

Developing a new EU anti-poverty strategy

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The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs adopted the own-initiative report by João OLIVEIRA (The Left, PT) on developing a new EU anti-poverty strategy.

A strategy aimed at eradicating poverty

Members are concerned that in 2024, **93.3 million people** in the EU were still at risk of poverty or social exclusion, including 20 million children – one in four – and 27 million people were experiencing acute material and social deprivation. They are calling for a **comprehensive** approach to prevention to address the root causes of the problem and tackle the multidimensional aspects of poverty and social exclusion.

The report recalled that poverty disproportionately affects marginalised and vulnerable groups of society and that the EU has committed, under the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) action plan, to reduce the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion by at least 15 million by 2030, including at least 5 million children. Without a paradigm shift in the approach to combating poverty, and without adequate funding, the EU and its Member States will not achieve these poverty reduction objectives.

Members called on the Commission to present a **comprehensive, ambitious and adequately funded anti-poverty strategy** that includes the following general objectives and guidelines:

- (a) recognition of poverty as a **violation of human dignity** undermining the full realisation of human rights and as a basis for the promotion of a rights-based approach in line with international legal frameworks;
- (b) the setting of the goal of **urgently eradicating poverty by 2035 at the latest**, building on the standards of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the EPSR, while also developing interim progress indicators, clear milestones and a monitoring framework enabling adequate coordination of policies and funding needs;
- (c) proper **coordination** between the Commission and the Member States, and where applicable with regional authorities, respecting the principle of subsidiarity, to achieve this goal;
- (d) a **comprehensive, people-centred and integrated life-cycle approach** to long-term anti-poverty policies, combining universal and targeted measures starting in childhood and throughout all stages of life, with the goal of eradicating poverty and promoting social inclusion as a cross-cutting criterion in sectoral policies;
- (e) **participation by people** with lived experience of poverty in defining, implementing and evaluating policies that affect them, in an inclusive, effective and transparent manner that goes hand in hand with a methodology and capacity building;
- (f) a fundamental and horizontal principle of **non-discrimination** throughout the anti-poverty strategy to tackle structural inequalities and societal stigmas rooted in discrimination that exacerbate poverty and social exclusion;
- (g) the allocation of **adequate and sustained budgetary resources** for anti-poverty measures through the MFF and national budgetary mechanisms.

Fair working conditions and a more equitable distribution of income and wealth

Members called on the Commission and Member States to ensure that the objective of **full employment and decent employment**, as well as **adequate social protection**, services for all, and a fair distribution of income and wealth, as a guideline for economic and social policies. The report recommended, *inter alia*:

- strengthening public employment services, training pathways and job search assistance systems for people living in poverty and vulnerable groups, including the long-term unemployed and the low-skilled;
- supporting women's entrepreneurship and self-employment opportunities, particularly in rural and island areas;
- ensuring that education is accessible to children with disabilities;
- guaranteeing access to essential goods and services, such as food, energy, water, housing, transport and communications, at affordable prices;
- significantly increasing public investment in policies guaranteeing social rights, ensuring universal access to quality public services as well as goods and services of general economic and social interest, such as decent housing, food, water, sanitation, energy, transport, communications and cultural and leisure activities;
- implementing and expanding programmes and measures, such as 'Housing First' initiatives, aimed at combating homelessness;
- adopting effective measures and policies aimed at implementing the principle of 'equal pay for equal work', by combating inequalities and discrimination in the workplace;
- tackling youth poverty and socioeconomic inequalities.

A strategy focused on child poverty

The report specifically recommended:

- ensuring that the poverty reduction strategy combats child poverty through a **life-cycle approach**, given that the early years of children's lives are crucial for their physical, mental, cognitive, social and emotional development;
- fully implementing without delay the **European Child Guarantee**, ensuring that it has a specific budget of at least EUR 20 billion in the 2028-2034 MFF, implemented through the ESF+;
- strengthening child-focused **social protection systems** by providing specific benefits for children in need, such as family allowances, school meals and cost reduction programmes for cultural, sporting, leisure and extracurricular activities;
- guaranteeing **every child's right to a family life**, meaning that poverty or precarious housing should never be used as the sole reasons for placing children in institutional care.