

Toolkit for the **EAPN Members** on

Advocacy Toward Adequate Minimum Income Schemes



EUROPEAN ANTI POVERTY NETWORK



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The European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) is an independent network of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and groups involved in the fight against poverty and social exclusion in the Member States of the European Union, established in 1990.

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Introduction

Over the last two years, national welfare states in Europe have been put under increasing pressure. The economic crisis generated by the pandemic led to a growing risk of poverty for people in vulnerable positions - such as those living in low-income households, women, single parents, migrants, youth, and racialised communities - as well as rising unemployment rates.

Likewise, the Russian invasion of Ukraine started in February 2022 exacerbated the increase in energy prices due to cuts in supply of Russian gas and threatened to create additional food insecurity.¹ According to Eurostat, in **2021, the estimated AROPE were 95.4 million people**, this means that over one fifth of the entire EU population is at risk of poverty, severely materially deprived, or living in a household with a very low work intensity.²

The current situation recalls the central role of social safety nets in coping with economic shocks. Today, all EU Member States (MS) have Minimum Income Schemes (MIS) in place, but they vary significantly

across countries in terms of adequacy, accessibility and eligibility.

The need for strong political action to address the current and future challenges was made clear during the Porto Social Summit in May 2021, where the EU political actors gathered to define the social policy agenda for the next decade. During the Summit, they also presented the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) Action Plan.³ The action plan (AP) described the Commission's steps to implement the 20 principles of the EPSR. After failing to reach the Europe 2020 poverty reduction targets,⁴ the AP sets out new social targets concerning employment, adult learning, and poverty reduction to lifting 15 million people out of poverty by 2030, of which 5 million must be children to be reached by 2030.

1 EAPN 2022 EU Poverty Watch: "To the surprise of many, the current energy crisis did not start with the war in Ukraine. Back in 2019, almost 80 million people in the EU were late or unable to pay their utility bills. The energy crisis was already driven by a fossil fuel supply crisis (particularly fossil natural gas), weather extremes, speculation in the energy market and Europe's dependency on fossil gas (including for electricity). Additionally, the wholesale electricity pricing mechanism, meaning that all suppliers - including cheaper renewables such as wind or solar - receive the same price of the last plant used to meet consumers' demand, which is often gas. Since gas is expensive, this means that final electricity prices soar in periods of high demand and that the market is exposed to volatile prices."

2 These data are derived from European Union Statistics on Income and living conditions (EU-SILC). The "at risk of poverty and social exclusion" index (AROPE) is computed as the sum of people whose equivalized disposable income is below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold (60% of the national median equivalized disposable income after social transfers), those who cannot afford at least 7 out of 13 deprivation items (severe material deprivation) and the number of people from 0 to 64 years living in households with a low work intensity (equal or less 20% of their total combined work-time potential during the previous year). [More information](#).

3 The European Pillar of Social Rights is a set of 20 principles designed to reach a strong social Europe based on fairness, inclusivity and opportunities for all.

4 The Europe 2020 strategy was the political agenda for the last decade (2010-2020) which aimed at promoting smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth. The strategy set out five targets: employment; research and innovation; climate change and energy; education; and combating poverty. The latter stated that by 2020 at least 20 million people should have been lifted out of poverty. However, this target was missed by about 14 million.

As part of the AP, the Council finally adopted the [Council Recommendation on Adequate Minimum Income ensuring active inclusion](#) on December 8, 2022.⁵ This Council Recommendation aims to further implement Principle 14 of the EPSR, regarding Minimum Income (MI) and should support Member States in reforming policies to alleviate poverty, preventing social exclusion, and modernising the existing EU framework to factor in the new economic and social realities,⁶ by providing guidelines and building consensus on the coverage, level of adequacy, on accessibility and the importance of the enabling characteristics. The Council's Recommendation on adequate minimum income ensuring active inclusion, once adopted, will replace the Council Recommendation 92/441/EEC. Although EAPN welcomes the adoption of the Council Recommendation as an important milestone toward adequate Minimum Income, it remains that only a Framework Directive would guarantee minimum standard of MIS across the EU, especially against national reforms to restrict access and conditions.⁷

In this context, this present toolkit is designed to help EAPN members and any organisation striving for social inclusion to advocate for better Minimum Income Scheme, using the implementation of the Council Recommendation on Adequate minimum income schemes in the EU as a starting point. The political context to deliver on Europe 2030 social targets, especially the poverty target will also act as additional dynamics to support advocacy and mobilisation efforts.

This toolkit aims to provide members with brief, clear information about the content of the Council Recommendation (Part I), the processes, and the opportunities for engagement at EU and national level (Part II). It also contains hints and examples of good practices, useful to build a strong and effective advocacy strategy toward the implementation of the Council Recommendation on Adequate Minimum Income at the national level (Part III).

5 The recommendation was formally adopted as A-item at the Council of the European Union on 30 January 2023.

6 The current EU framework on Minimum Income Protection is composed of [Council Recommendation 92/441/EEC](#) on common criteria concerning sufficient resources and social assistance in social protection systems, [the Commission Recommendation 2008/867/EC](#) on the active inclusion of the people excluded from the labour market, and relevant monitoring and policy coordination activities within the European Semester.

7 <https://www.eapn.eu/no-social-progress-with-the-far-right-the-case-of-minimum-income-in-italy/>

Part I:

Getting Familiar with the EU Framework on Minimum Income

Digging Deeper into the Council Recommendation on Adequate Minimum Income

The text stems from the need to improve and harmonise the current Minimum Income Schemes⁸ in the European Union. At the time of the adoption, all MS had an MIS⁹ however, their design varies from one country to another. Therefore, their effectiveness in combating poverty and social exclusion differs according to the country. The Council Recommendation aims to coordinate and provide standards for MS to ensure a decent life at all stages of life by providing adequate income support - through Minimum Income - and effective access to enabling and essential services.

The content of the political agreement is presented in the remainder of this session and throughout the toolkit. It is compared to [EAPN's position](#) in order to provide readers with a broader understanding of the key messages and the missing elements of the Council Recommendation.

To know more about the policy context and the soft law regarding MI, please refer to Annex 4.

EAPN has developed an in-depth analysis of the Council recommendation. The table on the right sums up the crucial limits of the Council recommendation:

8 Definition of the MI by the Council recommendation: *minimum income means non-contributory and means-tested safety nets of last resort to persons lacking sufficient resources, operating within social protection systems.*

9 In May 2023, Italy dissolved the MIS, ending the benefit in January 2024. Arguments were made that another scheme will be replacing the former one. However, no project has been presented at the time of the publication of this toolkit.

Limits/gaps and ways to proceed	EAPN's Recommendations	Rationale
<p>The lack of an explicit universal rights-based approach to adequate minimum income, which overcomes discrimination and unequal access and leaves no one behind.</p>	<p>Adopt an explicit universal rights-based approach to MIS in a multidimensional integrated anti-poverty strategy, with measures targeting specific vulnerable groups.</p> <p>Refrain from having negative and punitive conditionalities (e.g. forcing people to take up low-paid and insecure jobs, unpaid traineeships or the reduction or suspension of unemployment benefits when access to minimum income is requested.)</p>	<p>This will guarantee the implementation of Article 14 of the EPSR, universal rights and non-punitive and unconditional access to MIS as well as facilitate policies to eradicate high non-take-up rates.</p>
<p>That Member States are recommended to regularly review and, whenever relevant, adjust the level of minimum income in order to maintain the adequacy of income support.</p>	<p>MIS should be automatically indexed in all countries according to the changing cost of living and inflation.</p> <p>Ensure that MIS take people out of poverty by being above the 60% median disposable household income poverty threshold, underpinned by national reference budgets.</p>	<p>Regular indexation remains soft terminology, in particular in times of volatile increasing prices. Automated indexation based on inflation and cost of living is crucial to maintain the adequacy of MIS, coupled with strong reference budget methodologies that include social participation.</p>
<p>The lack of a common EU-wide framework and methodology on reference budgets.</p>	<p>Reference budgets of baskets of goods and services to check the adequacy of MIS need to be developed, for different household types and with the involvement of people, not only with those in poverty. They must capture the real costs of essential goods and services.</p>	<p>Reference budgets are a promising instrument to build consensus in society about what is an adequate income, in other words, a standard for a decent life, comprising amounts necessary to also lead a decent social life. They take into account cross-country variations in the institutional setup of the welfare state—including public services and/or public direct or indirect subsidies for essential goods and services—as well as in the type of benefits provided, be they in cash, in kind or services. They can also reflect related additional costs e.g. for childcare, (special) medical needs, accommodation, or (public) transport.¹⁰</p>

¹⁰ For more information read *Report and Recommendation from the Peer Review on use of Reference Budgets for policy purposes*. (September, 2018) EMIN. https://eminnetwork.files.wordpress.com/2018/11/reference_budgets_report_emin_peer_review.pdf.

Limits/gaps and ways to proceed	EAPN's Recommendations	Rationale
The lack of concrete sustainability measures/ best practices on the financing of MIS.	<p>Ensure a sustainable funding mechanism through progressive taxation which is fair and redistributes income, wealth and resources.</p> <p>EU funds should be targeted to support the development of effective national MIS.</p>	<p>MIS should be financed as a central redistribution mechanism, its funding mechanisms should explicitly create consensus on how wealth should be shared to eradicate poverty and reduce inequalities.</p> <p>Moreover, Member States have no obligation to present a funding plan, necessary to increase the MIS to reach the poverty line.</p>
The access to minimum income is based on proportionate length of legal residence, thereby excluding individuals with temporary residence, refugees and undocumented migrants.	<p>Ensure that everyone has equal access to minimum income, without discrimination, regardless of legal and residential status, gender identity, employment status, contractual arrangements, race, ethnicity, or other characteristics.</p>	<p>The lack of definition of what "proportionate length" leaves discretionary power to EU Member States which will not sufficiently challenge the barriers faced by migrants in access to MIS. Moreover, undocumented migrants are left out of the equation, leaving no space to challenge their ineligibility whereas MI is key to prevent and lift people out of poverty, granting them access to basic goods and services.</p>

Limits/gaps and ways to proceed	EAPN's Recommendations	Rationale
The collection of disaggregated data was only requested on the grounds of sex, age and disability.	Collect data on minimum income disaggregated by sex, age, disability, race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, migration status, socioeconomic status, citizenship and nationality.	Non-take-up rates for minorities, such as racialised or LGBTQI+ people are still concerning but without proper data, Member States will remain unable to design targeted and effective policies.
There are no concrete measures to overcome structural discriminatory and biased approaches and non-take-up by vulnerable groups such as Roma, refugees, women, racialised minorities, and undocumented migrants.¹¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tackling the high rates of non-take-up must be an urgent priority. Member States can do this by creating partnerships with civil society organisations and/or service providers; • through automatic application to those who need minimum income, taking into account the information available on social security/national registries; • reducing digital poverty whilst still providing offline information and simple administrative and implementation procedures; • making minimum income information fully understandable to those in need; • adapting existing provisions to ensure non-discrimination against any group of (actual or potential) beneficiaries of minimum income benefits; and adjusting existing policies or measures to cater for special and/or increased needs of individuals, households, or groups. 	The participation of those communities in the design and implementation of those policies is paramount to ensure an appropriate solution to the high non-take-up rates.
That it does not specify the age from which adequate minimum income should be available, a part from the explanatory memorandum.	The right to an adequate minimum income must be enforced from the age of 18.	Young adults must not be covered by sub-minimum income schemes, which provide inadequate social protection below the poverty line. Sub-minimum income schemes fail to act as incentives to work and trap young adults in poverty at a very young age.

