone of any policy framework aiming at leaving no one behind.

Apart from the specific target 1.3., social protection is reflected directly or indirectly in several different SDGs:

SDG 3, Target 3.8: Achieve **universal health coverage**, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.

SDG 5, Target 5.4: **Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work** through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibilities within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.

SDG 8, Target 8.5: By 2030, **achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men.**

SDG 10, Target 10.4: Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and **social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality.**

Social protection systems are fundamental, not only to reducing poverty, but also to preventing people from falling (back) into poverty across the life course and containing and reducing inequalities, including income inequality (SDG target 10.4). Together with tax policies, social protection systems are instruments for the redistribution of income, and they also play a significant role in addressing non-income inequality, such as reducing inequality in access to health and education.²⁶⁶ Access to essential social services, such as health care and education, in the long run increases opportunities for people with lower incomes and reduces the gap between them and people with higher incomes. Education and training, in particular, can play an important role in this area.²⁶⁷

Social protection schemes, such as cash and in-kind benefits, have also been shown to have a positive impact on gender inequality, significantly reducing the income gender gap. In Europe, studies based on Eurostat data demonstrate the negative correlation between social protection spending and income inequality for women. This relationship also holds for men. This means that the higher the level of spending on social protection, the lower the inequality, and this relationship is stronger for in-kind benefits than for cash.

Box 1

The contribution of social protection to the reduction of inequalities through access to in-kind benefits (health and education services) and cash transfers²⁶⁸

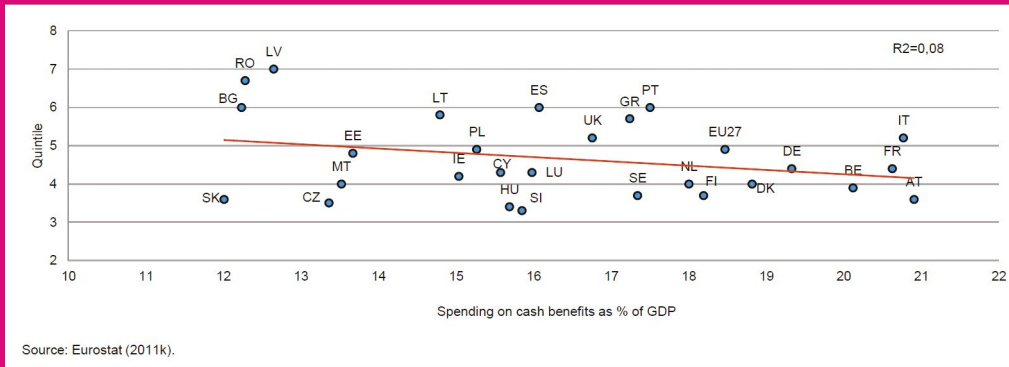
In **Austria**, social benefits play a very effective role in the redistribution of resources and in reducing poverty. In the absence of social protection, 45% of the Austrian population would have been at risk of poverty. However, as a result of guaranteed social security benefits, including pensions, this figure has fallen to 14%. In Belgium it is estimated that in 2014 social transfers helped to reduce the number of persons at risk of financial poverty from over 43% to around 15%.

In **Paraguay and Argentina**, where poverty reduction has been identified as a priority goal, social protection measures are also used to prevent impoverishment. For example, in Paraguay, the government uses high quality social services, social security and employment policies to reduce poverty and foster inclusive economic growth, while in Argentina cash transfers, such as the Universal Child Benefit, the Universal Old-age Pension and Disability Pension, are essential tools for combating poverty and ensuring a minimum income for the most vulnerable.

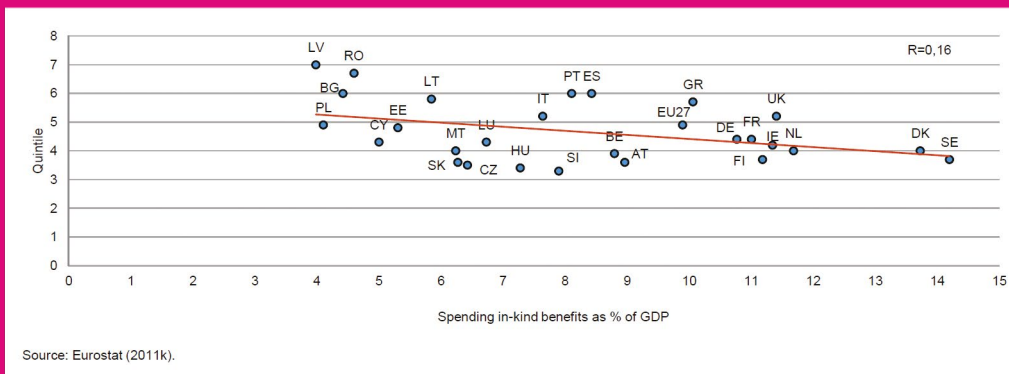
Box 2

Correlation between social protection spending and income inequality for women²⁶⁹

Correlation between income inequality for women and cash benefits



Correlation between Income inequality for women and in-kind benefits



Social Protection has always been at the core of the European social model. With regard to development cooperation, the European Commission's Communication on Social Protection in European Union Development Cooperation (2012)²⁷⁰ emphasises that *"the goal of EU development cooperation in supporting social protection is to improve equity and efficiency in provision, while supporting inclusion and social cohesion."* The adoption of the communication by the Council in October 2012 paved the way for EU development cooperation policies which made social protection at central to dialogue on national development strategies.²⁷¹

The EU together with the OECD and the government of Finland also established a 10 country programme to contribute to the strengthening of sound social protection systems in low and middle-income countries: the EU Social Protection Systems Programme (EU-SPS).²⁷²

Alongside the policy frameworks and operational tools which set out the commitment of the European Union to support the establishment and scaling up of national Social Protection Floors and systems, it is important to assess the impact that the different policy choices have on SDG 10 (reduce inequality).

2. The corporate capture of Social Protection

The provision of health and education through Public-Private Partnerships

Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) are increasingly promoted as the solution to the shortfall in financing needed to achieve the SDGs. Initially, PPPs were focused on economic infrastructure, but they are increasingly used to deliver social infrastructure

and services, such as health and education, in both developed and developing countries. Donor governments and financial institutions, such as the World Bank, have set up multiple initiatives to promote changes in national regulatory frameworks to promote PPPs.²⁷³ Promotion of these initiatives continues despite evidence showing that PPPs are, in the majority of the cases, the most expensive method of financing, significantly increasing costs to the public purse. PPPs can also increase rather than reduce inequality, as the cases below illustrate.

Box 3

PPPs in the area of health: the case of Lesotho²⁷⁴

The costs of Queen Mamohato Hospital in Lesotho have had significant adverse and unpredictable impacts on public funds. Figures suggest that in 2016 the fees 'invoiced' by the private partner, Tsepong, were double the "affordability threshold" set by the Government and the World Bank at the outset of the PPP. Flawed indexation of the annual fee paid by the government to Tsepong (unitary fee) and poor forecasting contributed to this doubling of costs. The increasing and inflexible costs of the PPP hospital also reduced the funding available for necessary investments in primary and secondary healthcare in rural areas where mortality rates are rising and where three-quarters of the population live.

Box 4

PPPs in the area of education: the case of Kenya and Uganda²⁷⁵

Chains of low-fee, commercial private schools are another problematic PPP development. Supported by global actors, these multinational providers of education aim to generate profit by delivering standardised low-quality education programmes developed in the Global North to poor and middle-class children in developing countries. One chain, Bridge International Academies, a Delaware-based company developing early childhood and primary education, has received support from the European Investment Bank – support which was approved despite concerns raised by CSOs about transparency and impacts on human rights, and the fact that the governments of both Uganda and Kenya have ordered Bridge International's schools to close because of their failure to meet basic quality standards.²⁷⁶

Private investment cannot be a substitute for public investment in social protection or in essential services such as health and education services. The provision of these public goods is not compatible with the quest for financial returns. Social protection, including health and education, are at the core of the social contract, and privatising these services can have devastating effects on human rights. Strong, high quality social services for all are critical foundations for the development of just societies and the reduction of inequalities.²⁷⁷ Resisting such “corporate capture” should, therefore, be a priority for the EU and its member states.²⁷⁸

Decent pensions for all: when the how determines the result

For decades pension privatisation has been presented as the necessary response to population ageing and the best way to ensure the sustainability of social security pension systems. Privatisation has been introduced with promises to improve economic performance, reduce administrative costs, and increase coverage and old-age benefit levels.

A recent study by the ILO,²⁷⁹ however, has revealed the negative impact of the privatisation of pension systems in 30 countries (14 countries in Latin America, 14 in Eastern Europe and two in Africa). These countries, yielding to pressures from the international financial organizations and the pension fund industry, fully or partially privatised their social security-based public mandatory pensions between 1981 and 2014. The subsequent decisions of more than half of these countries to reverse the privatisation, together with accumulated evidence of negative social and economic impacts, clearly show that the privatisation experiment has failed. The evidence also shows that:

- Coverage rates stagnated or decreased and pension benefits deteriorated, making reforms very unpopular. In Argentina for instance, between 1993 and 2002 coverage rates fell from 46% to 35% of the labour force for men, and from 42% to 31% for women; in Hungary, coverage rates decreased from around 75% of the labour force before the reform in 1998 to 71.8% in 2009.

- Gender inequalities were exacerbated. In Bolivia, the proportion of older women receiving any type of pension fell from 23.7% to 12.8% from 1995 to 2007, while in Poland the share of women at risk of old-age poverty reached a level as high as 22.5%;
- The risk of financial market fluctuations was shifted to individuals.
- Administrative costs increased, reducing pension benefits. In Argentina, administrative costs were originally 3.54% of the contributing employee’s income, representing 32.2% of the employee’s total pension contributions. In 2002, these costs had risen to 50.8% of contributions.
- The high cost of transition, often underestimated, posed significant fiscal difficulties.

3. Conclusions

As highlighted in the sections above, there is a global consensus that fulfilment of the human right to social protection enables the fulfilment of other rights. Indeed, the universal fulfilment of the right to social protection and the implementation of broad and human-rights based social protection floors will be indispensable to the goal of eradicating poverty and inequalities by 2030.

Concerns regarding the ideological promotion of PPPs in delivering essential social services and the promotion of privatized models of pension schemes are valid and justified. Accordingly, it is essential that transparent and stringent assessments are undertaken before making policy choices on social protection, and these should pay particular attention to evidence about their possible impact on inequality.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AS A COMPASS TO REDUCE HEALTH INEQUITIES IN EUROPE

BY VLADIMIR KOLEV, EUROPEAN PUBLIC HEALTH ALLIANCE (EPHA)

Short problem analysis

Continuous improvement of the health of all and reducing health, social and environmental inequities are central features of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by the UN in 2015. And are emphasized directly and indirectly in a number of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The 2030 Agenda recognises that good health is a precondition for, but also an outcome and measure of, sustainable development. Furthermore, it recognises that opportunities to improve health and reduce health inequalities can be found outside the “purely health” SDG 3, in SDGs addressing issues of environmental protection, shared prosperity and the social justice SDGs. Among the latter, SDG 10 is especially relevant as it aims to reduce inequalities in income, as well as those based on age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or other status within and among countries.

To support and advise the Commission and all stakeholders involved in the implementation of the SDGs at EU level, the European Commission established an “EU SDG multi-stakeholder platform” (MSP). The MSP contributed to the Reflection Paper on a Sustainable Europe by 2030²⁸⁰ published on 30 January this year, which identifies key enablers for the transition towards sustainability, using the SDGs as a compass. In April the Council of the European Union issued its own Council conclusions – “Towards an ever more sustainable Union by 2030”.²⁸¹ Although the EU has managed to a certain extent to reduce economic disparities between the Member States, inequalities within them continue to increase, in other words, the numbers of people living in poverty are growing as is the depth of poverty (the distance between the poverty threshold or poverty line and the real incomes of those living below it).²⁸²

This gap is widening, impacting first the most vulnerable groups, including children, Roma²⁸³ and migrants, people with disabilities, etc. On the other hand, improving health and reducing inequalities of all sorts is a precondition for the economic and social success of Europe.

Almost a decade ago, in 2010, in response to increasing economic and political pressure on the most vulnerable and socially deprived groups, EPHA issued its European Charter for Health Equity²⁸⁴. It called for proactive action from civil society to raise the profile of health inequalities; to begin working together to advocate for greater health equity; to keep the issue on the agenda; and to call for more effort by all actors. Its signatories fully supported the conclusions of another important document issued earlier that year, the Marmot Review: *Fair Society, Healthy Lives*²⁸⁵, a report on health inequalities in England that proposed an evidence-based strategy and highlighted the need to take action towards addressing the social determinants of health. Subsequently, in 2011, 2014, 2015 and 2017, Sir Michael Marmot’s Institute of Health Equity produced updated indicators, showing that while there had been progress in some areas since 2010, especially on the local governmental level and on the development of sustainable communities, health inequalities were widening and life expectancy was stalling. To review that stagnation UCL IHE and the Health Foundation will be publishing a *Marmot Review Ten Years On* in February 2020.

At the European level, Sir Michael Marmot and his team led the work on two final reports in 2013, *Review of social determinants and the health divide in the WHO European Region*²⁸⁶ and *Health inequalities in the EU*²⁸⁷, which provided an outline of new evidence on health inequalities and the need for action on the

social determinants of health. That same year the Commission issued a Staff Working Document, *Report on health inequalities in the European Union*,²⁸⁸ which indicated that investing in reducing health inequalities further contributes to social cohesion and breaks the vicious spiral of poor health that both contributes to and results from poverty and exclusion. Subsequently, the Commission implemented pilot projects²⁸⁹ related to specific aspects of reducing health inequalities.

Some of the more recent reports on the matter, such as *Health Inequalities in Europe*²⁹⁰, *Report on inequalities in access to healthcare*²⁹¹, *Health Inequalities. An interdisciplinary exploration of socioeconomic position, health and causality*²⁹² and *Universal Health Coverage and the Pillar of Social Rights*²⁹³, provide new evidence on the correlation between the social determinants and health inequities and propose actions to overcome these barriers.

On 26 April 2017, the European Commission published its proposal for a European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) with 20 principles aimed at earning Europe a 'social triple A' rating. Domain 16 of the Pillar, on health care, states, "Everyone has the right to timely access to affordable, preventive and curative health care of good quality".

Both the 2030 Agenda and EPSR stress the importance of universal healthcare coverage (UHC) – providing everyone with the health services they need without causing financial hardship. Effective implementation of UHC is also central to achieving the global goals of reducing poverty and improving health set by WHO and the World Bank Group. Health inequality, which disproportionately impacts vulnerable and marginalised groups and varies between different geographical regions, reflects the broader health and socio-economic inequalities that exist between and within member states. For this reason the degree to which UHC is achieved is a core marker of inequality in Europe.

Health inequities involve more than inequality with respect to health gradients, access to the resources needed to improve and maintain health and health outcomes. They also reflect failure to avoid or overcome inequalities that infringe on fairness and human rights norms. The fair and proportionate provision and protection of basic rights such as education, quality housing, decent work, access to healthcare and other universal services, are integral

to surmounting health differences. Lack of political, social or economic power is a shared characteristic of the social groups that experience health inequities.

Good health can contribute to fighting poverty by developing people's abilities to learn and work. The SDGs could bring about progress in coping with the biggest challenges that health is facing today, such as non-communicable diseases (NCDs), antimicrobial resistance (AMR), climate change (including urbanization, environmental degradation and air pollution), ageing and disabilities etc. Since health and other sectors are increasingly interlinked, a broad spectrum of EU policies, including agriculture, trade and transport, need to be examined and monitored in order to determine how and where these policies have a detrimental impact on population health.

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are the 21st century's main health issue. NCDs are responsible for the vast majority of deaths and diseases in Europe.²⁹⁴ NCDs are closely linked to poverty and socio-economic inequalities. Health inequalities are reflected in life expectancy, but are even more pronounced in healthy life expectancy (the number of years that a person is expected to live with good health). Women and men from lower socio-economic groups spend a greater share of their life in ill-health.²⁹⁵

In terms of policies to redress this avoidable, and therefore unfair, state of affairs, it is important to reflect on the fundamental drivers of inequalities in society, and consider action in the area of macro-economic and social policy. At the same time, population-based disease prevention measures, such as price policies, can have significant positive impacts on redressing health inequalities.²⁹⁶

Climate change is inextricably linked to the negative impact of **air pollution**. While Climate Change itself poses a threat to humanity and has direct, negative health consequences,²⁹⁷ the emissions contributing to it also cause air pollution. This also means that addressing CO₂ emissions would in effect mean curbing those emissions which have indirect and direct negative consequences for both health and climate change. By ratifying the Paris Agreement²⁹⁸ the international community has acknowledged part of the problem – but it still lacks a complementary commitment on air pollution, which would both underpin the climate commitments and tackle its environment and health impacts. While there are

various sources of pollution, most of the blame lies with industrial, agricultural, energy and transport emissions.²⁹⁹ Even though there are still scientific uncertainties regarding the full spectrum of health and economic harm caused by air pollution, there is enough evidence to justify immediate action to avoid further harm.

To draw attention to these issues, a recent European Environment Agency (EEA) report on environmental discrimination and the unequal negative health effects of environmental pollution and degradation³⁰⁰ called for targeted action to better protect the poor, older persons and children from environmental hazards like air and noise pollution and extreme temperatures, especially in Europe's eastern and southern regions. Action on roads is urgently needed to address health inequalities: a large proportion of Europe's population, about 75%,³⁰¹ lives in cities and is exposed to dangerously high levels of air pollution. However, not all European citizens are exposed to the same level of air pollution. Just as exposure to air pollution in urban areas is higher than in rural areas, living close to roads with heavy traffic increases concentrations of pollutants. Disadvantaged citizens tend to cluster in areas of heavy traffic, because housing is more affordable there, and are consequently more exposed to dangerous fumes. Addressing road transport and curbing emissions will contribute significantly to reducing health inequalities.

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) has been dubbed Europe's biggest threat to public health as a result of its inherent complexity and cross-border nature. Members of vulnerable groups, who already struggle to access quality healthcare services in most Member States and whose health is generally worse than that of more affluent populations, are likely to be most affected by the effects of incurable, multi-drug resistant infections. While they depend on basic public health services that do not distinguish between socio-economic groups, they do not have the option to "upgrade" in cases of specific needs and explore more costly options (in their own country or abroad) in order to access complex procedures or medicines, commonly tied to reimbursement restrictions, out-of-pocket payments or private health insurance plans. Furthermore, even if in theory everybody is entitled to the same level of treatment and care, in practice many advanced medicines and technologies carry a price tag that is prohibitive.³⁰²

The digitalisation and the use of digital technologies, including digital health technologies³⁰³ should be recognised as tools that can empower people to become more aware of their own health, monitor it better and enable easy access to information and healthcare services. Moreover, they allow individuals to recognize the environmental and social determinants that increase their well-being. This raises the issue of the need for digital competencies and training, especially for the most deprived, to enable them to make full use of digitalisation – an issue that has also been flagged up in the Digital Single Market³⁰⁴ goals. Depending on how health technologies are accessed and deployed by their end users, they can either reduce or (re)produce health inequalities.

In order to achieve sustainable and effective interventions, we have to undertake vital changes in economic and social strategies, which go beyond the health sector. We need a progressive agenda to combat health inequities, coupled with coordinated actions and policy coherence. Furthermore, we have to invest more in healthy and sustainable communities where people can grow, develop and be supported. The policies should be holistic, binding and evidence-based, so as to reduce unfair and avoidable health inequalities.

The achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is predicated on good health. It is a necessary precondition, as well as an outcome. EU policy action and collaboration on health, in addressing common public health threats which no single Member State can tackle alone, has significant and tangible added value.

With the European Parliament elections we have to urge the new European Commission and President to fully engage with, and strive to implement, the EU commitments towards reducing the health and social disparities between the populations in order to achieve the SDGs and to "leave no one behind".

INEQUALITY IS FOUGHT AGAINST AT THE FRONTLINES OF THE STRUGGLES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

BY KATHARINA WIESE AND NICK MEYNEN, EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENTAL BUREAU

Introduction

For the past seven decades, GDP growth has been the primary economic objective of European nations. But as our economies have grown, so has our negative impact on the environment. We are now exceeding the safe operating space for humanity on this planet, and there is no sign that economic activity is being decoupled from resource use or pollution at anything like the scale or speed required. There is, moreover, growing consensus that economic growth is neither able to eradicate poverty nor ensure equal access to health and education. Consequently, solving social problems within European nations does not require GDP growth. Rather, it requires a fairer distribution of the income and wealth that we already have and a reprioritisation from GDP growth to growth in wellbeing for all within planetary limits.

