

**Lifting 20 million people out of
poverty & social exclusion:
Insights and experience from local
public social services**
ESN Workshop Report

Brighton, UK
17 October 2011

ESN is the independent network for social services in Europe. Our mission is to help change the lives of the most vulnerable in society through the delivery of quality social services. We bring together the people who are key to the design and delivery of vital care and support at the local level to learn from each other and contribute their experience and expertise to building effective European and national social policy.

1. Introduction

The European Union has set a target of having “**at least 20 million fewer people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion**”. The new European target is therefore a renewed challenge to social services. There are five other EU targets, including targets on increasing employment rates and reducing school drop-outs. The EU has defined 10 policy guidelines against which Member States report annually. One of these, Guideline 10 (Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty) particularly focuses on the social dimension. Whilst it is quite broad, it mentions “*access to affordable, sustainable and high quality services and public services*” and “*social protection systems*” so it can be understood to cover social services.

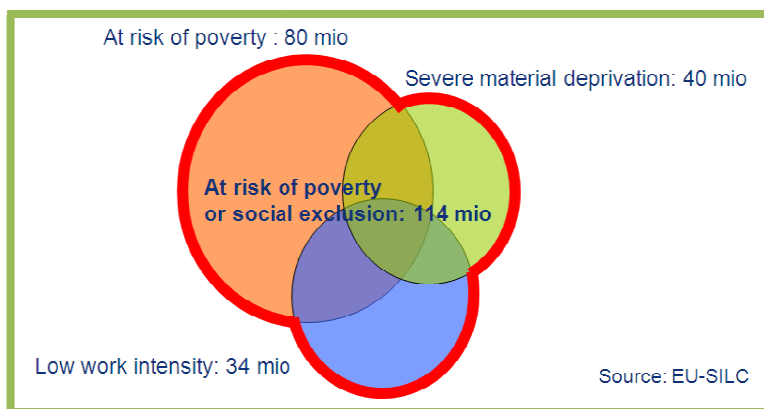


Figure 1: Population at risk of poverty or social exclusion according to the Europe 2020 headline indicators for the 27 Member States, EU-SILC (2009).

Defining what it means to be ‘at risk of poverty and social exclusion’ is key to measuring progress towards the target. Member States

agreed that the EU poverty and social exclusion target would be based on three indicators:

- **relative income poverty:** the percentage of people with an equivalised disposable income below 60% of the national median.
- **‘severe’ material deprivation:** the proportion of people who cannot afford four or more of the following nine items: pay their rent or utility bills; keep their home adequately warm; face unexpected expenses; eat meat, fish, or a protein equivalent every second day; enjoy a week of holiday away from home once a year; have a car; have a washing machine; have a colour television; or have a telephone.
- **households with very low work intensity:** the proportion of people aged 0-59 who live in households where the adults worked less than 20% of their total work-time potential during the previous 12 months.

Member States have set **national targets** as their contribution to achieving the overall EU target. However, in doing so, they have been free to choose a target that best suits their national policy context. As a result some of the targets set by Member States are not based on the three European indicators. In the case of those Member States who have opted to use a different indicator, the extent to which their national target will contribute to achieving the overall EU target is not clear. Several Member States have not set sufficiently ambitious targets. The Commission has therefore not been able to confirm whether the overall EU poverty target can be met by 2020 even if all the national targets are met. Progress will be monitored annually by the EU, in particular through the National Reform Programmes, which in fact cover the whole Europe 2020 Strategy.

Figure 2: The target on poverty and social exclusion in selected Member States.