¹¹ Joint statement on the European Commission's Proposal for a Council Recommendation on adequate minimum income schemes in the EU (2022, October). EAPN. www.eapn.eu/eu-joint-statement-minimum-income.

Limits/gaps and ways to proceed	EAPN's Recommendations	Rationale
<p>The responsibility for the triennial reporting moved from Member States, in the original proposal, to the European Commission and that the participation of minimum income recipients was not included in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation stages.</p>	<p>Minimum income recipients, as well as CSOs that support them, must be involved in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of MIS, which must take place every year.</p> <p>Member States must adopt clear and detailed participative monitoring systems for the implementation of MIS with benchmarks and indicators to measure progress.</p> <p>Member States must ensure results are publicly available and subject to yearly discussion with stakeholders including CSOs and people in poverty.</p>	<p>Beneficiaries are the experts on their own realities and their participation will enable Member States to design accessible, adequate and enabling MIS.</p> <p>Building effective MIS with high take-up rates, depends on embedding participative methods, and systematically engaging people receiving benefits and CSOs, throughout the implementation, monitoring and evaluation stages.</p>
<p>There is little mention of the need for coordination and integration of minimum income support and social services provision.</p>	<p>Guarantee an adequate ratio (which must be regularly reviewed) of individualised support cases for case managers and require joined-up working between officers providing MI and social services support on a regular basis.</p> <p>Reinforce the human resources/ capacity of the authorities in charge of minimum income support, employment services and providers of enabling services. They must also be provided with professional training to fight stereotypes towards MIS and poverty.</p>	<p>"Social service providers are best placed to actively outreach to people in need of support and to identify the specific needs of individuals to develop person-centred pathways toward active inclusion into society."¹² Working conditions of service providers are lacking in the Council Recommendation, although quality working conditions will only ensure effective access to MIS.</p>



Part II:

What and how to analyse MIS in your country

The second part of this toolkit focuses on the key elements you must look at when analysing the minimum income schemes in your country. EAPN and, of course, its members have decades of expertise on Minimum Income Schemes and this section is deeply rooted in this knowledge. We aim here it to share widely and support community-driven advocacy and campaigning.

In this section, we will provide guidelines to support the assessment of any MIS, including their adequacy, accessibility and enabling characteristics.

Pillar I: Adequacy

As highlighted in [EAPN's position paper on adequate minimum income](#), adequacy means sufficient for a dignified life. However, the policies aim to set MI at the poverty line, although already challenging, are not eradicating poverty. Indeed, the poverty line is a quantitative indicator defined by the 60% of the median income within a population and does not guarantee mechanically a decent and living income. Also, achieving an income at the poverty line should not be the end goal but a major and important milestone in the fight against poverty.

The adequacy can be calculated comparing the income of beneficiaries with the national poverty threshold, as an indication of the poverty alleviation capacity and effect of MI benefits or schemes. As to adequacy, EAPN's key demand is to have benefit levels above the poverty threshold. This line should also be combined with national reference budgets¹³ to make sure that essential items,

good and services are affordable and accessible with this income.

Reference budgets:

They serve multiple purposes beyond determining the bare essentials for survival. They play a crucial role in establishing an income that enables individuals to lead dignified lives and actively participate in society. Moreover, reference budgets are a valuable tool in creating a consensus on what constitutes an adequate income for a decent life, including the necessary funds for maintaining a satisfactory social life. In essence, they help set a standard for a decent life with sufficient financial resources.

They consider the variations in the welfare state's institutional setup, accounting for factors like public services, subsidies, and types of benefits provided, whether in cash, kind, or services. It involves **ten essential aspects of human life, comprising adequate housing, nutritious food, personal care items, healthcare, clothing, transportation, leisure activities, rest, a secure upbringing for children (e.g. childcare), and maintaining social connections.**

To ensure accuracy and inclusivity, it is essential to develop these budgets in collaboration with individuals experiencing poverty and a combination of methodologies, such as statistical data analysis and input from other experts in the field.¹⁴ The approach to constructing reference budgets varies based on geographical considerations. While some reference budgets are built using data at the country level, others adopt a more localised approach, often starting with the capital city or another significant urban centre as a reference point. The ultimate goal in these cases is to create budgets that can be applied to the entire country. However, some reference budgets take into account the differences between urban and rural areas. Since everyone's needs differ, reference budgets are typically tailored to specific model household in most EU countries. These model households often include couples with children and single households, and various assumptions are incorporated concerning their health, living conditions, and other relevant factors. Recognising the diversity of needs, a significant number of RBs are further differentiated based on the age of family members. For instance, separate budgets may be constructed for pensioners to cater to their unique requirements. This approach acknowledges that a one-size-fits-all basket of goods and services may not be suitable for all individuals and families within a country's population.¹⁵

What does the Council Recommendation state?

Adequacy of Income Support

The Council Recommendation invites MS to ensure adequate income support. The level of the monetary benefit should be set through a “transparent and robust methodology defined in the legislation and involving relevant stakeholders.” Also, it defines the elements that such methodology should take into account. They are the overall income sources, the needs and disadvantaged situation of the households eligible for the benefit, the income of a low-wage earner or a minimum-wage earner, standards of living and purchasing power, price levels and their related developments.

Moreover, the recommendation provides the standards to which the income of those lacking sufficient resources should converge.

The Council Recommendation sets that level to the at-risk-of-poverty threshold (AROP) or to the monetary value of necessary goods and services, which include adequate nutrition, housing, and healthcare, equivalent to the AROP threshold, therefore creating a large agreement on the adequacy level and common target to aim at.

Lastly, the CR excludes certain benefits from the means-testing and recommends to secure income support to meet particular needs such as people living with disabilities. Another proposed provision is the definition of means-testing threshold based on the cost of living of different types and sizes of households living in a MS. This threshold should take into account other sources of income and assets that households have in a proportionate way.

¹⁴ For more information on the methodology please, refer to EAPN's reports [here](#) and [here](#).

¹⁵ [Pilot project for the development of a common methodology on reference budgets in Europe - Publications Office of the EU \(europa.eu\)](#).

The Commission's proposal mentions reference budgets as a measure to improve adequacy, however, it lacks any further specification about a common EU methodology for the selection of items as well as representative statistical data on actual expenses of the poorest. The efficacy of the recommendation in improving adequacy is limited because it leaves discretion to MS on the definition of essential goods and services. **On the contrary, European standards for reference budgets can improve the adequacy of MI since they can ensure the inclusion of all basic goods and services.**

So, when assessing the adequacy of the minimum income scheme in your country, you must reflect on the following:

- How far from the poverty line is the MIS? How has it evolved over the years?
- What is the reference budget methodology in your country?
- Is it adequate in relation to the aforementioned methodologies/benchmarking indicators? In other words, compare the income of beneficiaries with the national poverty threshold. Then compare this with these numbers and through speaking with people and communities experiencing poverty and determine whether the amount of the MI enough to afford a decent life, meeting basic needs?
- Are MI beneficiaries able to afford a nutritious healthy diet based on the standard basket? Housing? Energy? Transport?
- Is it regularly indexed based on inflation and cost of living? How often is it updated?
- Does it include the social participation of individuals, including but not exclusively, of PeP?
- Are there public consultations with CSOs?
- Does your country have reference baskets for specific needs? This includes access to childcare, special needs related to disability or other healthcare needs including reproductive

justice, access to fertility treatment, to transition treatment and support.

- If not adequate, is there a plan, strategy to reach the poverty threshold by 2032 as committed in the Council Recommendation?

The Irish Example

The Vincentian MESL Research Centre collaborates with the public through focus groups to reach a social agreement on the essential requirements for a minimum living standard. **It generates comprehensive budgets for households, called Minimum Essential Standard of Living (MESL)**, determining the necessary elements for a satisfactory minimum standard of living, covering approximately 90% of households in Ireland. It takes into account the cost of living and inflation and specifies the average weekly cost of essential goods and services necessary to achieve a socially acceptable minimum standard of living. This standard represents the minimum requirements for households to live in present-day Ireland, encompassing their physical, psychological, and social needs. **It applies universally, not solely to those experiencing poverty.** The determination of this standard involves calculating the actual weekly cost of more than 2,000 items (goods and services) essential for maintaining a socially acceptable minimum standard of living. **These items include food, clothes, personal care, health, household goods and services, communication, social inclusion activities, education, transport, home energy, personal costs, insurance, savings, housing and childcare.**

In practical terms, the Minimum Essential Standard of Living research operationalises a direct measurement of a distinct benchmark

of what is required for participation, inclusion, and a dignified life - ultimately, contributing to the prevention of poverty. Moreover, the Minimum Essential Standard of Living research provides an alternative and complementary approach for assessing relative poverty. It serves as a crucial evidence-based benchmark for evaluating the sufficiency of social welfare support and minimum wage rates. The Minimum Essential Standard of Living specifically concentrates on a large number of representative household compositions. It aims to present the minimum expenditure requirements for these households, considering both urban and rural areas.¹⁶ It is updated annually therefore it stands as the most precise and current assessment of income sufficiency for individuals receiving social welfare benefits,¹⁷ although the lagged effect prevent on time response to acute inflation and price volatility. EAPN Ireland is advocating for the benchmarking of all social welfare rates against a level that is adequate to lift people above the poverty line and provide them with a Minimum Essential Standard of Living.