As global consumption of resources and human populations increase, the search for energy and materials leads to the removal of trade barriers, with extractive projects reaching the last untouched places on earth such as the Arctic, deep sea beds, remote forests inhabited by indigenous populations and, in the case of fracking, even the centres of industrialized economies. Damaging economic activities from extraction, processing, waste disposal and the impacts of pollution are distributed unequally among populations. Some individuals, groups and communities are more at risk than others from environmental threats. Those most affected are low-income persons and families, the working class and people of colour and indigenous peoples whose livelihoods and health are threatened by resource extraction, waste disposal and pollution in their neighbourhoods and workplaces.

The poorest households who have contributed the least to global pollution, are the populations most exposed to environmental degradation and hazards. Living in poorly ventilated homes or close to highly air-polluted urban areas increases the risk of developing chronic and other respiratory diseases. The poorest members of our society are also more vulnerable to environmental dangers and disasters, such as floods, drought and violent storms, which can push and even lock them into extreme poverty. Environmental inequalities can, therefore, lead to the deepening of social inequalities.

In the United States, growing concern over unequal environmental burdens and growing evidence of both racial and economic injustices led to the emergence in the 1980s of a grassroots civil rights campaign for environmental justice. Decades of research have documented a strong correlation between the location of environmental burdens and the racial/ethnic background of the most impacted residents. The highly unequal burden of pollution has been studied in detail in the US and is a well-known reality. In Europe, we seem to be slower to study and acknowledge this issue. However, stories of environmental injustices are neither unique to the US nor a matter of the past. Growing environmental injustices from mining to waste dumping have triggered the creation of a global movement for environmental justice that is reshaping how humanity lives on this planet. These movements are not only about a fair distribution of environmental hazards, but also social inclusion, participation in decision-making, and recognition.³⁰⁵

Challenges

Europe has historically been and remains responsible for a disproportionately high share of global environmental destruction and resource consumption. For instance, today around 40% of the food eaten by Europeans is grown on other continents. Growing food crops on other continents often has negative impacts on local communities because it requires huge expanses of their land, uses up their water resources and can lead to mass evictions organized by multinational food companies. The use of pesticides contributes to the degradation of the soils and is a threat to health, and the long transport routes required to import these goods to Europe cause increased emissions of greenhouse gases.



IF EVERYONE CONSUMED LIKE EUROPE DID, WE WOULD NEED ALMOST 3 EARTHS



OVER OF FOOD EATEN IN EUROPE IS GROWN ON OTHER CONTINENTS **40%**

Human rights' defenders and environmental justice activists who oppose the exploitation of their land and natural resources are increasingly threatened and even killed. The number of murders of these courageous activists has risen from one a week to four a week in just the last decade. The dominant unequal global economic system means more and more communities will continue to face violence when their environment is threatened.

WHILE **INDIGENOUS PEOPLE** ONLY REPRESENT **5%** OF THE GLOBAL POPULATION, THEY REPRESENT **15%** OF THE WORLD'S POOREST PEOPLE & ARE ON THE FRONTLINE OF **40%** OF THE WORLD'S **ENVIRONMENTAL CONFLICTS**.



SINCE 2009, THE NUMBER OF MURDERED ENVIRONMENTALISTS HAS RISEN FROM 1 TO 4 A WEEK



HONDURAN ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVIST BERTA CÁ CERES WAS MURDERED IN MARCH 2016

1. Roma, inequality and the environment

There is also environmental injustice within the EU. The poorest often find themselves on the frontline, living in the most environmentally degraded and health-damaging sites. In certain places in Europe and around the world members of ethnic minorities and communities of lower socio-economic status suffer from exposure to environmental hazards because their settlements are located close to hazardous waste sites or factories.³⁰⁶ This is the case in Cluj Napoca, Romania, for example, where Roma families (350 people) have been relocated to an area very near the Pata Rat municipal waste dump, just 800 metres away from their houses, which are now even closer (200 metres) to the chemical (pharmaceutical) waste dump. There appear to be no plans or intention to relocate the Roma from Pata Rat or to offer them acceptable living and working conditions. In the municipality of Rudnany in Slovakia, waste from the non-Roma part of the village is regularly collected and illegally deposited near the Roma shantytown in Patoracke. Minorities are further denied environmental benefits such as potable water, sewage treatment facilities, sanitation, and access to natural resources. For example, most parts of Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria, are connected to the public water and sewerage system. However, for the Glavova “mahala”, a ghetto neighbourhood in Sofia where Roma live, there is only one tap for every 200 families. There is more information about the situation of the Roma in the chapter dedicated to them.

2. The Environmental Justice Atlas

Environmental defenders need protection and one way to help is to give them international media exposure which makes it harder for local landowners, mine owners or others to attack them. The Environmental Justice Atlas is a massive database that collects information about the often invisible environmental conflicts taking place around the world. The categories of conflicts range from nuclear energy, fossil fuel, mining and building extraction over biomass, land conflicts, biodiversity conflicts and many more. The EJAtlas database aims to increase the visibility of the conflicts, highlight claims and testimonies and make corporations and governments accountable for the injustices caused by their activities. It further serves as a platform for those working on environmental justice conflicts to access information, exchange and connect with other organizations, activists and scientists working on similar issues. Over 2,800 environmental conflicts have been mapped, mainly related to mining, fossil fuels, water management and dams, land conflicts, and polluting industries. Around one in six of these conflicts are in Europe. However, the EJAtlas does not claim to cover with certainty all or even most of the important conflicts in the world. The data on all the environmental justice conflicts that are occurring across Europe are incomplete. The intention is to make the atlas more comprehensive, and to achieve that it requires continual development, expansion and updating. New maps, featuring specific topics and contexts, are now being developed in collaboration with different organizations.

Recommendations:

- Recognise environmental discrimination in EU and global policies. There is a need to act more firmly against the criminalisation of environmental activism around the world as well as in some EU member states. Proper implementation of the Aarhus Convention across all countries and by the EU itself will give environmental defenders better access to justice in the EU.
- Agree, ratify and implement the legally binding UN Treaty on transnational corporations and human rights which deals with harmful cross-border business practices, including, where necessary, sanctions for companies which violate its provisions. This is an essential step towards corporate accountability and it will also reduce global material flows and move us towards a circular and more local economy.
- Develop alternative indicators of progress and wellbeing to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and put the EU “Beyond GDP” Initiative³⁰⁷ back at the top of the political agenda in order to advance a post-growth strategy towards both environmental sustainability and greater equality. Economic policies should be evaluated in terms of their impact on human wellbeing, resource use, inequality, and the provision of decent work.
- Transform the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP) into a Sustainability and Wellbeing Pact. The SGP is a set of rules aimed at limiting government deficits and national debt. It should be revised to ensure Member States meet the basic needs of their citizens while reducing resource use and waste emissions to a sustainable level.
- Constitute a special commission on Post-Growth Futures in the EU Parliament. This commission should actively debate the future of growth, devise policy alternatives for post-growth futures, and reconsider the pursuit of growth as an overarching policy goal.

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REDUCING INEQUALITIES BETWEEN ROMA AND NON-ROMA: EU, SDG 10 AND COMBATING EXCLUSION OF ROMA

BY JELENA JOVANOVIC, ERGO NETWORK

1. Introduction

The 2030 Agenda and the promise of governments to “leave no one behind” provide significant opportunities to combat the exclusion of Roma in Europe. It is essential, therefore, to see whether the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies³⁰⁸ (in further text ‘EU Roma Framework’) and other relevant EU policies, such as Europe 2020³⁰⁹, are making use of the 2030 Agenda. Almost all 17 SDGs have a connection to the needs of Roma in Europe, but discussion about the alignment of the SDGs with EU policies relevant to Roma exclusion has been nonexistent. The European Roma Grassroots Organisations (ERGO) Network opened the debate this year. Their discussion paper³¹⁰ relates the SDGs with the Roma rights agenda and identifies topics, processes and potential actions that can support Roma rights advocates in the fight against antigypsyism.³¹¹

This chapter examines how the relevant EU policies are aligned with the Goal 10 of the 2030 Agenda - *Reduce inequality within and among countries*. Goal 10 should be an important entry-point for Roma into the SDG agenda because its first four targets focus on income growth of the bottom 40% inside countries; on political inclusion; the elimination of discriminatory policies and practices; and reducing inequalities of outcome – all of which are highly relevant to the situation of Roma people.

According to the European Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) there are six million Roma living in the European Union.³¹² The Council of Europe’s 2012 estimate of the Roma population in 27 EU member states European countries³¹³ are:

Council of Europe estimate of Roma population in 27 EU member states (2012)

Romania	1,850,000	Czech Rep.	200,000	Ireland	35,500	Slovenia	8,500
Bulgaria	825,000	Greece	175,000	Austria	35,000	Lithuania	3,000
Hungary	750,000	Italy	150,000	Croatia	35,000	Denmark	2,500
Spain	750,000	Germany	105,000	Poland	32,500	Cyprus	1,250
Slovak Rep.	400, 000	Portugal	52,000	Belgium	30,000	Estonia	1,050
France	400,000	Sweden	50,000	Latvia	12,500	Luxembourg	300
UK	225,000	Netherlands	40,000	Finland	11,000		

2. Analysis

It is important to look at the SDG indicators as all the analyses of the Roma-related policies show that one of the major faults of national Roma-targeted policies is the lack of concrete and measurable indicators. The SDG indicators could potentially be used in the future by the creators of new Roma related policies. The following sections look at issues where there is a strong overlap between Goal 10 and EU Roma objectives.

2.1 Income growth

The Europe 2020 strategy focuses on employment and poverty reduction. Two of its five ambitious goals are of immediate relevance to income growth of Roma families (SDG target 10.1). The strategy aims to achieve an employment rate of 75% for those of working age (20–64); and for poverty, the target is to bring at least 20 million people out of risk of poverty and social exclusion. Both the Europe 2020 Strategy and the European Pillar of Social Rights lay great stress on inclusion and are therefore relevant to Roma. Unlike poverty reduction which is a general objective, employment and education are specific objectives of the EU Roma Framework and therefore highly relevant in terms of reducing the proportion of Roma people living below the 50% of median income line and increasing per capita household income.

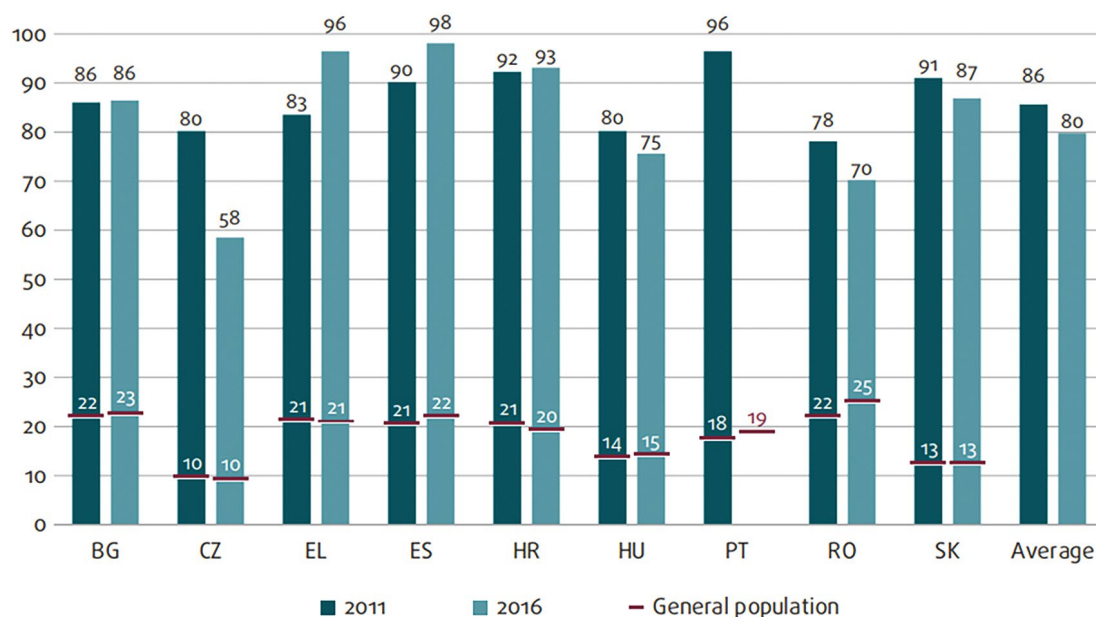
Some reports of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) show that, as far as their Roma citizens are concerned, Member States are a long way from meeting the Europe 2020 targets.

With few exceptions, poverty rates among Roma did not decline between 2011 and 2016. The EU does not make use of the SDG indicator 10.1.1³¹⁴ to measure income growth of Roma households. At EU level there has been a general reluctance to collect ethnically disaggregated data. Eurostat's labor force survey and the EU statistics on income and living conditions (EU-SILC) do not include Roma ethnicity as a marker. It is left to Member States, their own legislation and their interpretation of the legislation, to decide whether they will disaggregate or call for disaggregated data when providing information for the Europe 2020 Scoreboard³¹⁵ and responding to other European Commission requests. Nevertheless a European Commission working document "Evaluation of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020"³¹⁶ refers to SDG target 10.1.1, which calls for ethnically disaggregated data collection.³¹⁷

It is thanks to the FRA that data in the EU poverty domain, while somewhat limited, are disaggregated.³¹⁸

The target indicator of the Europe 2020 strategy related to median income differs from that of SDG 10, Target 2 (SDG 10.2: By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status). The Europe 2020 strategy uses the proportion of the population with an income below 60% of the national median income³¹⁹ as the indicator for the at-risk-of-poverty population whereas for SDG 10.2 it is the proportion of people living below 50% of the national median.

Household members at risk of poverty (below 60 % of national median equivalised income after social transfers) (%)^{a,b,c,d}



Notes: ^a Out of all persons in Roma households (2011 n=36,438; 2016 n=31,793); weighted results.
^b Value for Portugal cannot be published because of high number of missing values (>50 %).
^c At-risk-of-poverty based on the EU-MIDIS II survey are all persons with an equivalised current monthly disposable household income below the twelfth of the national at-risk-of-poverty threshold 2014 (published by Eurostat). The equivalised disposable income is the total income of the household, after tax and other deductions, divided by the number of household members converted into equalised adults; using the so-called modified OECD equivalence scale (1-0.5-0.3). Eurostat [t2020_52] (downloaded 05/03/2018).
^d The average for 2016 does not include Portugal.

Sources: FRA, EU-MIDIS II 2016, Roma (weighted data); FRA, Roma Pilot Survey 2011 (weighted data); UNDP-World Bank-EC 2011 (for Croatia, weighted data); Eurostat, EU-SILC 2014, General population; Eurostat, EU-SILC 2011, General population

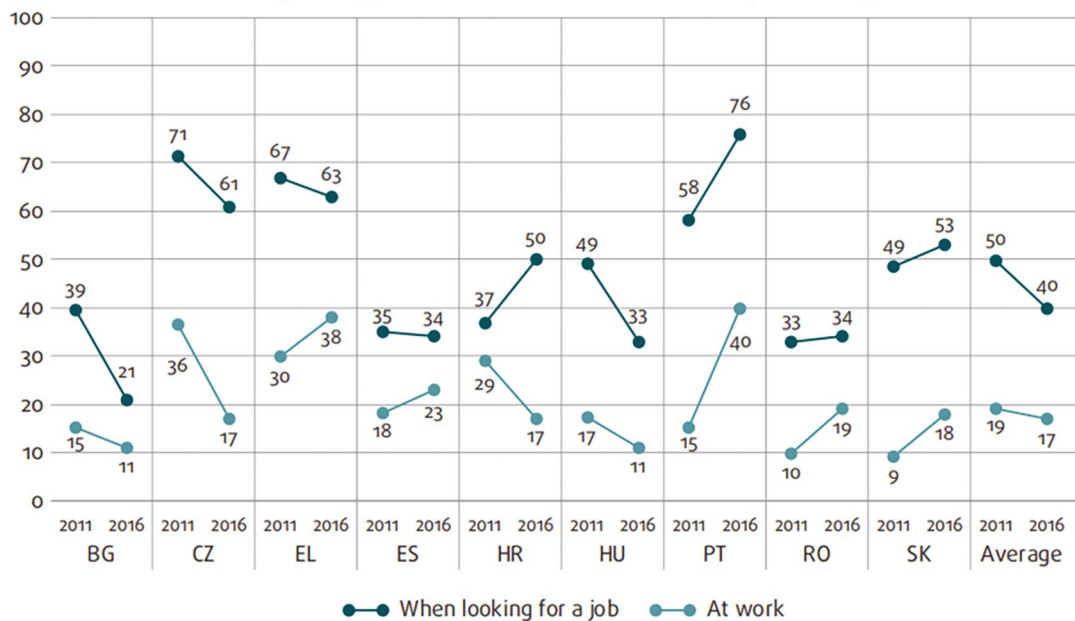
2.2 Combating antigypsyism

The SDG target 10.3 and its indicator 10.3.1 – “Proportion of the population reporting having personally felt discriminated against or harassed [...]” are an important entry point for Roma rights advocates who are fighting manifestations of antigypsyism, such as discrimination, hate speech and hate crime. The EU Roma Framework has not dealt with antigypsyism, even though the European institutions are now coming to regard it as the main cause of Roma exclusion and expect that there will be a focus on anti-racism in the future Roma Framework. The current framework talks about discrimination, but it has not been effective because not enough attention has been given to non-discrimination. The EU Roma Framework did not set a specific non-discrimination goal but referred to the existing legal obligations of Member States.³²⁰

There is, therefore, a clear need for a more comprehensive strategy to combat antigypsyism in all its dimensions and manifestations.³²¹ The European Parliament has passed resolutions on a post-2020 Roma Framework.³²²

The Racial Equality Directive³²³ and the Council Framework Decision on combating racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law³²⁴ have provided only limited normative backing for monitoring antigypsyism, and in practice Roma do not benefit equally from these legal instruments. Discrimination against Roma based on ethnicity is a very frequent manifestation of antigypsyism.

Respondents (16+) who felt discriminated against due to being Roma when looking for a job^a and when at work^b in the past five years (%)



Notes: ^a Out of all Roma respondents at risk of discrimination on grounds of Roma background in the past 5 years (2011 n=4,684; 2016 n=3,987); weighted results. Survey question: "Over the last 5 years in [COUNTRY] [or since you have been in the country if less than 5 years] have you ever been discriminated against because of being Roma when looking for paid work?"

^b Out of all Roma respondents at risk of discrimination on grounds of Roma background in the past 5 years (2011 n=3,598; 2016 n=4,068); weighted results. Survey question: "Over the last 5 years in [COUNTRY] [or since you have been in the country if less than 5 years] have you ever been discriminated against because of being Roma when at work by people who you work for or with?"

Sources: FRA, EU-MIDIS II 2016, Roma (weighted data); FRA, Roma Pilot Survey 2011 (weighted data); UNDP-World Bank-EC 2011 (for Croatia, weighted data)

The majority of respondents of the 2018 Evaluation of the EU Roma Framework identify rising antigypsyism as the main challenge to Roma inclusion at both EU and national level.³²⁵ Discrimination experienced by Roma 'when looking for a job' and 'at work' remains high (40% and 17%). For 76% of respondents, harassment due to ethnicity is a recurring experience. Instances of antigypsyism in the form of hate crime against Roma reduce Roma people's trust in public institutions, in particular in law enforcement and justice, thus undermining social inclusion efforts.³²⁶

Significant gaps in data on the Roma include there being no comprehensive study covering all the manifestations and dimensions of antigypsyism, especially with regard to groups such as Romani women, LGBT+ Roma, Roma migrants and returnees, Roma people with disabilities and older Roma. Studies in general on Roma fail to provide data disaggregated by gender, especially with regard to institutional antigypsyism experienced by women.³²⁷

Nor has the phenomenon of environmental antigypsyism, both serious and widespread, been included in discussions on combatting antigypsyism.³²⁸

2.3 Social protection

The SDG target 10.4 and its indicator 10.4.1 (Labour share of GDP, comprising wages and social protection transfers) are also important. However, collecting data to demonstrate what is happening in terms of social protection is likely to be difficult. Many Roma are forced to do undeclared work and are therefore excluded from official data. Because they find it so difficult to find regular employment, many Roma are living on social benefits, while many others have great difficulty in accessing social benefits.