Country	Target
Belgium	380 000 (relative poverty)
Germany	333 000 (long-term unemployed)
Hungary	450 000 (relative poverty)
Ireland	186 000 (own indicator: 'consistent poverty'; NB target rises to 250 000 if 2009 is used as baseline year ¹)
Romania	580 000 (relative poverty)
Spain	1 400 000 – 1 500 000
Sweden	Reduction of the % of women and men who are not in the labour force (except full-time students), the long-term unemployed or those on long-term sick leave to well under 14% by 2020
United Kingdom	1 700 000 or 10% (relative poverty, 2010 Child Poverty Act) ²

The European Social Network held a workshop on 21 July 2011 to address some **key questions about the role of social services** in helping achieve the target:

- How do you define/measure poverty (and social exclusion)?
- What role do social services in local government have in tackling poverty locally?
- What would it take to reduce poverty in your area significantly?
- What is your view on what your country's *National Reform Programme* says about combating poverty and social exclusion?

At the workshop, senior managers in local and regional social services (from Belgium, Germany, Iceland, Romania, Serbia, Spain and Sweden) were joined by several national and European policy experts, ensuring a variety of perspectives from practice, policy and research.

Workshop Participants

ESN warmly thanks all the participants in the workshop for their contribution to this report.

Dragiša Dabetić	Deputy Director, Belgrade Gerontology Centre	Serbia
Christian Fillet	Director of Social Services, Municipality of Willebroek / Association of Flemish Social Directors (VVOS)	Belgium
Alina Mrejeru	Head of Department for Projects, Strategies and Logistics in the Community Development and Care Directorate, Municipality of Arad	Romania
Elisabeth Rahmberg	Director of Social Services, Municipality of Lidköping / Association of Sweden's Social Directors (FSS)	Sweden
Gunnar Sandholt	Chairman, Association of Social Directors	Iceland
Carlos Santos Guerrero	Head of Service for Cooperation with Municipalities, Autonomous Community of Xunta de Galicia	Spain
Matthias Schulze-Böing	Managing Director, MainArbeit/JobCentre, City of Offenbach-am-Main and Chair, National Association of Job Centres	Germany
Ágnes Simonyi	Advisor to the National Family and Social Policy Institute	Hungary
Britta Spilker	EU Policy Officer, German Association for Public and Private Welfare	Germany
Hugh Frazer	Adjunct Professor of Social Inclusion, National University of Ireland, Advisor to ESN	

¹ Peer review, Ireland (16-17 June 2011): The setting of national targets – Short report, see http://www.peer-review-social-inclusion.eu/peer-reviews/2011/the-setting-of-national-poverty-targets/short-report_ie-2011

² Child Poverty Act (2010): chapter 9/part 1, Targets relating to child poverty, Section 3, see <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/9/section/3>

2. Defining and measuring poverty and social exclusion

ESN Members recognise the value of the European definitions (relative income poverty, material deprivation, low work intensity) as a measure of the “epidemic” of poverty in society. However, they are used to working with thresholds for welfare benefits based on individual/household income, which are probably below the 60% relative poverty measure. In terms of service provision, they are used to working with people who have a particular problem in their life, such as alcoholism, drug abuse, family breakdown or mental health problems. Several workshop participants said they found the European indicators “too abstract”, at least as a basis for local action.

The Region of Galicia in Northern Spain uses a 40% relative poverty measure (used by the EU as an indicator of ‘extreme’ poverty), but municipalities in the region say this purely economic definition is incomplete. Carlos Santos Guerrero from the regional government says that in a mixed urban/rural region, it fails to take into account undeclared income, e.g. from agricultural cooperatives and smallholdings.

Workshop participants agreed that social services and policy-makers need to understand the “*modern face of poverty*” arising from **unemployment**. Elisabeth Rahmberg (Sweden) described the modern face of poverty related to long-term unemployment as poor mental health, low self-esteem, low educational attainment, addiction. She emphasised that these are new, complex and inter-related problems that have no quick or easy solutions.