Accessibility

EAPN has always fought to ensure the universality of minimum income schemes in all European countries. Accessibility is defined as providing comprehensive coverage for all people who need the schemes for as long as they need support. There are four main aspects of accessibility to consider: 1) eligibility criteria; 2) degree of universality; 3) administrative procedure; 4) non-discrimination provisions.

Eligibility criteria should ensure that all people lacking sufficient resources are covered by the scheme. Therefore, they must not be too severe. EAPN has

long advocated for the widening of the criteria and the avoidance of negative conditionalities to ensure that they do not exclude certain groups of people as is the case today. Some eligibility criteria can cause indirect discrimination.¹⁸ To prevent that MS should pay particular attention to the characteristics of the most vulnerable groups and make sure that eligibility criteria do not discriminate people for their age, gender identity, sex, race, disability, nationality, legal status, religion and belief and socioeconomic status.

Discrimination and Stigmatisation

Poverty and discrimination are two related concepts. Often people experiencing poverty are discriminated against, however, poverty and discrimination are two separate dimensions. Poverty refers to a lack of resources (including financial), while discrimination is a cultural phenomenon that prevents people from engaging in social life based on some characteristics such as gender, age, sexual orientation, and race. When it comes to minimum income, discrimination can derive both from social beliefs and policy design.

Sometimes, people experiencing poverty refrain from applying for the minimum income to avoid being stigmatised for their condition. Moreover, in many countries recipients of minimum income are associated with discriminated groups such as Roma people, this situation prevents potential beneficiaries from applying because they risk being considered members of these groups.

Policy design plays a major role in fostering discrimination and social exclusion. Namely,

¹⁶ [MESL 2023 \(budgeting.ie\)](https://www.eapn.eu/files/2023/03/MESL_2023_(budgeting.ie).pdf).

¹⁷ Ireland budget 22.

¹⁸ Indirect discrimination occurs when a unreasonable rules aimed to be applied by all have a negative and unfair impact on a particular group. In the case of MI, indirect discrimination can occur when having an address or a bank account is a necessary requirement. This will apply to all but will have an unfair consequence and exclude people leaving in homeless or Roma communities, for example. More information here: https://eminnetwork.files.wordpress.com/2014/12/emin_-homeless_nontakeup_2014_final_en.pdf.

eligibility criteria impede specific groups of people experiencing poverty from applying. For instance, this is the case of the homeless who cannot apply because they do not have a permanent address. Likewise, migrants are excluded from the benefits because most of them are undocumented and/or need to have been residents in the country for a certain number of years.

There is no provision in the Council Recommendation on how to cope with stigma, even though MS are invited to address it. The causes of stigmatisation of the poor are rooted in the mistaken beliefs of society which depicts them as lazy and reluctant to work. Therefore, MS should take action to change them. Poverty is a systemic injustice that has little to do with poor people's willingness to live in those conditions. Poverty is multidimensional and affects different people and groups in multiple ways. MS should develop campaigns with the help of civil society and all the relevant stakeholders, including PEP, to spread awareness of what poverty is. Stigma can be eliminated only when there is a clear understanding of the concept of poverty. When advocating for that, you can refer to the EAPN's poverty explainer.

Bureaucracy

Administrative procedures are among the major causes of non-take-up.¹⁹ Complex regulations and procedures can discourage those who are eligible for the benefit from applying. MS should therefore simplify the bureaucracy and provide support to potential beneficiaries to help them access the benefit. When defining provisions for accessibility, it is paramount to ensure non-discrimination against any group of (actual or potential) beneficiaries of minimum income.

Application procedures can be tricky for potential beneficiaries. They usually need to follow a long process, including collecting several certificates to assess the assets, the residency, the address, etc. Gathering the information necessary to apply is both time-consuming and costly for people experiencing poverty, and sometimes it can refrain them from applying. Moreover, language is often hard to understand. MS must ensure that bureaucracy is not a barrier for the applicants any more. Most of the information that public administration needs can be found through different channels, e.g. municipality records, tax agencies, and other public offices, thus MS should diminish the amount of paperwork required from the applicants. They should also guarantee that the language used is clear and understandable to everyone. Transparency is fundamental, all the information on the scheme and the requisites for the application must be visible and available free of charge. Support desks are necessary too. All people in need have the right to be supported throughout the application process and after. Moreover, support desks ensure that access is guaranteed to all, especially to people whose personal situations may impede access to minimum income such as the elderly, illiterate, migrants, and people with disabilities.

Lastly, the duration of the application process should not be too long. Long and complex procedures are time-consuming for both civil servants and people that need income support. Furthermore, for the latter, this can be a disincentive for the application, especially if the application is rejected after means testing. Therefore, EAPN welcomes the introduction of the provision that limits to 30 days the time for decisions to be issued. However, EAPN is concerned that not all MS can meet that, especially when there is a lack of benefit providers. They need urgent reforms of the administrative systems to ensure that all potential beneficiaries can apply and receive a response in the shortest amount of time. To achieve that, MS should pay attention to the effects of digitalisation and the working conditions of civil servants too.

¹⁹ More on non-take up: <https://eminnetwork.files.wordpress.com/2018/09/non-take-up-report-and-recommendations-from-the-peer-review.pdf>.

Digital Divide

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, the digitalisation of service provisions has grown increasingly popular. Despite digital application forms being a necessity during the pandemic, they became the norm after the emergency. However, little consideration has been given to the negative consequences of digitalisation. Most people eligible for the benefits are not familiar with digital tools, and in the absence of external help cannot submit their application online. In addition to that, some people do not own all the digital tools needed to complete the procedure, namely smartphones, laptops, scanners, or card readers. Even when these tools are available, digital literacy, i.e. The knowledge and the ability to use these tools, may be missing. As a consequence, digitalisation has become a barrier to access to minimum income and other social benefits, as well as access to essential services which are equally important to prevent social exclusion.

MS must ensure that the digital divide does not continue to be a source of inequalities. Their role is to guarantee accessibility to everyone, including those who do not have digital tools or digital literacy/expertise. The “old-fashioned” application process through public offices and supporting desks must be guaranteed to all, digital application can be an alternative for those who have the means to proceed with that. Furthermore, MS can provide education and training to improve digital literacy or subsidise digital devices to the poor to reduce inequalities. Civil society, including NGOs, have actively provided digital support during and after the pandemic, MS should engage more with them and should consider collaborations with relevant stakeholders to provide training and support in general.

The digital divide also concerns information. Digital sources of information are not inclusive for the reasons mentioned above, moreover, online information can be tricky and deceiving, especially for those who are less educated or who are not expert users. MS

should not stop providing information online, but they must guarantee the availability of other sources of information such as newspapers, television, or public information points. More importantly, they must monitor online information and make sure that there are legal consequences for those who spread misinformation.

If possible, work with other CSOs to collect data on minimum income beneficiaries disaggregated by sex, age, disability, race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, migration status, socioeconomic status, citizenship and nationality.

What does the Council recommendation state?

Administrative Burden

In the Council Recommendation emphasis is put on reducing the administrative burden as well as relaxing some eligibility criteria, namely age and residency. However, the Council Recommendation remains vague. Regarding age, it is advised to guarantee access to young adults with no age specification, while on the legal residence requirements it only invites MS to ensure it is “proportionate.” **EAPN, instead, claims that the Council Recommendation should explicitly mention that all people in need can access the benefit from the age of 18 as well as eliminate the legal residency requirement since minimum income is a non-contributory benefit.**

Coverage of Minimum Income Schemes

The Council Recommendation proposes measures to increase the coverage of MI. Specifically, it asks MS to set transparent and non-discriminatory eligibility criteria, and it makes specific reference to the

residency requirements. The Commission proposal states that MS should ensure that the length of legal residence is proportionate, and should abolish the requirement of a permanent address to support the access to the scheme for people living in shelters, in institutions or in homelessness.

In addition to that, there are a series of recommendations related to procedural aspects. Firstly, on the applications, it suggests MS ensure that the decision is issued within 30 days from the submission. Secondly, it recommends that the MS keep beneficiaries in the scheme as long as they lack resources and comply with the eligibility criteria, thus as long as they need it. Thirdly, MS are invited to provide mechanisms of appeal, free of charge and accessible to anyone. Finally, the proposal recommends defining mechanisms to ensure that minimum income is responsive to crises, regularly indexed to remain adequate. This may include the temporary lift of eligibility criteria or the extension of the benefit duration.

Take up of Minimum Income

The Council Recommendation aims to address the high level of non-coverage, i.e. non-take up rate. Most notably, it is recommended to reduce the administrative burden by simplifying the application procedures and assistance to those in need, especially those who face digital poverty (the inability to adequately interact with online tools, due to inadequate access to digital equipment, skills or internet connection). The CR encourages MS to ensure updated information, which should be free of charge and user-friendly. Enabling all to access all information in a clear and simple way. MS are also encouraged to proactively reach out to those who are eligible for the benefits through different measures, including through local and regional stakeholders.

Additionally, MS should combat stigmatisation associated with benefiting MIS.

Discrimination

Discrimination stemming from policy design is mentioned in the Council Recommendation, MS are invited to adopt “transparent and non-discriminatory eligibility criteria”, however, the provision can be improved by mentioning explicitly what the non-discriminatory criteria are. Non-discriminatory criteria do not prevent certain vulnerable groups from applying. In other words, the age criterium should be set at 18 years old, the residency criterium should be abolished as well as the permanent address requirement. In some cases, the constraint on working hours can prevent the working poor from receiving the benefit, hence each case should be evaluated to make sure they are not left behind.

Guiding question:

- Is there discrimination in accessing MI schemes based on legal and residence status, gender identity, employment status, contractual arrangements, race, ethnicity, or other characteristics? Is it accessible from the age of 18? Is it possible to apply for MI online and in person? How is the process? Burdensome/bureaucratic or simple? Is it possible to combine MI with other benefits e.g. child benefits?
- How easy is the procedure?
- What is the restriction of eligibility the duration of the benefit?
- How heavy is the administrative process?
- How long is the granting process? Appeal process?
- Are there policies designed and implemented to address non-take up?
- What is the impact of digitalisation?
- Does the scheme allow for direct or indirect discrimination?
- What are the non-take-up rates?

