



Congreso de los Diputados



INFORME SOBRE LA REUNIÓN DE PRESIDENTES DE COMISIONES DE ASUNTOS SOCIALES. MALTA, 23 Y 24 DE MARZO DE 2017.

Los pasados días 23 y 24 de marzo de 2017, se desplazó a Malta Dña. Carmen Hernández Bento, Vicepresidenta Primera de la Comisión de Sanidad y Servicios Sociales, acompañada por el Letrado de las Cortes Generales, D. Luis de la Peña Rodríguez, adscrito al citado órgano. Asimismo, Dña. Cristina García Ohlrich actuó como intérprete durante las sesiones.

A esta misma reunión acudió, en representación del Senado, Dña. Carmen de Aragón Amunárriz, Presidenta de la Comisión de Sanidad y Servicios Sociales, con D. Francisco Lema Alvarelos, que actuó como intérprete.

El grupo indicado llegó por vía aérea a La Valeta el día 23 de marzo de 2017. D. José Pons Irazazabal, Embajador de España en Malta, acudió al aeropuerto para recibirles y, a continuación, ofreció un almuerzo a los asistentes.

A las 19'00 horas la delegación española asistió a una cena ofrecida por D. Anthony Agius Decelis, Presidente de la Comisión de Asuntos Sociales del Parlamento de Malta, en Villa Bighi, en Kalkara.

Al día siguiente, 24 de marzo, tuvo lugar la sesión objeto del desplazamiento.

Se inició a las 9'00 horas, con el discurso de bienvenida pronunciado por el Sr. D. Angelo Farrugia, Presidente de la Cámara de Representantes de Malta. Asimismo, tomó la palabra el Sr. Agius Decelis, Presidente de la Comisión de Asuntos Sociales del Parlamento de Malta.

Igualmente, intervino por videoconferencia la Sra. Marianne Thyssen, Comisaria Europea para el Empleo, Asuntos Sociales, Habilidades y Movilidad Laboral.

La primera sesión se dedicó al tema de la pobreza y la exclusión social. Contó con las intervenciones del Sr. Lara Montero, Director de European Social Network. También intervino la Sra. Sian Jones, Coordinadora de European Anti-Poverty Network. Se abrió seguidamente un debate en el que participaron los parlamentarios asistentes a esta sesión, siendo respondidos por los Ponentes citados.



Congreso de los Diputados

La sesión segunda se refirió al tema de qué es lo que convierte a una persona individual en socialmente excluida, contemplando las distintas perspectivas y el intercambio de las mejores prácticas. Actuaron como oradores Dña. Ángela Abela, Profesora del Departamento de Estudios de la Familia de la Universidad de Malta, Dña. Jana Hainsworth, Presidenta de la Plataforma Social y D. Silvan Agius, Director de Derechos Humanos e Integración y Ministro de Diálogo Social, Asuntos de Consumo y Libertades Civiles. Se abrió, a continuación, un debate.

A las 13'00 horas se realizó la foto oficial de los parlamentarios asistentes.

A las 14'30 horas se reanudó con la tercera sesión, referida a las políticas de Europa en 2020 y en adelante. Como oradores tomaron la palabra los Sres. Thomas Dominique, anterior Presidente de la Comisión de Protección Social, Barbara Kauffmann, Directora de Empleo y Gobernanza Social de la Comisión Europea y D. Ioannis Dimitrakopoulos, Jefe del Departamento de Derechos Ciudadanos, de la Agencia de la Unión Europea para los Derechos Fundamentales.

A las 16'15 se formularon las conclusiones de la jornada señalada por parte del Sr. Agius Decelis, Presidente de la Comisión de Asuntos Sociales de la Cámara de Representantes de Malta.

Con ello se dio por concluida la reunión.

La documentación recopilada se encuentra disponible en la Secretaría de la Comisión de Sanidad y Servicios Sociales del Congreso de los Diputados.

Por la noche el Embajador de España ofreció una cena en su residencia oficial a los miembros de la delegación española.

La mañana del día 25 de marzo de 2017 la delegación emprendió su regreso a España por vía aérea.

Palacio del Congreso de los Diputados, a 5 de abril de 2017.

Luis de la Peña Rodríguez
Letrado de la Comisión de Sanidad y Servicios Sociales



MALTA EU2017
PARLIAMENTARY DIMENSION

Meeting of the Chairpersons of the Committees on Social Affairs

Draft Programme



23 – 24 MARCH 2017
MALTA

Thursday, 23 March 2017

- 15:00 – 18:30** Arrival of delegations and registration at the hotels
- 18:30** Departure by bus from the hotels to the dinner venue
- 19:00** Dinner hosted by Hon. Anthony Agius Decelis, *Chairman of the Social Affairs Committee*
- Venue: Esplora, Interactive Science Centre, Villa Bighi, Kalkara*
- 21:30** Return to the hotels by bus

Friday, 24 March 2017

- 08:15** Departure by bus from the conference hotels to the Grand Hotel Excelsior, Great Siege Road, Floriana
- 08:30** Arrival of participants and registration for the meeting
- 09:00** **Opening of the meeting**
- Welcome address by Hon. Angelo Farrugia, *Speaker of the House of Representatives*
- Introductory remarks by Hon. Anthony Agius Decelis, *Chairman of the Social Affairs Committee*
- Speech by Ms Marianne Thyssen, *European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility* (tbc)
- 09:30** **Session I: Poverty and Social Exclusion: Working towards a more inclusive Europe**
- Keynote Speaker: Mr Alfonso Lara Montero, *Policy Director, European Social Network*
- Speaker: Ms Sian Jones, *Policy Coordinator, European Anti-Poverty Network*
- Debate
- 10:30** **Coffee Break**

11:00 Session II: What makes an individual socially excluded? Different perspectives and exchange of best practices

Speaker: Prof. Angela Abela, *Department of Family Studies, University of Malta*

Speaker: Ms Jana Hainsworth, *President, Social Platform*

Speaker: Mr Silvan Agius, *Director Human Rights and Integration, Ministry for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties*

Debate

13:00 Official Photo

Lunch

14:30 Session III: Taking stock of the policies of Europe 2020 and the way forward

Keynote Speaker: Mr Thomas Dominique, *Former Chairperson, Social Protection Committee*

Speaker: Dr Barbara Kauffmann, *Director for Employment and Social Governance, European Commission*

Speaker: Mr Ioannis Dimitrakopoulos, *Head of Equality and Citizens' Rights Department, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights*

Debate

16:15 Concluding remarks by the Chairperson of the Social Affairs Committee

16:30 Departure of delegations



Taking stock of the policies of Europe 2020 and the way forward

Meeting of the Chairpersons of the Committees
on Social Affairs
Malta, 24 March 2017

Barbara Kauffmann
DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion



Europe 2020 targets

Poverty and social exclusion

- *By 2020, at least 20 million fewer people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion, compared to 2008*

Employment

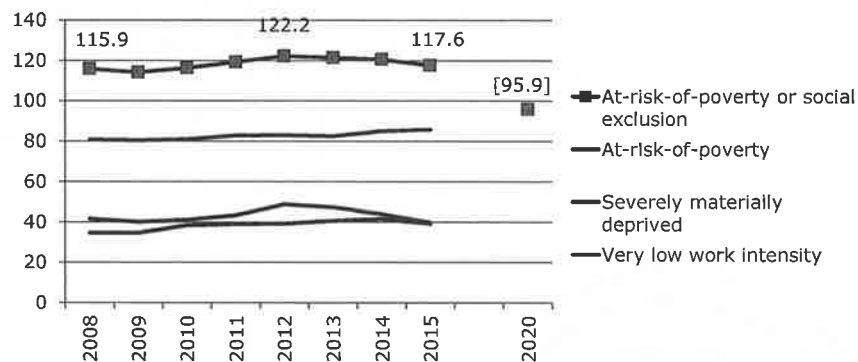
- *75% of the 20-64 year-olds in employment*

Education

- *Reducing school drop-out rates below 10%*
- *At least 40% of 30-34-year-olds completing third level education*



People at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion (EU27, million)

