



EAPN Final Declaration – 21 October 2017

Almost 100 delegates of the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN), representing 31 National Networks and 13 European Organisations met in Dublin, at our annual General Assembly. We meet at a time when Europe, in the opinion of the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, has the 'Wind in its Sails', as highlighted in the State of the Union address in September.

We are cautiously optimistic, recognising the importance and potential impact of the proposed **European Pillar of Social Rights, with the upcoming inter-institutional proclamation at the Social Summit in Gothenburg** as an important milestone which could establish the foundations for upward social convergence on EU social standards, and create more political impetus to meaningfully combat poverty and social exclusion.

However, even if a slight reduction of the number of EU citizens living at risk of poverty and social exclusion was announced this week by Eurostat, there are a number of developments which temper our optimism, notably:

- **An uncertain European political future.** The implications of Brexit are still not clear, politically or financially. Until Brexit negotiations have concluded and there is clarity around the 'divorce bill' there is still a risk that people experiencing poverty and social exclusion will be the first to suffer from this political setback.
- **An uncertain European financial future.** Negotiations on the next Multi-Annual Financial Framework are already starting. It is not clear if fighting poverty, as most EU citizens demand, will be at the centre of the discussions.
- **An EU economic model and governance system which prioritizes stability, growth and competitiveness** instead of people, social inclusion and cohesion, and continues to drive austerity attacks to our welfare states rather than investing in social rights and social protection.
- **The continuous and growing level of political populism.** Regular speeches and actions which treat the EU as part of the problem, once again, risk repeating historical mistakes. The lack of recognition of the value of the EU, particularly amongst people with low education levels, unemployed, and those who suffer the most economic difficulties, is one of the biggest challenges faced by the EU.
- **Rising inequality.** The richest one percent of Europeans (including non-EU countries) hold almost a third of the region's wealth, while the bottom 40% of the population share less than 1% of Europe's total net wealth. In other words: the richest seven million people in Europe have the same amount of wealth as the poorest 662 million people (including non-EU countries).
- **Ongoing failure to tackle the root causes of poverty and social exclusion.** It is incomprehensible and unacceptable that almost 120 million Europeans are still living at risk of poverty and social exclusion. We should not expect that the same "recipe", that brought us to this situation, will be able to tackle the structural causes of this problem.

In response to these concerns, members of EAPN declare that:

- a) The lack of trust from many European citizens in the European institutions means that it is imperative for the **discussions about the future of Europe to show these institutions care about the almost 25% of**