Eurodiaconia member organizations evaluated the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights with regard to the experience of Roma in the labour market and in accessing social services, social security, healthcare and adequate housing. The results show clearly that equal opportunities are not a reality for Roma. Social services are not supporting them effectively. Social protection schemes must be adapted and improved in order to effectively protect all workers, including Roma, from poverty.³²⁹

The FRA has stated that “EU Member States should ensure that social protection systems are effective in reaching all those in need of support, including Roma. [...] The procedures for claiming social benefits and other entitlements linked to these rights should be simple, and relevant information should be easily accessible for Roma people”.³³⁰

Discussions regarding EU Roma policies do not focus on social protection policies and transfers. The EU has yet to examine to what extent and in what ways these issues have been addressed at Member State level and what would be suitable indicators for post-2020 national Roma-targeted policies.

2.4 Migration

Even though SDG target 10.7 on migration³³¹ is very important, its indicators are not relevant for Roma as they do not address the experience of the Roma in Europe. It is therefore important that 2030 Agenda advocates examine national policies and their implementation to see whether they respond to the rights and needs of the most marginalized, including EU-mobile Roma and Roma third-country nationals.

Roma EU-mobile citizens and Roma third-country nationals are not considered in the EU Roma Framework.³³² Roma migrants and EU-mobile Roma were given even less attention than non-discrimination. With regard to migration, as with non-discrimination, the EU Roma Framework does not set specific objectives, but refers to existing legal obligations of Member States, such as the 2013 Council Recommendation³³³ and the Directive 2004/38/EC.³³⁴

Owing to the high levels of discrimination faced by Roma migrants and EU-mobile Roma, the next Roma targeted policy of the EU should recognise that this group and its issues constitute a specific area for action.³³⁵

Conclusions

The EU admits that it “appear[s] to have moved away from the sustainable development objectives for SDG 10 ‘reduced inequalities’ over the past five years”.³³⁶ With regard to Roma, it is evident that both EU policy actors and organisations and individuals working on the 2030 Agenda should devote more effort to developing indicators relevant for the most marginalized population in Europe. The Roma have experienced little to no improvement in their living conditions and opportunities, and antigypsyism is on the rise. We need to see how EU measures with relevance to Roma are or can be aligned with the 2030 Agenda, and how the processes of the 2030 Agenda can be informed by and learn from EU engagement in countering the exclusion of Roma.

Recommendations

General recommendations

- Define actions to support alignment between the policies for Roma and the 2030 Agenda at all levels (EU, National, regional, local), including the enlargement region of the EU.
- Define the roles of different stakeholders.
- Identify mechanisms for building capacities of (pro)Roma civil society.
- Support the contribution of (pro)Roma civil society to the SDG coalitions and the shadow reporting.
- Review commitments to combat inequalities at EU level, including legally binding commitments.
- Conduct a comparative analysis of how Member States have reported through VNRs and if and how they refer to the situation of Roma.
- Develop clear demands addressed to the current and future EU leadership on SDGs.
- Raise the issue of disaggregated reporting on ethnic data with civil society and EU.
- 2030 Agenda can become more informed by and learn from the EU engagement in the field of countering exclusion of Roma.

Specific recommendations

- Measure growth rates of household expenditure or income per capita with regard to Roma households.
- Systematically collect comprehensive data about the proportion of Roma people living below 60% of median income.
- Systematically collect data on proportion of the Roma population being discriminated against, harassed, experiencing hate crime, hate speech, including where the perpetrators are institutions.
- Conduct studies to include all manifestations and dimensions of antigypsyism. It is essential that specific measures and measurable indicators are developed for the post 2020 Roma Framework.
- Conduct studies to include experiences and policy and legal actions towards protecting the most marginalized groups of Roma, including women, youth, older persons, people with disabilities, LGBT+, Roma migrants and EU-mobile Roma.
- Examine policies in the light of the right to adequate minimum income benefits, specifically looking at social protection systems' effectiveness in reaching Roma and procedures for claiming social benefits and other entitlements.

PATA RÂT, EUROPE'S LARGEST WASTE DUMP GHETTO

A case study of environmental racism

BY PATRIZIA HEIDEGGER AND ELISE MAZAUD, EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENTAL BUREAU

Europe's largest waste-related ghetto is to be found in Cluj-Napoca, Romania's fourth biggest city. Around 1,500 people, mostly Roma, live in four different informal settlements around the Pata Rât landfill, situated a few kilometres away from the city centre. Leaks from the landfill pollute the soil and groundwater. The inhabitants often suffer from ear, eye and skin infections, asthma or bronchitis, high blood pressure, heart and stomach problems due to oozing substances and noxious smoke when waste is burned. Job opportunities are limited apart from those in the waste dump. Most of the children do not regularly attend school. While the social, economic and environmental issues around Pata Rât are complex, one thing is clear: the situation is the result of long-standing structural violence, including environmental racism, against the affected Roma communities.

In the 1960s, poor Roma families made their homes in the 'Dallas' settlement next to the dump in order to make a living by finding and selling recyclable materials from the industrial area and the landfill. However, the ghetto has grown over the years as more and more Roma families have been forced to move there from different parts of the city, either as a result of economic and social difficulties or due to successive evictions driven by the city authorities. The largest community with 800 members is the 'Cantonului' settlement. The poorest and most disadvantaged are the 10-15 Roma families living right next to the landfill in the 'Rampa' settlement. The 'Coastei' community had to settle 800 meters from the landfill and 200 meters from a former pharmaceutical waste dump following a forced and illegal eviction of 250 mostly Romani people from Coastei Street in December 2010. After their homes were demolished, around half of the 76 families have been provided with housing at Pata Rât. One room may host a family with up to 12 members – and some of the dwellings come without sanitation or proper cooking facilities. Each block of four homes shares one water connection which provides only cold water. The remaining families were not offered any accommodation and were forced to build improvised shelters with materials from the landfill, such as cardboard, plastic or rotten wood. The fact that the settlement is only poorly served by public transport has only improved slowly. As a consequence, the majority of the people working in the city centre lost their jobs and their children found it difficult to attend school.

Pata Rât is an example of environmental racism, that is, a situation in which members of a particular socio-ethnic group are forced to live in a contaminated or unhealthy location and are exposed to greater health risks and more unfavourable living conditions than the general population. Across the European Union, especially in Eastern Europe, environmental racism is one of many aspects of antigypsyism. Many Roma communities are made to live in contaminated and environmentally unsafe sites.

In 2014, the Cluj-Napoca County Court declared illegal the city authorities' decision to displace the families from Coastei Street and force them to live under such conditions. It ruled that adequate housing in line with the minimum legal standards be provided and that damages be paid to the families. In 2017, the European Commission took Romania to the European Court of Justice for its failure to close and rehabilitate 68 illegal landfills, including Pata Rât, especially because Romania had been allocated funding by the EU's European Regional Development Fund to replace the substandard waste dump with a new waste disposal system.

It is a humanitarian imperative to provide the affected families with decent housing. At the same time, substandard waste dumps resulting in negative impacts on human health and environmental hazards need to be replaced by adequate waste management systems. The upgrading of the waste dump needs to go hand in hand with the provision of adequate housing, the integration of the children of Pata Rât into general schools, and support with alternative employment to waste picking which currently provides a minimal livelihood for the families who live there. And the affected families need to be at the centre of the solution: they need to be closely consulted to make sure that this time, they will not be left behind.

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EQUALITY BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN IN THE EU - TRANSFORMING EUROPEAN POLITICAL AND DECISION-MAKING INSTITUTIONS

BY MANON DESHAYES, EUROPEAN WOMEN'S LOBBY

"We believe in a truly feminist Europe that is underpinned by our core values: equality between women and men, diversity, peace, dignity, justice and respect. There is still a lot of work to do to realise this goal: progress towards gender equality has stalled, leaving women facing significant and enduring barriers in many aspects of life including health, safety, education, employment, work-life balance, power and economics. The 2015 EIGE Gender Equality Index shows that we have stopped progressing in reducing the inequality gap between women and men across the 28 EU Member States. Austerity has been a disaster for women, particularly impacting those experiencing multiple inequalities such as racism, ableism, ageism, migration status and homophobia. As a result, women have been driven into poverty at a higher rate than men. Responding to these challenges requires a collective approach between social movements, concerned citizens and everyone who has the power to make positive change happen in our communities."

Joanna Maycock, Secretary General of the European Women's Lobby.

Across Europe and globally women have mobilised to claim and uphold their right to equal treatment, but, at best, their goals have been only partially achieved. There is still much more to be done at the EU and national levels to recognize the reality of women's and girls' lives in Europe and to ensure that their experiences and perspectives are reflected in policy.

The European Women's Lobby (EWL) has identified the priorities that still remain to be addressed in the unfinished business³³⁷ of ensuring the effective implementation of international human rights treaties that advance and consolidate women's rights. The European Union, with its EU Treaties, has an obligation

to ensure equality between women and men and integrate a gender perspective in all policy and financial frameworks. For the 2019-2024 European term, EWL calls for:

1. A Europe that realises women's equality in political decision-making

Women are still seriously under-represented with regard to political decision-making in all European institutions and across all EU Member States. This means that women's voices are not heard, and their votes are missing, from the rooms and corridors where decisions are made about all of our lives. Equal representation of women and men, reflecting the diversity of the whole European population, must be guaranteed and fought for by all, as an essential part of transforming our political institutions and our ambition to put all people and the planet at the centre of the political agenda.

Gender equality is a vital part of the human rights agenda. Studies have shown that increased representation of women in elected office can reduce both petty and grand corruption. Despite differing approaches and political allegiances, women in public office often find that breaking up male-dominated corrupt networks is part of their core political agenda of improving public services. Find the report [here](#).³³⁸

To ensure equal representation and participation of women and men in political decision-making, the EU should appoint an EU Commissioner with sole responsibility for women's rights and equality and adopt a robust political strategy on women's equality.

It should also ensure 50/50 representation of each sex in all EU top jobs and decision-making bodies.

2. A Europe that guarantees all women's equal economic independence

Women's economic independence, on an equal footing with men, is crucial to women's equality and freedom, and has not yet been realised in any European country. We must turn our backs on austerity economics and confront and reverse the feminization of poverty – poverty that has a particularly painful impact on women who are already marginalized by intersecting forms of discrimination (such as racism, ageism, ableism, homophobia and so on). Concrete measures need to be taken to tackle unemployment, the lack of decent, quality work for women, the unequal distribution of unpaid care work and the persistent gender gap in pay, life-long earning power and pensions. We must work to ensure that women and men become equal-earners and equal-carers throughout their lives and have income security throughout their life course.

*Equal Pay*³³⁹ - Even though the principle of equal pay for equal work was enshrined in the 1957 founding Treaty of the European Union, women in the EU continue to face discrimination in the job market and to earn less than men. **The average gender pay gap in the European Union is 16.0%,³⁴⁰ and exceeds 20% in Estonia, the Czech Republic, Germany and United Kingdom. This means that, in a Europe of equal pay for equal work, women would have worked for free from the beginning of November to the end of the year compared to their male counterparts. The pay gap adds to the inequalities women experience throughout their lives and affects each one of them differently, depending on their race, age, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, level of education, location and other social and personal circumstances.**

In a male bread-winner "second earner" model, women are paid less and therefore contribute less to their **pensions**. This is then reflected in a wide pension gap and higher risk of poverty for older women.

The gender pension gap stands at 40% in the EU, exceeding 45% in Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. Women's pension income is reduced both by the gender pay gap and by time spent out of the labour-market to care for children and other dependent family members, and also by women's greater reliance on part-time work and their over-representation in low paid sectors of the economy.

To tackle the gender pay gap effectively, we need first to address its multiple and complex root causes, starting from the lack of high quality, accessible and affordable care services. As we have seen, women are penalized throughout their lives for the daily tasks they perform to keep society functioning, that is, primarily, the task of caring for children and/or dependent adults. There are a number of important mechanisms already in place or in the pipeline at the EU-level, such as the proposed Work-Life Balance Directive,³⁴¹ to begin to lift this weight from women's shoulders, and the EU Institutions need to demonstrate political will in implementing them without delay.

The EU has pledged to be a frontrunner in implementing the UN's 2030 Agenda and achieving all Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG 5, to "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" by 2030. By addressing the root causes of gender pay gap and its consequences, the EU will be taking concrete steps towards the following SDG 5 targets. The EU must therefore:

- Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.
- Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.
- Make increased efforts to close the gender pay gap which is crucial to the achievement of women's economic independence, a strategic objective of the Beijing Platform for Action, a fundamental human rights instrument for women and girls adopted in 1995.³⁴²

3. A Europe free from violence against women

Male violence is a daily reality for many women and girls across Europe and is a visceral expression of structural inequalities between women and men. It remains, however, under-reported, under-estimated, under-prosecuted and de-politicised. Eliminating violence against women across all age groups is an integral part of achieving equality in society. Together we must act to put an end to all forms of violence against women and girls and promote a society of peace and safety. All women and girls deserve a life free from violence and free from the fear of violence. In Europe.

- **One in three women** has experienced physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15.
- **50 women** die every week as a result of male domestic violence.
- **Every second woman** has faced sexual harassment.
- **75%** of women in top management positions have experienced sexual harassment at work.
- **One in four women** experiences physical and/or sexual violence during pregnancy.
- Violence against women costs **€226 billion** each year – equal to almost 2% of the annual EU budget.³⁴³

The EWL has also been working on the issue of online violence against women and girls, and is now reviewing the issue of women in the digital world. In our report, [Her Net Her Rights](#), we show that across continents women are also 27 times more likely than men to be harassed online. One of our main demands is that the EU should adopt a directive prohibiting sexism and gender inequality in education and the media, and extend the Equal Treatment Directive and define forms of cyber Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) as a cybercrime within the European Commission's DG Migration and Home Affairs.

Trafficking - Trafficking in human beings (THB) is the world's fastest growing crime,³⁴⁴ but although it is recognised by an EU Directive³⁴⁵ as a serious human

rights violation, EU Member States have failed to act on the implementation of the Directive to combat the human trafficking crisis which is evident across Europe. The most common form of trafficking is that of women and girls who are trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation. At the same time, however, according to a 2016 European Commission study,³⁴⁶ victims of sex trafficking can be difficult to identify in mixed populations of women in prostitution. Article 18/4 of the anti-trafficking directive asserts that in order to prevent THB, EU Member States should discourage demand and consider criminalising the act of purchasing sex. Ultimately, in a context of hyper-sexualisation and oppression of women in society, male sex buyers who exploit women's vulnerability through financial power and control should be made accountable for their actions. In several member states the purchase of sex is legal, which allows traffickers to use these legal frameworks to further exploit victims and make large profits from the demand for "sexual services".

In addition to the effective transposition of the Directive 2011/36/EU to combat trafficking, other key proposals at the European level include:

- Continue to invest in the ratification and implementation of the Directive on THB, including the office of the Anti-Trafficking Coordinator.
- Make progress on European legislation based on the 2014 Resolution on sexual exploitation and prostitution and its impact on gender equality.
- **Ratify and implement the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence** and ensure the full integration of the Convention into EU legislation and policy frameworks.
- A strong EU legal framework on the issue of violence against women, introducing mandatory and standardised rules in all the EU countries. Following the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, the EU must **introduce a Directive on Violence against Women**, adopt a comprehensive EU strategy and ensure full implementation of the EU Victims' Rights Directive.

4. A Europe that provides peace, human security and dignity for all women and girls

Whether it be through sexual exploitation, the denial of sexual and reproductive health and rights, violence at the hands of men or the oppressive proliferation of racist and nationalist viewpoints, the health, well-being and safety of millions of women and girls are put at risk on a daily basis. We demand a better future for everyone across Europe. To achieve this, we must work together so that all women and girls can fulfil their potential in a secure and supportive environment. Two issues need urgent action:

Refugees - Violence, sexism and racism are central to the structures of sexual exploitation, in which migrant and refugee women and girls are disproportionately represented. It is estimated that 70% of women in prostitution have a migrant background and 75% are between 13 and 25 years old. The vulnerability of migrant and refugee women and girls is compounded by trauma, lack of state support and of access to work and legal migration routes, psychological violence/ manipulation and their experience of trafficking. The EU response to the increase in numbers of migrants and recent migration policies have not yet improved the situation and have failed to reflect a humanitarian response to this issue.

The EWL proposes that the EU asylum system should incorporate a gender perspective and above all protect unaccompanied girls. Evidence from grassroots organisations working on the frontlines has revealed a growing phenomenon of “missing girls” in Europe. There is an immediate need for the collection of disaggregated data (including age disaggregated data) and the identification of potential trafficking victims at reception centres across Europe. Because only one out of ten unaccompanied minors are girls,³⁴⁷ the EWL, together with other women’s rights organisations, asks “Where are the girls?” In addition, an [EIGE report \(2018\) - Gender-Specific Measures in Anti-Trafficking Actions](#) suggests that, in order to prevent sex trafficking and to protect girl-child victims of sexual exploitation, there is a need for comprehensive strategies, such as the early identification of child victims, the adequate provision of guardians, together with the development of age appropriate support programmes and the provision of gender specific accommodation services for children by Member States.

The EU institutions should honour their commitment to combat the crime of human trafficking by ensuring that all Member States are efficiently transposing and implementing the EU directive on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Protecting its Victims.³⁴⁸

Older Women – the situation of older women is often overlooked in studies, statistics and policy impact assessments. Their quality of life is profoundly affected by the high gender pension gap, which stands at 40% in Europe, and their higher risk of old age poverty. Statistics do not generally record the age of women suffering violence beyond 64. Violence against older women is therefore another issue, where older women are often invisible, hidden in the overall categories of “domestic violence” and “elder abuse”. For example, older women are less likely to report violence owing to shame, disability, confusion, frailty, pressure from the perpetrator or the family or because of limited access to external support.³⁴⁹

5. A Europe that channels resources for women’s human rights

Financial decisions and investments mirror political priorities. Accordingly, the provision of sustainable funding mechanisms and resources reflects the true extent of political commitments to women’s rights and gender equality. We call for consistent and reliable funding for women’s rights organisations and urge decision makers to approve and implement gender responsive budgets with the goal of realising women’s rights and equality at all levels.

*Gender equality & the EU Budget*³⁵⁰ - The European Women’s Lobby, Women in Development Europe (WIDE+), CARE International and COFACE Families Europe are seriously concerned by the lack of visible commitments to equality between women and men in the negotiations of the future European Union budget in the context of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF).

We call for a clear commitment to equality between women and men in the MFF in line with treaty obligations.

This means making equality between women and men **a horizontal key priority in the MFF 2021-2027, and the inclusion of a gender mainstreaming clause in the Common Provisions for the seven shared management funds.**

Equality between women and men has been the cornerstone of the European Union since its beginning. Over the decades Europe has shown strong leadership in gender equality. Equality between women and men as well as gender mainstreaming in all policies are requirements enshrined in the Treaties, the European Charter of Fundamental Rights, the UN Convention on the Rights of persons with Disabilities, as well as the Beijing Platform for Action, **the European Pact for Gender Equality 2011-2020, and the Sustainable Development Goals.**

For this reason, it is not acceptable that equality between women and men is no longer a visible horizontal provision for the future EU budget and consequently will not be a priority for the spending period after 2020. The dilution of gender equality in other priorities is an indication that equality between women and men has been downgraded in the EU agenda. Women represent at least half the population and, while some progress has been made to achieve equality between women and men, gender equality is still not a reality in the EU and beyond. We cannot afford to become complacent. At a time when European societies are confronted with rising extremism, radicalism and divisions, it is more important than ever to uphold and strengthen the EU values of equality between women and men and human rights. It is of utmost importance that the EU does not take a step backwards.

2019 European Semester Country Reports

EWL gave the European Commission recommendations on how the gender perspective could be strengthened in future Country Reports, and more widely in the European Macro-Economic Framework. These include:

- **A gender and intersectional perspective needs to be strengthened:** gender equality must go beyond the very important issue of increasing female participation in the labour market. EWL calls for the use of gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting throughout the European Semester and for it to take into account the multiple discrimination and inequalities that women face.
- **Barcelona targets are not being met** in many Member States and there are huge differences between countries: in several Member States there is a persistent lack of high quality and affordable preschool childcare (particularly for children from 0 to 3 years). For example, in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, fewer than 5% of children under three years of age are cared for in formal childcare structures (EU-SILC 2016).

What are the Barcelona targets?

In 2002, at the Barcelona Summit, the European Council set two targets for Member States: by 2010 high quality and affordable childcare facilities must be available for:

- At least 90% of children between 3 years old and the mandatory school age; and
- At least 33% of children under 3 years of age.