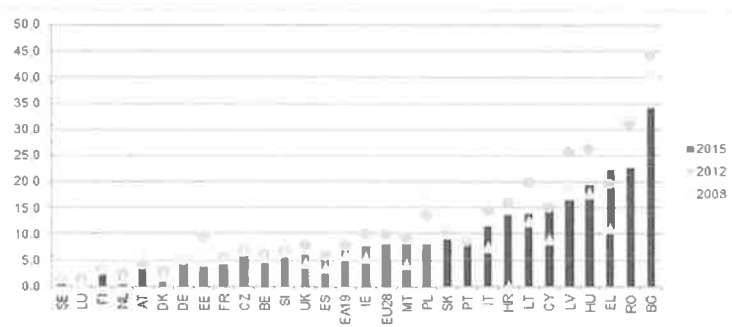


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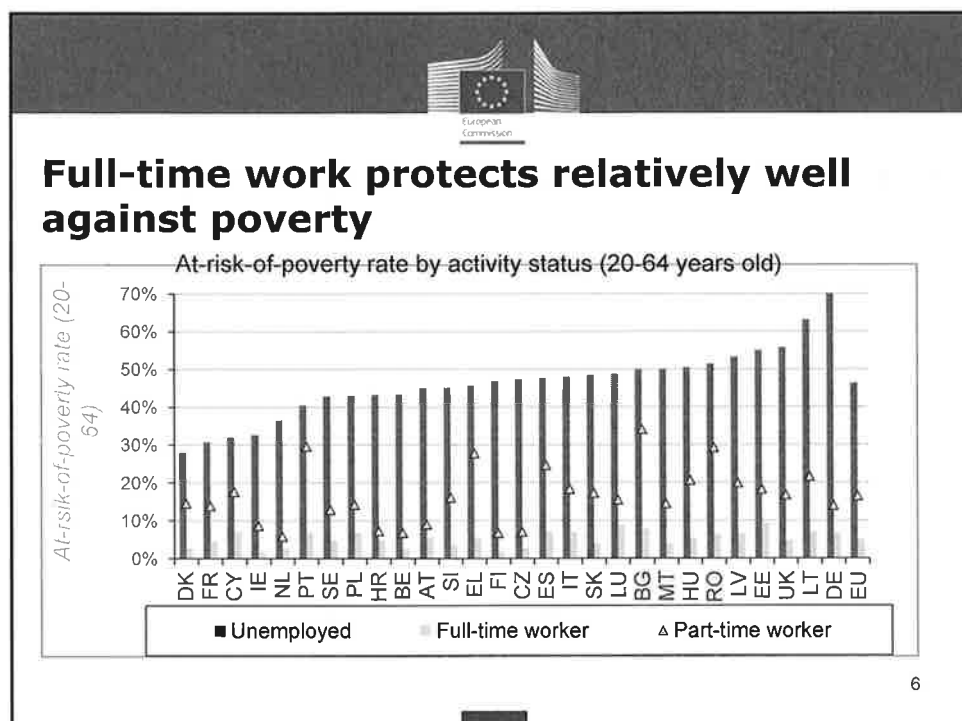
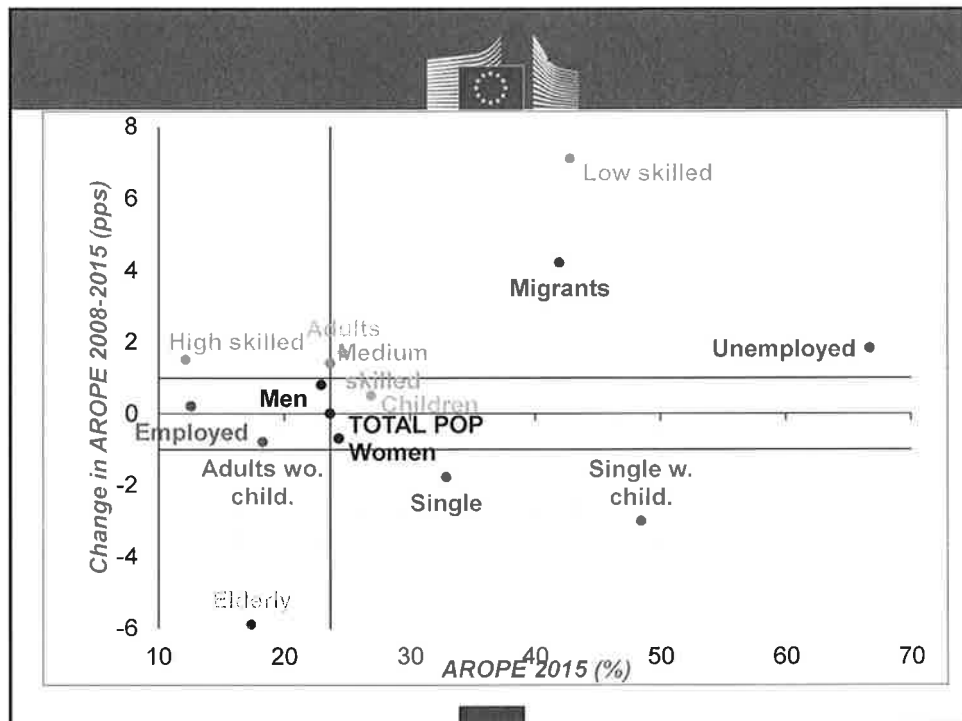
Large differences across countries

- Severe material deprivation rate (% of total population)



Source: EUROSTAT [ilc_mddd11]

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Key findings

- Poverty arises when **low-wage** is accompanied by **low-work intensity** in the **household**
- Link between **in-work poverty & household size** → need to support families with children
- **Full-time work** protects relatively well against poverty while **unemployment** is a serious poverty risk
- The **quality of the job** (in terms of work intensity & wage level) determine whether people escape poverty upon getting a job

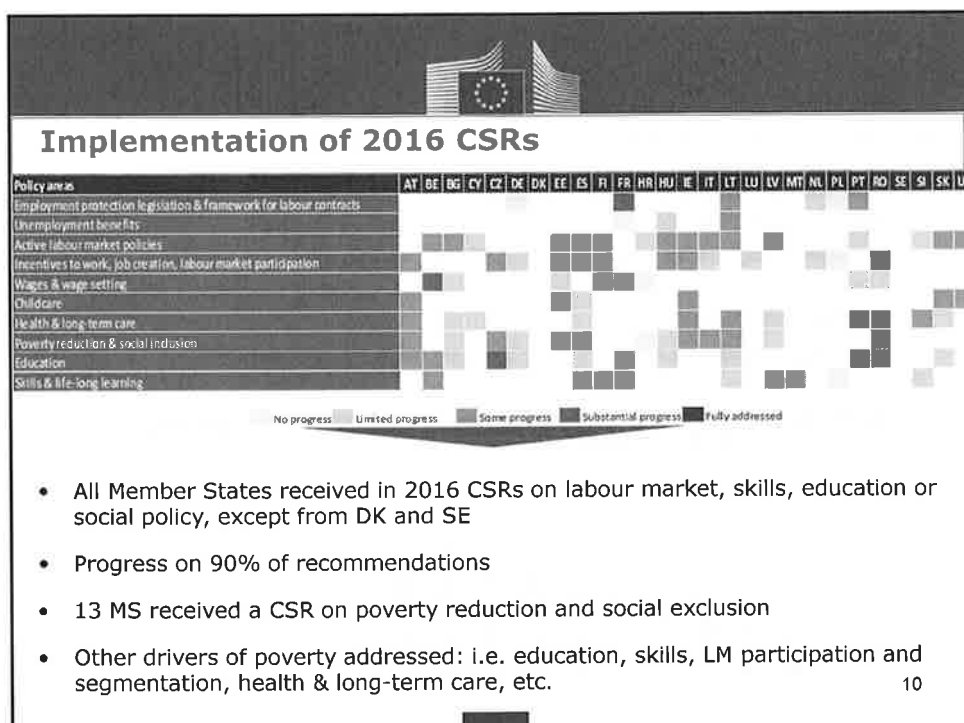
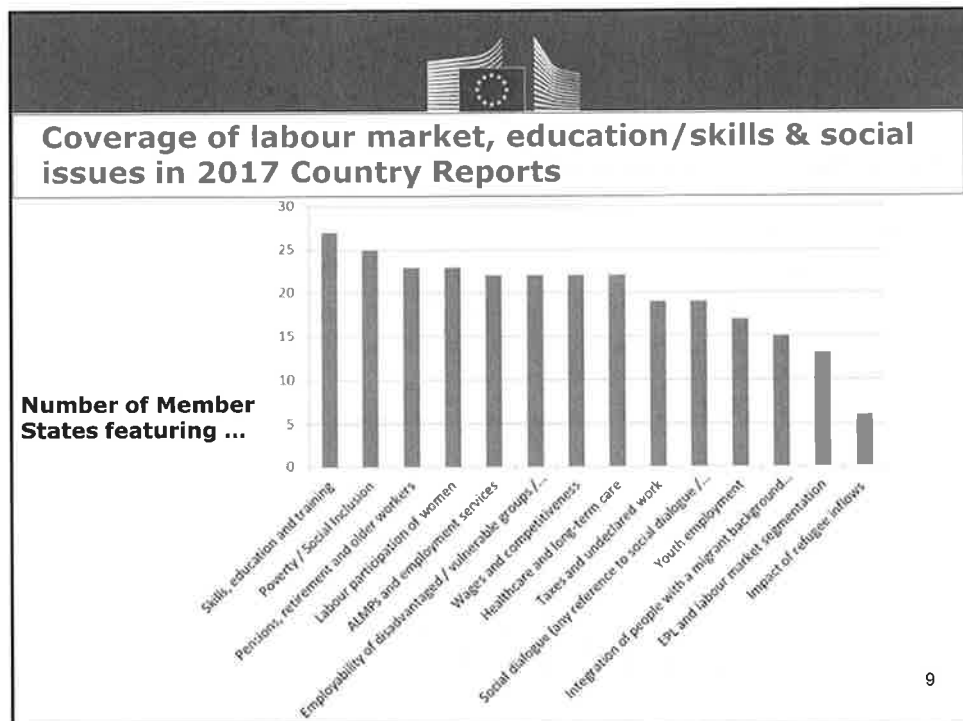
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The role of the European Semester

- Almost 50% of all CSRs are on labour market, skills, education or social policy (2016)
- Since October 2015, the European Semester has been streamlined and now involves:
 - Stronger focus on employment, social performance and inequality
 - Emphasis on upward social convergence
 - Enhanced involvement of social partners
- Inclusive growth at the core of 2017 Annual Growth Survey:
 - Improving social fairness and reducing inequalities

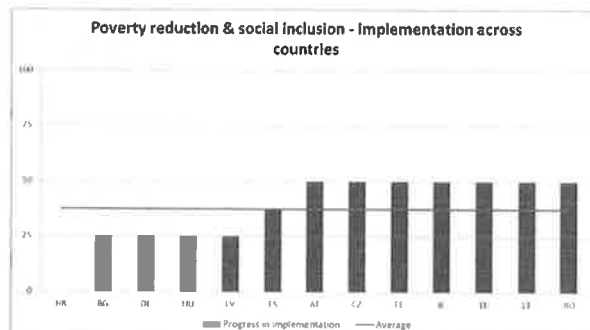
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Poverty reduction and social exclusion

- Poverty has started to go down, from very high levels
- Some progress on CSRs for the majority of targeted Member States
- No progress in HR, limited progress in BG, DE, HU and LV
- Adequacy and/or coverage of minimum income and accessibility of high-quality public services are key challenges

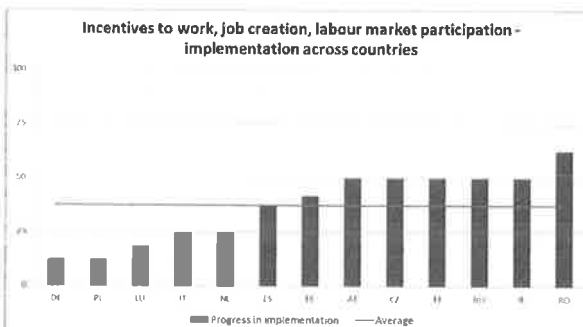


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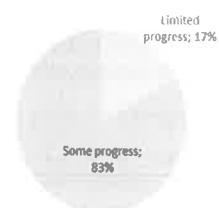


Job incentives, labour market participation & childcare

- 13 MS received CSRs in a broad category of job incentives and labour market participation
 - Some progress or more in AT, CZ, FI, HU, IE and RO
- 6 MS were recommended to improve childcare services, mainly to support employment of women
 - Some progress in AT, EE, IE, SK and UK; limited progress in ES



Childcare



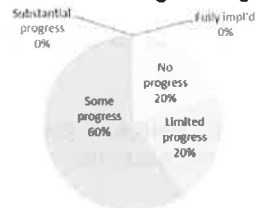
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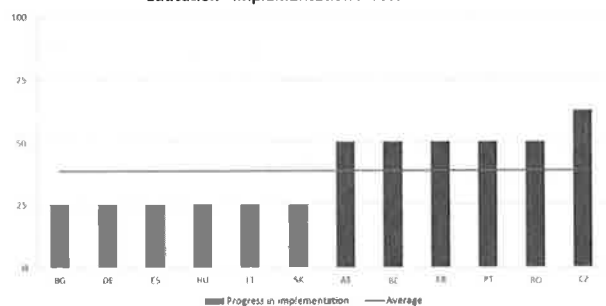
Education and skills

- Important changes in education in CZ but also in other MS such as AT, BE, FR, PT and RO.
- Share of early school-leavers continues to decrease; 10 MS are still above the Europe 2020 strategy headline target of 10%

Skills & life-long learning



Education - implementation across countries



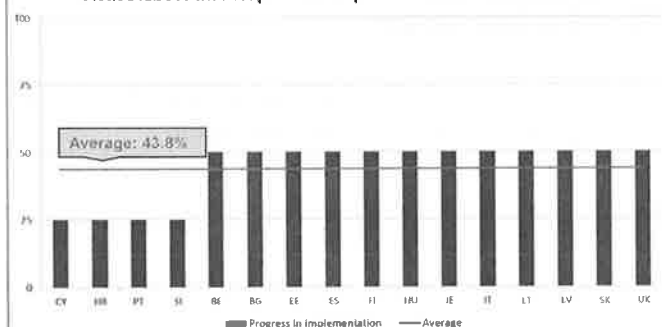
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Active labour market policies

- Still 20.2 million unemployed including 9.2 million LTU (Q3-2016)
- 5.5 million young people entered the Youth Guarantee in 2015
- Recommendations for 16 Member States
- Some progress for the majority of CSRs on ALMPs, including PES
- Main challenges include the integration of long-term unemployed, youth, individualised ALMPs and PES capacity

Active labour market policies - implementation across countries



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Some success stories

- In **Malta**, a package of measure to 'make work pay' has been implemented since 2014.
- **Cyprus** adopted the Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI) in 2014.
- In **Italy**, the 'Support for Active Inclusion' (SIA) provides for greater access to activation programmes.
- **Romania** adopted in 2016 the minimum inclusion income, due to enter into force in 2018.