Enabling Characteristics

Enabling is defined as measures and mechanisms that promote people's empowerment and participation in society and facilitate their access to quality services and inclusive labour markets. This implies the use of design parameters in line with an integrated, person-centred "active inclusion paradigm." This approach stresses people's rights along with supporting and empowering them for social participation and/or quality jobs. EAPN has assessed for more than a decade the negative impact of punitive activation measures such as the obligatory participation in labour market activation programmes - this includes social work and/or forced volunteering - or the acceptance of any kind of job, therefore, it strongly advocates for the development of positive conditionalities that address social and health needs of people facing complex obstacles to accessing the labour market.

Activation Measures

Active inclusion measures can be a barrier to accessibility if they are not designed properly and are not supported by well-functioning public services. These measures should be aimed primarily at (re) integrating those who can work in the labour market. However, (re) integration in the labour market is not enough to prevent poverty. The latter can only be achieved when people are offered quality jobs, with salaries that are above the poverty line.

Today, several MS negate income support to workers even if their salary does not protect them from the risk of poverty and social exclusion. On the contrary, some schemes force recipients to accept any kind of job to avoid losing the benefits. In other circumstances, instead, recipients decide not to accept part-time jobs or fixed-term contracts because they can become ineligible for minimum income even if they have unstable jobs. These conditionalities do not contribute to the reduction of poverty, rather they are counterproductive because they keep people below the poverty

line and prevent them from active participation in society. Therefore, it is important that MS incentivise quality employment by promoting decent working conditions along with adequate wages. Moreover, it is necessary to keep in the schemes those who have unstable jobs. MS should also handle the labour market mismatch by ensuring that people are equipped with the necessary skills that jobs require. Public employment services, counselling, and training play a major role in closing the gaps; hence MS should make sure that these mechanisms are properly designed and efficient.

Working Conditions of Benefit Providers

Challenges that policy reforms should address concern benefit providers too. Often the excessive bureaucracy is cumbersome even for civil servants, as they deal with long procedures and need to stay constantly updated on recent policy developments. In this case, MS should provide adequate training to civil servants and provide adequate working conditions, including increasing the workforce. The Council Recommendation invites MS to assign a case manager for everyone, he will follow their case throughout the entire duration of the measure. In other words, case managers are supposed to follow each case before, during, and after minimum income is provided to them. This means that case managers will also be in charge of monitoring and collecting data, hence a common and efficient methodology for data collection should be developed.

Benefit providers are those who are in direct contact with recipients, they are responsible for the implementation and may experience issues linked to the policy design. They are the most suited for monitoring and collecting complaints, the latter must be heard and solved. National governments should put in place well-functioning mechanisms for complaints and appeal procedures that ensure rapid adjustments of the policy. The provision will benefit both benefit providers and recipients because the adopted measures will be constantly tested and

updated to meet the needs of the applicants and the civil servants.

Often, there is a lack of coordination between benefit providers and public employment services. In most countries, beneficiaries are obliged to register at the public employment office and undergo costly application procedures again. This issue is caused primarily by insufficient transparency among public offices: if they foster communication between them, the workload will be reduced and the efficiency improved. As a result, they will be able to provide timely responses that better suit beneficiaries and ease their reintegration process.

All the issues mentioned above primarily stem from the lack of adequate training for civil servants. The latter usually have outdated skills and thus need frequent upskilling and reskilling. They will guarantee an adequate response to the needs of people lacking sufficient results and provide them with quality services.

How is access to essential services such as energy, transport, financial services, digital communications, education and lifelong learning, public libraries, healthcare, housing, food, water, sanitation, and social services? Is it affordable? Is it accessible to all without discrimination?

Punitive Conditionalities

Countries commonly impose negative and punitive conditionalities for beneficiaries of Minimum Income Schemes. These may involve compelling individuals to accept low-paid and insecure employment, unpaid traineeships, or even reducing or suspending unemployment benefits when they apply for access to the minimum income support. To gain a comprehensive understanding of these conditionalities, it is essential to carefully review the legislation on Minimum Income Schemes in your country. Furthermore, speaking directly with beneficiaries and obtaining their perspectives

can provide valuable insights into the practical implications and impact of these conditions.

Individualised Support

Both EAPN and the latest Council Recommendation on Minimum Income, recommend superficial support for MI beneficiaries, as well as an inclusion plan. So it would be important for you to get in touch with MI beneficiaries to understand if they are getting the necessary support. Is there an adequate ratio of individualised support cases for case managers? Are all MI beneficiaries receiving individualized support? What is the waiting time? What does the individualised support consist of? What is the impact of the digitalisation of the social services?

What does the Council recommendation state?

Access to Inclusive Labour Markets

The Council Recommendation stresses the central role of labour market activation measures. MS are recommended to promote employment and reintegration in the labour market, through training or coaching for instance, by providing support to people on their pathway to employment. However, the CR fails to recognize unemployment and exclusion from the labour market as an issue beyond the individual's responsibility. We believe that individualised support is necessary but insufficient to guarantee decent income, as in-work poverty remains an issue for 1/10 workers in the EU. It is a concern that decent wages and quality working condition falls outside of the scope of the CR. This paradigm limits consensual understanding of the structural barriers to quality employment, but the translation into policy practice can be very detrimental to MI beneficiaries: administration are implicitly required to lower the number of beneficiaries by offering inadequate employment, to

show the success of the MIS. However, the recommendation includes the possibility to combine income support with earnings from work, which employers should not see as public subsidies for inadequate wages, but as a temporary support to beneficiaries. This provision should encourage recipients of minimum income to accept sporadic work, traineeships, and probation periods without the risk of being ineligible for the minimum income benefit, paving thus a way out of the scheme.

Moreover, the Council Recommendation encourages the MS to consider the situation of young adults, who often struggle to find stable employment, whilst largely ineligible to MIS. Therefore, MS are invited to invest in human capital supporting upskilling and reskilling programs, also involving social partners, and consider young adults as eligible to MIS.

MS should also support work opportunities in the social economy.²⁰ Indeed, employment in the social economy can provide work experience and could be a steppingstone towards attachment to the open labour market.

Access to Enabling and Essential Services

In the Council Recommendation proposed by the Commission, access to essential services is briefly mentioned. MS are invited to ensure effective and equal access to enabling services that include enabling services such as early childhood education and care, training and education, healthcare and long-

term care, and social inclusion services which refer to services addressing the specific needs of those “left behind.” They include counselling, psychological support, rehabilitation, etc.

More importantly, these services must be of quality. Quality principles have been defined in the [Voluntary European Quality Framework for Social Services](#) published by the Social Protection Committee, which distinguishes between overarching principles for social services provision, principles for the relationships between service providers and users, principles for the relationship between service providers, public authorities, social partners and other stakeholders, and principles for human and physical capital. It also provides guidance on the implementation and development of tools to measure and evaluate the quality of social services.

In addition, the Commission recommends safeguarding the continuity of effective access to essential services and encourages MS to address the financial and non-financial barriers to access essential services. These non-financial barriers can be physical, e.g., non-accessible buildings, or not, as in the case of lack of information or digitalization of services. MS should therefore adopt all the necessary measures to make essential services accessible and affordable for everyone, in particular, for people lacking sufficient resources.

EAPN welcomes the attention that the Council Recommendation pays to the development of an individualized approach and the provision of quality services that enable people to participate in social life. Nonetheless, it lacks measures to foster the coordination and integration between

²⁰ Social economy refers to the economic and social actors active in all sectors that are not driven by profit, and distinguish themselves by the form of entrepreneurship, e.g. cooperatives, mutual societies, associations and foundations. Social economy promotes the employment of excluded people, as well as their personal and social activation

minimum income support and social services provision. Moreover, no measure mentions the issue of sustainable funding for social services which is extremely important to guarantee their quality.

Individualized Support

An element of novelty in the Council Recommendation is the proposal for the adoption of individualized support. Contrary to the most common household approach, the individualized approach should address the diversity of needs of people lacking sufficient resources and foster social inclusion. To develop this approach, the Commission recommends MS assess multi-dimensional needs and barriers to social inclusion, to identify the needs and the necessary services to provide the support needed in each case.

As part of the individualized support, MS should develop individual inclusion plans within three months starting with access to minimum income. This plan should include objectives, timelines, and a package of support tailored to individual needs. The support package should include measures for the active labour market (re) integration and social inclusion. Moreover, they recommend assigning a case manager to the recipients. This person will be in charge of securing continuous support for individuals and overseeing the progress in the implementation of the inclusion plan.

Concerning the long-term unemployed, MS are invited to review and adapt their existing job integration agreements to [the Recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market](#). The latter defines a 'job-integration agreement' as *"a written agreement between*

a registered long-term unemployed person and a single point of contact, having the objective of facilitating that person's transition into employment on the labour market." Moreover, that recommendation invites MS to *"make a specific offer of a job-integration agreement at the very latest when a long-term unemployed person has reached 18 months of unemployment."*

Guiding Questions:

- Is there a time limit for receiving MI?
- The impact of punitive conditionality on the AROP? Or on the take up?
- What are the procedures to access support pathways to employment?
- Does being beneficiary of MI give enough access to essential services and social tariff?
- Do the beneficiaries have to submit to compulsory training or job/volunteering to continue receiving MI?
- How long does it take to get an appointment with a case manager?

Governance

Have there been impact assessments of the MI scheme in your country? Who is in charge of the evaluation: which administration?

What does the Council recommendation state?

Governance, Monitoring, and Reporting

The last section of the Council Recommendation on adequate Minimum Income concerns governance, monitoring, and reporting. In addition, it defines the role of the Commission.

Regarding governance, one of the recommendations is to strengthen the operational capacity of employment and essential service providers. The Council Recommendation specifies that the operational capacity should be strengthened through data sharing and the development of further integrated service models. Another recommended measure is that of empowering and integrating into the entire process all the relevant stakeholders, i.e., civil society organizations, local and regional authorities, and social economy actors. In other words, relevant stakeholders should be part of the designing phase, the implementation, the evaluation, and the monitoring of MIS.