- The Country Reports **lack any feminist approach to demographic shifts** such as Europe's ageing population, migration, low fertility rates and the links with care provision.
- **A holistic understanding of care with a life-course approach:** care does not only consist of childcare, but encompasses eldercare, healthcare, care for persons with disabilities.
- The **gender pay gap and gender pension gap** are persistent issues in all EU Member States.
- Policies at national and European level do not take into account or promote the equal involvement and role of fathers and second parents in child care.
- The importance of **engaging civil society organisations in policy-making and providing a space for dialogue at EU level.** The Commission has committed to strengthen this dialogue, which must be provided with appropriate funding and support, especially in those Member States where conservative governments have shrunk the space for civil society organisations, particularly women's organisations.

<https://womenlobby.org/Consultation-on-European-Semester-at-last?lang=en>

HOMELESSNESS IS THE VISIBLE MANIFESTATION OF INCREASING INEQUALITY ACROSS THE EUROPEAN UNION³⁵¹

BY RUTH OWEN, FEANTSA

Introduction

Homelessness is a very visible manifestation of failure of government policy in two areas: in regulation and management of housing markets and in provision of solutions for people who find themselves homeless for whatever reason. The two are inextricably linked. They play out in a context of poverty and inequality, evolving and increasing at different rates across the European Union.

Throughout Europe homeless population profiles have been changing since the beginning of the recession. Housing markets are pricing more and more people out of decent accommodation, and not only the most vulnerable. Being above the poverty line or having a job is no guarantee of housing security (in the market economy). Factors such as being young, having dependent family members, or being a migrant make people more susceptible to difficulties in accessing housing. Housing affordability and liveability are emerging as the most challenging social policy issues all over Europe.³⁵²

European Union and housing

This situation has evolved and continues despite the professed desire of the EU Commission to give equal priority to social issues alongside financial and economic issues. In 2014 the President of the European Commission, Jean-Paul Juncker told the European Parliament that he wanted Europe to earn “Social Triple A” rating alongside Triple As for its economic and financial policies.³⁵³ The European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR), first unveiled by the European Commission in 2017, has 20 principles which are intended to guarantee equal opportunities and access

to the labour market, fair working condition and social protection and inclusion. Principle 19 states:

- a. Access to social housing or housing assistance of good quality shall be provided for those in need;
- b. Vulnerable people have the right to appropriate assistance and protection against forced eviction;
- c. Adequate shelter and services shall be provided to the homeless in order to promote their social inclusion.

The EPSR, however, is non-binding on Member States and does not have an implementation plan. In addition, responsibility for housing lies with Member States.

Housing expenditure by households

In 2017, European Union households spent more than €2,000 billion on ‘housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuel’ (i.e. 13.1% of the EU’s GDP). Of all these areas of spending, housing has seen the biggest increase over the last ten years (ahead of spending on transport, food, health, communications, culture, education, etc.): households spent 24.2% of their total expenditure on housing in 2017, an increase of 1.5 points compared to 2007. Countries where households spend the greatest proportion of their total expenditure on housing are Finland (28.8%), Denmark, (28.7%), the United Kingdom (26.7%), France (26.2%) Sweden (26.1%) and the Czech Republic (25.4%). At the other end of the scale, the countries where the least expenditure proportionally is spent on housing are Malta (10.1%), Lithuania (14.8%) and Cyprus (15.4%).³⁵⁴

These are average figures. Inequality in housing expenditure is increasing, with the proportion of disposable income that poor households have to spend on housing increasing faster than the average. In some countries (Denmark, Austria, Italy, France, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Portugal), the proportion of the household budget allocated to housing fell for the population as a whole between 2007 and 2017 but increased for poor households; in others (Greece, Spain, Luxembourg, Ireland, Slovenia, Lithuania, Cyprus and Finland), while housing costs increased for all households, for poor households they increased to a greater extent.³⁵⁵

In 2017, 3% of the total European population and 8% of poor households were in arrears on their rent or their mortgage. The proportion of poor households in mortgage arrears is particularly high in Greece (21%), France (17%), Ireland and Cyprus (12%) as well as in Austria and the United Kingdom (11%). Analysis of arrears from 2007 to 2017 reveals inequalities yet again, with more poor households falling behind with their payments than the non-poor. In France, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Germany and Croatia, the proportion of households in arrears increased among poor households while it fell for the population as a whole.

In 2017, the proportion of poor households overburdened by housing costs (i.e. spending more than 40% of their disposable income on housing) rose to 38%, slightly more than in 2010 (+0.8 points), while the proportion of non-poor households overburdened by housing costs fell slightly (-0.7 points).³⁵⁶ One of the responses to high housing costs is to attempt to make savings. In a survey conducted in 2016 the Eurofound Quality of Life Survey found that in the previous 12 months 3% of all Europeans had moved into less expensive housing, taken in a lodger or moved in with someone else.

In all European Union countries, with exception of Slovakia, households who are renting have higher housing expenditure than homeowners. Poor tenants have particularly high housing costs in Luxembourg (€988 per month on average), Greece (€746), UK (€740), Denmark (€657) and the Netherlands (€629). Between 2007 and 2017, the cost of housing for poor tenants increased in three-quarters of EU countries, in particular in Romania (+234%), in Estonia (+150%), in Poland (+117%), in Greece (+84%), and in Bulgaria (+61%). In contrast, loans for house purchases have

never been cheaper: the average rate of interest charged for home purchases across the Euro area fell steadily from just over 5% p.a. in early 2008 before the economic crisis to 1.87% p.a. in February 2019.³⁵⁷

Housing management

In 2016, government agencies in the European Union spent €27.3 billion on property development³⁵⁸ and €73.7 billion on housing benefits.³⁵⁹ The World Bank³⁶⁰ has shown that the majority of EU Member States have focused their tax and public spending on property owners with expenditure on tax incentives (mainly targeting property owners with the highest incomes) often higher than spending on housing development programmes. The World Bank goes on to explain that mortgage credits do little to address the issues faced by people on the lowest incomes. On the contrary, mortgage credits, in the form of tax credits on mortgage interest or other incentives targeted on buyers and property owners, benefit those who are best positioned on the income distribution ladder, and are therefore do little or nothing to boost the supply or availability of affordable housing for those who need it most.

Housing conditions

In addition to high rents, poor households often have to live in sub-standard houses or apartments, that are overcrowded, damp or lacking basic sanitary facilities – and it is particularly households made insecure and vulnerable by the excessive costs of decent housing who suffer the most. In 2017 more than one in four poor Europeans were living in overcrowded housing. Eastern Europeans (in Romania, Poland, Bulgaria, Latvia and Hungary) are facing this problem in large numbers with rates above 40% of the total population.

Standards of housing are generally improving across Europe, but not for poor households who experienced worsening in conditions in a number of countries. Poor households are also likely to experience fuel poverty – not having enough money to maintain an adequate temperature in their homes. In 2017, in the European Union, 8% of all households had financial difficulty in maintaining an adequate household temperature. 18% of poor households had this

difficulty: in Italy, the rate was 29%, in Lithuania 26%, in Portugal 39% and reached 60% in Bulgaria. This indicator has worsened over the last ten years for poor households in half of all Member States: in Greece, there was a 54% increase between 2007 and 2017, and fuel poverty now affects half of all poor households. In Belgium, 20% of poor households are affected by this financial difficulty and 28% are living in damp housing (+25% between 2007 and 2017).³⁶¹ The houses or apartments of poor households are also likely to be poorly insulated which means that their fuel costs are much higher than they would be for a well-off household living in properly insulated accommodation.

All these problems are exacerbated by inequality. The likelihood of experiencing housing deprivation is higher in countries where income inequality is high.³⁶²

Who is most at risk?

Being a child or a young person aged 18-24, or from a country outside the EU, or a lone person with dependent children increases the risk of experiencing housing exclusion in Europe. Unfit housing has drastic consequences particularly on children,³⁶³ in terms of health, development, social life and well-being (lack of daylight, space), that can perpetuate the intergenerational cycle of poverty. Particular difficulties are faced by lone parent families. They are more likely to be overburdened in terms of their housing costs than other families. In 2017, one in five lone parent families (21%) in the European Union, spent more than 40% of their income on housing, in comparison with 9% of all families with children

Across Europe, families with children are more vulnerable to overcrowding than the population as a whole, except in Finland. In the European Union in 2017, almost one-quarter of households with children were living in overcrowded conditions compared to 9% of families without children.

Lone women with children are often worse affected than the rest of the population. In 13 European Union countries, lone women with children are more likely to live in damp accommodation than lone men with children.³⁶⁴

Coming from a foreign country outside the European Union also increases the risk of experiencing certain forms of housing exclusion, particularly overcrowding, and this is the case across all European countries. Between 2007 and 2017, inequality between people from foreign countries and nationals of the country concerned grew in the EU with regard to overcrowded housing, particularly in Poland, Slovakia, Belgium and the Netherlands.

Homelessness

According to recent estimations, each night, across the European Union, at least 700,000 people sleep rough or in emergency/temporary accommodation. This is an increase of 70% compared with 10 years ago when FEANTSA made similar calculations. The prevalence figure, measuring how many people experience homelessness at any point over 12 months is much higher.

The normal response of governments to homelessness is to treat it as an emergency, a temporary respite for the homeless person which he or she can use to begin to move towards housing sufficiency. Organisations working with homeless people are well aware of the shortcomings of the provision of emergency accommodation and its failure as any type of longer term solution. Access can be determined by the seasons and the weather. Conditions placed on admission can be difficult and tortuous to negotiate. The shelters themselves can be crowded and unpleasant, making the street or a friendly doorway a more inviting place to sleep. Systematised emergency accommodation is a reactive response to homelessness (neither curative nor preventive), disorganised (without strategy) and segmented (not continuous). The usefulness of emergency accommodation is not in question here. Rather, it is the widespread and institutionalised use of emergency accommodation as the main system of response to homelessness that needs to be challenged. The rightful place of emergency accommodation is as a short-term transition service, accessible to all, and a platform for redirecting people to appropriate solutions.

It doesn't have to be like this

Is there a solution to homelessness? Finland is the only country in Europe which has managed to reduce homelessness. The number of homeless fell from more than 20,000 in the 1980's to 6,615 in 2017. None are sleeping rough, and only 6% of them are living in emergency accommodation (84% are homeless people temporarily accommodated at friends or relatives). Finland has achieved this with appropriate and robust legislation, political will and strategic planning.

The approach used by Finland has put into practice is Housing First. It means "... ending homelessness instead of managing it. The basic idea is to offer permanent housing and needs-based support for homeless people instead of temporary accommodation in hostels or in emergency shelters. Permanent housing means an independent rental flat with own rental contract.

In [Housing First](#) people do not have to earn their right to housing by proving their capability to manage their lives. Instead, they are provided with a stable home and individually tailored support.³⁶⁵

According to Juha Kaakinen of the Y-Foundation in Finland any local objections were overcome because there was "... a strong political will to find new solutions for homelessness. There were a few local reactions concerning the location of new service facilities. However, those were mainly overcome by open interaction with the neighbourhoods... Financially, the key things are affordable housing and support. Extra funding that the state has allocated for flats and services has been an incentive for the municipalities to implement Housing First. Tenants pay rent and are entitled to receive housing benefits. Depending on their income, they may contribute to the cost of the services. The rest is covered by the municipalities. They provide the support themselves or buy support from other service providers, mainly from the NGOs. Stable living conditions enable the use of mainstream services instead of using expensive emergency services. This will save money in a long term."³⁶⁶

Recommendations

- The European Union must live up to the aspirations set out in the Pillar of Social Rights. It has a unique role to play in protecting fundamental rights, human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law. It must try to ensure that Member States' policies respect human rights and do not contribute to the criminalisation of homelessness. The European Commission's silence on the criminalisation of homelessness, which has existed in Hungary since 2018 – and, what's more, is enshrined in its Constitution – is a flagrant dereliction of the Commission's duty.
- The European Union should not hide behind subsidiarity and the fact that housing is a Member State responsibility. Homelessness is the consequence of failure of multiple public policies to protect citizens from housing deprivation. European legislation on issues such as migration, free movement, discrimination, disability, taxation, consumer protection, competition, energy and macro-economic governance must take into consideration reducing homelessness and the rights of homeless people.
- The European Commission must strengthen its control measures and its sanctions in relation to Member States which infringe European legislation on free movement. It should also establish a new legislative framework that would guarantee access to basic services, including accommodation, to mobile European citizens in order to protect their fundamental rights, similar to the directive on reception conditions for asylum applicants.³⁶⁷

- Since migrants, asylum seekers and people with a migration background are disproportionately represented among populations experiencing housing deprivation and homelessness, the European Commission should guarantee continuity in housing for all people in the process of seeking asylum.³⁶⁸ It should invest in housing and accommodation solutions to promote the integration of migrants. It should guarantee access to basic services (such as food, health-care and accommodation) regardless of administrative status and ensure that the necessary resources are allocated to the services who work with these people.
- The European budget is one of the most important tools at the disposal of Member States to help them reduce homelessness. In the current multiannual financial framework (2014-2020), structural funds and investment funds support initiatives in the fight against housing exclusion, particularly through the European Social Fund (at least 20% of the ESF in each Member State must be spent on promoting social inclusion, the fight against poverty and discrimination), the European Regional Development Fund and the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived.
- The future multiannual financial framework (2021-2027) currently being negotiated, opens up further possibilities for financing measures to reduce homelessness, both through structural funds and through InvestEU, the future investment programme that will follow the 'Juncker' plan. InvestEU envisages increased emphasis on social investment, in particular on social infrastructure, with affordable housing as a priority. Given that the main responsibility for organising and financing measures to fight homelessness lies at local, regional and national level, the role of European financing should be to improve policies and services.
- The challenge will be to ensure that resources, both national and European, are used strategically to end homelessness and not used merely to finance short-term measures, and that they reach the most vulnerable – as they rarely do at present.³⁶⁹ Finland, however, has provided us with an outstanding example of good practice. The Commission should also explore the possibility of developing specific instruments for the eradication of homelessness in the framework of the InvestEU programme, such as an investment platform or a dedicated fund.
- Eurobarometer surveys show that access to affordable housing is a major concern for EU citizens. The fight against homelessness is top of the political agenda in a growing number of Member States. This gives the EU a window of opportunity to put greater effort into its follow-up, coordination and direction of Member States' actions in this area.

YOUNG PEOPLE CALL FOR MEASURES TO PREVENT INCREASING ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

BY STEPHANIE BEECROFT, EUROPEAN YOUTH FORUM

Inequality between generations across the EU has shown a marked increase, with young people suffering the most.³⁷⁰ Austerity measures over the past decade have had a significant impact on young people in the EU, with spending on employment, education, health and social protection decreasing. In recent years, young people have become the population group at greatest risk of poverty and social exclusion, with more than one in four young people affected by this risk.³⁷¹ This represents a failure of the European social model to protect and promote the economic and social inclusion and wellbeing of all its citizens. It also jeopardises the EU's progress towards achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 10. If intergenerational inequality continues to rise it will not be possible for the EU to reduce inequalities within countries, a core part of SDG 10.

Young people today face obstacles in accessing civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights, experiencing discrimination in securing quality jobs, in participating in politics and in accessing fair, just and adequate social security systems. Legal and policy approaches to young people rarely take a rights-based approach, often viewing young people as a problem that requires a solution, rather than as rights holders.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development cannot be achieved without a move towards more equal societies. Our societies cannot be equal while young people face discrimination and challenges to their social, economic and political inclusion. The achievement of SDG 10 is of vital importance both for sustainable development and for young people. It is of great concern therefore that, according to data and analysis from Eurostat, the EU is both currently moving moderately away from targets in relation to this Goal and also failing to measure certain aspects of inequalities within the current EU indicator set.

Challenges to social, economic and political inclusion

Social and economic inclusion

Responses to the economic crisis and austerity measures led to a decline in employment protection, including cuts to minimum wages and unemployment benefits, affecting young people directly. Fiscal consolidation programmes since the crisis have had a direct and disproportionate impact on youth in the EU and have impacted on their inclusion in society.

Young people face high levels of vulnerability and unequal access to the labour market. Across the EU the youth unemployment rate, while decreasing, continues to be more than double the overall unemployment rate.³⁷² Entry-level jobs are diminishing and fewer employers are willing to take on and invest in the development of young workers. As a result, internships and apprenticeships have become necessary pathways to employment. Too often the positions available are unpaid, yet young people carry out work that could or should be done by paid employees. This violates their right to fair wages and to just and favourable conditions of work that ensure a decent living, jeopardising young people's social and economic inclusion. Unpaid internships also serve to deepen inequalities as not all young people can access them equally.

Young people have a slightly higher in work at-risk-of-poverty rate than the general working population, at 11% for 18-24 year-olds in 2017, compared to 9.4% of all people in work.³⁷³ Young people are also increasingly and disproportionately caught up in precarious and non-standard forms of employment, such as zero-hour contracts, undeclared work, temporary work and work in the platform economy.

According to Eurostat data, in 2016 43.8% of employees aged 15-24 in the European Union had temporary contracts.³⁷⁴ New and non-standard forms of employment do not always provide the necessary accumulation of work hours or income required by the state to allow access to social security. This contributes to the risk of poverty and social exclusion for young people.

Political inclusion

Young people are often viewed as too young, too immature or too apathetic to participate meaningfully in democratic life or political processes. This attitude limits their ability to influence decisions that directly affect them. Fewer than 2% of Members of Parliament worldwide are under the age of 30, which is far from representative of the general population. Low levels of youth representation in political bodies and decision-making processes are an important trigger of distrust of politics among young people, as they do not feel that their interests are represented.³⁷⁵ The underrepresentation of young people in politics is an impediment to the political inclusion of all across the EU and also undermines cohesive and inclusive societies.

Unequal opportunity and inequality of outcome

Young people in the EU face age-based discrimination as individuals in terms of their access to the labour market or the political sphere, but such discrimination is also structural. Discrimination on the basis of age or perceived inexperience is not just a widespread practice within the EU but in some cases it is also perpetuated through policies. Age limits constitute a form of structural discrimination against young people, which runs contrary to target 10.3 on ensuring equal opportunity and reducing inequalities of outcome.³⁷⁶

Youth minimum wages

Providing the opportunity for young people to gain valuable on-the-job experience is often used to justify unfair practices such as youth minimum wage policies, whereby young people, because of their age, receive a wage that is often well below the national minimum wage standard. Such differing minimum wage policies perpetuate age-based discrimination and conflict with the right to equal remuneration for work of equal value. In 2015, youth minimum wages were in place in seven EU Member States³⁷⁷, and in some of these countries youth minimum wage policies persist in 2019. Youth minimum wages constitute discriminatory policies and are an impediment to progress in targets 10.2, 10.3 and 10.4. They should therefore be eliminated.

Access to social protection

Access to social protection can be affected by age-based criteria. In some countries, young people must be above a certain age to access minimum income schemes, while access to unemployment benefits is often linked to length of prior employment. According to a 2015 study by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), in certain EU countries young people cannot receive income support before the age of 24 or 25³⁷⁸. Additionally, owing to their contributory nature, unemployment benefits are not available for young people looking for their first job or those who have only completed short-term contracts. Given that young people are already facing difficulties in obtaining quality, stable and long-term employment, this leaves them more vulnerable as they are unable to access their right to social security. In addition, difficulties in obtaining stable employment result in young people being unable to participate in contributory statutory pension systems. This means that the current generation of young people is at risk of poverty later in life³⁷⁹ and creates knock-on challenges for society as a whole. These issues are obstacles to progress in targets 10.2, 10.3 and 10.4.

Political participation

The legal voting age in most EU countries is 18, although there are three exceptions where Member States have set the voting age at lower than 18 for all elections.³⁸⁰ In many countries, however, eligibility rules for running for elected office impose age limits that are higher than the voting age. Despite voting at 18, young people are therefore often prevented from running for office, particularly upper houses or President, until they are considerably older. These discriminatory laws present an obstacle to progress towards the political inclusion of all across the EU.

Anti-discrimination legislation

Non-discrimination laws alone cannot fully address ageist attitudes and structural discrimination against young people. Yet laws and policies within the EU do not go far enough to protect young people from age-based discrimination across all areas of life. At EU level, for example, there is no legal protection against age-based discrimination except in the field of employment.

The absence of legal frameworks prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of age in all areas of life constitutes a significant barrier to fighting discrimination on the grounds of age. Anti-discrimination legislation has created a hierarchy of rights, whereby certain grounds of discrimination are more forcefully or effectively prohibited by legislation than others. Additionally, EU anti-discrimination legislation does not explicitly provide for the consideration of multiple grounds of discrimination to reflect the lived experiences of discrimination that some young people face. Factors such as gender, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnic origin, socioeconomic background, or migratory status, combine with age to result in multiple and intersectional discrimination. Yet, young people at the intersection of several categories are often excluded by legislation.

A more equal society?