The **public perception** of poverty is often far from the reality. Christian Fillet reported a survey in Flanders that showed that people think that 1 in 1500 people go to a food bank every year, but the reality is closer to 1 in every 100. Britta Spilker reported that ‘poverty’ is often considered an unsuitable term for the situation in Germany and many Germans would be surprised to learn that 1 in 5 people in the country are considered ‘poor’ according to the Europe 2020 indicators. From Iceland, Gunnar Sandholt said: “*The one good thing about this crisis has been that people in Iceland are now talking about poverty.*”

As a country with high income levels and an employment-oriented society, Germany prefers to use indicators like long-term **unemployment** or low-work intensity to relative poverty. What many do not realise today is that fewer and fewer people fit into the ‘normal box’ of life-long employment. According to Matthias Schulze-Böing (Germany) recent social and labour market-reforms have improved policies to tackle long-term-unemployment and to integrate those at risk of exclusion from regular employment. However, it remains difficult to integrate those furthest from the labour market back into work.

There was a strong consensus that **child poverty** needed to be treated as a phenomenon in its own right. Gunnar Sandholt (Iceland) highlighted that there is often a problem with income distribution in poor families: there are poor families where children are well looked-after; in other families, this is not the case. Christian Fillet (Belgium) argued that the higher risk of poverty for children and the comparatively high number of children in jobless households (11.8% in his town) increases the likelihood of poverty being passed on from generation to generation. Gunnar Sandholt also stressed that wider issues like parental leave and women’s employment are part of the solution to child poverty.

The issue of integrating the Roma community was brought up by Alina Mrejeru (Romania), particularly in terms of education and employment - this was seen as a common challenge facing Central and Eastern Europe. Poverty among **ethnic minorities or migrants** in the rest of Europe was also a concern for participants. Britta Spilker said that according to some surveys people with a migrant (for example, Turkish) background in Germany may experience social exclusion as soon as they give their name, e.g. when looking for an apartment or applying for a job. Workshop participants also agreed that poverty, social exclusion, unemployment and poor education could be described as an 'epidemic' in certain **neighbourhoods and communities**.

The workshop also brought home the contrasts between different parts of Europe. Participants from **Central and Eastern Europe** (Hungary, Romania and Serbia) acknowledged that these countries are still undergoing a transition, even if they have already become EU Member States. Public sector salaries in Romania have recently been cut by 25%, leading to problems with motivation to work. Serbia's GDP is 37% of the EU average and Dragiša Dabetić spoke about the many 'victims of transition', i.e. people who lost their jobs in the era of privatisation over the last ten years.

In contrast, the Nordic participants (Iceland and Sweden) highlighted the right of an individual to escape poverty and the significance of equal access to services for everyone in society, rich or poor. As an example of **universal services**, Elisabeth Rahmberg told the participants about a programme to give every school-child in her city a laptop. Carlos Santos Guerrero (Spain) questioned whether it was really fair to give every child, rich or poor, a free laptop, when some could afford to buy their own. Ágnes Simonyi (Hungary) pointed out that universal provisions like this are a way to avoid the stigma of poverty: everyone gets the same, rich or poor. Elisabeth Rahmberg said they combined this programme with outreach to the poorer families, though some reject the offer of help. Matthias Schulze-Böing agreed with her that you have to keep trying: *"that's what social work is about,"* he concluded.

3. Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion at local level

László Andor, European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion told ESN's European Social Services Conference in Barcelona in 2010:

"Social services including all of you present at this conference as leaders and managers in local and regional government, have an important role to play in helping lift 20 million people out of poverty and social exclusion."

In light of this, ESN asked members from Sweden, Iceland, Belgium, Germany, Spain and Romania how social services would contribute to the European target to "lift 20 million people out of poverty and social exclusion", focusing in particular on two questions :

- What role do social services in local government have in tackling poverty locally?
- What would it take to reduce poverty in your area significantly?

Municipality of Lidköping, Sweden

In Lidköping, a relatively prosperous town of 40,000 inhabitants in central Sweden, there are around 300 households per month receiving social welfare benefits with another 100 'at risk of poverty'. Elisabeth Rahmberg, the municipality's Director of Social Services, says:

"In Sweden, serious poverty is not the main issue, but the gap in living standards, especially for those on long-term welfare and unemployment benefits."

Sweden's municipalities, including social services, have a significant role in ensuring equal opportunities, for example between men and women and also for ethnic minorities.