MS are recommended to continuously monitor the implementation of MIS, paying particular attention to the labour activation measures and the access to services. The Recommendation invites MS to improve the availability and the quality of data, also by carrying out regular evaluations and adjustments. However, there are no common standards or methodology proposed in the document, hence MS have a lot of discretion in collecting such data and conducting evaluations. Finally, MS are invited to report every three years to the Commission on the progress in the implementation of the Recommendation. Indeed, according to the Commission 3-years' time span guarantees

that the reforms implemented by MS produce visible effects, and thus their efficiency can be better evaluated.

In the context of the Council Recommendation on adequate minimum income, the role of the Commission is primarily to provide support to MS. The Commission intends to promote mutual learning and dissemination of results among MS, as well as work jointly with them to develop the benchmarking framework on minimum income. In doing this, the Commission will involve the Social Protection Committee (SPC), which is an advisory policy committee to the ministers in the Employment and Social Affairs Committee and is responsible for developing and defining EU social indicators. Moreover, the Commission will continue to monitor MIS in the European Semester and propose Country-Specific Recommendations (CSRs) to MS. Lastly, the Commission plans to take stock of the actions taken in response to this Recommendation, concerning the reduction of poverty and social exclusion, employment, and participation in training in order to report to the Council by 2032.

Guiding questions:

- Did your Member State present a plan to have MI reach the poverty line by 2030?
- Is there sufficient social investment or have there been budget cuts in the social protection budget?
- Evaluate the participation of PEP and CSO in the evaluation and implementation of the MIS: meaningful? Tick the box exercise.

Part III:

How to Proceed

The third part of this toolkit focuses on advocacy principles in general. It should help you build and shape your work around minimum income, by guiding you through the identification of objectives and targets, as well as providing you with hints and support to build a strong voice with your community.

Advocacy Action Principles

What is advocacy?

“Advocacy is a tool for putting a problem on the agenda, providing a solution to that problem, and building support for acting both on the problem and the solution.” (Ritu R. Sharma from *Academy for Educational Development*)

Advocacy amplifies the voice of the most vulnerable, who are often ignored, and provides evidence to decision-makers to change the way they act. Therefore, advocacy must be based on a strategy to attain its goal. A good strategy requires time and dynamicity, i.e. ability to adapt to changes and the variety of stakeholders involved. That is why in this section you will find the main principles and key elements for strong advocacy efforts.

Nothing About Your Community Without Your Community

The most important principle of bottom-up advocacy can be summarized by **“nothing about your community without your community.”** It means that you cannot advocate on behalf of someone without engaging with them and building a relationship with them. The concept of community is vast. It can mean people who suffer the same oppression, shared values,

beliefs. Ultimately, it should mean a group of people who team up to build a common with to fight against a shared problem. You can come as an outsider or insider, depending if you face the problem yourself. As uncomfortable as it may be, topics such as the person’s situation vis-a vis poverty, need to be discussed. This would also be a good opportunity to establish the definition of the root causes of poverty, common values, basic principles on functioning as a group and the common goal to eradicate poverty. This is not a simple concept and mistakes will be made along the way: always come back to the values and the common unity that made the community in the first place to guide you all along the way.

You need to understand what the perspective is, what the needs are, and what the demands are. You must rely on the community for this knowledge. Your job as advocacy actor will be to amplify their demands through the means you all share and work on the barriers to ultimately get the community in the driving seat.

Mapping the structural barrier for mobilisation:

- Lack of literacy?
- Living in survival mode? (lack of stable and safe housing, access to food, shelter, ...)
- Ongoing job search?
- Unsafe environment and potential repression (for migrant, racialised communities, ...)
- Suffering from addiction?

By knowing what the barriers are to mobilisation, your work could allocate resources, as part of your strategy, to overcome these obstacles and ensure a community-driven organisation.

Why?

A deeper understanding of your community needs ensures designing better solutions that deal with the root causes of the problems you are trying to solve. Your community provides guidelines, value and expertise. Remember that you are building with them, therefore it is their voice you need to hear first.

Intersectionality and Inclusivity

In your advocacy work, you need to adopt an **intersectional approach**. Intersectionality refers to the acknowledgment that discrimination and inequality faced by an individual stem from different dimensions that are all interconnected and often overlap. These dimensions include gender, race and class.

The intersectional approach implies that power dynamics in all forms is taken into account. In practice, it means that you cannot look at only one form of inequality and exclusion, because **“There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because**

we do not live single-issue lives.” Audre Lorde

Without intersectionality, you will not be able to promote efficient solutions, instead you can obtain counterproductive results, that is, an increase in inequality and discrimination of determined groups.

Advocacy should be **inclusive**. The concept of inclusivity entails that everyone, especially vulnerable communities (e.g. Roma,²¹ people in homelessness, sex workers, single/solo parents, racialised and LGBTQI+ communities, etc.) must be not only included but recentre in your work. You are advocating for social change; your narrative must go beyond the demand for equal opportunity and access but must strive towards equity in terms of the results of the policies. You should ensure inclusivity in all stages of your work, from the definition of problems and solutions to the assessment and monitoring of policies.

21 “The umbrella term ‘Roma’ encompasses diverse groups, including Roma, Sinti, Kale, Romanichels, Boyash/Rudari, Ashkali, Egyptians, Yenish, Dom, Lom, Rom and Abdal, as well as Traveller populations (gens du voyage, Gypsies, Camminanti, etc.)” *from Roma equality, inclusion and participation in the EU*. (2020, October 7). European Commission. Retrieved December 21, 2022, from https://commission.europa.eu/content/roma-equality-inclusion-and-participation-eu_en.

Power Mapping

It is paramount to draw a **power map**, a visual tool that helps identify the essential elements of an advocacy strategy. Once you have covered basic elements, you can combine them to define the best approach to achieve your goals. A power map is characterised by:

1. Central targets. These are the people that enact policy changes. These people can be found in different political bodies and at different governmental, administrative and political levels. Usually, Ministers of Social Affairs are those who design anti-poverty measures, such as MI, however, it can be the case that these policies are developed and delivered by the regional level. Likewise, other actors, such as Ministers of Finances may be involved in policymaking. Do not forget the Parliament and the Judiciary as they both have a say in the adoption and recasting of legislation. Since the interpretation of dispositions can vary, they should be targeted as well to ensure harmonised and successful delivery of the MIS.

2. Resources. This exercise will help you identify the resources you have and those you are missing. When talking about resources, we refer to all types: financial, human, time, data sources, motivation, network, visibility, etc. Once those resources have been identified, they can be better allocated to achieve higher results. For those missing, you can consider **alternative solutions** such as looking for them externally through coalition building, networking with other Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) or trade unions.

3. Resources that target value. Which resources among those you have are most appreciated by targets? What are the resources they do not have access to and would need your expertise for? These resources can be the expertise by experience that people experiencing poverty

(PEP) have, the data you collect, academic research, your evaluation of anti-poverty policies, etc. to identify those valued resources, you might to identify allies with the policy-makers who will help you understand their needs.

4. Your relationship with the targets. What is the relationship between you and the targets of your advocacy plan? Have you ever engaged with them? Are they open to listening? Are you in a position of power, i.e. are you considered trustworthy and reliable by them? Do you have direct access to them? If not, do you know people that can help you? Can you influence them indirectly? What needs to improve/change?

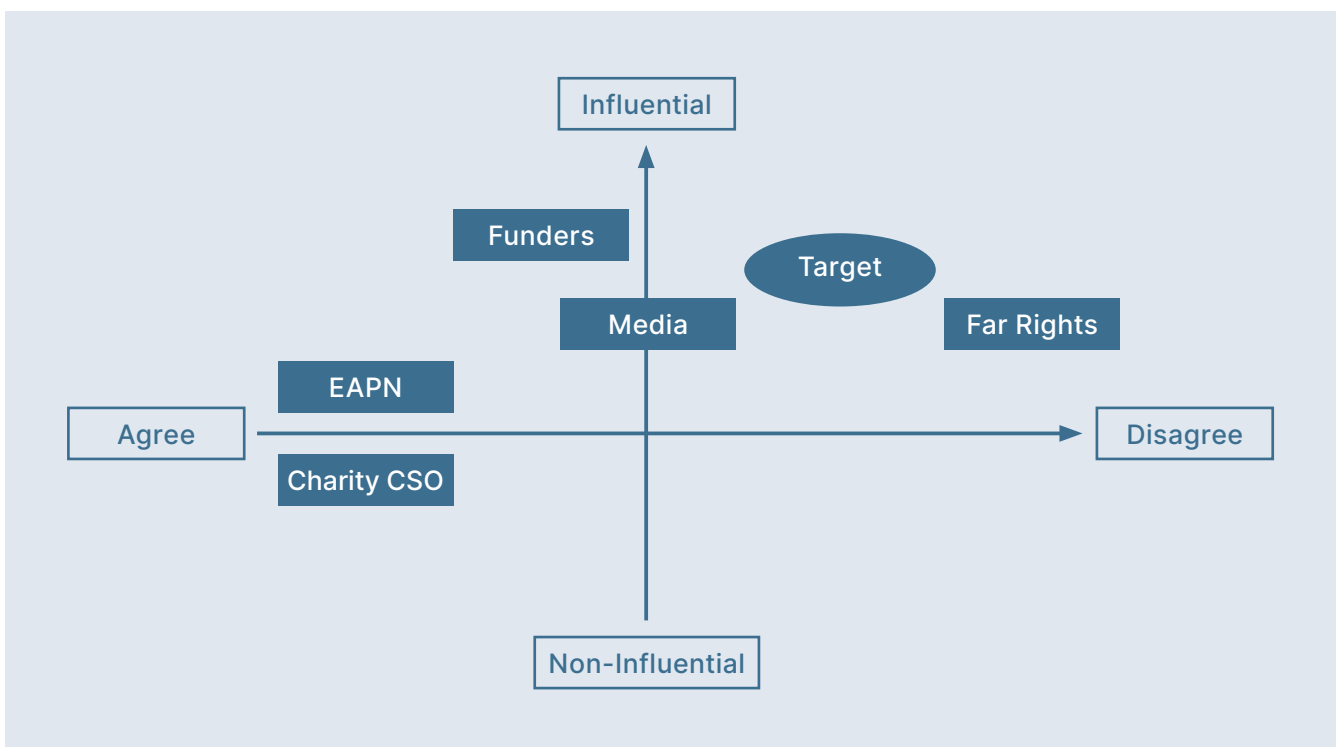
5. Your allies. You should map the people whose demands match yours. These can be other organisations working on human rights, social justice, academics, activists, journalists and media, trade unions etc. However, your allies do not need to be only CSOs, you can also look at political parties, civil servants and elected representatives that share your point of view, etc. You can cooperate with them to make your voice stronger and increase your lobbying power.