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ESF contributes to the social inclusion target...

- ESF directly contributes to **Europe 2020 headline targets**
- Strong orientation to back financially the delivery on the **poverty reduction target**
 - > 20% of ESF envelope on "Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination"
- ESF investment linked to **economic governance / CSRs**

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The way forward (I)

- ***The Social Pillar*** (expected end April 2017):
- **A framework for renewed socio-economic convergence:**
 - Rethinking our policy making and monitoring tools
 - Stronger awareness of the deep inter-connections between social and economic spheres
 - New encompassing approach to resilience and fairness

Public consultation: enhancing social fairness and tackling inequalities a core priority

Implementation through a mix of instruments: responsibility for delivery mostly at national and local level

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The way forward (II)

- ***Governance tools and future policy options***
- - Short term:
 - **developing benchmarking within the Semester**
- - Longer term:
 - **Reflection papers on Social dimension and EMU**
- ***UN Sustainable Development Goals (2030)***

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- ***Thank you for your attention!***

Parliamentary Dimension of the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the EU

Meeting of the Chairpersons of the Committees on Social Affairs

Session III:

Taking stock of the policies of Europe 2020 and the way forward

Thomas Dominique,
former Chair of the Social Protection Committee (SPC)

1

Context (COM)

Europe 2020 is the European Union's ten-year jobs and growth strategy. The Europe 2020 strategy is about delivering growth that is: smart, through more effective investments in education, research and innovation; sustainable, thanks to a decisive move towards a low-carbon economy; and inclusive, with a strong emphasis on job creation and poverty reduction.

Five headline targets have been agreed for the EU to achieve by the end of 2020. These cover employment; research and development; climate/energy; education; social inclusion and poverty reduction.

Employment : 75% of the 20-64 year-olds to be employed.

Education : Reducing the rates of early school leaving below 10%, at least 40% of 30-34-year-olds completing third level education.

Fighting poverty and social exclusion : at least 20 million fewer people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

Europe 2020 is a strategy shared among the European institutions, the member states and the social partners. At EU level, each institution has a part to play in making sure the EU is taking the necessary action to help reach the Europe 2020 targets. At Member State level, full ownership is essential from Heads of States and governments, including regional and local levels. Civil society, including social partners and other stakeholders, also have an important role to play, both in the development of the national programmes and in monitoring follow-up on the ground.

2

Context (cont.)

Progress towards the Europe 2020 targets is encouraged and monitored throughout the European Semester, the EU's yearly cycle of economic and budgetary coordination. The European Union has set up a yearly cycle of economic policy coordination. Each year, the Commission undertakes a detailed analysis of EU Member States' plans of budgetary, macroeconomic and structural reforms and provides them with country-specific recommendations for the next 12-18 months. These recommendations also contribute to the objectives of the EU's long-term strategy for jobs and growth, the Europe 2020 strategy, which is implemented and monitored in the context of the European Semester.

In October 2015 the Commission decided to further streamline the European Semester. This notably includes better integrating the euro area and national dimensions, a stronger focus on employment and social performance, enhanced democratic dialogue, promoting convergence by benchmarking and pursuing best practices, and the support to reforms from European Structural and Investment Funds and technical assistance.

3

State of play (EPSCO March 2017)

Social aspects play an increasingly important role in the European Semester, as considerations of inclusiveness and fairness are key for creating jobs and growth, benefitting all citizens, strengthening trust in the EU and bolstering common European values. Ministers underlined that the economic, social and employment situation in the Union has improved but that more efforts are needed to continue to address the challenges that EU citizens face. In this regard, the increased focus of the Semester on employment and social aspects was very welcome, as was the intensification of the dialogue with the Commission, which ministers hoped would continue to expand even further. They concurred that the Semester provides an adequate framework for advancing Member States' reform efforts and for exchanging experiences and sharing best practices, in particular via peer reviews.

These allow Member States to learn from each other, bearing in mind that every country has a specific situation and that a one-size-fits-all does not apply. Structural reforms need to be inclusive, paying attention to the segments of the population that most need it. Stakeholder consultation, and more particularly the effective involvement of social partners in the design and implementation of reform programmes, respecting national practices and contexts, is essential to guarantee increased ownership and fairness of reforms, as well as better outcomes.

4

State of play (cont.)

In an ever-changing economic context where technology plays an increasingly important role and is transforming labour markets, ministers highlighted the need to invest in skills, education and lifelong learning, and to ensure the labour-market integration of youth, the elderly and the long-term unemployed. The benefits of the collaborative economy should be reaped without endangering social protection systems nor the quality of jobs. The full labour market participation of women, and an ameliorated work-life balance, were underlined as essential for maximising the economic potential of the labour force. Tackling poverty and inequalities continue to deserve specific attention, in particular given great divergences within and across Member States.

5

Actual achievements (JER 2017)

The employment and social situation is improving in a context of moderate economic recovery. As a result, the 75% employment rate target of the Europe 2020 strategy may be reached by 2020 provided the current trend continues. The employment rate in the age group 20-64 is for the first time above that observed in 2008, at 71.1% (second quarter of 2016). However, poverty remains high and employment and social outcomes vary significantly across countries.

Most labour market indicators saw an improvement in 2015 and 2016. The unemployment rate kept falling and stood in September 2016 at 8.5% (10% in the euro area). Youth unemployment and long-term unemployment also continued to decline, but remain high in several Member States. Activity rates are increasing, and the EU created more than four million jobs throughout 2015 and the first half of 2016. The employment rate of women in the EU in 2015 was still significantly below that of men, but the gap has been closing since 2008. Convergence in labour market conditions gradually continues although wide differences between Member States persist.

Household incomes in the EU rose in 2015, mostly through increases in labour income and a decrease in taxes and contributions. However, gross household income in the euro area has not yet fully recovered and remains slightly below levels reached in 2009. The number and proportion of people at-risk-of poverty or social exclusion has started to decrease but is still high. The risk of poverty or social exclusion rate in the EU has now returned to its 2008 level of 23.7%. Though recent improvements are welcome, a concerted effort is needed towards the target of lifting at least 20 million people from poverty or social exclusion by 2020, as the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2015 remains higher than in 2008.

6

The way ahead (JER 2017)

High inequality levels reduce the output of the economy and the potential for sustainable growth. Large and persistent inequalities do not only raise concerns in terms of fairness as they usually reflect a high risk of poverty and social exclusion but also in economic terms, as they lead to an under-utilisation of human capital. Inter-generational transmission of poverty compounds these negative impacts. The design of education, labour market and social security institutions in some Member States does not adequately support their function as an investment in human capital, promoting fairness of outcome; thus it does not remedy the unequal opportunities and in turn contributes to persistent and ever higher income inequalities. To tackle inequalities, Member States can take action in different areas, including tax and benefits systems, wage setting policies (including the minimum wage), education and skills, and healthcare systems.

Reforms promoting resilient and inclusive labour markets must continue, stimulating job creation and labour market participation while properly combining flexibility and adequate security. Member States linking flexibility in working arrangements with effective active labour market policies and adequate social protection weathered the crisis more successfully. Many Member States have implemented important reform agendas in recent years, with positive effects on job creation. Still, more efforts are needed to promote the creation of quality jobs and increase the inclusiveness of labour markets, by removing barriers to labour market participation, tackling labour market segmentation and ensuring that social protection systems provide adequate income support and enabling services to all while encouraging transitions into employment and making work pay. This would also help address rising levels of in-work poverty in some Member States.

7

The way ahead (cont.)

Tax systems should better support job creation and address inequalities. A number of Member States took steps to reduce the tax wedge, mostly targeting low income workers. They aimed at promoting both labour demand – by supporting companies (re)hire – and labour supply – by reducing disincentives to take up jobs and increase take-home pay, especially for disadvantaged groups. Even so, the overall tax wedge on labour remains high in a considerable number of Member States. In addition, in some Member States tax systems continue to provide strong disincentives for second earners to work or to work more hours. Lower and well-designed taxation on labour could help stimulate employment growth, and in turn mitigate inequalities.

Nominal wages have increased only moderately in a low inflation environment, while several Member States have reformed their wage setting frameworks in cooperation with social partners. Wage developments have in most Member States been aligned with labour productivity, including wage increases where the economic context provided space. Such alignment is necessary, over the medium run, to stimulate productivity gains and support of aggregate demand and growth. A small number of Member States have reformed their wage setting frameworks to reinforce the role of social partners at different levels of bargaining. Action was also taken to make minimum wage setting frameworks more transparent and/or predictable. Wage-setting systems should further pursue coordination among different levels of collective bargaining, while allowing a certain degree of flexibility geographically and across and within sectors.

8

The way ahead (cont.)

The involvement of social partners in the design and implementation of reforms is uneven across the EU. However, all Member States have bipartite or tripartite bodies to allow for the interaction of social partners and their consultation in the design and implementation of policies, their actual involvement varies significantly. Yet, effective social dialogue, in line with national practices and conditions, is crucial to ensure fair and efficient reforms, increase their ownership and carefully assess their impact on different groups of the population.

Member States have continued to modernise their education and training systems to improve the skills needed to adapt to labour market needs. However, inequalities in educational uptake and outcomes are remaining. Reforms aimed inter alia at promoting the acquisition of basic skills, at fostering adult learning and improving the labour market relevance of tertiary education. Continuing structural reforms and upscaling measures will be necessary to ensure that all young people- and especially lowskilled young people and those facing multiple barriers re-enter the labour market.