Elisabeth Rahmberg highlighted two specific problems in Lidköping:

- the rate of youth unemployment is 12% compared to the national rate of 9%
- 10% of children are living in households just above the poverty line and a further 6% from poor families are below the poverty line.

However, Ms. Rahmberg says that the difference between being slightly above and below the line makes little difference to children's lives.

Ms. Rahmberg argued the focus should be on education and social inclusion for all children, with particular attention paid to children in foster care, children whose parents have drug problems and children from migrant families. There would be a need for comprehensive early intervention programmes for these and other vulnerable groups. An increase in social benefits, especially for child-care and single parents, would also be necessary. Reducing the rate of school drop-outs is important and would require a national strategic plan to get all children through school. Ms. Rahmberg highlighted the importance of secure housing, especially for young adults with psychiatric problems and low level of education. She concluded: *"education is really the way out of poverty."*

Iceland

In Iceland, local government is seen as the safety net for citizens. It is the constitutional right of all citizens to receive help from the state if they cannot afford living costs. Gunnar Sandholt, chair of the Association of Social Directors, shared Elisabeth Rahmberg's view that combating poverty and social exclusion should begin with children. He said that special attention needs to be paid to the child as a separate entity within the family. Subsidies should be provided for children in order to pay for kindergarten and school costs as well as leisure and family activities. Other actions would include:

- Increasing the benefit rate to the level of the poverty rate
- Strengthening counselling services, training programmes and social rehabilitation

- Preventing school drop-outs by providing scholarships

However, Mr. Sandholt also noted that local social services are helping families facing higher debt levels and increasing housing costs, who had until recently managed by themselves. The national government would therefore have to improve the tax revenue to municipalities and provide extra funding for housing. He also said that the national government could do more to fight poverty, notably reducing or abolishing user payment in health-care and helping people with large household debts.

Municipality of Willebroek, Flanders, Belgium

Willebroek is a town of 25,000 inhabitants; its social welfare centre (OCMW) has 25 social workers who provide assistance to those who have low incomes (250 persons) or those who are in debt (800 persons). The OCMW's target is to reduce the number of people with a low income to 150 by 2014. Christian Fillet, Director of the OCMW, sees the main role of local government as preventing people receiving social benefits from falling into the poverty trap. Local initiatives are important in helping reduce the rate of unemployment, especially in low work-intensity households. At 9.2% (compared with 7% in the EU), a large proportion of the population, including many children, continues to live in low work-intensity households.

Child poverty in Willebroek is at 17.2%, above the national average of 14.7%. The OCMW tries to ensure that school costs are at a minimum for families with low incomes. It also offers assistance to those with housing problems; 15-20% of the local housing stock is social housing owned by the local authority. Other services include debt management advice and Dutch language classes for asylum-seekers and migrants.

Mr Fillet argued that using existing tools more effectively is the best way to reduce poverty and social exclusion. Smaller municipalities need to work together to increase their ability to handle larger tasks. He also highlighted that the OCMW's social workers work with families to try to reduce early school-leaving.

City of Offenbach-am-Main, Germany

Offenbach is a city of 120,000 near Frankfurt; its industrial economy has declined over the years, creating some socio-economic problems. Matthias Schulze-Böing, Managing Director of Main-Arbeit Job Centre and Chair of the National Association for Jobcentres, sees the role of local government in terms of prevention (equal access to first-class education and employment) and reaction (minimum income, social assistance and integration measures). In more detail, local social services:

- Help people get back to work
- Manage social benefits for older people, asylum seekers and job-seekers
- Provide debt or psychiatric counselling and training and placements for job-seekers
- Help single parents and migrants access a network of services through vouchers

He reported that 18.2% of the city's population is currently receiving social assistance.