In general, economic inequality within countries is high and there is no sign of this abating. Inequality is created and perpetuated through our economic and political system.

There is a need to design a fairer economy from the start by means of policies regulating quality jobs with decent wages and working conditions for all. Policy-makers should implement measures that ensure a sustainable and socially just allocation of profits, adopt regulations to prevent political capture and reform taxation systems to clamp down on tax avoidance and tax evasion. New revenue should be invested in policies that benefit all young people and reach all vulnerable and marginalised groups.

It is clear that for all young people to be fully included in our society, its economy and its politics, a siloed approach will not work. The interlinkages of SDG 10 with SDGs 1, 3, 4, 5, 8 and 16, in particular, are core to its achievement. Education, for example, is a key indicator of life outcomes: quality and inclusive education across the life-course lays the groundwork for social cohesion and an equitable society. Ensuring quality employment, tackling poverty, establishing youth-inclusive social protection systems and addressing discrimination and underrepresentation of youth in politics are equally fundamental steps towards a more sustainable, cohesive and equal society.

Failure to address inequalities and social exclusion leads to loss of trust and cohesion in society and is detrimental to social harmony and well-being.³⁸¹ Conversely, building a society that works for young people creates a stronger foundation for all. For this to happen, the discrimination and barriers that young people experience in accessing their economic and social rights must be urgently addressed.

Recommendations

- The EU and its Member States should take a rights-based, rather than a “social policies” approach to youth, to facilitate the recognition of young people as rights-holders and advance the removal of the barriers they face in accessing their rights.
- The EU institutions should adopt legislative instruments to ensure the implementation of the 20 key principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights for all social groups, including young people.
- Policy-makers across the EU should end age-based discrimination in wage policies and ensure equal remuneration for equal work. National minimum wage policies that apply to all workers, regardless of age, must be established.
- Policy-makers across the EU must reform social protection policies to end age-based discrimination in access to unemployment benefits, minimum income schemes or other social protection mechanisms, and ensure adequate coverage for all in the context of the changing realities of the labour market and the changing nature of work.
- EU Member States should enact or amend national legislation to align the minimum voting age and the minimum age of eligibility to run for office, as a necessary step towards ensuring young people's political inclusion.
- Across the EU, legislation prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of age in all areas of life should be enacted. Existing anti-discrimination legislation should be amended so that discriminatory practices can be identified as those based on more than one prohibited ground of discrimination, or those that are a combination of prohibited grounds.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES: ENSURING OUR RIGHTS TO EQUALITY TO SUCCESSFULLY IMPLEMENT THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

BY AN-SOFIE LEENKNECHT, EUROPEAN DISABILITY FORUM

Persons with disabilities comprise an estimated 15% of the world's population, more than one billion people.³⁸² The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development states that more than 80% of persons with disabilities live in poverty.³⁸³ Persons with disabilities encounter widespread exclusion from all areas of economic, political, social, civil and cultural life, including employment, education, healthcare and other services and experience higher rates of poverty and discrimination, and lower levels of income than the general population.³⁸⁴

In order to achieve a world in which no one is left behind, actions to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 10 - Reduced inequalities - and all the interlinked SDGs, must be undertaken in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).³⁸⁵ The CRPD promotes, protects and ensures the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities across the lifecourse (from before birth to death). The European Union ratified the CRPD in 2006 and it is therefore legally binding.

What is the issue?

In Europe, discrimination practised against persons with disabilities is a daily reality. Discrimination ranges from more visible forms (such as segregated education and denial of employment opportunities) to more subtle forms (such as imposition of physical, psychological and social barriers), resulting in social and physical exclusion of persons with disabilities.

While the EU and its Member States have pledged to ensure the rights of persons with disabilities by ratifying the CRPD³⁸⁶ and have taken some practical

steps on inclusion, there are still considerable gaps in protection against discrimination on the grounds of disability. EU law does not adequately protect Europeans with disabilities from discrimination in all fields of life. Women, children, older persons with disabilities, or persons with disabilities who are LGBTI+ or part of ethnic minorities, experience multiple forms of inequalities.³⁸⁷

The EU needs to recognise and remedy these gaps in order to make satisfactory progress towards achieving SDG 10's targets on inequalities with regard to persons with disabilities. This is the conclusion of the [third European Human Rights report](#) by the European Disability Forum (EDF),³⁸⁸ which analyses how European countries are guaranteeing the rights of persons with disabilities. The report states that while most EU countries do have laws to protect persons with disabilities from discrimination, these laws are either not well applied, or do not go far enough. It also concludes that the EU's "piecemeal" equality legislation (different laws for different minorities) results in a lack of protection for those persons with disabilities who are also part of other protected groups (children, older persons, LGBTI, ethnic minorities, refugees and asylum seekers for example).³⁸⁹

Beyond the obligation to implement the rights of equality and non-discrimination, as required by the CRPD, such protection is crucial to protecting the freedom of movement of more than 80 million EU citizens with disabilities. In practice, the different levels of protection which persons with disabilities still experience today are likely to continue to have a negative impact on the freedom of movement of persons with disabilities across the EU, affecting in particular employed persons, tourists and students with disabilities.

Kamil Goungor, chair of the EDF Youth Committee shares an example: “As someone with disabilities, it’s already difficult to get a job, but it’s twice as difficult if you are young and if you have a disability. Because you not only face accessibility issues, but you also have to demonstrate your experience. How can you gain experience when a youth with disabilities faces a lot of barriers in order to even find an internship?”

Both the EU itself and Member States have important and complementary responsibilities in ensuring equality of persons with disabilities, as required by the CRPD and SDG10. The provisions of SDG10, Target 2, are very clear: “By 2030 empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.”

What has been done in the EU to address this?

Yannis Vardakastanis, President of EDF notes: “EDF’s vision is a Europe where equality is guaranteed for all. The EU’s motto is ‘United in diversity’: this will only happen if you have a broad non-discrimination legislation.”

The EU has adopted several directives to combat discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnic origin and gender in a broad range of fields, such as employment, social protection and benefits or compensation for social disadvantages, education and goods and services available to the public, including housing and health care.³⁹⁰ However, only the Employment Equality Directive adopted in 2000³⁹¹ currently prohibits discrimination based on disability, and solely in the field of employment and vocational training. This Directive, which came into force in 2003, also covers discrimination on the grounds of age, religion or belief and sexual orientation, and was a very positive step. It specifically obliges employers to accommodate the needs of disabled people at the workplace, by taking ‘... appropriate measures, where needed in a particular case, to enable a person with a disability to have access to, participate in, or advance in employment, or to undergo training ...’

This provision on mandatory accommodation to the needs of persons with disabilities at work is central in ensuring their equal right to work and employment.

The adoption of anti-discrimination directives initiated a movement throughout the EU and its Member States towards the adoption of national non-discrimination legislation transposing the directives. Many EU Member States go much further than the EU Employment Equality Directive in protecting persons with disabilities from discrimination. 24 countries have provisions on discrimination based on disability which also cover other areas of life, such as access to goods and services (including housing), education and social protection. In contrast, Estonia, Greece, Poland and Slovakia only protect persons with disabilities against discrimination in the field of work, as required by the 2000 EU Employment Equality Directive.

While this progress in 24 Member States is positive, in reality, it is limited. Member States may not fully understand and include in their legal provisions means to ensure ‘reasonable accommodation’³⁹² or understand that its denial is a form of discrimination on the grounds of disability. They also often do not recognise and address discrimination by association and the multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination. Furthermore, laws that discriminate against persons with disabilities, for instance, by authorising the limitation or removal of their legal capacity, and promoting segregated education and employment, are still in force in many countries.

In 2008, the European Commission proposed a EU directive prohibiting discrimination in access to goods and services, education, social protection and health (“Horizontal Equal Treatment Directive”).³⁹³ The Commission’s proposal is supported by the European Parliament and civil society, but has been blocked for more than ten years now by the Council of the European Union,³⁹⁴ which represents the Member States of the EU. For the past decade, the Council has not been able to agree on the text. This prevents Europeans from being protected against discrimination in all fields of life in all countries of the EU.

What are the EDF recommendations for the new Commission to act on inequality for persons with disabilities?

The 2019 EDF Human Rights report³⁹⁵ calls on the EU to adopt broad and ambitious legislation that protects all people from all forms of discrimination. Such legislation has never been adopted, despite years of calls by anti-discrimination groups.

The report recommends that:

1. EU and Member States should repeal all discriminatory laws and eliminate discriminatory practices.
2. The EU and Member States should combat all forms of discrimination on the grounds of disabilities. They should tackle discrimination of persons with disabilities in all sectors and population groups, including women and girls, children, older persons, ethnic minorities, migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, LGBTQI.
3. The EU should ensure fiscal measures the use of EU funds promote non-discrimination and accessibility.
4. Persons with disabilities should be continuously involved in all that impacts them.
5. The EU and Member States should collect and disaggregate more data relating to persons with disabilities.
6. The EU and Member States should provide more training on 'reasonable accommodation' applicable to all areas of life.
7. Legal aid, legal action and compensation should be available to all persons with disabilities that are victims of discrimination.

THE CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING AND MONITORING THE AGENDA 2030 AND SDGS 3 AND 10 FROM AN OLD AGE PERSPECTIVE

BY NENA GEORGANTZI, AGE PLATFORM EUROPE

There are three explicit references to older people in the SDG framework; (Goal 2 - hunger - Target 2.2; and Goal 11 - human settlements - Targets 11.2, 11.7).³⁹⁶ There is language referring to “all”, people of “all ages”, in most goals. Goal 3 is “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.” Goal 17, Target 17.18 explicitly references age in relation to disaggregated data for the monitoring and assessment of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.³⁹⁷ Inclusion of language on older people, age and all ages reflects the intention of the SDGs to ‘leave no one behind’ and to meet the rights and needs of all social groups, which necessarily includes older people. While this arguably represents progress, especially when contrasted with the Millennium Development Goals and the UN Millennium Declaration, which did not mention age or older persons at all, there is a sharp contrast with other groups such as persons with disabilities, mentioned 11 times in the 2030 Agenda, and children and young people, mentioned 23 times. Therefore, as far as age and older people are concerned, there is plenty of room for improvement. Given the speed and scale of demographic ageing it is important to raise the profile of ageing issues in the global development agenda, starting with the gaps and inconsistencies in the SDG framework.

In the light of the global experience of ageing, it is surprising that Goal 3 on healthy lives does not include a specific target for older people. Experts have noted that Target 3.4, which calls for the reduction by one third of “premature mortality” from non-communicable diseases up to age of 70 is discriminatory.³⁹⁸ Defining as ‘premature’ those deaths that occur before the age of 70, when most deaths from NCDs occur after 70 years of age, allows “governments to deny prevention, cure or care to the majority of people suffering from heart disease, cancer, diabetes, lung disease and

dementia.”³⁹⁹ This target in and by itself deprioritizes the rights and needs of people over 70 years of age, and is in contradiction with the fundamental universal human right to health to people of all ages. This could have the effect of governments and health providers failing to improve or correct inadequate or biased health services for older people.⁴⁰⁰ AGE Platform Europe have noted that older persons may also be excluded from rehabilitation or surgical treatment.⁴⁰¹ In sum, the use of language on “premature death” in SDG 3 appears to perpetuate ageist prejudices that devalue older people’s lives and opens the way for unequal treatment and breaches of the right to the highest attainable standard of health for all.

The combination of age discrimination, resources limited by austerity policies and increased pressure on public finances undoubtedly has significant impacts on services for older people. SDG10, which aims to reduce inequalities, has some potential to address the discrimination faced by older persons, as it refers to age as a ground of discrimination. Most SDG targets, however, refer to income inequalities, failing to reflect the other forms of discrimination that older people experience. By way of example, indicator 10.3.1 seeks to gather information about the “proportion of the population reporting having personally felt discriminated against or harassed within the previous 12 months on the basis of a ground of discrimination prohibited under international human rights law.” Currently there is no explicit prohibition of age discrimination under international standards, so no reports of harassment or discrimination on the basis of age could be included under this indicator.

The gap in international human rights law means that age discrimination may be justified in a wider range of circumstances than for other grounds.

Thus, despite age discrimination being prohibited in several contexts,⁴⁰² mandatory retirement ages are considered acceptable in a number of countries,⁴⁰³ even though they infringe older people's right to work and earn a sustainable income. Age discrimination with regard to insurance is also commonly permitted.⁴⁰⁴

Although the SDGs and human rights mechanisms should inform and strengthen each other, in the case of older people, international human rights standards are inadequate.⁴⁰⁵ The lack of an internationally agreed definition of age discrimination in human rights law currently impedes Member States from adopting a harmonized and equal application of SDG10 for older persons. Furthermore, without clear recognition that such situations conflict with human rights provisions, it is possible to regard them as normal, justifiable and inevitable and to overlook them in the implementation of the SDGs.

The other serious challenge for age inclusive SDG implementation is the number of significant gaps in age data. National and comparative surveys have both age limits and serious gaps in relation to ageing, which limit the possibility of counting in and including older people. For example, the continuing dependence on data between the ages of 15-49, routinely used to assess violence against women, ignores the experiences of abuse in older age.⁴⁰⁶ Information on elder abuse is limited by age limits within demographic and health surveys with the result that older persons' experience of abuse is invisible.⁴⁰⁷

Although recent efforts to encourage the provision of more age-disaggregated data to measure progress on the SDGs are very positive,⁴⁰⁸ data sets may still reflect outdated, biased or incomplete views about older age. Typically older people are represented as a single group, such as 50+ or 60+, without appropriate age cohort distinctions to reflect the heterogeneity in older age. It is also complicated to reflect age and its intersecting characteristics, such as being female or male, a migrant or a person with a disability. Poverty datasets based on household income may fail to reflect the real extent of poverty faced by older people. Such surveys assume that older people get an equal share, whereas in reality the needs of children may be prioritized and older people may have additional unmet needs, for example, due to mobility limitations or health needs.⁴⁰⁹

These gaps in data are an obstacle to understanding older persons' experience, mean that older people can literally be invisible in the monitoring of the SDGs and that development strategies are not adequately factoring in older persons' rights and experiences. This will continue to be the situation if properly disaggregated data are not collected and not made available. Good data are essential for the realization of rights and for the greater understanding and guidance that are needed to design and implement age-inclusive development policies. Without international human rights norms around older age, a truly age inclusive implementation of the SDGs seems problematic. Even if the implementation of the SDGs helps advance older people's rights in some areas, they are likely to leave them behind in others, due to the absence of a comprehensive human rights framework specific to older age.

In addition, the absence of clear human rights standards for older people makes monitoring the 'leave no one behind' principle of the SDGs difficult for NGOs, National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), age advocates and other civil society stakeholders. The Danish Human Rights Institute has developed an online tool linking SDGs with human rights obligations, with the aim of helping to anchor implementation strategies in human rights obligations.⁴¹⁰ As there are so few references to older age and older persons in international human rights law, however, this guide is currently limited in scope about how the SDGs can take into account the rights of older persons. Other material, training and guidance for SDG implementation supporting national implementation strategies are also unlikely to include issues of ageing and older people. On the other hand, the obligation of Member States to take into account the CRPD⁴¹¹ in development strategies has encouraged actions and guidance to support rights holders and duty bearers in mainstreaming the rights of persons with disabilities in development processes.⁴¹²

In sum, while the SDGs represent an important opportunity to raise the profile of the rights of older persons in the global development agenda, it remains unclear how the promise to "leave no one behind" can be met for older persons. Further guidance, provided by human rights standards is needed to formulate and implement fully old age inclusive policies.

EU POLICIES ON DEBT, TAX AND FINANCE AND THEIR IMPACT ON DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

BY BODO ELLMERS AND TOVE RYDING, EURODAD

EU policies on debt, tax and finance have a very significant impact on the achievement of SDG 10, both within the EU and in third countries. These are the policies that shape the availability as well as the distribution of financial resources that will directly or indirectly impact on sustainable development. Wrong and ill-informed decisions do not just hinder progress, they can even be detrimental to development and reverse progress already made. Striking examples of this can be found from within the EU itself – for example in the way countries directly affected by the Euro crisis experienced the impoverishment of large shares of the population, the destruction of welfare systems and the transformation of labour markets towards increasingly precarious work.

Worryingly, while debt, tax and finance are central policy areas which are discussed in cabinets and parliaments in Brussels and Member States' capitals on a daily basis, the need to achieve the SDGs in general and SDG 10 in particular is nowhere sufficiently embedded into the decision-making procedures. Moreover, while taxation is at least rhetorically addressed in official EU communications on policy coherence for development, the EU policies related to debt sustainability and wider financial sector policies are not.⁴¹³ This is highly problematic, for the following reasons:

After the Euro crisis: the impacts of fiscal austerity and internal adjustment

The Euro crisis that held Europe hostage over the past decade was one of the key constraints impeding progressive transformation towards sustainable development in the EU, as austerity policies slashed investment spending across the EU, but in particular in the most affected countries of the European 'periphery', such as Portugal, Spain, Cyprus and especially in Greece.

The way in which the EU addressed the crisis had negative spill over effects on third countries. A key reason for the Euro crisis was internal imbalances, the countries in the EU 'periphery' imported more from those in the 'core' than they exported. The deficits were financed by lending from the 'core' country banks to 'periphery' country consumers. This house of cards was not sustainable in the long run and collapsed a decade ago.

The EU's approach to solving the crisis was one-sided adjustment, focused on forcing austerity policies on the countries in the periphery. The methods used included political and ideological pressure and a sophisticated regulatory framework, which the EU set up after the outbreak of the crisis. This includes, among other elements, reforms to the Stability and Growth Pact, a new [Macroeconomic Imbalance Procedure](#), and the [Fiscal Compact](#), which imposed austerity policies on the countries in the periphery. As a consequence, fiscal and trade deficits have been reduced, and countries such as Greece, Spain and Portugal are no longer deficit countries. However, nothing has been done to address the exorbitant trade surpluses in countries of the European core such as Germany and the Netherlands.

As a consequence, the EU as a whole has become a surplus region vis-a-vis the rest of the world. Former internal problems turned into external problems, as the EU attempted to solve internal economic imbalances by converting them into external economic imbalances. Since the competitive devaluations of the 1930s Great Depression this type of economic and financial response to crisis has been known – as a ‘beggar-thy-neighbour’ policy.

In the Eurozone, where the European Commission has more tools at hand to impose austerity, the current account surplus, at 3.5% of GDP, was even above the EU’s average of 1.4% of GDP, according to Eurostat data for 2017. This indicates that the EU is generally importing fewer goods and products from other countries than it exports. It is consequently ‘exporting unemployment’ to the rest of the world, instead of supporting job creation and income generation. This undermines developing countries’ chances to develop through trade. A few wealthier Member States, in particular Germany, the Netherlands and Denmark are responsible for most of the surplus in absolute terms.

Another implication is that core countries’ excessive savings, which were once recycled into the EU’s internal periphery, are now flowing as loans to the ‘new’ deficit countries outside Europe, creating external debts there. The EU is currently building a new house of cards of unsustainable debt, very similar to the house of cards that led to the Euro crisis a decade ago, but this time outside Europe.

The impact of lax monetary policies

This effect is reinforced by the second major set of crisis management instruments used by the EU in recent years: lax monetary policies. Starting from late 2008, the European Central Bank (ECB) as well as central banks in non-Euro EU countries lowered interest rates, and have kept them at levels near zero per cent since then. Central banks also started to [buy government bonds](#) and other assets in order to avoid defaults, lower borrowing costs and boost credit supply in the EU. At first, this was done cautiously and in small steps, but from 2015 onwards, following ECB-director Mario Draghi’s announcement he would do “whatever it takes” to prevent a collapse of the common currency area, the scale was dramatically

increased. The so-called “quantitative easing” (QE) policies helped to lower interest rates across Europe, and thus freed up public funds for more useful purposes than paying creditors. However, an unintended but predictable side-effect of QE was that it created trillions of hot speculative money, which has been destabilizing the world economy ever since.

For developing countries, this policy was a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it boosted financing options for developing countries. In the absence of capital controls, some of the money created through QE flowed to developing countries, in search of high-yield investments. In the context of fiscal austerity and recession, these were difficult to find in Europe. Many low-income countries that were previously dependent on funding from development banks or China started to issue Euro bonds on global financial markets, and had no problems in finding buyers. Foreign currency loans were easy to obtain, and public as well as private actors in developing countries made extensive use of this financing option.⁴¹⁴

The EU and its Member States have also set up new institutions and facilities that act pro-cyclically, i.e. that further promote the export of private capital from Europe to the global South. Most prominent are the European External Investment Plan and the G20’s Compact with Africa, the latter set up under the German G20 presidency in 2017.