Tackling long-term unemployment remains a priority. Increasing duration of unemployment implies depreciation of skills, lower attachment to the labour market and ultimately higher risk of social exclusion. Moreover, it risks turning cyclical unemployment into structural, with negative consequence on potential growth. Several Member States are reinforcing support for the long-term unemployed through individualised support and improved coordination between employment services and other actors.

9

The way ahead (cont.)

Women continue to be underrepresented in the labour market and face an important pay differential. They outperform men in terms of educational attainment. However, the employment gap between women and men remains wide, in particular for mothers and women with caring responsibilities. This is compounded by financial disincentives faced by women when entering the labour market or wanting to work more. A significant pay gap is observed in several Member States. Combined with shorter careers, this often translates into lower pensions for women. This indicates that a comprehensive integration of work-life balance considerations into policy making is needed. Access to affordable and quality childcare and other care services, leave and flexible working time arrangements, and tax and benefit systems free of disincentives for second earners to work or to work more is of key importance in order to move towards a full equal treatment of women and support upward social mobility.

Efforts have continued to modernise social protection systems to improve coverage and adequacy of benefits, access, quality and responsiveness of services and actively encourage labour market participation. A number of Member States have put in place policy reforms aimed at improving the coverage and adequacy of social benefits while promoting activation. Measures are directed to a variety of groups, including low income earners, the unemployed, people with disabilities, homeless and people with care responsibilities. Despite reform progress, high levels of (child) poverty in some Member States remain points of concern. Adequate safety nets should be made available to those who lack sufficient resources for a decent standard of living, including support for labour market (re)integration of those in working age.

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The way ahead (cont.)

After a wave of reforms focusing on higher retirement ages, recent pension reforms present a more diverse picture, including measures to safeguard pension adequacy through minimum guarantees and indexation. While some Member States focused on improving the sustainability of their pension systems, for instance by increasing retirement age and limiting access to early retirement, some others focused on the protection of low-income pensioners, either by rising minimum pensions or through targeted additional benefits. Pension systems should ensure adequate standards of living, while preserving sustainability. To this aim, men and women should be encouraged to remain longer in employment, also through the availability of appropriate work-life balance policies and the modernisation of working environments. Supplementary pensions can play a key role, in particular where the adequacy of public pensions is expected to deteriorate.

Health systems contribute to individual and collective welfare and economic prosperity. In a number of Member States healthcare reforms have been implemented to encourage the provision of and access to effective primary health care services, to streamline and increase the sustainability of specialist and hospital care, and to improve the access to affordable medicines used in a cost-effective way. Some Member States are also taking steps to improve the efficiency and quality of long-term care services. This would reduce obstacles to labour market participation for family carers, especially for women.

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Thanks ☺

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Meeting of the Chairpersons of the Committees on Social Affairs

23-24th March 2017

MaltaEU2017 Parliamentary Dimension

Presentation

Fighting Poverty and Social Exclusion

By

Nipping Poverty in the Bud

Examples of Good Practice

Prof Angela Abela

Department of Family Studies

University of Malta

SLIDE 1

Honourable Mr Speaker, Honourable Chair of the Social Affairs Committee, Honourable Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed a great privilege for me to be presenting to you this morning on a subject of such importance for our respective countries. Adequate income and participation in social life is an important determinant to one's wellbeing. Families constantly have to handle their finances as they go about their daily lives, trying to fulfil their dreams in every stage of the family life cycle. Meaningful connections with those around them not only with their families but also with their communities are equally important for their wellbeing. These provide them with a lifeline in moments of distress and an opportunity for celebration and solidarity with others.

In my work as an academic and a practitioner (I am a clinical psychologist and a family therapist and supervisor), I adopt a systemic theoretical framework to make sense of what is happening around me and take into account the context in which families are embedded. It is for this reason that I will first provide you with a backdrop of our socio economic context before moving on to present to you examples of good practice that are being implemented here in Malta, which have the potential to fight the intergenerational cycle of poverty and social exclusion for our children and families, an area of work which is very close to my heart.

CONTEXT

SLIDE 2

Our economy is doing very well. It remained resilient during the financial crises of 2007/2008. The current economic performance is characterised by a robust increase in real GDP and very low levels of unemployment ranking the fourth lowest in the EU 28 with the unemployment rate standing at 4.4% in January 2017 (Eurostat 2017)

Statistics on poverty in Malta show that between 2013 and 2015, the at-risk-of-poverty rate went up slightly from 15.7% to 16.3% whereas the at-risk-of-poverty and social exclusion rate went down from 24% to 22.4%. Childhood poverty also went down but our children, continue to be our most vulnerable group. In 2015 23.4% were at risk of poverty (.6% less than 2013) whereas 28.2% are at risk of poverty and social exclusion (3.8% percentage points less than 2013). Having so many children living in poverty does not augur well for their future and that of our society.

Those on the minimum wage complain that it does not suffice. The percentage of working poor stood at 6% for those working full time in 2015 and went up to 10.4% when including those at risk of poverty and social exclusion (NSO personal communication March 20 2017).

After 2013, budgetary measures were introduced to alleviate the burden on low income families such as, the reduction of 25% on water & electricity bills, tapering of unemployment benefits for persons entering employment and in-work benefits for low income families with children.

Our Prime Minister has now promised that an increase in the minimum wage will be one of the measures to be taken in the next budget. I consider this measure to be extremely important. Making work pay rather than being expected to undertake precarious jobs to earn a living is fundamental if we truly believe that employment is a social right.

In this respect a rights-based approach to dealing with poverty informs this presentation. I join other scholars in believing that poverty and social exclusion are the result of neglect by society towards more vulnerable groups. We have a responsibility in protecting these families' human rights including their five social rights to employment, housing, health, education and social protection as stipulated by the Council of Europe. Our children too have a right to be protected. Parents are to be supported and children should never be separated from their parents because of poverty.

This framework is extremely important. Otherwise we risk pathologising and medicalising poverty and other related phenomena such as racism for example (Centre on the Developing Child at Harvard University 2016). No amount of medication and/or psychological intervention, early childhood curricula or home visits will take the place of job training for those who want to increase their skills, family friendly measures for parents with caring responsibilities, good health care, innovation and the revival of a sense of community in our neighbourhoods and housing policies that create social cohesion rather than cluster vulnerable families together. These are but some of the initiatives that would have a direct influence on child and family wellbeing.

Examples of good practice start from having the basics right. It is only then that we can venture further.

A focus on the early years

The examples of good practice, which I will be reviewing today are about interventions with families with young children. This is because the early years are critical years in the child's development. By addressing poverty and social exclusion at this stage, there lies an enormous potential in terms of fighting the intergenerational cycle of poverty. In the first years the human brain goes through the fastest developmental growth ever. 1.8 million new synapses per second are occurring between 2 months of gestation and two years. SLIDE 3 Children's development starts from conception as the foetus is already influenced by the quality of life it experiences in the mother's womb.

Though early difficulties may not necessarily put a child at a disadvantage for life, early developmental skills are an important foundation for development.

Parents and young children living in disadvantage and poverty experience multiple stressors. Parents get stressed, depressed and anxious. For example 20% of mothers in the lowest quintile for socioeconomic status experience post natal depression compared with 7% in the highest economic quintile (WHO & Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation 2014). SLIDE 4 These emotional states disrupt the parenting behaviour (Conger, Reuter & Conger 2000). Babies and infants are not immune to the stresses and harsh conditions to which poor parents are exposed. To grow infants need warm consistent and nurturing caregiving. In this respect, the wellbeing of parents is considered as crucial for the baby's wellbeing given that parents provide the facilitating environment for children to develop well through their attunement

with their infants and the quality of interaction and stimulation which they provide. More educated parents talk, sing and read more to their infants at a very early age. By the time children reach 3 years old, poor children will have heard 30 million fewer words than their wealthy peers. (SLIDE 5)There is a whole body of research which shows that already by age two, there is a significant cognitive difference between children living in poverty and those who do not and this continues to be visible and even increases over the years. Recent research by psychologists from Stanford University reveals that 2 year-old children of lower-income families may already be six months behind in language development (Stanford Report Sept 25 2013).

It is therefore of no surprise that Heckman, the Nobel prize laureate in economy has emphasized that the earlier the intervention the higher the return on the investment made for children. (SLIDE 6)

The EU institutions and the member states have also been working on how to combat poverty and social exclusion in Europe. In February 2013 the European Commission issued a long awaited recommendation entitled *Investing in children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage*. These policy guidelines reflected the considerable work over the years by EU institutions and the Member states. Early intervention and prevention are perceived as part of an integrated strategy that also takes into account the successful employment of parents in family friendly work that pays. Whereas children's rights are paramount, the importance of families in children's lives and the quality of relationships in the family are considered as the robust variable when gauging children's sense of wellbeing. Integrated strategies, that go beyond material security for children and aim at promoting equal opportunity to all children are prioritised. Special attention is given to at risk groups and the importance of policy continuity and long term planning is also highlighted.

Examples of good practice in Malta

SLIDE 7

The introduction of the *Free childcare Scheme* for women working or in education with children from 0 to 3, which was introduced in April of 2014 in Malta is a policy that reflects these principles. Parents are entitled to free childcare which is pro-rata to the mother's (or single father) employment hours. The service is provided either through the 13 child care centres run by the Ministry of Education and Employment or through registered private childcare centres . The Scheme was primarily meant to encourage women to join the labour market by providing child care services which are free of charge. At present Malta has the third lowest female employment rate in the EU 28. However the female employment rate has been steadily going up between 2005 and 2015 and the average annual growth rate of 4.34% makes it the largest and most rapid increase in Europe (European Commission 2016). This policy was therefore timely and was particularly of help for mothers who work on a minimum or a relatively low wage given that the additional cost of child care would have rendered going to work futile for this group of women, especially for those who did not have their own parents to look after their children. The over reliance on grand parents emerged in a recent national study about lone parents whose youngest child was 3 years or younger (Abela et al 2013) and is typical of familialistic countries like Malta as reported in a study on grand parenting in Europe published in 2013 (Glaser et al. 2013)

The *Free Childcare Scheme* in Malta has succeeded in breaking the mould in a familialistic country as it has been very well received by families with young children, in spite of the traditional wariness by parents, when it comes to placing children in a childcare centre. According to statistics published in 2016, the Scheme resulted in being most popular in the age bracket between one and two and two and three where circa one in every 3 children are attending.

Only 7.5% of babies between 0 and 12 months are registered. In this respect I think that parental leave needs to increase. Maternity leave has been extended by 4 weeks in 2013 and is now 18 weeks. The last 4 weeks are not on full pay but on state benefit. This is still 9.7 weeks less than the average duration of maternity leave in the European Union (Institute of Family Policy).