Mr. Schulze-Böing sees combating poverty and social exclusion in Offenbach as strongly linked to education and employment. He says that in order to make a significant contribution to reducing poverty and social exclusion, the employment rate would have to go up by 10% and unemployment down by 50%; educational attainment would have to

increase significantly and the school drop-out rate would need to be reduced by 80%. The national government would also have to take action to:

- Improve coverage of social security and pension systems
- Invest in education, life-long learning, skills development
- Implement minimum wage schemes
- Reduce the burden of social security and health insurance contributions
- Implement selective immigration policies

The German system, he says, has to change its assumption that everyone has “*a normal work biography*” in order to help people who have poor education, long periods without work and gaps in pension, social security and health insurance contributions.

Autonomous Community of Galicia, Spain

The Region of Galicia in Northern Spain has a population of 2.8 million; the coastal economy has prospered on fishing, but the rural hinterland is in a transition from small-scale agriculture to tourism as well as ecological farming and forestry. In Spain, “*municipalities are the entrance point to the social services system,*” says Carlos Santos Guerrero, the Head of Service Cooperation with Municipalities. The regional government and municipalities work in collaboration to manage and deliver social services and benefits. In the first instance, municipal social services assess and meet the needs of vulnerable people (including people with disabilities, people with care needs, older people, homeless people and the Roma community). Further specific needs are managed by specialised services delivered by the regional administration.

The ageing population, the emigration of a skilled workforce and youth unemployment (31% in the first quarter of 2011) are major challenges. In order to reduce poverty, the autonomous communities and municipalities would need central government funding to:

- Develop personalised pathways for the active inclusion of vulnerable groups
- Improve labour market and social integration in cooperation with specialised NGOs
- Promote integrated approaches for intervention in declining rural and urban areas
- Launch new social inclusion regulations (benefits, measures, programmes, etc.)
- Improve coordination among different levels of administration and with local actors

Municipality of Arad, Romania

Arad is a town of 200 000 with 3% unemployment and 0.1% homelessness. Alina Mrejeru, the Head of Community Development and Care Directorate said: “*We’re not ashamed to say we have poverty in our country.*” She sees the role of local government as combating the effects of local socio-economic problems, such as social exclusion, housing problems, the effects of the economic crisis and poor social infrastructure.

The solutions suggested were to improve access to European funds and to develop more projects like those already in operation, such as:

- ‘People for People’ – a 9-month campaign to help poor people in Arad with clothing, food and other goods (around 277 families got help this way)
- ‘Equal chances in the labour market’ for disabled persons
- ‘Project Rainbow’ aiming to reduce school dropout rates for children from disadvantaged families, with a special focus on the Roma population

Ms Mrejeru explained that it was important for the municipality to learn from these projects and in the process develop partnerships and relationships with NGOs.

4. Europe 2020: the National Reform Programmes 2011

So far in this report, we have seen how ESN members in local public social services understand poverty and social exclusion, what is being done already and what more they think could be done to combat poverty and social exclusion. ESN also asked participants to review their countries' National Reform Programmes (NRPs) 2011, paying particular attention to their emphasis on poverty and social exclusion, their comprehensiveness and attention to the role of social services.

Introducing this session, Hugh Frazer noted that the new NRPs had not enhanced the mainstreaming of social inclusion objectives, nor led to increased synergies between policy areas, as had been argued would happen. His analysis of the NRPs concluded that *“more focus has been placed on ‘smart and sustainable’ than on ‘inclusive’ growth and social protection and inclusion have been downgraded to subsidiary issues.”* He told the workshop participants:

“The role of tackling poverty and social exclusion in ensuring ‘smart and sustainable growth’ has not been fully understood by Member States nor has it been seen as an investment. As a result, a broad approach based on mutual interdependence of economic, employment, environmental policies remains to be developed.”

In its own evaluation of the National Reform Programmes, the Commission has said that national targets have shown that there is a real commitment to the goals of Europe 2020. However, the trend in many countries highlights *“a growing risk of poverty and marginalisation unless active measures are taken to counter them”*.³

Sweden

Elisabeth Rahmberg reported that the NRP for Sweden is mostly focused on the challenges facing the labour market and on improving education, which are major issues for local government as well. However, she said that poverty also needed to be underlined as an ‘epidemic’ of a complex set of social issues. In her view, the long-term costs of social exclusion would also need to be addressed. There should also be a greater focus on children’s needs and gender equality.