Pushing poor countries into a new debt trap

The lending boom has pushed poor countries into a new debt trap.⁴¹⁵ Both private and public debt levels in developing countries have surged. This became problematic after Central Banks in the USA and Europe turned around and started to ‘normalize’ their monetary policies, phased out bond purchases, and, in the case of the US Federal Reserve Bank, raised interest rates.

By the end of 2018, 32 low-income countries had either defaulted or were at high risk of debt crisis, according to the [IMF debt sustainability assessments](#).⁴¹⁶ This number has more than doubled in the past five years. The lending boom to developing countries in the wake of the financial crisis has consequently wiped out the hard-won debt relief gains

made by the Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) debt relief initiatives in the 1990s and 2000s.

Middle-income countries such as Argentina, Pakistan, or Turkey which were hit by a “tsunami⁴¹⁷” of capital flows from the North in the early years of the crisis, have more recently experienced massive capital outflows with foreign investors withdrawing their speculative capital. Argentina had to request the largest IMF bail-out loan ever in 2018 – almost US\$ 60bn – in order to refinance capital flight. It committed in return to harsh austerity adjustments, which in the coming years will predictably constrain if not reverse progress made towards the SDGs in the country.⁴¹⁸

Backing IMF adjustments that undermine the SDGs

Many other developing countries ended up in a similar situation: in a recent research report, Eurodad assessed loan conditions in IMF programs and found that these were designed without consideration for the best implementation of the SDGs. Conditions that may hamper progress towards achievement of the SDGs include those which require governments to cut public spending overall (“fiscal consolidation” in the IMF jargon), to fire public service workers (“wage bill reforms”) that are key to effective delivery of public services including health and education, or to reduce private sector wages and undermine workers’ rights (“labour market reform”).⁴¹⁹ IMF programs, including their loan conditionalities, need to be signed off by the IMF Executive Board, in which EU Member States hold more than 30% of voting rights. Collectively, they could veto any IMF program that undermines SDG implementation or violates human rights. But they do not.

Aware of the devastating human rights violations stemming from creditor-designed ‘economic reforms programs’, of both the Troika in Europe, and the IMF outside Europe, the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) adopted Guiding Principles on Human Rights Impact Assessments (HRIA) of Economic Reform Programmes in March 2019.⁴²⁰

The UNHRC calls on governments and creditor institutions to ensure that these HRIAs are done, and their findings are considered, when decisions on economic reforms are made. The UNHRC Resolution was adopted by majority vote, due to the support of developing countries in the UNHRC. Scandalously, however, all EU Member States with seats in the UNHRC voted against, making clear that they prefer to turn a blind eye to the often devastating human rights impacts of economic reforms that they themselves implement or impose on others through the IMF.

EU’s role in the broken global tax system

The obvious alternative to funding the implementation of the SDGs with debt is to ensure higher tax income in developing countries. If done correctly, that is, by means of progressive tax systems that redistribute resources from the wealthiest to the poorest, taxation could be a key tool to achieve SDG10 on reducing inequality. But done incorrectly, through the imposition of regressive taxes, taxation can lead to increased inequality.

A central element of any fair, effective and progressive tax system is to ensure that multinational corporations pay their share of tax in the countries where they do business. However, as illustrated by numerous tax scandals in recent years, this can be a difficult thing to achieve, and still today, multinational corporations have numerous ways of using international structures to avoid taxes. While corporate tax avoidance is a very costly affair for both developed and developing countries, the impacts are felt more forcefully by developing countries, which often rely more heavily on corporate taxes for generating public revenue, and typically have greater difficulties finding alternative sources of income.⁴²¹

The EU and its Member States play a multifaceted role in relation to this problem. On the one hand, the EU itself is deeply impacted by the loss of corporate tax income, and has, in some cases, been a first mover in providing solutions. In 2013, for example, the EU introduced transparency rules that allow the public to access data to see where multinational banks do business and what they pay in tax in each country where they operate (so-called public country-by-country reporting). Although this won't solve everything, research has shown that this type of transparency can play an important role in reducing corporate tax avoidance.⁴²² For this reason, the EU is currently debating whether to expand the system to all large multinational corporations, instead of just banks, but unfortunately, this initiative is currently being stalled by the majority of EU Member States.⁴²³

EU tax havens and the race to the bottom

Unfortunately, some EU countries also play a different, and much more worrying, role in the international tax system, namely by helping multinational corporations avoid tax. For example, EU Member States such as the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Ireland, Hungary and Malta have been called out by both the European Commission and the European Parliament owing to their use of so-called “aggressive tax planning structures”, meaning structures which multinationals can use to significantly lower their corporate tax bill.⁴²⁴ Such harmful tax structures in the EU can have very direct negative impacts on developing countries. One example is the tech giant Apple, which, according to a case presented by the European Commission, used tax structures in Ireland to lower its corporate tax rate dramatically, reducing it in 2014 to 0.005 per cent. According to the Commission, the profits which were channelled through Ireland did not originate only in Europe, but also came from Africa, India, and the Middle East.⁴²⁵

However, it is not only the countries with the most aggressive structures that are a cause for concern. An increasing number of EU countries have engaged in what is often referred to as “tax competition”, in an attempt to attract foreign investment.

For example, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of EU countries using harmful tax incentives such as special tax regimes for income from intellectual property, so-called patent boxes which are known to create risks of corporate tax avoidance.⁴²⁶ At the same time, there is a broad trend in both Europe and globally towards lowering headline corporate tax rates as part of what has been described as a “race to the bottom” on corporate taxation.⁴²⁷

Enforcing biased and ineffective tax standards on developing countries

One important way to stop harmful tax practices and reverse the “race to the bottom” would be through global cooperation and regulation. But unfortunately, the current international framework on taxation of multinational corporations is deeply complex, opaque and ineffective.⁴²⁸ Furthermore, it has failed to take account of the interests and realities of most developing countries. This is to a large extent a reflection of which countries were, and importantly were not, in the room when the rules were written.

For the last 50 years, the OECD, also known as the “rich countries’ club”, has been the place where global tax standards have been decided. In more recent years, decision making has also included the G20. However, during the last major review of international corporate tax standards – the OECD’s process on Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS), which was concluded in 2015 – over 100 developing countries were excluded from the decision making.⁴²⁹ After the BEPS package, a document of almost 2,000 pages, was adopted, the OECD set up the implementation body known as the Inclusive Framework, inviting all countries to come and follow the agreed standards “on an equal footing”, and to participate in the negotiation of any additional BEPS decisions. However, in order to join the Inclusive Framework, developing countries are required to sign up to the decisions that have already been made.⁴³⁰ This means that developing countries are still not able to participate on a truly equal footing in the setting of international tax standards.

Developing countries have not accepted this system without objections. In fact, for years, the Group of 77 (G77), representing over 130 developing countries, has been calling for the establishment of an intergovernmental tax body under the United Nations to lead the setting of global tax standards instead of the OECD.⁴³¹ However, both the European Commission and several EU Member States have rejected this request, and instead insist on keeping standard setting under the auspices of the OECD and G20.⁴³²

In December 2017, the situation took a turn for the worse when the EU decided to blacklist countries that had not committed to following the OECD standards as ‘non-cooperative jurisdictions’,⁴³³ and threatened to apply financial sanctions against them.⁴³⁴ Thus, after first having been excluded from the decision making, developing countries are now being pressured to commit to following international tax standards that not only fail to take their interests and realities into account but also have been shown to be unable to solve the problem of international corporate tax avoidance.

Excluding poor countries in global economic governance

Tax standards are not the only international policies that are written in bodies where developing countries are severely underrepresented. The same is the case for debt and finance. The G20 and the Financial Stability Board (that the G20 set up at the 2009 Summit in London to coordinate financial sector regulation) include a few of the major emerging economies such as China and Brazil. However, most developing countries - and all low-income countries - have been left behind. This is a reflection of the broader picture, where global economic governance is conducted by bodies dominated by developed country interests, which do not represent or act in the interests of developing countries.

The management of the IMF and the World Bank is yet another example: an unwritten ‘Gentlemen’s agreement’ says that the managing director of the IMF is always a European, while the president of the World Bank is always from the United States.

Developing countries have contested this ‘northwestern’ dominance of the international financial institutions (IFIs) for quite some time. The premature departure of ex-President Kim announced in January 2019 provided an opportunity for the World Bank to change this unjust tradition⁴³⁵ – an opportunity that EU Member States failed to grasp. They hold roughly one quarter of voting rights at the World Bank and could have vetoed a Trump-appointed, but deliberately decided not to challenge the United States. The flawed governance structures of the World Bank and the IMF are seen as a key reason why the IFIs work in the interest of rich countries, to the detriment of those of developing countries.

Attempts to strengthen the “G193”, meaning the role of the United Nations in global economic governance, receive little support from the European Union and its Member States. The most remarkable example of the EU’s rejection of the United Nations was its boycott of the UN General Assembly’s ad hoc Committee on a multilateral legal framework for sovereign debt restructurings processes in 2015. The Committee had been set up on initiative of the G77, with the mandate to develop an international insolvency regime that would protect countries in debt crises from aggressive litigation by predatory vulture funds. The EU’s boycott contributed decisively to the Committee’s failure to establish a hard and effective insolvency law for sovereign debtors, with the result that the international community now lacks the necessary effective institutions to solve current and future debt crises.⁴³⁶ This is particularly problematic now that a new wave of debt crises is seen as a major threat to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.⁴³⁷

There is urgent need to establish and strengthen fully inclusive global economic governance institutions, correct failed and unjust policies and fill the gaping holes in the international financial architecture. The EU must (re-)discover true and enlightened multilateralism, and help create inclusive, transparent, democratic and accountable institutions for global economic governance.

THE EU CONTRIBUTION TO TACKLE INEQUALITY IN PARTNER COUNTRIES

BY ISABELLE BRACHET, ACTIONAID & REBEKKA BLOMQVIST, CONCORD EUROPE

The European development policy adopted in 2017 ("European Consensus on Development") puts eradicating poverty, tackling discrimination and inequalities and leaving no one behind at the heart of the European Union's approach to development cooperation. It calls on the EU and its Member States to "act to reduce inequality of outcomes and promote equal opportunities for all, directly assist the poorest and most vulnerable sections of society and to promote more inclusive, sustainable growth; to "assess the determinants of and trends in economic and social inequalities and to strengthen their tools and approaches to make them more effective in addressing inequality", as well as to "mainstream the reduction of inequality in their development cooperation and support innovative social practices".

The European Consensus reflects the EU's commitment to leave no one behind, underpinning the Agenda 2030 and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG 10, committing governments to reduce inequality within and among countries.

EU development cooperation has an important role to play in reducing inequality, but EU's commitment to reducing global inequalities needs to go beyond development policy. The EU needs to ensure its other policies do not exacerbate inequality, which is why the principle of Policy Coherence for (Sustainable) Development must be applied. This is notably the case for policy areas such as migration, trade and investment, taxation and climate policies.⁴³⁸

This chapter therefore addresses the implications of tackling inequalities through the EU development cooperation, as well as providing examples of other policy areas through which the EU should be contributing to reducing inequalities. The chapter also puts forward concrete recommendations on how EU can strengthen its work on reducing inequalities.

1. Inequality in EU development cooperation

The EU's commitment and contribution to fighting inequalities through its development cooperation is important for the reduction of inequality in the world. Reducing inequalities is multi-dimensional and should therefore be considered in all of EU's development cooperation. This section looks at how EU is addressing inequalities in its development cooperation, but also how tackling inequalities can be more integrated and central in EU's development cooperation than is currently the case.

As set out in the European Consensus on Development, EU development cooperation must contribute to fight inequality. In many instances, with its partner countries, the EU is fighting inequalities even though the activities are not always framed as such. This happens for example through support to public education, projects to tackle discrimination, an emphasis on women's rights, support to farmers' organisations, women's access to land, etc. However, as the implementation of the Gender Action Plan II shows, especially regarding gender-targeted funding, the EU is not always meeting its own targets (in this case, for tackling gender inequality), while a proportion of EU development cooperation fails entirely to address inequality.

A most glaring recent example showing how much room for improvement remains can be seen in how the EU addresses inequalities in its development cooperation is its Aid for Trade (Aft) policy. Aid for Trade was revised in 2017 - after the adoption of the Consensus - and represents one-third of EU Official Development Assistance (ODA). It is precisely because trade takes place between partners who are vastly unequal in terms of economic development and

negotiating power that Aid for Trade was established, with the objective of helping developing countries to access the benefits of expanded trade. However, inequalities are not only between countries, but also within countries, and therefore a more targeted approach to inequalities is required if the growing gaps between 'haves' and 'have-nots' are to be addressed through AfT. To help ensure that the benefits of trade and investment are distributed more fairly and also contribute to reducing inequalities both between and within countries, AfT should support social dialogue and workers' representation, labour inspectorates, decent work programmes, women's cooperatives and opportunities for litigation by producers in supply chains. Unfortunately, the only reference to inequality in the new AfT strategy is a footnote committing not to exacerbate inequalities and to consider both the intended and unintended consequences of aid for trade interventions. And for some strange and unexplained reason, this commitment only applies to situations of fragility and conflict.

The External Investment Plan (EIP) is another EU initiative where there has been insufficient consideration of the need to ensure that funded development projects do not exacerbate inequalities. Inequality considerations must be included from the very outset, in determining the nature of the project to be funded, in identifying the anticipated development outcome, in choosing the private sector partner to invest in and in all the modalities that surround a project, including adequate indicators to monitor its impacts. One example of how the EIP may further aggravate inequalities is in the operations proposed in the agriculture investment window. Here the projects are more likely to benefit particular segments of the local population in partner countries, namely the better off groups of farmers, primarily men. These groups often have an advantage in the EIP-funded projects because they are often better equipped to adapt to the proposed innovations and they have better access to resources such as land, capital, information and markets. Similarly, it is unlikely that the most marginalised small scale family farmers, especially women, will be able to benefit from these

investments. The fact that this instrument is not primarily suitable for targetting the most marginalised small-scale producers, who have little land or other assets, should be explicitly acknowledged, and complementary initiatives and governance systems should be further developed to make sure that investments like these do not exacerbate inequalities for the furthest behind.

The EU should put fighting inequalities at the centre of all its Official Development Assistance. Specifically, this means the EU should focus more of its ODA on Least Developed Countries (LDCs). EU contributions to LDCs have only marginally increased over the years and are far from keeping up with the overall increase in the EU's ODA. This is worrisome considering that the current 47 LDCs continue to rely heavily on ODA owing to their limited domestic resources and limited capacity to attract other types of financial flows. For the LDCs to be able to overcome some of the most severe structural impediments to their sustainable development, a genuine transfer of resources that matches the 0.15–0.20% commitment to LDCs is needed. Furthermore, it is crucial that ODA disbursements to Middle Income Countries (MICs) target inequalities and promote human rights, democracy and civic space rather than leveraging funds from development finance institutions and private investments that are already abundantly available to these countries⁴³⁹.

There are rising levels of inequality in MICs and More Advanced Developing Countries (MADCs), where three-quarters of the world's poor live. Governments of MICs need the policy and fiscal space to ensure that the benefits of economic progress are equitably shared with the most marginalised. However, regressive advice by the IMF and World Bank promoting cuts in public spending, targeted benefits instead of universal coverage, privatisation of public services and regressive taxation, substantially restricts the policy and fiscal space of developing countries. The EU should define how it wants to engage with MICs and tailor its approach to fit the context since this is a very diverse group of countries. It should not base its approach on income levels alone as the

measure of development progress; instead it should ensure its policies do not restrict the ability of those countries to address and reduce inequality, and use its influence in the International Financial Institutions (IFI) to encourage similar shifts.

The EU, through its development cooperation, could do far more to support governments in their domestic resource mobilisation and promote progressive and effective tax systems, and to raise much needed revenue for public services - all while respecting partner countries' policy space in this regard. Partner countries should be supported to undertake assessments of the impacts that national tax policies have on economic and gender inequalities, in order to ensure that women and men living in poverty are not disproportionately impacted. It has been proven that the richest in society are structurally undertaxed - for example, the effective tax rate of the top 10% in Latin America is just 4.8% and in many countries the bottom 10% now pay a higher rate of tax than the top 10%.⁴⁴⁰

Tackling inequalities in development cooperation must aim to target the most marginalised to make sure that no one is left behind. Questions of intersectionality are often not adequately addressed by EU policies and programmes. All people - no matter their race, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation or gender identity, age, (dis)ability, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, birth, migration or other status - must benefit from the outcomes of development cooperation - and the most marginalised must be prioritised in order to improve equality.

Another area where inequalities are evident is in the political space available to all citizens. One cannot talk about inequality without also speaking of the capture of power (economic, social, and political) by wealthy elites. That is why one of the ways to address inequalities is to support governance and democratisation processes and to strengthen civic participation and local civil society organisations, farmers cooperatives, people's movements, human rights defenders, workers' organisations etc, in partner countries, to ensure that all people have a voice and to redress some of the power imbalances that fuel inequalities. Rights to participation and representation and access to justice and decision-making are being

eroded as civic space is shrinking worldwide. The EU must continue to expand its efforts to support civil society initiatives to have a say in decisions that affect them and hold decision-makers to account.

Tackling inequalities is at the heart of the EU development cooperation framework, and this section has addressed how EU is working to reduce inequalities, as well as looking at concrete steps that the EU can take to further integrate and put fighting inequalities at the forefront of its development cooperation.

2. Inequality in non-development EU policies

As shown in the previous section, it is crucial that EU development cooperation focus on fighting inequality for a fairer world. However, EU commitment to reducing global inequalities must go beyond development policy. This section presents examples of how other EU policy areas relate to inequalities and what steps can be taken to reduce these inequalities.

EU fiscal policies

Developing countries are losing out on billions of dollars yearly in much needed resources to fund public services due to tax evasion and tax avoidance. While the EU has been taking some steps to tackle these issues, there are many additional important actions it needs to take to support developing countries, such as increasing the transparency of EU-based corporations' tax behaviour in developing countries by introducing public country-by-country reporting, and conducting analyses of the spillover effects of EU and Member States' tax policies (including tax treaties) on developing countries.

EU trade and investment policy

The EU should ensure that its trade and investment policy does not restrict the policy and fiscal space of developing countries. The privatisation of public services in many societies is systematically eliminating human rights protections and further marginalising those living in poverty. The EU should exclude certain sectors - such as water, health and education - from

European trade and investment negotiations, as demanded by the European Parliament. It is crucial to ensure EU investment policy, as well as its blending and guarantee operations, are not incentivising the privatisation of public services in developing countries⁴⁴¹.

To judge by President Juncker's State of the Union speech 2018, not only are EU-Africa relations going to be further prioritised, but clearly trade is going to increase significantly in importance in those relations. It is therefore critical to address the unequal negotiating power of the two regions – or of any African sub-region or country – vis-à-vis the EU. The EU should support African participation in international fora and global governance mechanisms.

A much greater focus should be put on territorial markets and regional trade, as opposed to the current EU trade policy which encourages the expansion of global value chains. This has the consequence that local firms are obliged to stick to low-value added production generating limited domestic revenue, where poorly paid and insecure jobs largely prevail.

For instance, the power imbalance in the internationally traded food system is demonstrated by the classic example of an "hourglass system", where a large number of producers and a large number of consumers are connected by funnelling through small numbers of multinational corporations who dominate production, processing, retail and financing, giving them an dangerous level of power. The small numbers are getting even smaller at the moment, with mega-mergers taking place between agribusiness trans-national corporations. Redressing this inequality of power requires firm support to small-scale farmers in developing countries, but also serious regulatory measures.

Lack of corporate accountability

Inequality is also driven deeper when EU corporations operate in developing countries without respecting the human rights of workers and local communities. A lack of EU-wide regulation requiring companies to conduct human rights due diligence and to provide effective, inclusive redress for all victims is allowing companies to get away with human rights abuses that would not be allowed within the EU.

EU and Climate

After over a century of industrialisation and burning of fossil fuels, countries in the EU now benefit from relatively high income, wealth, development and access to technologies compared to many other countries around the world. However, the repercussions of decades of greenhouse gas (GHGs) emissions is leading to global warming, which is causing devastating climate change impacts all over the world. As a result, vulnerable developing countries, most of whom have relatively low historical responsibility for producing GHGs, are suffering the worst impacts. Poor communities around the world are now facing ever-more frequent and severe droughts, floods, cyclones, erratic rainfall patterns, rising sea levels, crop losses and disappearing freshwater sources as a direct result of the emissions produced, in large part, by EU Member States.