6. Your adversaries. Who disagrees with you or work against your goals? What are they advocating for? What is their influence on the targets? Why are they influential (or not)? Do you have counterarguments? How can you offset their influence? Mapping your rivals is as important as identifying your allies because it helps locate yourself in the broad picture.

7. Potential risks and backlashes. What are the potential risks and backlashes of your actions? Can your actions negatively impact your community? What are the risks of not achieving your goals? Is there a way to mitigate potential backlashes? Is the political climate you are operating in safe? Anticipating repercussions is essential to prevent

any further damage to your community and to develop alternative actions that entail fewer risks for you and your community.

Once you have identified the key elements and answered the questions, you can draw your map placing all the elements on two axes (see the sample picture). It will be the starting point of your advocacy strategy.



Do Your Homework

The power map is ready. Use that to draw your advocacy strategy.

- ✓ Define your objective.
- ✓ Choose your targets.
- ✓ Define the type of engagement, how do you want to reach them?
- ✓ Allocate your resources according to where they are exploited the most.
- ✓ Engage with the right stakeholders.
- ✓ Draw your risk assessment and reduce backlashes.

Part IV:

Strategic Advocacy on Minimum Income Scheme

Advocacy in Action: Minimum Income

EAPN has been advocating for MI at the European and national level for decades. The Council Recommendation on Adequate Minimum Income ensuring active inclusion is a small step forward and is crucial to creating momentum. This section aims to give you hints for a successful advocacy strategy on MI.

Nothing About the PEP Without the PEP

Minimum Income measures are primarily directed towards people at risk of poverty and People Experiencing Poverty (PEP). They are the community that are advocating for adequate, accessible and enabling MIS.

How?

- If you are not already connected, meet with them as much as you can. It can be informal meetings, in a community centre for instance, or formal ones such as the national and [European PEP Meeting](#). You should make the effort to go to where they are, not the other way around.
- Share information with them about your work, and make sure the language is accessible. There must be a room for you to transform your argument, based on their experience and the known barriers they face to access MIS.
- Organise need-based sessions to find out how to serve them better (how to initiate an application online, how to make a complaint, how to appeal decisions; ...). This will make sure that you keep their interests centred.
- Develop a methodology to collect data on the barriers to access MI and the enabling characteristics: interviews, focus groups, group discussion, survey, ... beneficiaries should, of course, not only be the respondent but collect the data as well: this is participatory action research methodology. PEP must be central in your monitoring exercise.
- Convene meeting with decision makers and PEP whilst making sure PEP safety (specifically for undocumented migrants) is guaranteed and their consent is fully informed. The meeting should have agenda led by PEP, based on their expertise and the priorities they mention (on administrative barriers, adequacy, conditionality...).
- Allocate financial and human resources to keep the engagement going.
- Be creative both in the methodology and the dissemination of the outputs.
- Engage in regular evaluation and assessment exercises where PEP can voice concerns and good experiences.

Define Your Goals

What do you want to achieve with your advocacy? What are the most urgent issues you are trying to solve? Is it adequacy? Accessibility? The non-take up? The impact of the digitalisation? The lack of transparency in the complaint and appeal procedure? Something else? To identify them you need to assess the current state of play.

- What are the main features of your MIS?
- Has it contributed to the reduction of poverty in your country?
- Does it cater to the needs of the PEP?
- What are the most critical issues within your scheme?
- What is the government's position on MI?
- Is MI debated at the national level? If so, who is in favour? Who is not? Why?

Tip: Avoid focusing on all issues at the same time, it will be costly and less effective! The ones you choose to focus on should build momentum and path the way to further improvement of the scheme. Assess regularly the relevance of these priorities.

Build Your Narrative²²

Once objectives are set, it is time to develop your narrative. To help you understand better, **let's assume that our objective is to decrease the non-take-up rate of MI.** The narrative should include:

1. The definition of the core problem. You should specify what the problem is, what does it imply, and why it is important to solve it. In our case, the problem **is the non-take-up which refers**

to the rate of people covered by the benefit even though they are entitled to it. Non-take-up implies that the coverage of MIS is reduced and thus it is less effective in reducing poverty and social exclusion. You can also argue that since the MI is a social right, not getting access to it consists of a violation of rights.

2. The identification of causes and effects. This process entails finding the immediate causes and breaking them down until you reach the root causes. For instance, one cause of non-take-up is the lack of case manager. The latter can be caused by the lack of human resources in administration leading to gaps in delivery; or the other way around when this is a lack of communication by a lack of communication by administration in terms of people in need of MI leading to a lack of proper human resource allocation. Once the causes are determined, you move on to the effects on your community and society. One effect of non-take-up can be the increase in inequalities between those who accessed MI and those who did not.

3. Solutions to the causes of the problem. Now it is time to transform the causes into actions that solve the problem. Thinking of a solution for each cause is less cumbersome and can be more effective. Following the previous example, a solution to the lack of investment in human resources can be increasing investment by reallocating financial resources or raising money by reforming the tax system, simplifying the process of application could be another solution.

4. Your demands. You have described accurately the problem and its causes, as well as solutions. Now you can formulate your demands. Make sure they are clear, achievable and target the right stakeholders.

²² This information is based on the advocacy handbook "Refugees' access to higher education and beyond" produced as part of the Refugees Education Initiatives Project. <https://www.enar-eu.org/new-advocacy-handbook-on-refugees-access-to-higher-education/>

Guidelines on How to Draft Key Messages

Key messages are the essence of the ideas you want to communicate. They are the main points you want your audience to hear, understand and remember. Therefore, there are a few guidelines you should keep in mind when you are drafting them. Key messages should be:

- ✓ **Concise:** Draft from 3 to 5 key messages per topic. For each statement, you should use three sentences in length at maximum. You should be able to read it in less than 30 seconds.
- ✓ **Strategic:** Define, differentiate, and align with benefits/value proposition.
- ✓ **Relevant:** Balance what you need to communicate with what your audience needs to know.
- ✓ **Compelling:** Exploit meaningful information to stimulate action.
- ✓ **Simple:** Use plain and clear language; avoid jargon and acronyms.
- ✓ **Memorable:** Easy to recall and repeat; avoid run-on sentences.
- ✓ **Relatable:** Use an active rather than a passive voice and avoid advertising slogans.
- ✓ **Tailored:** Adapt to different target audiences, by adjusting language and depth of information.

Define Products

You need to disseminate your knowledge and your key messages both to your community and other relevant stakeholders. Pay attention to the format you are using. You should consider the needs of your target audience and choose the most impactful product. Hereafter, you can find the description of some products, among which you can find those that suit your target audience.

Factsheets

Factsheets are usually one or two-page documents containing essential information about one issue. They can include visuals and infographics. These are the best products for the dissemination of key

messages since they are short and easy to read. They should catch the attention of the targeted audience; hence you should not ignore layout details. Factsheets can be very helpful to spread information throughout your community too. Legislative acts as well as details on application procedures for MI are often hard to read.

Statements

Statements are short formal documents where you can state your position on a specific issue. You can use this format to ask for public pledges or to react to the government's actions. For instance, EAPN EU released [a reaction statement to the Commission's proposal for a Council Recommendation on Adequate MI](#) joint with Caritas Europa and Eurodiaconia as well as a [position paper](#) with an analysis of the [final version of the Council Recommendation](#). The strength of statements is that they are short and get straight to the point. Make sure to disseminate your statement, the more you do it the higher visibility you have!

Letters

Open Letters are addressed to the targets you have identified. They are usually drafted to ask for specific actions or to request meetings, in particular when private communications have been unfruitful. Bear in mind that a public letter may be more suitable to ask for commitment, while private letters are ideal if you have detailed requests.

An efficient advocacy letter must include:

- ✓ your contact details.
- ✓ an introduction of your organisation and your purpose, include your influence, supporters and audience.
- ✓ your position, and your request accompanied by a justification.

Tip: Stick to one page and make sure your message is timely!

Events

If you have the resources, you can organise events. They are occasions for you and your community to gather, put forward your demands and challenge policy-makers. There are several formats to consider:

- **Conferences.** They are formal events where you can present your evidence and your key messages to the audience. All relevant stakeholders, including targets and PEP, should be invited.
- **Meetings.** They refer to gatherings of people that share interests for the same issue. Meetings can be formal or informal. They represent occasions for discussion and for sharing opinions and ideas. You can consider organising such events to strengthen the collaboration with your allies or to grasp the viewpoint of your community.
- **Workshops.** Workshops are more interactive sessions around a topic that include learning sessions, brainstorming, and problem-solving. They are designed to create specialised results, such as producing key recommendations.
- **Capacity building sessions.** These sessions aim to share information and develop skills in your organisation or your community. You can consider organising a capacity building to share information on rights that your community has, or on the application procedures of MIS, but also training to policy-makers to provide them with resources and a better understanding of the issue.
- **Mobilisation.** In this case, you ask your community and the network of allies to be directly involved in the advocacy work by claiming their demands in the streets, before a specific office for instance. This type of action gains a lot of visibility and can reignite motivation and momentum. The mobilisation can commemorate a specific date (17/10 for instance of the international day for the eradication of poverty), a political context (legislation or reforms undergoing, elections for instance) or a tribunal decision after a complaint or an appeal process.

Videos and Podcasts

Do not forget to take advantage of technology! You can edit video testimonies of PEP describing challenges in accessing MI or create a series of podcasts on MI to raise awareness among citizens. These tools can be helpful for your community. For instance, you can show them how to apply online for MI benefits (if they have digital tools).

Website and Social Media

Your website and your social media are your windows. You should keep them updated with your initiatives, infographics, experiences from the ground, etc. Use social media for quick reactions to political debates and do not forget to use the hashtags #MinimumIncome and #SocialRights to join the online discussion. You can reach out to new audience and approach potential allies as well.