The Commission also picks up on the labour market focus of the report. It raises concerns over youth unemployment rates, the employment rate of non-EU nationals (women in particular), the issue of long-term unemployment and rates of return from sickness leave in Sweden. On a positive note, it remarks that *“the sickness insurance reform has clearly resulted in a lower number of people on long-term sick leave and disability schemes (by 15-20% since 2006) and shorter periods of illness.”*

Belgium

Christian Fillet stated that the Belgian NRP highlights homelessness and child poverty as the key poverty and social exclusion issues that the country needs to address. He applauded the level of cooperation and consultation with social services and other stakeholders during the preparation of the NRP. He also considered it important to know

³ European Commission Communication (June 2011), Guidance for national policies in 2011-2012, COM (2011) 400 final, see http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/communication_en.pdf

that the Flemish Government has drawn up a separate Flemish Action Plan for Poverty Reduction for 2010-2014⁴.

The Commission remarked that Belgium's focus was on finding a better match between education and the needs of the labour market. In spite of the country's high expenditure on active labour market policies, "*activation remains largely inefficient, mainly due to the combination of long time lags in the follow-up of job-seekers and limited coordination of institutional actors*". The Commission also underlines the need for Belgium to ensure a significant decrease in the rate of early school-leaving in Wallonia and Brussels.

Germany

According to Matthias Schulze-Boeing, the main focus of the German NRP is labour market and employment policies; however there are few explicitly new policies outlined in the programme. A lot of emphasis was placed on bringing women back into the labour market. He argued that there is a need to focus more on education, as improving access to and the quality of education could prevent many issues that later emerge in the labour market. The Commission shares this view: "*the unemployment rate is especially high for low-skilled workers, while their participation rate in life-long learning (LLL) remains low.*" Matthias highlights that the role of local government is implied rather than made explicit due to the decentralised character of the German federal system.

The Commission sees long-term and high unemployment among low-skilled workers, particularly with a migrant background, as a remaining challenge for Germany. However, it was concerned that the NRP did not identify people in 'in-work poverty' as a challenge, despite the growing number of people in this category. The NRP briefly lists some education initiatives from the *Länder*. It judges that further measures are necessary to tackle low educational attainment and high drop-out risks of certain social groups.

Spain

Carlos Santos Guerrero reported that the Spanish NRP is very much employment-focused; education and social services are only important in the context of helping improve the national employment rate. There are very few references to the role of social services in ensuring better levels of social inclusion. He also regretted that the long-term economic costs of social exclusion and poverty in terms of welfare and health expenditure were not a strategic concern. The NRP is also missing a comprehensive approach to combat the prejudice surrounding poverty.

Mr. Santos Guerrero argued that more emphasis should be placed on tackling child poverty, a point also made by the Commission: "*The lack of affordable care services is a significant factor causing inactivity or involuntary part-time work, and thereby influencing child poverty.*"⁵ The government still has a lot to do to tackle the rate of unemployment (which is at a record high of 21.25%) and especially youth unemployment (41.6% in 2010⁶). On a positive note, the Commission judges that the indirect impact of the September 2010 labour market reform on youth unemployment, female employment rates and low-income second earners could be very significant in reducing poverty.

⁴ See Executive summary: [Flemish Reform Programme Europe 2020](#)

⁵ Council Recommendation (June 2011), the National Reform Programme 2011 of Spain, SEC(2011) 718 final

⁶ Commission Staff Working Paper (June 2011), Assessment of the 2011 national reform programme and convergence programme for Spain, p.14 SEC(2011) 817 final

Hungary

Employment was the strongest element of Hungary's NRP according to Ágnes Simonyi. Its primary concerns are low work intensity, helping low-skilled workers and Roma integration. Ágnes Simonyi reported that the role of local government was not mentioned in the NRP, but was strongly present in the new National Social Policy Concept, which outlines a reform in the sector (the Concept was put on hold following a recent vote in the Hungarian Parliament). She expressed doubt about the segmented nature of social policy-making in Hungary – split between four ministries – saying this could create coordination problems.