The recent report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) sounded the alarm that even if we manage to limit global warming to 1.5°C, the warming impacts are still likely to be devastating. Vulnerable countries and communities in the South, who have played almost no part in causing climate change, will be the ones whose lives and livelihood will be most at risk from extreme weather events, hunger, thirst, loss of livelihoods and forced migration.

Equality is not a moral or academic nicety, but a practical necessity in meeting the Paris goals. Equality needs to be achieved not only among nations, but also among individuals as disparities in wealth are very closely paralleled by disparities in emissions. The richest 10% of the world's population is responsible for over 50% of global greenhouse gas emissions. And wealthy people overwhelmingly reside within the world's wealthy countries. Their emissions support lifestyles that cannot be shared by all. 'Luxury emissions' must be treated very differently from poorer countries as rich people can far more easily afford to reduce their footprint than those whose impacts are already minimal.⁴⁴²

The EU as a bloc, and individual EU Member States, must acknowledge the scale and urgency of climate action required. They must initiate bold, transformative programmes in sectors including the food system and energy, under the framework of an economic vision that protects and nurtures environment and society in the context of climate change, and reverses rising inequality. The EU's goals for decarbonisation and long-term low-greenhouse gas development plans, must include drastic reductions in agricultural emissions, and greenhouse gas reductions in all other sectors, of at least 80% by 2030, and 100% by 2040. The EU and the Member States must seek to reduce overall energy consumption and rapidly move away from fossil fuels and unsustainable energy sources such as bioenergy. The EU should transition towards 100% clean, sustainable, renewable energy. The EU must also urgently scale up its provision of grant-based public climate finance to developing countries so that they can adapt to climate change impacts and transition to greener pathways. The EU must ensure a balance in its climate finance between support for mitigation and adaptation and that the finance is reaching communities at greatest risk and responding to locally based and defined adaptation needs.

These examples of where other EU policy areas apart from development cooperation have a substantial influence on inequalities, shows that Policy Coherence for (Sustainable) Development is crucial if the EU is committed to reducing global inequalities.

3. Genuine Measures of Progress

If the EU's intention is to address inequalities and to ensure that all people benefit from a country's social, environmental and economic progress, but with the most marginalised now benefitting first and foremost, then it is essential that all policy- and decision- making is based on achieving real measures of progress. Many economists, statisticians, governments and the European Commission have recognised the severe limitations of GDP as a measure of progress – before even speaking of the dire impacts on climate change from pursuing GDP-led growth. More appropriate measures of progress should be put in place in order to ensure that policies and programmes aim to close the inequality gaps within and between countries and are indeed succeeding in leaving no one behind. Such measures should be based on the well-being of people and planet. These measures should be drawn up in consultation with the public and be locally relevant, with a globally harmonised core set of indicators. They should be consistently used in all spheres of policy- and decision-making, initially together with GDP, but ultimately replacing it.

OVERVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section provides an overview and recommendations on different areas of inequality, drawn both from the 15 country papers submitted by partner groups and the thematic papers provided by 11 EU-wide networks. The chapters go into detail on specific dimensions of inequality - social protection, health, homelessness, gender, age, disability, young people, the Roma, debt and tax injustice, the environment and development cooperation. The 15 countries, over half the Member States of the European Union, are a representative cross-section and make up nearly three quarters of its population. Five are core founding members of the EU (France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands); five joined the EU between 1973 and 1995 (Austria, Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain); and five are eastern European nations which joined between 2004 and 2007 (Czech Republic, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovenia).

The recommendations are divided into the following sections: transforming policies to end inequalities; putting people first, with a clear focus on tackling discrimination; and measurement of progress. The fact that an issue or trend is not mentioned in a country paper or its summary, does not mean that it is not a reality in the country concerned. The authors have highlighted issues which they and their organisations see as important. The recommendations do not cover all policies (for example, education) or all groups experiencing discrimination mentioned in the report.

TRANSFORMING POLICIES TO END INEQUALITIES

1. Economic inequality

Economic trends affecting equality across all these countries are not uniform. In some countries economic inequalities are deepening, others have high but stable inequalities while in others income inequality is below the EU average. Different levels of economic development also make a huge difference. For example, the EU's statistics agency, Eurostat, defines "being at risk of poverty"⁴⁴³ as having a net income (after taxation and transfers) below 60% of the national median. This means very different things in Romania and in Luxembourg, the richest country in the EU, with a national income per head five times that of Romania.

Official figures indicate that across the European Union there has only been slight increases in income inequality in the past five years. The reports, however, reveal concern about income inequality, already high in some countries, with the very richest gaining more from economic growth than the poorest. The numbers of people in poverty have increased and precarious work is widespread. Several reports note that employment, even full-time, is not sufficient to lift people out of the 'at-risk-of-poverty' category. Seven countries have in-work poverty rates above the EU average (9.6% of the working population⁴⁴⁴) while another four have rates below but close to the average. As the report from Portugal puts it: "Having a job does not guarantee a decent and dignified life."

Across all countries, income inequality is significantly reduced by social transfers. Despite this, large numbers of people remain at risk of poverty after social transfers.⁴⁴⁵ Recommendations from several country reports ask for more far-reaching measures to reduce inequality, not only through reforms to tax and benefits systems, but via more radical measures to address the causes of inequality, including limiting and regulating precarious employment; raising minimum wages; providing more social housing at below market rents; introducing inheritance taxes; introducing a financial transactions tax; and the introduction of a universal basic income. Income inequality, even if reduced by social transfers, leads to wealth inequality, which is greater than income inequality. Several countries report concern at the very unequal life chances of children from richer, more highly educated families compared with children from poor families, especially the bottom 20 %.

Inequalities can also have a spatial dimension. Five reports mention that regional disparities and the urban/rural divide reflect significant economic inequalities. In Lithuania, in 2016, the median income of rural households was 65% of that of urban households, and the gap is widening. In Portugal the interior is losing population and is older and poorer. Between 1960 and 2016 the population in the interior fell by 37.5% while that of the coast increased by 52%; 83% of the wealth produced is concentrated in coastal areas, as are 82.4 % of young people and 89 % of students in higher education, generating a dynamism that is in stark contrast to the abandonment, disinvestment and greater vulnerability of the interior.

Recommendations on economic inequalities

Wages and taxation

- The EU should formulate and promote a European Fair Wages Action Plan including living wages to ensure that wages of the bottom 40% of wage earners grow faster than the national average up to 2030 (target 10.1).
- The EU and Member States should address income inequality in the European Semester by establishing an income inequality benchmark of Gini 0.25 and using the Palma ratio⁴⁴⁶, and foster more progressive national income tax systems.
- The EU and Member States should promote more progressive tax systems.
- The EU and Member States should promote tax justice by blocking tax loopholes, preventing tax evasion by multinational corporations and others and ending the use of tax havens, in Europe and overseas.

Social protection

- Member States should set up nationally appropriate social protection systems for all, including floors, both to reduce and prevent poverty.
- The EU should establish an EU-wide unemployment insurance.
- The EU should include the proportion of population (fully disaggregated⁴⁴⁷) covered by social protection floors/systems in the SDG reporting framework.
- In its development cooperation action, the EU should support the establishment of nationally appropriate social protection systems for all, including floors.

Housing and homelessness

- The EU should try to ensure that Member States' policies respect human rights and do not contribute to the criminalisation of homelessness.
- The EU must penalise Member States which infringe European legislation on free movement.
- The EU should ensure that resources, both national and European, are used strategically to end homelessness and are not used merely to finance short-term measures.
- The EU should develop a clear action plan to support Member States to make progress on tackling homelessness, in line with the EPSR (especially priority 19) & the SDGs (especially SDG 1 & 11). This should include monitoring, policy guidance and coordination, transnational exchange & mutual learning.
- The indicator on housing cost overburden rate should be added to the indicator on severe housing deprivation rate in the Scoreboard of Principle 18 (Housing) of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

2. Environment and climate injustice

The health impacts of environmental pollution within Europe fall most heavily on poor people who are forced to live in neighbourhoods with poor air quality and industrial contamination. Tax incentives awarded to households to make climate-friendly investments of insulation or renewable energy are of no use to poor people who do not have the resources to make these investments or high enough incomes to qualify for a tax cut.

Some Member States' and European policies such as international trade and agriculture have heavy external carbon footprints and negative externalities. The result is that Europe is responsible for a disproportionately high share of global environmental destruction and resource consumption around the globe. Around 40% of the food eaten by Europeans is grown on other continents, and this too negatively impacts local communities as it requires huge expanses of their land, uses up their water resources and can lead to mass evictions organized by multinational food companies. Many environmental defenders, who attempt to protect local communities and their lands from appropriations by national or multinational mining and agribusiness interests, have been threatened or even killed.

Recommendations on environment and climate injustice

- The EU and Member States should protect environmental defenders by implementing Article 3 of the Aarhus Convention on environmental transparency and ensure that NGOs and individuals have access to justice on environmental matters.
- The Commission should propose an anti-SLAPP Directive⁴⁴⁸ and extend its scope to include environmental defenders.
- The Commission and Member States should ensure that taxes and levies introduced with the purpose of cutting GHG emissions and other environmental objectives do not fall disproportionately on low income sectors.
- The European Commission should Turn the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP) into a Sustainability and Wellbeing Pact (SWP) and create a DG for Wellbeing and Future Generations.
- The European Parliament should set up a special commission on Post-Growth Futures.

3. International inequalities

The European Union and its Member States interact with developing countries in a multiplicity of ways – through economic relations, political dialogues and development cooperation policies. These interactions are not all benign for developing countries. Less positive interactions include arms sales; banking secrecy; pursuit of trade which requires ever cheaper labour; aggressive tax planning to attract the profits of multinational corporations which deprives some countries, elsewhere in the European Union or in the Global South, of much needed tax revenue; and the heavy environmental footprint of European companies in developing countries. All these can cause harm, which runs counter the good intentions of international cooperation. For this reason, one of the key recommendations emerging from the country reports is a strong call for greater policy coherence for sustainable development.

Official Development Assistance (ODA) remains an indispensable tool to reduce inequality by investing in human capital, build resilience and capacities in the world's poorest communities which are otherwise bypassed by – or worse, exploited by – international trade and investment. Not all aid goes to developing countries, however, because the OECD permits spending on refugees and students in donor countries to be counted as ODA. In recent years, in some donor countries a significant proportion of ODA has been spent on hosting refugee populations. Regrettably, the EU and its Member States are still a long way from achieving the UN 0.7% of GNI target for official development assistance. In 2018, among these 15 Member States, the proportion of GNI devoted to ODA ranged from 0.11% in Lithuania⁴⁴⁹ to 0.98% in Luxembourg, the only country among these 15 Member States to achieve the UN 0.7% target.⁴⁵⁰ Recent trends for most Member States are towards aid decreasing as a percentage of GNI. The European Union and its Member States need to reverse this trend and make a clear time-bound commitment to achieving the 0.7% target.

Recommendations on international inequalities

- The EU and Member States should ensure that policies are having a positive impact on those who are left the furthest behind. To achieve this, they will need to invest more in collecting disaggregated data and in supporting partner countries to do likewise. A minimum of seven categories to disaggregate data is recommended - by gender, age, disability, rural-urban split, minority status, social status and income quintile.
- The EU needs to move beyond GDP to a Genuine Measure of Progress based on the well-being of all people and planet in order to ensure that their policies and programmes aim to close the inequality gaps within and between countries – and will help to make certain that no one is left behind.
- The EU and its Member States must extend their commitment to reducing global inequalities beyond development assistance, by ensuring that Policy Coherence for (Sustainable) Development is an integral part of all EU policies with external impact such as trade and investment, taxation and corporate accountability and the arms trade.
- Member States should increase Official Development Assistance to 0.7% of GNI as soon as possible and provide 0,2% of GNI to Least Developed Countries by 2025.

4. Gender inequality

Gender inequality, widespread and present in all countries, is reflected in the gender pay gap (unequal pay for equal work) and in the unfair distribution of unpaid work - childcare, household tasks and care of and by dependent adults and older persons - which forces women to take part-time jobs or to give up paid work altogether. In Portugal and Italy, women spend over 300 minutes a day carrying out unpaid work compared with men's 100 minutes a day. France has the lowest unpaid work gap, with women doing unpaid work for 3 hours and 52 minutes a day compared with men's 2 hours and 22 minutes.⁴⁵¹ As the European Commission itself remarks, "an equal sharing of this [unpaid] work would certainly impact on women's career opportunities and opportunities for self-development."⁴⁵² The gender pay gap, women's over-representation in low paid sectors of the economy, part-time work and interrupted careers result in women receiving smaller pensions than their male counterparts - the gender pension gap. Patriarchal attitudes reinforce the discriminatory practices which have such a negative impact on women and girls across the life course.

Recommendations on gender inequality

- The EU should adopt and ensure adequate funding for a robust EU political Strategy on Equality between women and men.
- In line with its legal commitment to promote equality between women and men, the EU should implement gender mainstreaming in all policy areas.
- The EU and Member States should enforce laws and regulations requiring gender parity in elected bodies, boards of companies and public institutions – and introduce them if they do not already exist.
- Member States should strengthen, provide resources for and, above all, enforce laws on violence against women, strengthen protection and ensure prosecutions against perpetrators are conducted properly and effectively.

5. Health

Health inequalities are strongly correlated with income and educational inequalities, with lower income groups and people with lower educational qualifications experiencing worse health than higher income groups. There is plentiful and detailed evidence of this in the European Commission's report, *Health Inequalities in Europe (the Marmot Report)*.⁴⁵³ Country reports link health inequalities with the environment, noting that low income groups are more likely to live in areas with poor air quality and therefore are more likely to suffer from respiratory diseases. Groups experiencing active discrimination, especially the Roma, are exposed to industrial contaminants because they are forced to live near waste dumps. Poorer people also find it difficult to buy healthy food. Access to health services, even when free, can be problematic for certain groups because there are few clinics in the areas where they live and specialist services tend to be concentrated in large cities.

Recommendations on health

- The EU and Member States should improve public policies, not only in the health sector, that take into account the specific needs of people and the social determinants of health.
- The EU and Member States should encourage development of cohesive and sustainable communities (with green spaces, good public transport, quality housing, healthy food supply sources and energy use).
- Adopt an EU Framework to tackle Non-communicable Diseases (NCDs) to meet the target SDG3.4 for all ages with no age caps.
- Develop and deploy a robust Health Impact Assessment methodology to respect Article 168 of the TFEU.



PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST

Discrimination is widespread in attitudes and everyday practices, and also sometimes explicit in policies. It is a driver of inequalities and profoundly affects people's experience of social inclusion, education and health systems, the environment in which they are forced to live, their access to social benefits, employment as well as housing. The people whose lives are negatively affected, sometimes very severely, by discrimination include the Roma (mentioned in seven country reports as specific victims of discrimination) and migrants and people of a 'migration background'. In addition, people can experience discrimination because of their age, gender, disability, location and sexual orientation. Several reports pick up the issue of intersectionality, stating that different inequalities compound each other – thus, in terms of poverty risk, it is worse to be an older woman of migrant or Roma background or a woman with a disability, facing double or triple discrimination.

Migrants and people of a migration background are more likely to live in poor housing or to be made homeless, to experience bad health, and to have difficulties in accessing employment. They and their children can encounter prejudice and discrimination in the education system and obstacles to quality education resulting in poor educational outcomes which in turn block access to decent work. This applies especially to migrants of a "non-western" background. Everywhere migrants and the children of migrants are more likely to be at risk of poverty. Portugal, with the welcome it extends to migrants and good migrant integration policies and practices, goes against this trend.

Several reports express concern about environmental inequalities evident in exposure of low-income groups to contaminants, impure water and poor air quality (with PM2.5 particle concentration above the EU average and World Health Organisation guidelines). They note that poorer people are more likely to experience environmental inequality because they live close to roads with heavy traffic and, in some cases, heat their own homes with wood-burning stoves. The Roma are a particular example of a group experiencing acute environmental inequality because they have been forced by discriminatory policies and attitudes to live near waste dumps or in other unhealthy environments. There are dramatic differences in health⁴⁵⁴ and life expectancy⁴⁵⁵ between middle- and upper-income groups and poor people resulting from a combination of causes.

The recommendations that follow are listed by issues where discrimination is the core driver of inequality.

Recommendations on migrants and refugees

- The EU and Member States should recognise the positive contribution of migrants and refugees to host communities and ensure they are entitled and have access to quality healthcare, social services and education, including further education and vocational training.
- The EU and Member States should develop institutional capacity to recognise and approve the competences and qualifications of migrants in order to facilitate their access to the labour market.
- The EU and Member States should enhance and enforce controls to prevent the exploitation of migrants.

Recommendations on young people

- The European Commission should propose the adoption of a Recommendation on Adequate Minimum Wages explicitly banning youth minimum wages.
- EU Member States should implement the Recommendation on Access to Social Protection for Workers and the Self-employed without delay, ensuring attention to *all* young workers, regardless of their employment relationship or level of remuneration and end age-based discrimination in access to unemployment benefits, minimum income schemes or other social protection mechanisms.
- The European Council should reprioritise the adoption of the Equal Treatment Directive, to ensure that legislation prohibiting age-based discrimination in all areas of life, as well as discrimination based on multiple grounds, is enacted across the EU.

Recommendations on older people

- The European Commission should propose a European strategy to close gender pay, career and pension gaps across the life-course, with particular reference to pension credits, minimum income, health insurance and the maintenance of rights to unemployment benefits for informal carers who have dropped out of the labour market.
- The European Commission should table and adopt a framework directive on adequate minimum income across the life course, including minimum pension.
- The European Commission should finally adopt the directive on equal treatment in the access to goods, and also support the campaign at UN level for a Convention on the Rights of Older Persons.

Recommendations on persons with disabilities

- The EU should combat all forms of discrimination on the grounds of disabilities.
- The EU should consult with and actively involve all persons with disabilities and their representative organisations in all decisions that impact them. The campaign message of people with disabilities is “Nothing about us without us.”
- The EU should collect and disaggregate more data relating to persons with disabilities.

Recommendations on Roma and travellers

- The European Commission should require different EU structures to collaborate effectively on Roma issues in order to ensure that policies affecting them are in alignment with the 2030 Agenda.
- The European Commission should identify mechanisms for building capacities of Roma and pro-Roma civil society organisations and other national stakeholders to support their contribution to the national SDG coalitions and the shadow reporting.
- The European Parliament, the Council and the Commission should review commitments to combat exclusion of Roma and antigypsyism at EU level.

Recommendations on LGBTI people

- The EU should build on the EC list of actions for LGBTI rights and adopt an ambitious LGBTI strategy to give a clear mandate to the European Commission to step up its work on protecting the fundamental rights of LGBTI people.
- The EU LGBTI strategy should adopt a truly intersectional approach, combating all forms of discrimination against LGBTI people, including children, older persons, ethnic minorities, migrants, homeless people, asylum seekers and refugees, and people with disabilities.
- The EU institutions should commit to review commitments to combat discrimination of LGBTI people and gaps in protection against such discrimination and lack of implementation, including asylum legislation, protection against hate crimes and hate speech, limitations to the right to freedom of movement, and protection against discrimination outside the labour market.
- The ground of sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics should be included in all work on the SDGs and respective indicators should be developed. At the same time, the specificity of exclusion and multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination facing LGBTI people should be taken into account specifically.

MEASURING PROGRESS AND MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

There is insufficient data to monitor the implementation of European Union policies, as set out in the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR), and actions taken to achieve the targets of SDG10 (and all SDGs). Examples of data not fit for purpose include the persistence of age caps (lack of data for persons aged over 64) and discrimination outside the area of employment, such as discrimination experienced by Roma communities.

Recommendations

- The SDG 10 monitoring framework is significantly more detailed than the latest SDG 10 framework published by Eurostat. The European Union and its Member States should provide compatible disaggregated data for reporting to the United Nations and adopt the agreed indicators of the Global Indicator Framework of the SDGs.
- The European institutions should move quickly to fill the gaps in existing data sets which will be used to monitor SDG 10 as well as the European Pillar on Social Rights. This must include data disaggregated in five- to ten-year cohorts across the entire lifespan and incorporate other factors of disaggregation.
- The EU should ensure that Voluntary National Reviews conducted by Member States use input from civil society - including civil society representatives from the most marginalised communities - in order to identify key issues and for civil society itself to be key partner in assessing and monitoring progress on SDG implementation. The European Union should incorporate more qualitative data into inequality measurement and broaden consultations on inequality indicators to include civil society and academia, and consider non-institutional sources whenever relevant.
- The European Pillar of Social Rights, adopted in 2017, should be fully integrated into legislation. All 20 principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights should be covered by the Scoreboard including Principle 8 - Social dialogue and involvement of workers; Principle 9 - Work-life balance; Principle 10 - Healthy, safe and well-adapted work environment and data protection. Principle 3 - Equal opportunities is only partially covered, mainly in relation to employment.
- The European Union should use its European Structural and Investment funds (European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund, and Cohesion Fund) to ensure that Member States reduce inequalities by making the principle of "Leave no one behind" a precondition for the approval of structural funds which should be used for programmes specifically targeted at disadvantaged groups and issues such as homelessness.