The average daily duration of children in the free child care scheme is five hours. We do not know how many of these children are picked up by parents who are working on reduced hours and how many are picked up by grandparents. One thing is for sure; grandparents are no longer obliged to care for their grandchildren for very long hours even in circumstances where they find such a task to be burdensome and exhausting. In one year alone the average number of hours of grand parenting has gone down. Grandparents and grandchildren can now enjoy their relationship without having to experience the stress and constraints that a near parenting role might potentially bring with it. This augurs well for the children's overall development. The infants' development including their cognitive development will suffer when looked after by tired and exhausted grandparents.

Another extremely valuable initiative which the 13 child care centres run by the State undertake is that of liaising with outside agencies to promote the wellbeing of vulnerable families. To this effect 34 out of 412 current children attending these child care centres do not pay for the service after means testing in spite of the fact that the mother is not in education or in employment. In the case of these families detailed referrals are prepared by professionals who work in a number of services offered by other Ministries. These include services by the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity such as those offered by the newly set up Family Resource Centres in the community, and/or the specialised social work services and Psychological and Family Therapy Services offered by multidisciplinary teams at community level. . The Child Development Assessment Unit within the Health Services also makes such referrals . Coordinators from the child care centres and professionals from the various services keep an open channel of communication to address difficulties that arise in order to support the child and family in a holistic manner. Similarly if families who make use of the childcare service require support from an outside agency, these same agencies support the family.

This interagency way of working with children and their families across Ministries is without doubt an example of good practice that merits to be highlighted. We know that there are more children and families to be reached. Among lone parents alone, 12.45% were considered as particularly vulnerable. Lone mothers either had a disability or an illness, or were facing mental illness and or lived in a context of domestic violence or had children with a disability.

The National Strategic Policy on Positive Parenting 2016-2024

I would now like to make reference to a more recent strategic policy which was launched last year by the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity and which also seeks to nip poverty in the bud by breaking the cycle of poverty and disadvantage as early as possible. The *National Strategic Policy on Positive Parenting 2016-2024* (SLIDE 8) has a number of best practices incorporated in it. It specifically calls for better synergy between government services in the different Ministries and involves experts in the field to avoid fragmentation and duplication and builds on existing services. It provides a number of evidence-based preventive and interventive parenting programmes which are on offer at different stages of the family life cycle. The time allotted for this presentation will not permit me to present all of the policy actions (there are over 60 of them) which form part of this *Strategic Policy*. These include home based therapy Services with families whose children are at risk of being put into care, specialised training provided to professionals in the area of domestic violence and Substance Misuse as well as support to parents following a separation in Court and more.

Rather I will focus on those policy actions that seek to intervene as early as possible in the life of children and their parents and have the potential of breaking the cycle of poverty and disadvantage. One of these policy actions reaches families where mothers are expecting a baby and forms part of the first assessment carried out by midwives when these mothers register for their first appointment at the Antenatal Services. It includes an assessment of the mental health of the expectant mother and routine screening with regards to any adverse situations in the home. Those in need of specialised support are then to be referred to the appropriate service including the Perinatal Service and/or other services that are not necessarily within Health Services such as the Family Therapy Service and the Domestic Violence and Substance Misuse Services. Intervention at such an early stage is greatly beneficial for all families, especially for those living in poverty who may be particularly isolated and do not afford to seek help in private practice.

The cost benefit analyses of proper screening and timely intervention are remarkable. If we had to simply focus on the mother's mental health, we know that between 10% and 20% develop a mental illness during pregnancy or in the first 12 months following the birth of the child. A study carried out in 2014 by the Centre of Mental Health and the LSE in the UK shows that when the mental health of the mother during the perinatal period is untreated, this would impose costs of around 10,000 sterling for every birth for society as a whole. Almost three quarters of the adverse impacts (72%) are endured by the child! With a much smaller amount, calculated at 400 sterling per birth, mothers can recover from these illnesses (Centre for Mental Health and LSE October 2014). (SLIDE 9)

In this respect the Perinatal Clinic needs to move out into the community to be closer to families and employ psychologists, family therapists, counsellors and other helping professionals who are specialised in parent-infant psychotherapy and whose role will involve supporting the parents, helping them in their parenting and enhancing the parent-infant relationship.

The Strategy also envisages assessing the level of stress of the parents and their wellbeing during their visit to the Well Baby Clinic when the baby is six weeks old and then again when the baby is eight months old. This is a time when the stress of the parents is expected to be soaring (Borg Xuereb 2008). Parents who are stressed will be referred to follow one of the

evidence based parenting programmes that will be on offer in the Family Resource Centres. The emphases will be on the relationships between the parents and between the parents or significant others and their child.

The Strategic Policy also seeks to reach out to those parents giving birth for the first time at our main state hospital but who do not turn up for courses offered to parents by the Parentcraft Services. Outreach Services for families who are marginalised and do not actively seek services on offer is another hallmark of this Strategy. (SLIDE 10)

The strategic Policy also envisages research which would help to monitor the results. The empathic attunement of the professionals and their ability to be reflexive with families who find themselves under a lot of pressure and or distress is paramount to the quality of service offered. Continuous professional development is therefore extremely important at all times. In the case of Malta the lack of helping professionals who choose to work in the public sector is another challenge that needs to be addressed rather urgently. If not, families on a low income who cannot access services in private practice will experience inequality and will be left behind.

Conclusion

It is being hoped that these early interventive approaches will help families in a timely manner, limit the potential harm that can be incurred and eventually reduce the volume of work and/or the gravity of the problems families would end up facing at a later stage. Ultimately the real success of these policies should lead to having more young people In Malta continuing their education beyond school leaving age.

The fight against poverty continues. Honourable Ladies and Gentleman I hope that this tiny presentation has been of some help to inspire you to act in favour of the poor. You are very well placed to do that. Policies that help reduce inequality and social exclusion necessitate political will. (SLIDE 11)

Meeting of Interparliamentary Social Affairs Ctee
24th March 2017, Malta



***Poverty and Social Exclusion,
Working towards a more Inclusive Europe***

***Sian Jones,
EAPN Policy Coordinator***

***Poverty and Social Exclusion, working towards
A more inclusive Europe***



Outline

- **Introduction**
- **What's happened to poverty?**
- **What role for the EU?**
- **Putting EU strategy against poverty at heart of Inclusive EU**

Introducing EAPN



- ☐ **Independent Network of NGOs** committed to fight against poverty + social exclusion, with people in poverty.
- ☐ Started in 1990 – **key actor** in poverty programmes and development of social OMC.
- ☐ Receives **financial support** from the European Commission (PROGRESS/now EaSi)
- ☐ **31 National Networks** and **16 European NGOs** as members (6000+ organisations)
- ☐ **Participation of people** with direct experience of poverty must be part of the solution.
- ☐ **Eradicating poverty is feasible and a political choice**

Introduction



- ☐ **Everyone has the right to a life in dignity, and a life free of poverty.**
- ☐ **Combating poverty/ social exclusion**, promoting social justice/ fundamental rights: core EU objectives
- ☐ **Since 2010, EU supported Europe 2020 target** to reduce risk of poverty and social exclusion by 20 mln
- ☐ **Instead Poverty increased (4.6 million)** together with inequality
- ☐ **Austerity has contributed to increase, increasing distrust in EU and government role**
- ☐ **An effective EU rights-based, integrated, antipoverty strategy key to Inclusive Europe for all.**

15th EU People Experiencing Poverty Meeting



Introduction: Quotes from the 15th People Experiencing Poverty Meeting



- ☐ *"It's hard for us..but worse because there is no hope for my children'*
- ☐ *"Money and better services like housing is crucial, but it's also about dignity.... about **empowerment**".*
- ☐ *"What difference does it make to vote? People don't trust politicians. **They are there for their own interests and don't represent us...**"*
- ☐ *"We want politicians to show that we live in a **more equal and just country** – not just for the privileged and the rich...."*

What's happened to poverty?



- **Europe 2020 target to reduce poverty by at least 20 million by 2020** based on 3 indicators (at risk of poverty, severe material deprivation and low work intensity)
- **2015: 118.7 million people (23.7%) at risk of poverty and social exclusion (EU SILC)- nearly 1 in 4 of the population. Slight decline from 2015 (24.4%)**
- **Highest risk in Bulgaria, Romania and Greece (41.3%, 37.3% and 35.7%)** and lowest risk in Czech Republic (14.0%), Sweden (16%) and NL and FI (16.8%)
- **Highest increases in Greece (from 28.1% in 2008 to 35.7% in 2015), Cyprus, Spain, Italy** compared to highest decreases in Poland, Romania and Bulgaria.
- **The main risk is income poverty (1 in 6) compared to material deprivation (1 in 12) and jobless households (1 in 10).**
- **17.3% at risk of poverty, has increased since 2014 – with highest levels in Romania,(25.4%) Latvia, Lithuania and Spain, Bulgaria (22%)**
- **Material deprivation has decreased – average is 8.1%, but over 20% in Bulgaria, Romania and Greece (22.2%)**

Not all groups face the same risk...



- **Children (26.9%) compared to older people (17.4%) adults (25.4%), young people (23.7%) – 40% in RO.**
- **Women, single parents (48.3%) large families (27.1%).**
- **Excluded groups facing bigger risk: Roma (80%), and migrants (40.1%) also people with disabilities (30%) also homeless**
- **Unemployment is a risk, but a job alone is not enough: 10.5% in-work poverty, 55% of poor families are working in UK.**
- **Adequate Social protection is essential to reduce poverty Average 17.3%; range from 25.4 (RO) % to 9.5% (CZ)**

Austerity policies have increased poverty..



- **Job loss, long-term unemployment, precarity of contracts.**
- **Preference for expenditure cuts in benefits** *eg SPC report 2011 – restrictions on eligibility, duration, reduced benefit, particularly to disabled, children, young people, changes indexation, sickness benefit, targeting in housing/child benefits..*
- **Cuts to Services – eg social services/employment, but also health undermining universal principles.**
- **Rises in prices of basic goods** *eg electricity, food and rents – increasing indebtedness also public transport*
- **Inadequate revenue: Limited tax rises – and generally regressive** *ie VAT and property taxes, not tackling flat taxes, tax evasion*
- **Rolling back welfare state started before 2008...**

Is the EU helping? Opportunities..



- **Europe 2020 poverty target and guidelines mainstreamed in European Semester: (2016: 11 poverty CSRs cf to 6 in 2015)**
- **20% of ESF to fight poverty and promote social inclusion and social pillar inclusion strand in all funds including research .**
- **Social Investment package – Active Inclusion Recommendation, Investing in Children, and Tackling Homelessness**
- **New European Pillar of Social Rights – offers chance of upward convergence on social standards and employment/social rights?**
- **Future of Europe? 5 scenarios – a new vision for Europe?**

Is the EU helping? Threats...