Mobilise

Advocacy is also about mobilising. The louder you are the more influence and pressure you will put on decision makers. The more visible you are the more awareness you will raise about poverty and the necessity for adequate, accessible and enabling MIS.

Build Your Community on MI

Being an anti-poverty organisation entails empowering the PEP and amplifying their voices. Your role is to build a strong community powerful in claiming their rights, like minimum income.

- ✓ Provide them with all the relevant information on MI.
- ✓ Listen to PEP's struggles in accessing the benefit and define your goals accordingly.
- ✓ Create safe* spaces for them to confront the decision makers.
- ✓ Organise (safe*) protests in significant places where PEP can speak out.

*What is safe?

Safe means that people's lives, physical and mental integrity are not endangered and are cared for. Make sure that vulnerable minorities, such as undocumented migrants, racialised groups or sex workers are not exposed to judicial risks, retaliation, stigmatisation and violence, both from external and internal actors.

Create Alliances

You have identified your allies in the power map, now it is time to reach out to them.

- ✓ Find their contact details and ask for meetings (better if in person).
- ✓ Initiate a dialogue with them, express your viewpoint and listen to theirs.
- ✓ Share the knowledge as you might work with the same communities.
- ✓ Plan possible collaborations such as joint reports, campaigns, statements, events, etc.
- ✓ Think of building coalitions and remember that the aim of coalitions is to share the work load not to duplicate it!

Anticipate Risks, Conflicts, and Backlashes

Every action can have a reaction. Not all reactions are positive, therefore you need to anticipate negative repercussions, and prevent them. You can draw a risk assessment plan based on these questions:

- What are the potential outcomes of your work?
- What are the repercussions on the people a risk?
- What are the potential reactions from your enemies?
- Are there instruments to prevent backlashes?
- Are there alternative actions that reduce risks?
- Are there conflicts of interest*?

*Conflict of Interest

A situation in which an individual or an organisation becomes biased thus unreliable because of a opposition between personal interests and professional duties or responsibilities.

Monitor ²³

Your advocacy work must be contextualised in your country scenario. You must be aware of any reform or action taken by the government or any relevant authorities in the field of social protection and social inclusion, in other words, you need to monitor!

What to Monitor

- **Legislation.** Past and new laws that define social protection policies as attached to MIS and promote social inclusion must be constantly monitored. You can find them in the official journal of your country, in media or can be shared by any allies. Usually new laws are published in the journal weeks in advance, so that citizens have enough time to get familiar with them.
- **Policies.** Sometimes policies are not written in official legislation, for instance internal instructions, protocols, or regulations. They can have effects on MIS because they may contain instructions for benefit providers on how to conduct the means-testing or how to define adequacy.
- **Practices.** Practices refer to the application of the legislation and policies mentioned before. You can use existing reports or collect your own data to draft reports on the implementation of MIS. Monitoring the practices can help you compare the laws and the implementation. This can be a way to find out what the barriers to accessibility of MI are. Your community is a valuable resource in this case.
- **Discourses.** Politicians and other governmental authorities give several speeches (e.g. debates in Parliament). Monitoring their discourse can be a good way to hold them accountable, especially when they express commitment.

²³ This section is based on the toolkit 'documenting the discriminatory impact of counter-terrorism and counter-radicalisation in the European Union', https://www.enar-eu.org/wp-content/uploads/2018_10_counter-terrorism_toolkit_final.pdf.

How to Monitor

To monitor policies and the impact of reforms, you need to collect data, both quantitative and qualitative. You do not necessarily need to get data by yourself, look at official statistics and other reliable sources. However, make sure they provide equality data.*

***Equality data** refers to disaggregated data used to assess the situation of vulnerable groups compared to the rest of the population. This data includes religion and belief, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender, race, disability, nationality, legal status and age.

There are several methods for data collecting, each of them has pros and cons:

- **Polls, questionnaires, and surveys.** They can be submitted to the PEP, beneficiaries of MIS, benefit providers, or NGOs working on poverty and social inclusion. They allow you to collect a lot of information quickly because you can spread the same questionnaire throughout your network and on social media. However, these tools provide biased results (sample might not be large enough, randomisation is not possible). However, the qualitative data and information will guide your policy analysis and your advocacy strategy.
- **Interviews.** Collecting testimonies of beneficiaries describing their experiences with minimum income (on the access to application, the application process itself, the follow-up plan by the social services, on the adequacy and the enabling characteristics, on the relationship with the service providers) will provide complementary data to the national superficial already available. However, conducting interviews is time consuming and involves a small number of interviewees (so there is a risk of lesser representation).
- **Case studies.** They are detailed evaluations of specific cases, such as a city, community, profile of eligible and/covered beneficiaries. They are based on surveys and interviews as well as desk research. Its analyses the legal provision, the political context, the access to MIS, the impact of the scheme and its provision for this particular group and can conclude by specific recommendation.
- **Content analysis.** It consists of desk research based on second sourced information (media, civil society organisation research), official declarations, legislation texts and policies. This method can provide the theoretical framework, but it does not allow for the collection of data on the actual impact of policies.

Assess Success

Once you have completed your advocacy action, you should assess and evaluate your work. This exercise is useful for the identification of good practices, which should be kept in future advocacy strategies, and bad practices which should be abandoned.

- Did you manage to influence the targets?
- Did you manage to achieve your objective?
- If yes, have your demands improved the design of MIS? How?
- What were the effective elements of your strategy? And the ineffective?
- Did your community feel more empowered?

From the Top!

Advocacy is a process, as such it requires time to be completed, whilst evolving, adapting to a superficial changing context. When you have concluded a cycle (predetermined), you can start from the top. If you did not reach your objective you can try again, if you did, you can move to another issue, that has been raised and affecting the community you are advocating with.

You should:

- Identified gaps and missed opportunities.
- Explanation: limited resources, unrealistic goals, unmeaningful or superficial engagement with communities.
- Potential solution to explore: explore new funding, reaching out to trusted stakeholders, defining milestones.
- Redefining your objectives.

Remember that reaching your objectives is not always easy, you need to persevere and stay motivated, self-critical and always open to challenging yourself.

Good Practices

While building your advocacy strategy toward adequate Minimum Income, it may be helpful to look at other countries' experiences and good practices. Some members of the EU Inclusion Strategies Group shared with EAPN EU their experience and some examples of best practices concerning their advocacy work at the national level. For all of them, increasing the MIS' adequacy is the main priority.

They also strongly recommend linking the benefit to reference budgets to capture the real cost of essential goods and services.

EAPN Bulgaria

In Bulgaria, the MIS is composed of the guaranteed minimum income (GMI), which amounts to 38 euros, and the differentiated minimum income (DMI) which is calculated as a share of the GMI depending on a series of eligibility criteria such as age, health condition, or social status. Therefore, the benefit provided to each person can vary. The key issue with this scheme is that it is extremely inadequate and fragmented. Regarding adequacy, the Minister of Finances defines the funding for the programme, and this makes it harder to approve larger spending. The amount of the benefit was increased from 33 euros to 38 euros per month in 2019 to adjust for

inflation, while the set of rules determining the final benefit for each recipient did not see major changes in the past years. Another issue with the current scheme is the non-take-up rate. People associate the benefit with Roma people therefore they avoid applying for it, whilst some do that only because it is a precondition to receiving other social benefits.

EAPN Bulgaria strongly recommends the restructuring of the scheme and the use of reference budgets to determine the adequacy of the benefits. In addition to that, the network proposes to unlink active labour market policies from the provision of social assistance. The latter, instead, should be linked to well-being. EAPN Bulgaria also recommends the substitution of the regressive taxation system with a progressive one that would allow the gathering of financial resources for the GMI. Concerning social workers, the network suggests defining a mechanism to report the issues they encounter and to address them.

The advocacy strategy on MI includes addressing the Minister of Labor and Social Policy and the Minister of Finances as he oversees the funding for the GMI. If the former mildly supported them (e.g., during [the EMIN bus campaign](#)), the latter hardly considers the demands. There is a lack of political will until the new elections take place in April 2023.

EAPN Bulgaria joined several task forces and coalitions. They are members of the National Council for Social Inclusion and of the Working Group in the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy where the network actively provides their recommendations. EAPN Bulgaria also works in coalition with Trade Unions, particularly on the cost of living. Moreover, EAPN Bulgaria uses the media, such as television and the press, to spread its expertise and recommendations. The strategy is to speak whenever possible, even though there are no concrete results: Advocacy work requires time and persistence.

EAPN Ireland

The MIS in Ireland is composed of several benefits, some of them are means-tested, while others are not. The main payment is the *Jobseeker's Allowance*, which is means-tested. The support for a recipient amounts to €220 per week in 2022. There are additional supports in households for other qualifying adults or children. The Irish system also includes a social insurance-based *Jobseekers' Benefit* for those who become unemployed at the same level as Jobseekers Allowance (which is not means-tested), and the *Work Family Payment* for low-paid workers with children. There is a lower payment of Jobseekers payments of €129.70 in 2022 for those under 25 years of age unless they meet certain criteria.

The current scheme is not adequate, as the poverty line in Ireland is €301.91 per week in 2022. This needs to be addressed rapidly given the increasing cost of living. Reform is also needed to tackle the inadequate coverage of eligible beneficiaries (non-take-up rate) issue too. The latter is particularly high among the working poor because they can only apply for the Jobseekers' payments if they work less than three days per week regardless of the number of working hours per day.

Therefore, the main demand of EAPN Ireland is to improve the adequacy of the scheme by linking it to the poverty line and reference budgets. A key component of their advocacy work around minimum income is the **campaign to benchmarking social welfare to a level that is adequate to lift people above the poverty line and provide them with a Minimum Essential Standard of Living** (i.e., reference budgets). To strengthen their voice and spread their claim, they cooperated with other national organizations that demand to implement benchmarking.

The Government's Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025 includes a commitment to consider and

prepare a report for Government on the potential application of the benchmarking approach to other welfare payments. There was a Government call for submissions on benchmarking in 2022.

