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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Permanent Representatives Committee/Council

Subject: Social Package: Delivering on the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy and Pathways
for Effective Implementation
- Exchange of views

Delegations will find attached a Presidency steering note on the above subject, with a view to the exchange of views at the Council (EPSCO) on 29 June 2026.

Social Package: Delivering on the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy and Pathways for Effective Implementation

Social Package

On 6 May 2026, the European Commission presented the social package which includes a number of key actions, the Communication on the first-ever EU Anti-Poverty Strategy, a proposal for a Council Recommendation on fighting housing exclusion, a Communication on breaking the cycle of child poverty and strengthening the European Child Guarantee, and a Communication on enhancing the strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities up to 2030. Together, these initiatives seek to advance the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and accelerate progress towards the EU's headline social targets for 2030, and to help eradicate poverty by 2050.

Despite important efforts at European, national, regional and local levels, poverty and social exclusion remain major challenges across the European Union. Today, 1 in 5 Europeans and 1 in 4 children are at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE). In addition, almost 1 in 5 people aged 65 or over, was in 2025, at AROPE. Progress towards the EU 2030 target of reducing the number of people at AROPE by at least 15 million, including at least 5 million children, hasn't been progressing as planned. Since 2019, the EU has reduced its AROPE population by only 3.5 million, while child poverty has remained stable. The EU Anti-Poverty Strategy therefore calls for stronger, sustained and more coordinated efforts across all levels of governance to accelerate progress towards the EU2030 target and help eradicate poverty by 2050.

EU Anti-Poverty Strategy

The EU Anti-Poverty Strategy recognises that poverty is a comprehensive and multidimensional and often results from a combination of factors, including amongst others, insufficient income, weak labour market attachment, and inadequate access to key goods and quality services. In addition, the increasing cost of living is leading more people into precariousness, and some regions are particularly at risk, while many socio-economically vulnerable people are mostly exposed to poverty. Effective action therefore requires an integrated preventing and protective approach that not only alleviates poverty but also prevents its occurrence, supports people in sustainably exiting poverty and breaks the intergenerational cycle of poverty.

The Strategy proposes measures to tackle poverty specific to different age groups and the transition of poverty between these categories, acknowledging the high impact of poverty through the life cycle. Particular attention is given to ensuring that disadvantages experienced during childhood do not persist throughout the life course and are not transmitted from one generation to the next. Thus, addressing child poverty helps prevent poverty later in life and enhances intergeneration fairness. This requires early intervention, investments, improved access to adequate resources for parents, activation measures, quality jobs, quality services and opportunities for children in need, and, overall, policies that promote social mobility, and inclusion which prevent the accumulation of disadvantages during the life cycle.

The Strategy also highlights the importance of addressing the low levels of take-up of support. Across the European Union, many individuals and families who are entitled to benefits and services do not claim them, representing non-take-up that ranges between 20-50% across Member States. This is the result of inadequacy of clear information, complex administrative procedures, digital and language barriers, stigma and/or limited trust in institutions. As a consequence, vulnerable individuals may remain without support despite existing policy measures and available resources. Addressing non-take-up is a key anti-poverty measure in itself. Improving outreach, simplifying procedures, strengthening guidance and counselling services, enhancing integrated access to services, reducing administrative burden and ensuring accessible pathways to rights, can significantly enhance the effectiveness of social protection systems. By ensuring that people effectively access the support to which is provided and they are entitled to, governments can substantially strengthen the overall impact of anti-poverty policies and improve social inclusion outcomes.

Principles for effective anti-poverty policies

To support Member States in translating the Strategy's objective into effective national policy frameworks/strategies and actions, the Commission has published, alongside the Strategy, the Principles for effective anti-poverty policies, which aim to support national, regional and local authorities in planning, implementing and reviewing their anti-poverty frameworks. The Principles are structured around six dimensions: enabling conditions and governance, access to social rights and respect for fundamental rights, adequate and inclusive income protection, integration in the labour market of the working age population, access to affordable and quality services, and taking a person-centred and place-based approach. Member States, regions and municipalities can use the Principles at any stage of the policy cycle: to develop or update national anti-poverty frameworks, to benchmark existing strategies against EU objectives and the EU 2030 target, to design concrete reforms or as a reference framework when programming funds.

Multi - Level Coordination

Effective poverty reduction requires strong governance, political leadership, funding, monitoring and coordinated action across all levels of government. Since poverty cuts across employment, social protection, education, health, housing, energy and taxation, governments must ensure coherence between policies and promote integrated responses that address root causes. To this end, the Strategy encourages Member States to designate an Anti-Poverty Coordinator at the highest political level, with a clear mandate to support the implementation of the anti-poverty policy frameworks, ensuring cross-ministerial and multi-level coordination, and in mainstreaming anti-poverty objectives across economic, social and fiscal policies.

In addition, the Strategy emphasises the importance of meaningful participation by social partners, civil society organizations, the private sector, EU institutions and people with lived experience of poverty. Their involvement throughout the policy cycle contributes to more effective, inclusive and responsive policy design and implementation.

Against this background, Ministers are invited to exchange views on how the objectives of the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy can be translated into effective national reforms and investments, how governance arrangements and coordination mechanisms can be strengthened to improve policy delivery, and more specifically how to reach the most vulnerable and reduce non-take-up of social benefits and support.

Questions for discussion

Against this background, ministers are invited to reflect on the following questions:

1. *How can Member States best operationalise the lifecycle and comprehensive approach of the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy at national level and accelerate progress towards the EU 2030 target on poverty reduction?*

 2. *How does your Member State, promote the take-up of social benefits and services?*
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