Endnotes

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- ² https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/new-european-consensus-development-our-world-our-dignity-our-future_en
- ³ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights_en
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- ⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/People_at_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion
- ⁶ Eurostat. Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion. See https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Children_at_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion Eurostat clarifies that: "The main factors affecting child poverty, after taking account of the effect of social transfers in reducing child poverty, are the composition of the household in which the children live and the *labour market situation of their parents, also linked to their level of education.*"
- ⁷ <http://www.oecd.org/els/soc/cope-divide-europe-2017-background-report.pdf>
- ⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/sdg_multi-stakeholder_platform_input_to_reflection_paper_sustainable_europe2.pdf
- ⁹ EU SDG Indicator Set. Final version of 28 April 2017 as agreed with Commission Services, which received a favourable opinion from the European Statistical System Committee at its meeting on 17-18 May. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/276524/7736915/EU-SDG-indicator-set-with-cover-note-170531.pdf>
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- ¹² The summary re SDG 10 in the report states: "The selected indicators point towards a decrease of inequality between countries and an increase of inequality within countries. Concerning inequalities between countries, both GDP per capita and gross disposable household income per capita show a convergence of EU Member States over the past few years. Imports from developing countries have increased, while financing to developing countries has decreased. On the other hand, inequalities within countries — measured in terms of income inequality — have generally increased over the past few years. Income inequalities between the richest and the poorest groups of society have intensified, with the income share of the bottom 40 % of the population decreasing. Alongside the increase in the number of people earning an income below the poverty threshold (who are therefore considered at risk of income poverty), the average distance from the poverty threshold for those below the poverty threshold has grown considerably, making it more difficult for these people to escape this situation." <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/9237449/KS-01-18-656-EN-N.pdf/2b2a096b-3bd6-4939-8ef3-11cfc14b9329> p14
- ¹³ Ibid pp 183-197 for full listing of statistics and tables per target
- ¹⁴ People are considered to be at risk of income poverty when their equalised disposable income (after social transfers) is below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold, which is set at 60% of the national median equalised disposable income after social transfers
- ¹⁵ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-statistical-books/-/KS-01-18-656>
- ¹⁶ SDGWatch Europe
- ¹⁷ <https://inspire-partnership.org/article/news/detail/News/how-has-the-eu-progressed-towards-the-sdgs.html>
- ¹⁸ European Parliament, Committee on Development – Report on tax avoidance and tax evasion as challenges for governance, social protection and development in developing countries (2015/2058(INI)). See http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-8-2015-0184_EN.pdf
See also Wayne Swan. (Interview 2019) Pay taxation, buy civilisation (International Politics and Society – Friedrich Ebert Stiftung - 29.03.2019) <https://www.ips-journal.eu/regions/global/article/show/pay-taxation-buy-civilisation-3359/>
- ¹⁹ Not fit for purpose: SDG monitoring report fails to illustrate how far the EU is from a sustainable future, SDG Watch Europe, <https://www.sdgwatcheurope.org/not-fit-for-purpose-sdg-monitoring-report-fails-to-illustrate-how-far-the-eu-is-from-a-sustainable-future/>
- ²⁰ See 17.18 'By 2020, enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing States, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts'
- ²¹ Eurostat. Europe 2020 indicators - poverty and social exclusion.
See <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/pdfscache/29306.pdf>
- ²² Turning promises into action: Gender equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UN Women, <http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/2/gender-equality-in-the-2030-agenda-for-sustainable-development-2018>
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- ²⁴ OECD, Data. Austria. Gross domestic product (GDP), <https://data.oecd.org/gdp/gross-domestic-product-gdp.htm> (20.02.2019).
- ²⁵ OECD, Data. Income Inequality, <https://data.oecd.org/inequality/income-inequality.htm> (20.02.2019).
- ²⁶ OECD, OECD Data. Income inequality, <https://data.oecd.org/inequality/income-inequality.htm#indicator-chart> (20.02.2019).
- ²⁷ Definition of risk of poverty or marginalization according to EU-SILC: Income is below the poverty line or affected people are significantly deprived of their material or live in households with no or very low work intensity.

- ²⁸ Definition of significant material deprivation according to EU-SILC: Essential goods/areas of life are unaffordable (e.g. washing machine, mobile phone, ability to keep apartment adequately warm).
- ²⁹ *Statistics Austria*, Tabellenband EU-SILC 2017. Einkommen, Armut und Lebensbedingungen (2018) 144, https://www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/menschen_und_gesellschaft/soziales/armut_und_soziale_eingliederung/index.html (20.02.2019).
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- ³¹ *OECD*, Better Life Index. Austria, <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/countries/austria/> (20.02.2019).
- ³² *European Commission*, Monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context (2018) 110, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/9237449/KS-01-18-656-EN-N.pdf/2b2a096b-3bd6-4939-8ef3-11cfc14b9329> (20.02.2019).
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- ⁴⁸ *European Commission*, Monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context (2018) 38, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/9237449/KS-01-18-656-EN-N.pdf/2b2a096b-3bd6-4939-8ef3-11cfc14b9329> (20.02.2019).
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- ⁷³ Marginally remunerated means working in 'mini jobs' paying up to €450 a month. See Jon C Messenger and Paul Wallot (2015) The Diversity of "Marginal" Part-Time Employment. ILO – INWORK Policy Brief No. 7. Geneva 2015. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/publication/wcms_375630.pdf
- ⁷⁴ People affected by poverty are considered to receive 60% or less of the national median income which for an individual is currently 1000 Euros per month
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- ⁷⁶ Living below the poverty line means receiving less than 60% of the national median income.
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- Persons are considered to be at risk of poverty after social transfers, if they have an equivalised disposable income below the risk-of-poverty threshold, which is set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income.
 - Severely materially deprived persons have living conditions severely constrained by a lack of resources, they experience at least 4 out of 9 following deprivations items: cannot afford i) to pay rent or utility bills, ii) keep home adequately warm, iii) face unexpected expenses, iv) eat meat, fish or a protein equivalent every second day, v) a week holiday away from home, vi) a car, vii) a washing machine, viii) a colour TV, or ix) a telephone.
 - People living in households with very low work intensity are those aged 0-59 living in households where the adults (aged 18-59) work 20% or less of their total work potential during the past year.
- ¹⁶⁴ The indicator measures the share of persons who are employed and have an equivalised disposable income below the risk-of-poverty threshold, which is set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income (after social transfers). For the purpose of this indicator, an individual is considered as being employed if he/she was employed for more than half of the reference year. The indicator is based on the EU-SILC (statistics on income, social inclusion and living conditions).
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- ¹⁹² Measures which have helped to reduce inequality include: the continuous increase of the minimum wage since 2014, the reform of the personal income tax to ensure greater progressivity and the increase of lower retirement pensions; updating the value of the Index of Social Support in 2017 (for the first time since 2011), or the reformulation of rules and increases in social benefits such as the Family Allowance, the Solidarity Supplement for Older Persons and the minimum income legal scheme ("Social Integration Income").
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- ²⁰⁸ The inactivity rates of women aged 25-49 are 24.7 % for RO and 19.7% for the EU (Q3-2018, Eurostat data)
- ²⁰⁹ The research sample included 2.186 households, from 65 of the villages in which WVR carries or has carried out its activities. We collected information from 2186 adults and 2258 children aged between 7 and 18 years old. The data collected has been analyzed comparatively for the period 2012 – 2018.
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- ²²¹ Ibid.
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- ²²⁵ European Institute for Gender Equality, [Gender Equality Index: Slovenia](#), Brussels, 2018, p. 1
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- ²²⁸ Ibid.
- ²²⁹ 2015 data. IJS, 2018.
- ²³⁰ IMAD 2018, p. 137.
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- ²⁴³ http://www.violenciagenero.msssi.gob.es/violenciaEnCifras/estudios/colecciones/pdf/Libro_22_Macroencuesta2015.pdf
- ²⁴⁴ Observatorio Feminicidio.net
- ²⁴⁵ Eurostat, early dropout rate in education and training, European Labour Force Survey, available in: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=t2020_40&plugin=1
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- ²⁵⁶ European Commission. International Cooperation and Development. https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/news-and-events/eu-remains-worlds-leading-donor-development-assistance-eu757-billion-2017_en
- ²⁵⁷ <https://observatoriorisc.org/la-informacion-fiscal-las-empresas-del-ibex-35/>
- ²⁵⁸ Para 79. We also encourage member states to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels which are country-led and country-driven. Such reviews should draw on contributions from indigenous peoples, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders, in line with national circumstances, policies and priorities. National parliaments as well as other institutions can also support these processes. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>
- ²⁵⁹ See [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2019/603473/EXPO_STU\(2019\)603473_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2019/603473/EXPO_STU(2019)603473_EN.pdf)
- ²⁶⁰ See VNR data base to access all reports <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/vnrs/>
- ²⁶¹ See for example the reports of civil society reviews and the key message of the 2018 review that ‘the foundations for making progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs are being built, but countries are not making the most of the VNRs as they are not reporting enough on lessons learned, where they would like to learn and where they would like to get support from others. at <https://sdg.iisd.org/news/stakeholders-launch-assessment-report-of-2018-sdg-national-reviews/>
- ²⁶² Direct translation from French: “Aborder la transition économique et écologique sous l’angle de la solidarité.” See: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/10729Rapport%20ODD%20France.pdf> page 32. The exact meaning is not entirely clear. It could mean that the costs of transition to a more environmentally sustainable economic model will not weigh too heavily on poor people.
- ²⁶³ https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:R202
- ²⁶⁴ <https://www.social-protection.org/gimi/gess/ShowTheme.action?id=1321>
- ²⁶⁵ Articles 22 and 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), and articles 9, 11, 12 and 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1979).
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- ²⁶⁸ Source: General Survey on the implementation of the Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202), https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/WCMS_673942/lang--en/index.htm
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- ²⁷⁰ <https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/node/80694>
- ²⁷¹ At the aftermath of the Communication on Social Protection, the EU established the Social Protection European Union Expertise in Development Cooperation (SOCIEUX): a technical assistance facility to support the creation of inclusive social protection systems. The EU also established, together with the OECD and the government of Finland, a programme to contribute to the strengthening of sound social protection systems in low and middle-income countries: the EU Social Protection Systems Programme (EU-SPS).
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- ²⁷³ History RePPPeated - How public private partnerships are failing, EURODAD publication, <https://eurodad.org/HistoryRePPPeated>
- ²⁷⁴ Source: History RePPPeated - How public private partnerships are failing, EURODAD publication, <https://eurodad.org/HistoryRePPPeated>
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<https://www.thenation.com/article/profit-driven-internet-schools-fail-ugandas-children/>
- ²⁷⁷ A 10-point roadmap for Europe on the role of the private sector in development, CONCORD Europe, <https://concordeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Private-sector-2017-online-final.pdf?1fdb40&1fdb40>
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- ²⁷⁹ Reversing Pension Privatizations: Rebuilding public pension systems in Eastern Europe and Latin America. International Labour Organization (ILO) publication, 2018
- ²⁸⁰ European Commission (2019) Reflection paper towards a sustainable Europe by 2030.
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- ²⁸³ European Public Health Alliance (2018) Closing the life expectancy gap of Roma in Europe.
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- ²⁸⁵ Professor Sir Michael Marmot (2010) Fair Society, Healthy Lives.
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- ²⁸⁷ European Commission (2013) Health inequalities in the EU, Final report of a consortium.
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- ²⁸⁹ European Commission, Pilot projects funded by the European Parliament.
- ²⁹⁰ Foundation for European Progressive Studies (2018) Health Inequalities in Europe.
- ²⁹¹ European Social Policy Network (2018) Report on inequalities in access to healthcare across the EU released.
- ²⁹² European Federation of Academies of Sciences and Humanities (2018) Health Inequalities.
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- ²⁹⁵ OECD/EU (2018) Health at a Glance: Europe 2018 – State of Health in the EU Cycle.
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- ³⁰⁵ See, Harper, K., Steger, T., & Filčák, R. (2009). Environmental justice and Roma communities in Central and Eastern Europe. *Environmental Policy and Governance*, 19(4), 251-268.
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- ³⁰⁹ European Commission, Europe 2020 at https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/eu-economic-governance-monitoring-prevention-correction/european-semester/framework/europe-2020-strategy_en
- ³¹⁰ European Roma Grassroots Organisations (ERGO) Network, 2019, “ROMA INCLUDED: Can the Sustainable Development Goals contribute to combatting antigypsyism?”, available at http://ergonet.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Report_ERGO_SDGs-1.pdf
- ³¹¹ The Alliance against Antigypsyism (Core members - ERGO Network, ENAR and Central Council for German Sinti and Roma) defines Antigypsyism as the main cause of exclusion of Roma people and the most acceptable form of racism in Europe. Read more in *Antigypsyism - A reference Paper* available at www.antigypsyism.eu
- ³¹² <https://fra.europa.eu/en/theme/roma> The estimate for all of Europe is 10-12 million.
- ³¹³ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/roma-and-travellers/publications> Figures are an average of minimum and maximum estimates.
- ³¹⁴ Growth rates of household expenditure or income per capita among the bottom 40 per cent of the population and the total population.
- ³¹⁵ Headline indicators can be found at <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/europe-2020-indicators/europe-2020-strategy/headline-indicators-scoreboard>.
- ³¹⁶ European Commission, 2018, “Evaluation of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020”, available at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1544109661990&uri=CELEX%3A52018SC0480>
- ³¹⁷ Target 17.18 is the following: By 2020, enhance capacity building support to developing countries, including for LDCs and SIDS, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.
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- ³¹⁹ Eurostat: “Severely materially deprived persons experience at least 4 out of 9 following deprivations items: cannot afford i) to pay rent or utility bills, ii) keep home adequately warm, iii) face unexpected expenses, iv) eat meat, fish or a protein equivalent every second day, v) a week holiday away from home, vi) a car, vii) a washing machine, viii) a colour TV, or ix) a telephone. People living in households with very low work intensity are those aged 0-59 living in households where the adults (aged 18-59) work 20% or less of their total work potential during the past year.” https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/-/t2020_50
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 2. Ad Hoc Committee of Experts on Roma Issues (CAHROM), “Thematic report on combating anti-gypsyism, hate speech and hate crime against Roma”, 2013, available at <http://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900016800890fb&format=native>
 3. Center for European Policy Studies, “Combating Institutional Antigypsyism: Responses and promising practices in the EU and selected Member States”, 2017, available at <https://www.ceps.eu/publications/combating-institutional-antigypsyism-responses-and-promising-practices-eu-and-selected>
 4. EU High Level Group on combating racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance, “Antigypsyism: Increasing its Recognition to Better Understand and Address its Manifestations”, 2018, available at https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/document.cfm?doc_id=55652
 5. The Roma civil monitor pilot project, “A synthesis of civil society’s reports on the implementation of national Roma integration strategies in the European Union”, 2018, available at <https://cps.ceu.edu/sites/cps.ceu.edu/files/attachment/basicpage/3034/rcm-civil-society-monitoring-report-1-synthesis27-2017-eprint-fin.pdf>
 6. Study requested by the LIBE Committee of the European Parliament, “Scaling up Roma Inclusion Strategies; Truth, reconciliation and justice for addressing antigypsyism”, available at [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2019/608859/IPOL_STU\(2019\)608859_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2019/608859/IPOL_STU(2019)608859_EN.pdf).
- ³²² For example see “Report on the Fundamental rights aspects in Roma integration in the EU: fighting anti-gypsyism” (2017/2038(INI)), 2018, available at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P8-TA-2017-0413&language=EN&ring=A8-2017-0294>.
- ³²³ Available at http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-07-257_en.htm?locale=en
- ³²⁴ Available at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM%3A133178>
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- ³²⁶ European Union Fundamental Rights Agency, 2018, “A persisting concern: anti-gypsyism as a barrier to Roma inclusion”, available at https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2018-anti-gypsyism-barrier-roma-inclusion_en.pdf
- ³²⁷ Examples of such practices are: segregation in maternity care departments, overcrowding, separation from new-born babies, racial harassment and humiliation, neglect, physical restraint and abuse during childbirth, failures related to informed consent and decision-making with regard to medical treatment and coercive, forced and involuntary sterilizations.

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- ³³⁵ European Commission, 2018, "Evaluation of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020", available at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1544109661990&uri=CELEX%3A52018SC0480>
- ³³⁶ See the Eurostat data at <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/sdi/key-findings> and <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/sdi/reduced-inequalities>.
- ³³⁷ https://womenlobby.org/IMG/pdf/european_women_s_lobby_manifesto_2019_final_.pdf
- ³³⁸ <https://womenlobby.org/The-movement-is-stronger-than-ever-after-the-Strikes-what-next?lang=en>
- ³³⁹ <https://womenlobby.org/Equal-Pay-Day-the-European-Women-s-Lobby-calls-for-improved-gender-equality-in?lang=en>
- ³⁴⁰ 2017 figures. Eurostat. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Gender_pay_gap_statistics
- ³⁴¹ The recently adopted Work-Life Balance Directive provides for paid parental leave and paternity leave, paid and non-transferable (two-months) and, for the first time at EU level, legal paid carers leave, all of which carry the potential to provide legal measures for men to take their share of care.
- ³⁴² Also see: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jX3_SMAy2pE and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eulp9VdKzFk>
- ³⁴³ https://www.womenlobby.org/IMG/pdf/ewl_factsheet_on_vaw_2016-final.pdf?4440/91f0a080d64657d23185662e37057600aeee7cf5
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[Directive 2000/78/EC](#) against discrimination at work on grounds of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.
[Directive 2006/54/EC](#) equal treatment for men and women in matters of employment and occupation.
[Directive 2004/113/EC](#) equal treatment for men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services.
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The following organisations have contributed content:

- 4D
- ACTION AID
- Age Platform Europe
- ATD Fourth World
- Awo International
- Caritas Luxembourg
- Cercle de Coopération des ONGD du Luxembourg
- CID Fraen an Gender
- CLER Réseau pour la transition énergétique (Energy Transition Network)
- CONCORD EUROPE
- Coordination Sud (Southern Coordination)
- Czechia Against Poverty and Inequalities
- ECODES
- ENGIM Internazionale
- ERGO Network
- EURODAD
- European Disability Forum
- European Environmental Bureau (EEB)
- European Public Health Alliance (EPHA)
- European Women's Lobby (EWL)
- European Youth Forum
- Faces of Inequalities
- FEANTSA
- Fondation Internet Nouvelle Génération (FING)
- Forum Umwelt und Entwicklung (FUE)
- French Committee for International Solidarity (CFSI)
- French Democratic Confederation of Labour (CFDT)
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- Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP)
- Hellenic Platform for Development
- Human Rights League (LDH)
- Humanité et Biodiversité (Humanity and Biodiversity)
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- Institute of Public Affairs
- Institute Povod
- Irish Environmental Network (IEN)
- Les Petits Débrouillards (Resourceful youth)
- Lithuanian Non-governmental Development Cooperation Organisation Platform
- Max Havelaar France
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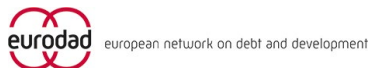
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The European-wide project **Make Europe Sustainable for All (MESA)** is coordinated by the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) and implemented in 15 European countries by 25 partners. It aims to raise citizens', CSOs', and policy-makers' awareness on the Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the 193 Member states of the United Nations in 2015. At the core of the project are campaigns and advocacy on inequalities, sustainable agriculture, gender equality, climate change, migration and sustainable consumption and production. This report was produced as part of the **Fighting Inequalities** in Europe campaign of the project.

#SDGS4All ■ <https://makeeuropesustainableforall.org> ■ <https://makeeuropesustainableforall.org/fight-inequalities>

The report contributes to the global **Faces of Inequality** campaign, which gives social exclusion, poverty and discrimination a face – and shows the extreme wealth and injustices as tax avoidance of multinational companies. It empowers people in the fight for their rights and is part of a global movement to end inequalities – by changing power structures. *Faces of Inequality* contributes to the achievement of the Agenda 2030 and specifically SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality). The campaign is built jointly by members and partners – especially organisations of marginalized and excluded peoples.

#FacesofInequality ■ <https://gcap.global/faces-of-inequality>