- EU economic governance encouraged austerity policies increasing poverty
- Juncker priority to fiscal consolidation, investment and restructuring/modernizing labour markets and social protection.
- 2015/6 - increased investment: EFSI, public investment as guarantee for private risk, not public or social.
- Current EU priorities: Fortress Europe: deficits, security and migration not social progress
- BREXIT/Fear of populist backlash – driving retreat behind subsidiarity whilst EU intervening directly in social budgets

What way forward? More Social EU



- Need for inspiring vision not timidity: transformative social + sustainable EU
- Ensure EU macroeconomic objectives contribute to social goals/and prevent negative distributional impact
- A clear social dimension based on EU social rights, social investment and social standards
- Concrete impact on poverty: EU framework: minimum income, minimum wage/ spending on social protection?
- Democracy now! Clear mechanisms to ensure effective participation of NGOs and people most affected.

What way forward – People at the heart



- ☐ Poverty is a structural not an individual problem...
You can't solve poverty without reducing inequality
- ☐ Don't blame the poor.. support and empower!
- ☐ What works? A rights based integrated, anti poverty strategy through the life course for all groups
 1. Adequate minimum income and social protection
 2. Accessible and affordable public services: housing, health, education, transport, energy..
 3. Access to inclusive, quality jobs
 4. Thematic strategies for key target groups: Investing in Children, Homeless etc
 - Personalized, joined up support
 - Financed through fair distribution/ tax justice
- ☐ Participation + empowerment as pre-requisite

What way forward – people at the heart



For Further Information**EAPN Publications: www.eapn.eu**

- *Nobody left behind: Access to affordable health and housing services.(2017)*
- *Inclusive Labour Markets (2017)*
- *What progress on Social Europe: EAPN Assessment of NRPs 2016 (2016)*
- *Last Chance for Social Europe: EAPN position on the European Pillar of Social Rights (2016)*
- *Lifeboat or Life sentence: Troika programmes and impact on poverty and social exclusion (2013)*
- *Re-engaging hope and expectations: Getting out of the crisis together (2012)*

For Further Information**Contact*****Sian Jones, EAPN Policy Coordinator******E-mail: sian.jones@eapn.eu******Phone: +32 2 226 5859******Address: Boulevard Bischoffsheim 11, 1000
Brussels;******Website: www.eapn.eu***



Working towards a more inclusive Europe

Alfonso Lara Montero, Policy Director, ESN

Malta, 24 March 2017

with support from:

Dorothea Baltruks

Marianne Doyen

Kim Nikolaj Japing



The European Social Network is
supported by the European Union



The context

The
Social Services
Network for
Europe

A
social investment approach
throughout
the life cycle

The context - Publications



The context – Working groups and workshops

Disability working group
Ageing and Care working group
A series of workshops on youth inclusion



Examining policy Stimulating debate

Example of a local social exclusion matrix (B-SEM) (adapted from Joanna Mack, PSE)

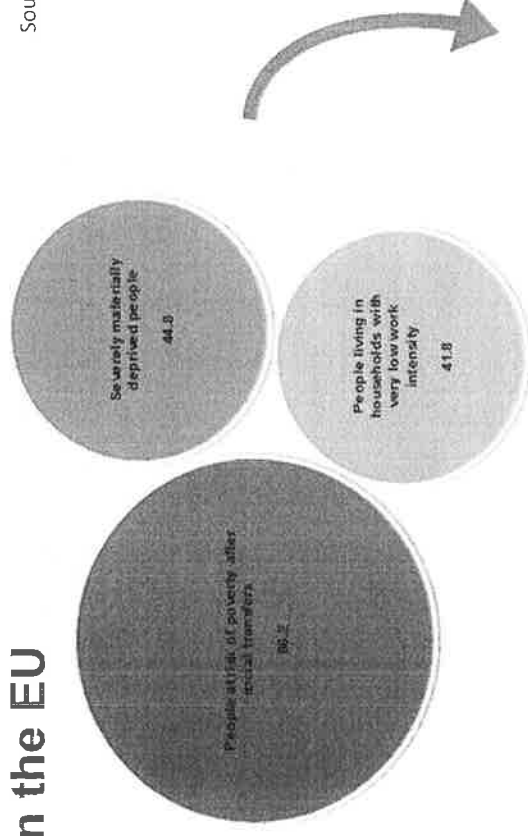


Material and economic resources
Access to public and private services
Social services & resources
Economic participation
Social participation
Culture, education and skills
Political and civic participation
Health and well-being
Living environment
Crime, harm and criminalisation

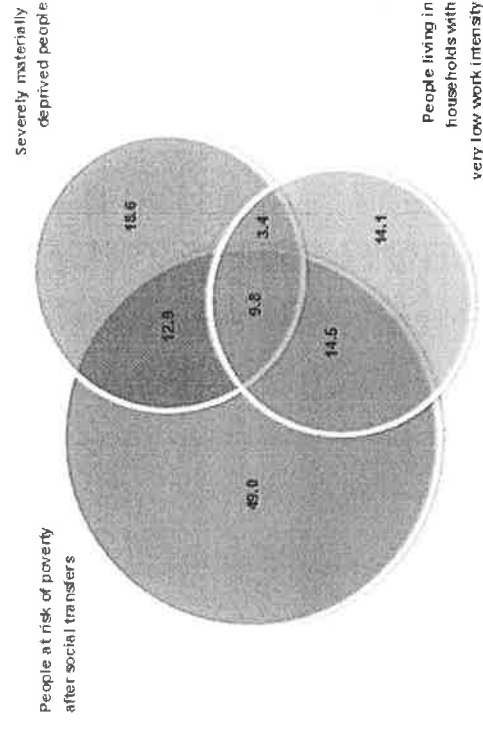
Examining policy Stimulating debate

Poverty and social exclusion in the EU

Source: Eurostat ([ilc_pees01](#))



- The tree dimensions of poverty
 - Monetary poverty
 - Material deprivation
 - Low work intensity

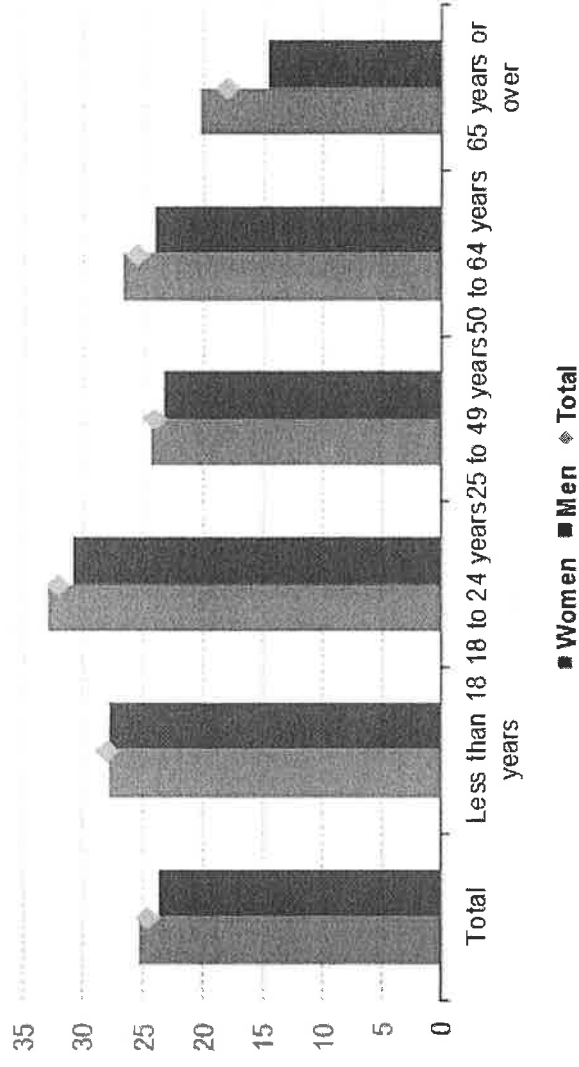


(¹) Estimated data

Examining policy Stimulating debate

Poverty and social exclusion in the EU

Which groups are at
greater risk of poverty or
social exclusion?



Source: Eurostat ([ilc_peps01](#))

Examining policy Stimulating debate

122.3 million people were at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the 28 EU Member States in 2014.

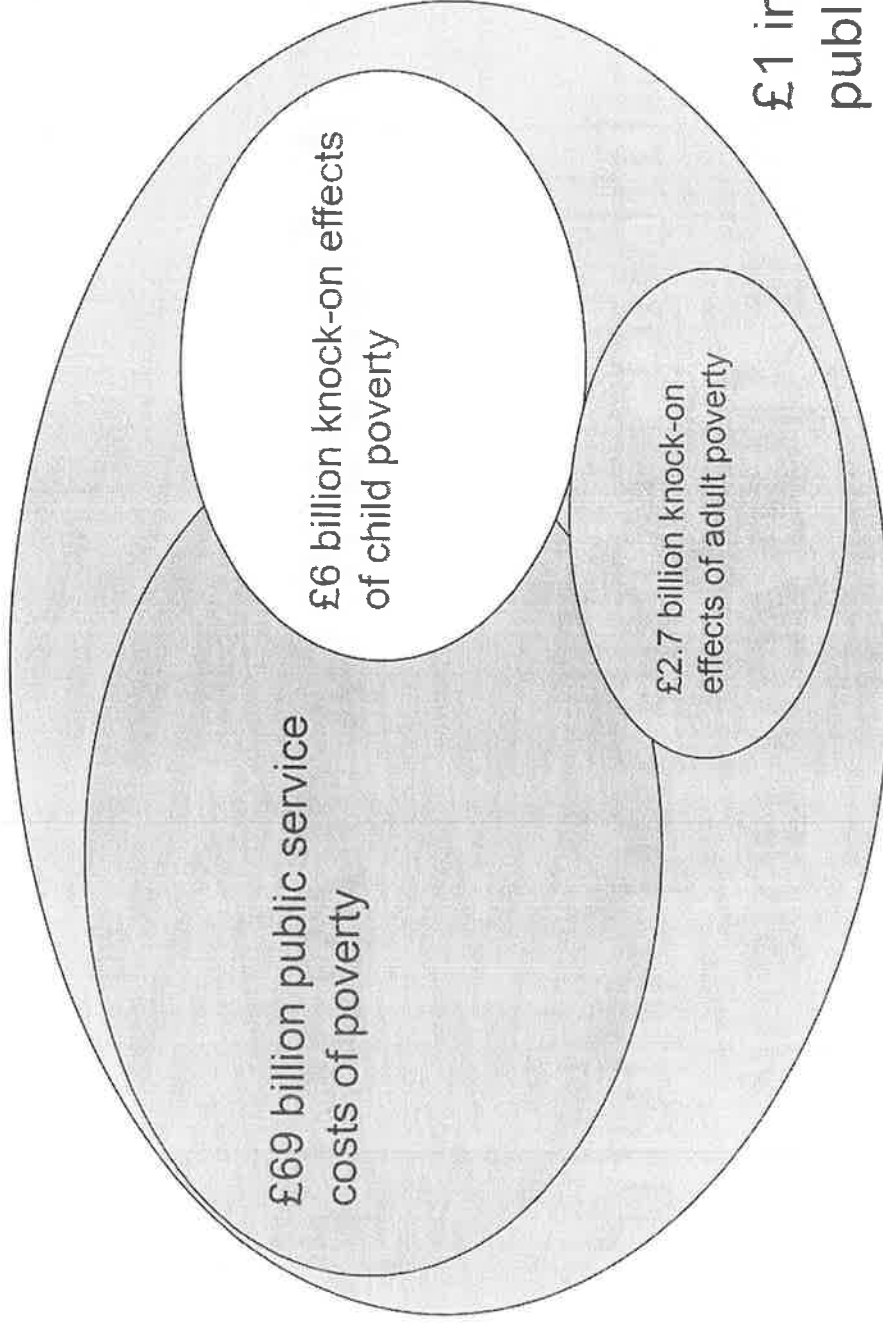
More than a third affected by more than one dimension of poverty