According to the Commission's analysis, the achievement of the poverty target will greatly depend on employment trends, especially in light of high low work intensity figures (highest in the EU and growing from 9.5 % in 2005 to 11.3 % by 2009⁷). The Commission highlights the transformation of the social benefit system and policies aimed at strengthening work incentive as a positive development. However, it warns that "*it is important to maintain a sufficient level of support for those most in need*".

Romania

Alina Mrejeru, the Head Department for Projects, Strategies and Logistics in the Community and Care Directorate in Arad, sees the National Reform Programme for Romania as quite ambitious in its objectives. As a result she says that there has been a lot of reference to the term of 'reform' with regards to access to health care for vulnerable groups as well as access to the labour market. She also underlined that reducing the rate of early-school leaving and integrating the Roma community were also key aims present in the NRP.

According to EC recommendations, unemployment remains particularly high among vulnerable groups, especially the Roma population⁸. Against this background, Romanian authorities requested international and EU financial assistance in May 2009. The Commission notes that the World Bank is working together with national authorities "*to improve the design of the social protection system in Romania (...) in order to target spending better on those most in need*"⁹. As such, the World Bank is set to provide up to €750 million of results-based financing for social assistance and health reforms¹⁰.

⁷ Commission Staff Working Paper (June 2011), Assessment of the 2011 national reform programme and convergence programme for Hungary, p.18 SEC(2011) 725 final

⁸ Council recommendations (June 2011) on the National Reform Programme 2011 of Romania, SEC(2011) 731 final

⁹ Commission Staff Working Paper (June 2011), Assessment of the 2011 national reform programme and convergence programme for Romania, p.4 SEC (2011) 825 final

¹⁰ Ibid , p. 2-3

6. Conclusions

It is clear from ESN members' local experience that combating poverty and social exclusion is as much about education and employment as about basic welfare benefits and specialist social work services. ESN Members found it regrettable that the policy links between these issues are not more prominent in the NRPs. They cited the need to reduce school drop-outs, increase educational attainment and raise employment among vulnerable groups, in order to "lift 20 million people out of poverty". They all felt that social work and the wider welfare system should help vulnerable children and young people reach their goals.

There is no doubt from ESN members see the role of social services as crucial to combating poverty and social exclusion. Indeed, much is already being done by specialist social work services to work with families in difficulty to help them overcome or manage challenging life circumstances in order that parents can work and children can finish education. They identified several key areas where further action would be needed:

- Education and social inclusion for all children
- Investment in life-long learning
- Comprehensive early intervention programmes
- Personalised pathways for vulnerable groups
- Ensuring adequate social benefits
- Better access to European funds

At the end of the workshop, Alina Mrejeru, shared an acrostic of the word 'poverty': *"People. Overwhelmed by problems. Vulnerability. End of the road. Risk. Target. Yes we must do something!"* ESN is committed to supporting its members through mutual learning and policy information so that they can support vulnerable people who are overwhelmed by problems and feel like they are at the end of the road to overcome their problems and escape poverty and social exclusion. ESN will also continue to work at EU level to contribute to policy development and monitoring based on the knowledge and experience of its Members at local level.

References

- "Europe 2020 Target on Poverty & Social Exclusion: What role for social services?" ESN Members' Workshop, 21 July 2011.
- ESN's Recommendations on the European Platform against Poverty: <http://www.esn-eu.org/get-document/index.htm?id=449>
- ESN Review of National Reports on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2008-10: <http://www.esn-eu.org/get-document/index.htm?id=218>
- National Reform Programmes and Country-Specific Recommendations are available at: http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/tools/monitoring/recommendations_2011/index_en.htm

ESN Contacts

Stephen Barnett, policy director: stephen.barnett@esn-eu.org

Adrienn Sz. Nagy, policy & information assistant: adrienn.nagy@esn-eu.org