EAPN believes that **developing a campaign with a clear demand and simple messages and building alliances is essential to be effective.**

EAPN Portugal

In Portugal, the Guaranteed Minimum Income was established in 1996, after in 2003 it became the Social Integration Income and new conditionalities were introduced. Recipients of the scheme receive a cash benefit of 189.66 euros per month and must register with the Social Security Institute, which provides them with a social and professional integration contract. The amount of the benefit can vary according to the household size. The scheme has conditionalities for children, such as the enrolment to school to supplementary benefit, impacting disproportionately certain community such as Roma children who face additional barrier to education.

The current scheme is conceived primarily as an active inclusion measure rather than a poverty reduction one. The amount is far from adequate, and there are several conditionalities to determine eligibility. However, there is no big advancement in active inclusion due to a lack of human resources that work in the social security institute and provide social integration contracts. Bureaucracy is a major barrier to accessibility; it is one of the causes of the high non-take-up in Portugal which is around 30% according to unofficial sources. The latter is also influenced by the racist stigmatisation associated with MI benefits that is described to be disproportionately accessed by Roma people.

EAPN Portugal has long advocated for an adequate minimum income, adapting to the different territorial characteristics and needs. They also call for the

reduction of bureaucracy because it can improve accessibility and can ease the workload of civil servants. The Portuguese scheme lacks a follow-up mechanism; thus, it is difficult to assess the impact of the policy and signal criticalities. Finally, EAPN Portugal stresses that complementarity with other essential services, such as healthcare or housing, is missing in the current policy setting. It must be improved to guarantee the effective reintegration of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion. The monetary benefit is weak if not associated with improved and free access to services.

The advocacy work conducted by EAPN Portugal consists of several initiatives. First, they have produced policy analysis, such as position papers and reports which have been disseminated to all the relevant stakeholders (such as local administration and ministries) becoming a valuable source of information. Second, the network has built a dialogue with the Minister of Solidarity, as well as with some political parties. It's also part of the national forum dedicated to the fight against poverty which includes discussions on minimum income. The Portuguese network has the capacity to organize seminars and thematic events, attended by large audiences, including local authorities, students, and other CSOs. This way they keep the debate open and stimulate the development of new ideas to improve MIS. EAPN Portugal also organizes projects and campaigns whose primary aim is to raise awareness on minimum income, its potential and the policy gaps. The Network helped in its mission by the members, especially their Local Council of Citizens, their territory-based nucleus.

Concerning active inclusion, EAPN Portugal has started a project that aims at closing the gap between the labour market and the unemployed. They provide training and coaching to those looking for a job based on requests by companies. According to them, the key to the efficiency of MIS

is **flexibilization: flexibility of the unemployed combined with the integration in the labour market. This project is an example of the resourcefulness of civil society organisation**, reacting faster to shocks than administration such as the Social Security Institute. The project also shows the combination of a frontline work, responding to concrete need of beneficiaries, with a policy target to identify trends and barriers to access employed where solutions could potentially be replicating by administration and all relevant actors.

EAPN Spain

The national MI is called *Ingreso Mínimo Vital*, it was introduced just before the Covid-19 pandemic: although the government originally planned to have this MIS fully implement it in 3 the process had to be accelerated. Regional schemes already existed but they varied widely across the countries. Therefore, in the last two years, there have been improvements: for instance, frontline NGOs can become members of a national network and support the application of eligible however, funding remained unavailable for such actions.

The current MIS presents several limits: first, the cash benefit is not adequate, at 50% of the AROP threshold in 2020. Second, it is highly fragmented because the national measure is complementary to the regional benefits, thus an urgent need to harmonize MIS in all regions. Non-take-up is extremely high only 55% of eligible people are covered today by the scheme. The causes include the lack of transparency and disinformation. This concerns both the applicant and civil servants, who are often not informed of the procedure.

Besides asking for the improvement of adequacy, EAPN Spain, demands for the simplification of bureaucracy as well as the improvement of transparency. However, the main priority in Spain is the harmonization and coordination between the regional schemes and the national policy.

Advocacy is a strong pillar of EAPN Spain's activities. It relies on a strong relationship with the Ministry of Social Inclusion. There is a bilateral exchange of information between them: the former provides policy updates, while the latter reports on the implementation of the measure, and highlights gaps and limits of the schemes. EAPN Spain reports on the state of poverty in the country through the information coming from its regional networks. Analysis and reports are then disseminated to all the relevant stakeholders including national and local authorities. Finally, EAPN Spain has recently started a project to ascertain the causes of non-take up of minimum income.²⁴

The Spanish Presidency of the Council starts in July 2023. EAPN Spain is not losing momentum and has already building a relation of trust with the Ministry of Social Rights. They have an ongoing dialogue with them and will receive more information on the Presidency agenda during their General Assembly at the end of November 2022. EAPN Spain has also reached out to EAPN Belgium (since the Belgian Presidency will follow the Spanish one) to start preparing the advocacy strategy for next year.

²⁴ See EAPN Spain for more information on the 'Acceso Vital' project, <https://www.eapn.es/actualidad/1643/se-realizan-las-encuestas-telefonicas-post-test-del-proyecto-acceso-vital-hasta-finales-de-agosto>.

Annex

What is the Council of the EU? What is a Recommendation?

The Council of the European Union (also known as “the Council”) is one of the two legislative bodies of the European Union. It is made up of national ministers and its composition varies according to the topic of the meetings. The Council of the EU **expresses the views of national governments** rather than those of the citizens (which are represented in the European Parliament). The Treaty of Lisbon established that every MS presides over the Council for six months following a rotating scheme. Member States (MS) holding the Presidency are grouped into “trios”, they work in groups of three to define the long-term objectives and the common agenda for the next 18 months of their presidencies. **Each MS sets the priorities of its presidency** and chairs all the ministerial meetings that take place under the semester of its presidency. In 2023, the presidency will be held by Sweden first, followed by Spain (as part of the next trio with Belgium and Hungary). The Council adopts EU legislative acts together with the European Parliament, based on the Commission’s proposals. A recommendation is **a non-binding act by which the EU means to achieve certain ends without imposing a mandatory legal framework**. Recommendations may relate to both policies of the EU as well as individual MS. They usually contain suggestions and define standards for MS to harmonize their national policies. Moreover, they often create precedents for future binding legislation, as directives, regulation and treaties.

Since recommendations are not legally binding, they are what is called an instrument of soft law, which means that there is no legal consequence for MS if they do not implement them. Even though

they are weak legal instruments, they **have political weight**. The subjects of the recommendation (i.e., MS) are expected to urge to the suggested actions they agreed on. The reason for compliance should follow from the authority of the EU and its political significance. In other words, MS are inclined to implement recommendations because they adopted them together at the European level. Noncompliance can have a negative impact on the accountability of the national governments.

Annex: Policy Resources

In formulating your positions, you might find it useful to refer to the following policy resources from the European and international levels.

Council Recommendation on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market. (92/441/EEC)

This recommendation sets the basis of the EU minimum income framework. It asks MS *“to recognize the basic right of a person to sufficient resources and social assistance to live in a manner compatible with human dignity as part of a comprehensive and consistent drive to combat social exclusion, and to adapt their social protection systems, as necessary [...]”*

Commission’s Recommendation on Active inclusion of the people excluded from the labour market (2008/867/EC)

This recommendation is part of the EU minimum income framework. The Commission recommends MS *“Design and implement an integrated comprehensive strategy for the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market combining adequate income support, inclusive labour markets*

and access to quality services. Active inclusion policies should facilitate the integration into sustainable, quality employment of those who can work and provide resources which are sufficient to live in dignity, together with support for social participation, for those who cannot.”

European Parliament resolution on the role of MI in combating poverty and promoting an inclusive society in Europe (2010)

This [resolution](#) adopted by the European Parliament in 2010 recognizes the importance of MI in combating poverty. It considers MIS as a fundamental element of a strategic approach toward social integration. More importantly, the resolution claims for MI to be set at a level equivalent to at least 60% of the median income in the MS concerned.

European Parliament [resolution](#) on adequate minimum income ensuring active inclusion (2023)

This resolution reacts to the Council recommendations and reinforces the need for social protection for the most vulnerable. Additionally, this resolution includes, for the first time, a call for a directive on Minimum Income and recognises the limits of soft laws. This resolution can potentially create momentum, ahead of the European Elections in 2024.

European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan – Principle 14

The principle states that *“everyone lacking sufficient resources has the right to adequate minimum income benefits ensuring a life in dignity at all stages of life, and effective access to enabling goods and services. For those who can work, minimum income*

benefits should be combined with incentives to (re) integrate into the labour market.”

Article 34 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU

The [Charter of the Fundamental Rights of the EU](#) is the European bill of fundamental human rights, and it is composed of 50 articles. Article 34 concerns social security and social assistance.

“1. The Union recognizes and respects the entitlement to social security benefits and social services providing protection in cases such as maternity, illness, industrial accidents, dependency, or old age, and in the case of loss of employment, in accordance with the rules laid down by Union law and national laws and practices.

2. Everyone residing and moving legally within the European Union is entitled to social security benefits and social advantages in accordance with Union law and national laws and practices.

3. In order to combat social exclusion and poverty, the Union recognizes and respects the right to social and housing assistance so as to ensure a decent existence for all those who lack sufficient resources, in accordance with the rules laid down by Union law and national laws and practices.”

Sustainable and Development Goals (SDGs) **1, 8, 10**

There are also international references you can appeal to. For instance, the Sustainable and Development Goals (SDGs) set by the UN. Specifically:

- **SDG 1** is about ending poverty in all its forms and everywhere. Thus, it matches with the purpose of EAPN and should be achieved also through well-functioning MIS.
- **SDG 8** refers to the promotion of sustained, inclusive, and sustainable growth, full and productive employment, and decent employment for all. This goal recognizes the importance of providing quality jobs to prevent in-work poverty.
- **SDG 10** concerns the reduction of inequalities within and among countries. It may be helpful to invite MS to adopt the Council Recommendation on MI that aims at harmonizing MIS across the EU.

Official Labour Organisation Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202)

This [Recommendation](#) invites MS to establish social protection floors as fundamental elements of social security systems. It defines social protection floors as “nationally defined sets of basic social security guarantees which secure protection aimed at preventing or alleviating poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion.” It also states principles that should be respected by MS when implementing the recommendation. They include non-discrimination, the universality of protection, adequacy, and respect for the rights and dignities of people covered by social security guarantees.



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