Examining policy

Stimulating debate

- Addressing poverty & social exclusion **not only** a social justice matter but also economic
- Poverty is very **costly** to society

£78 billion a year total cost of poverty in the UK



£1 in every £5 on public services in the UK are spent to address the way poverty damages people's lives

Source: JRF report in UK

Addressing social exclusion at local level throughout life

- Incorporating an understanding of poverty in the assessment of children & families
- Social services' resources to support families
- Meeting the needs of children without parental care
- Supporting people's mental health
- Supporting people's transitions
- Safeguarding vulnerable adults
- Preventing older people's isolation
- Supporting active ageing
- 'Povertyism': addressing awareness & discrimination against service users
- Managing knowledge to improve practice
- Building relationships, inter-professional and inter-sector cooperation
- A personalised approach to support

Early years investment

EU/International legislation & policy

- UNCRC
- EU Recommendation

Key issues

- Child best interest
- Child care availability
- Low investment
- Addressing family poverty



Practice

- Community Planning Partnerships
- Integrated health, education & social centres
- Assessment & coordination systems
- Promoting child participation in care

Vulnerable young people inclusion

EU/international policy & legislation

- Youth Guarantee
- YEI



Key issues

- Vulnerable young people
- Transitions
- Mental health
- Increased service cooperation

Practice

- Garantie Jeunes
 - AROPE
 - Services + income
 - Transitions
- Care leavers in inspection teams

Inclusion of people with disabilities

Policy/legislation

- UNCRPD
- EU disability strategy

Key issues

- Independent living vs institutional living
- Co-production
- Service quality today vs quality in the past
- Formal & informal carers
- Support PwD in open LM
- Manage ageing process



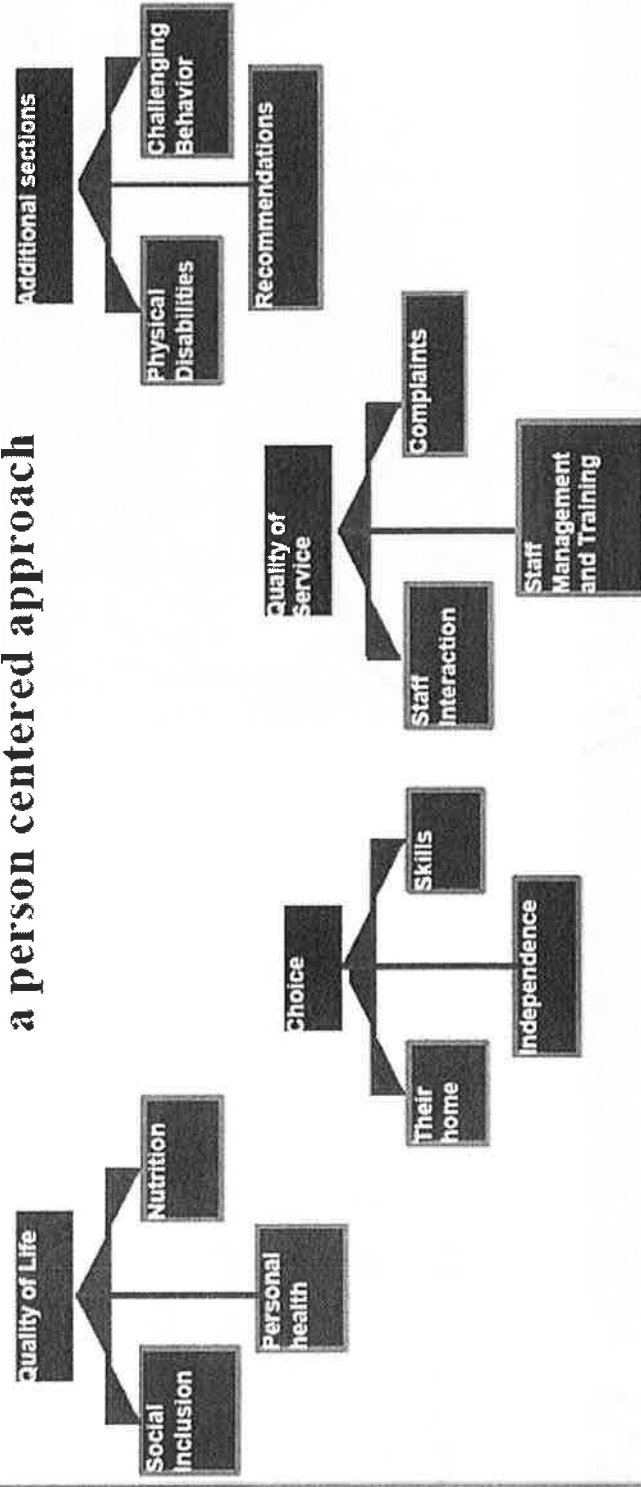
Practice

- Locus' demand driven LM integration programme
- User led quality assessment

User led quality

What does the survey look at?

A whole service assessment but through
a person centered approach



Older people's active ageing & social inclusion

Policy/legislation

- 2014 SPC report
- European charter of rights & responsibilities of OP in need of LTC & assistance

Key issues

- Overspending in institutional care
- Loneliness & social isolation
- Active ageing & participation
- Informal carers support
- Digitalisation
- Minorities' ageing experience



Practice

Tackling social isolation in rural areas

- Use of IT solutions
- Joint effort to identify users

Conclusion: Key cross-cutting issues

Addressing multi-dimensional nature of social exclusion

Highlighting the ethical and economic case

Encouraging innovation with a view to scale up

Addressing stigma

Identifying risk & protective factors

Promoting outcomes measurement

Promoting what works

Supporting:
meaningful involvement of users
the workforce
informal carers



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MALTA EU 2017
PARLIAMENTARY DIMENSION

General Information

Meeting of the Chairpersons of the Committees on Social Affairs



23 - 24 MARCH 2017
MALTA

Website

The Parliamentary dimension website can be accessed here: <https://parl.eu2017.mt>

Meeting venue

Grand Hotel Excelsior
Great Siege Road
Floriana
MALTA

Phone: +356 21250520
Email: info@excelsior.com.mt
Website: www.excelsior.com.mt

Click [here](#) for a map of the area.

Hotels

Participants are encouraged to book their hotel rooms at the earliest possible at one of the recommended hotels below. The preferential rates negotiated by the House of Representatives are guaranteed until **7 February 2017** and rooms will be assigned on a first-come first-served basis.

Participants are kindly asked to book accommodation directly with the hotels using the links provided below in order to benefit from the preferential rates.

Grand Hotel Excelsior *****

Room Type	Preferential rate per room per night
Single Deluxe, inland view	€145
Single Deluxe, partial sea view	€160
Including	Buffet breakfast, WiFi and VAT
Excluding	€0.50 Eco contribution tax per night

Click [here](#) to book directly with the hotel and insert **213** in the **promo code** field when making your reservation.

Phone: +356 2125 0520
Email: info@excelsior.com.mt
Website: www.excelsior.com.mt

Click [here](#) for a map of the area.



Cancellation policy:

Free cancellation up to one day prior to arrival. Modifications and late cancellations on the day of arrival are not allowed. Credit Card provided at time of booking will be charged for the entire stay. All reservations must be guaranteed with a valid credit card. If the credit card used to guarantee the booking is invalid, the hotel reserves the right to cancel the reservation prior to arrival.

Fortina Spa Resort *****

Room Type	Preferential rate per room per night
Standard	€140.00
Including	Buffet breakfast, WiFi and VAT
Excluding	€0.50 Eco contribution tax per night

Attached **booking form** should be duly filled in and forwarded to the Fortina Spa Resort.

Phone: +356 2346 2121/0
 Email: info@fortinasparesort.com
 Website: www.fortinasparesort.com

Click [here](#) for a map of the area.

Cancellation policy:

No deposit will be processed at the time of booking, however credit card details are required to guarantee room reservation. If cancellation is made within 2 days of arrival date and in the case of no-show, the first night will be charged for. **All cancellations have to be in writing.**

Hotel Fortina ****

Room Type	Preferential rate per room per night
Standard	€102.50
Including	Buffet breakfast, WiFi and VAT
Excluding	€0.50 Eco contribution tax per night

Attached **booking form** should be duly filled in and forwarded to the Hotel Fortina.

Phone: +356 2346 2121/0
 Email: info@hotelfortina.com
 Website: www.hotelfortina.com

Cancellation policy:

No deposit will be processed at the time of booking, however credit card details are required to guarantee room reservation. If cancellation is made within 2 days of arrival date and in the case of no-show, the first night will be charged for. **All cancellations have to be in writing.**

Arrival and departure

Participants are to arrange their own transfers from and to the airport.

The Malta International Airport is located approximately 10 km or a 10-15 minute drive to the Grand Hotel Excelsior, Floriana, depending on traffic, and approximately 12 km or a 15-20 minute drive to the Fortina Spa Resort and Hotel Fortina, depending on traffic. Link to the Malta International Airport website: www.maltairport.com

Public Transport

Bus number X4 connects the Malta International Airport directly to Floriana and Valletta; the journey takes approximately 30 minutes, depending on traffic, and a ticket costs €1.50. Tickets can be purchased directly on the bus. There are no direct bus connections between the airport and Sliema.

Link to the Malta Public Transport website: www.publictransport.com.mt/airport-services

Taxi

A taxi from the Malta International Airport to Floriana/Valletta/Sliema takes approximately 15-20 minutes, depending on traffic and costs around €20 one way.

A taxi rank is located outside the airport.

www.maltairport.com/passenger/getting-here/taxi-service

Transport

Transfer from the recommended hotels to the meeting venue and to the social functions will be provided by the organisers.

Registration*Accreditation*

Delegates are required to be registered via the online accreditation system through the designated delegate accreditation officer (DAO) of each Chamber/Parliament at <https://delegation.eu2017.mt>.

The deadline for registration is **7 March 2017**.



Hotel/Venue

Registration desks will be open at the recommended hotels on Thursday, 23 March 2017 from 15:00 to 18:30. Delegates arriving later will be able to register at the meeting venue on Friday, 24 March 2017 from 08:30.

Badges

Upon registration participants will receive their identity badge and the information package.

Delegates who will not be staying at one of the recommended hotels and who would like to join the dinner on Thursday, 23 March 2017 are required to pick up their badge at the registration desk in the Grand Hotel Excelsior, Floriana, or at the Fortina Spa Resort, Sliema, at the times indicated above and may join the transfer from this hotel to the social function venue.

Colours of the lanyards attached to the badges:

Red:	Head of delegation
Blue:	Delegate
Grey:	Local Support/Taskforce
Green:	Liaison officer
Yellow:	Media
Light Blue:	Interpreter
Purple:	Workforce/technical

For security reasons, all participants are requested to wear their identification badge at all times during the events. Participants are requested to immediately report the loss of their badge to the meeting organisers.

Interpretation

Simultaneous interpretation of the plenary debates will be provided in Maltese, English and French.

A limited number of booths can be made available on a first-come, first-served basis to those delegations wishing to bring their own interpreters. These delegations are to inform the organisers in advance, and in any case not later than **20 February 2017**.

Taking the floor

Participants who wish to take the floor during the meeting are kindly requested to fill out the request-for-the-floor cards, which are to be handed in at the start of the sessions. These cards will be provided upon registration together with other meeting documents.

The floor will be given to the delegates in the order that the request-for-the-floor cards were submitted.

Information

Copies of all meeting documents will be made available outside the meeting hall.

Currency

The official currency in Malta is the euro (EUR).

Climate

The average maximum temperature during the day is normally around 15 degrees Celsius, whereas the minimum temperature during the night may fall to around 10 degrees Celsius.

More information and detailed weather forecasts are available at www.maltairport.com/weather

Facilities

A limited number of computers and printers will be available at the conference venue.

WiFi internet connection will be also available.

Embassies

The list of **Embassies and Consular Offices** representing foreign countries in Malta can be accessed from this [link](#).

Visas

Participants requiring entry visas for Malta are to make their own visa arrangements.

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MALTA EU 2017
PARLIAMENTARY DIMENSION

Background Note Session I

Meeting of the Chairpersons of the Committees on Social Affairs

23 - 24 MARCH 2017
MALTA

Session I: Poverty and Social Exclusion: Working towards a more inclusive Europe

What is poverty? There have been countless definitions of the word "poverty" and attempts to divide the term between absolute poverty and relative poverty. The European Commission itself, in its Joint Report on Social Inclusion, 2004, has said that "People are said to be living in poverty if their income and resources are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living considered acceptable in the society in which they live. Because of their poverty, they may experience multiple disadvantages through unemployment, low income, poor housing, inadequate healthcare and barriers to lifelong learning, culture, sport and recreation. They are often excluded and marginalised from participating in activities (economic, social and cultural) that are the norm for other people and their access to fundamental rights may be restricted".

"With more than 120 million people in the EU at risk of poverty or social exclusion, EU leaders have pledged to bring at least **20 million people out of poverty and social exclusion by 2020**. The fight against poverty and social exclusion is at the heart of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth." *European Commission, Joint Report on Social Inclusion 2004*

Up till the year 2000, various legal documents had included provisions relating to the eradication of poverty and social exclusion, amongst which are the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union, the Treaty of Amsterdam and the Lisbon Strategy. The year 2000 also saw the establishment of the Social Protection Committee, which aims to promote cooperation between Member States and the Commission.

In spite of all the work done, the various attempts, projects and programmes, poverty and social exclusion were still a reality in Europe. A steady decrease in the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion was experienced in the period prior to the economic crisis suffered throughout Europe. This reassuring trend was reversed with the impact of the economic crisis and by 2012, the number of people at risk rose by a staggering 24.8%.

Data extracted in 2016 from the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC), shows a worsening social situation with 8.1% of the European population living in severe material deprivation and 10.5% living in households with very low job intensity, which makes the 2020 target of having 20 million fewer people in or at risk of poverty or social exclusion, look unreachable.

In spite of the grim outlook, the European Commission is moving ahead with its work and through the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion, organises regular meetings with relevant stakeholders to make sure of their involvement in the drafting and implementation of policies that are aimed at combating poverty and social exclusion.

The work done by the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion is not exclusive. Through the Open Method of Co-Ordination, Member States regularly hold peer review meetings (attended by experts from the European Commission, other Member States and relevant stakeholders) to discuss good practices and to give expert advice on major policy reforms. In 2016 alone, there were four peer review meetings, all of which tackled subjects that are closely linked to poverty and social exclusion.

Voluntary organisations across Europe (at both national and European level) are active in the fight against poverty and social exclusion. The European Anti-Poverty Network has 31 national networks and 18 European organisations that work with the Social Open Method of Co-Ordination (OMC) and the Europe 2020 strategy. This network of organisations gives a voice to persons who are facing poverty and social exclusion by ensuring they are stakeholders in decision-making processes, both at EU and national levels.

Europe 2020 has given very evident priority to issues of poverty and social exclusion and while the targets are still quite a long way from being achieved, work is ongoing and will continue to be given due importance in the hope that people will have a better life in Europe in the years to come.

Questions that may guide the discussion:

- What makes a person poor and socially excluded?
- What is the relationship between poverty and economic inequality?
- Has your Parliament/Chamber adopted any resolutions/reports on the reduction of poverty and social exclusion?
- What roles do national parliaments and the European Parliament have in promoting social inclusion at national and European level?



MALTA EU 2017
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Background Note Session II

Meeting of the Chairpersons of the Committees on Social Affairs

23 - 24 MARCH 2017
MALTA

Session II: What makes an individual socially excluded? Different perspectives and exchange of best practices

In order for societies to flourish and continue improving, their members need to have a decent standard of living, while also be able to participate in the community in which they live.

Social exclusion can come about for many reasons: a person may be excluded through some kind of discrimination; there may be issues of unemployment, low income, lack of decent housing, lack of basic skills and medical issues. These, among other issues can be catalysts for people who are poor or at the risk of poverty to also start the road to social exclusion.

Unfortunately, certain groups of people are sometimes denied opportunities simply because of their race, sex, religion, gender, age, disability or other social identity. These people are not just poor – they are also excluded from society based on who they are, how they live and what they believe in. This kind of exclusion denies people the right to make choices and makes them more susceptible to poverty, while making it extremely difficult for those who already poor to improve their life.

In order for countries to reduce poverty (or the risk thereof) and social exclusion effectively, they must have policies that specifically target groups of people that tend to be socially excluded. They must take into account the real challenges that are faced by these people and find ways to tackle them by coming up with effective frameworks that promote social inclusion, improve opportunities and access to services, as well as tackling the prejudice present in society in a way that will produce a real change in the lives of those who are socially excluded.

In its resolution of 4 July 2016, the European Parliament acknowledged the high unemployment rates, socio-economic inequalities and declining social rights present in the European Union and stressed the need for development and defence of public services in the Member States, including access to justice; education and health systems; care for children, elderly and sick people; and an overall high level of social protection.

Besides the work being done by the European Union and by many entities across Europe, each country needs to assess its own situation and come up with policies and practical ideas of how to combat its poverty and social exclusion problems. Co-operation between countries and national parliaments can help by offering insights into how each country tries to deal with these

issues locally and may serve as inspiration for other countries. At EU level, this is already done through peer reviews, where open discussions take place on selected good practices, between experts of the European Commission, peer countries and other stakeholders, with the intention of mutual learning.

The aim of this session is to provide Members of Parliament a similar opportunity to discuss their country's perspectives on the subject and to share best practices that may help other countries who are struggling to combat the same issues.

Questions that may guide the discussion:

- What measures have been used in your country to combat poverty and social exclusion?
- Which practices have proven to be the most effective? Were there any measures that were not as effective as anticipated?
- Has your Parliament/Chamber actively promoted any measures conducive to the reduction of poverty and social exclusion?
- Are there any particular experiences that can be shared with the other Member States that could promote a more just and inclusive society?



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Background Note Session III

Meeting of the Chairpersons of the Committees on Social Affairs

23 - 24 MARCH 2017
MALTA

Session III: Taking stock of the policies of Europe 2020 and the way forward

According to the latest EuroStat research, one in four people in the EU is at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Such a high number of people living on the margins of society undermines social cohesion and limits Europeans' potential. Europe 2020 is the EU's growth strategy for the coming decade. It will enable the EU to become a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy. Its actions include delivering high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion. Concretely, the EU has set five ambitious objectives - on employment, innovation, education, social inclusion and climate/energy - to be reached by 2020.

The European poverty and social exclusion headline target has been set on the basis of three combined indicators – the number of people at risk of poverty, levels of severe material deprivation and numbers of people living in households where under-employment features prominently. These indicators address the various features of poverty and exclusion across Europe and the differing situations and priorities among Member States.

It is not very easy to define inclusive growth because the definitions vary and tend to be vague. In general, what appears to be widely recognized is that inclusive growth involves improving living conditions for a large majority of the population, particularly for the disadvantaged people by creating equal opportunities and reducing barriers to achieving these objectives. Policies for combating poverty and inequality do not necessarily include the creation of productive employment that goes beyond income and is one of the basic factors in almost every conceptualization of inclusive growth; it also requires equal opportunities in terms of access to resources in the labour market.

Who is at risk of poverty and exclusion?

Children, the elderly, single women, lone parents, the low-skilled, the unemployed, inactive people of working age including those with disabilities, people living in rural areas and migrants face the highest risk of poverty or exclusion. Ethnic minorities, including the Roma, cannot be identified through official EU statistics but some national sources indicate that they also face a high risk of exclusion.

Questions that may guide the discussion:

- EU heads of State and Governments have committed to lift at least 20 million people out of poverty and social exclusion in the next decade. How can Member States translate these objectives into national targets?
- What role should national parliaments have in the achievement of the national targets?
- Are employment and education policies sufficient tools to combat poverty and social exclusion?
- What other policies are deemed to be conducive to the reduction of poverty and social exclusion?
- Are present active inclusion strategies combining income support, access to the labour market and health and social services working to prevent long-term exclusion?
- What strategies are effective in encouraging a labour market participation rate, targeting in particular women and the young?
- What specific attention is being given to prevent and fight homelessness and housing exclusion?
- Ensuring universal access to quality care for all will require renewed efforts to maintain an efficient health sector. Are Member States taking steps in increasing effectiveness, sustainability and responsiveness of health care and long-term care in the context of austerity and ageing?
- The success of the Europe 2020 Strategy depends on an integrated and coherent approach between all relevant policy areas in particular social, employment and economic policies as well as close cooperation between all levels of government, social partners and civil society. How can linking EU funds to Europe 2020 priorities supporting social innovation?



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Meeting of the Chairpersons of the Committees on Social Affairs

List of Participants

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Réunion des Présidents des Commissions des Affaires sociales

Liste des Participants

23 – 24 MARS 2017

MALTE

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Dr / M. Godfrey Farrugia	Member of the Social Affairs Committee
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