



Reaction to the European Commission's Anti-Poverty Strategy

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The publication of the first-ever European Union Anti-Poverty Strategy is a milestone to be celebrated. It marks a moment to focus on those living in poverty and the challenges they face every day.

In the Anti-Poverty Strategy are many good and positive developments to be welcomed, including:

Firstly, the Strategy acknowledges poverty to be a multi-dimensional reality and that meeting the goal of helping to eradicate poverty in the EU by 2050 means emphasising prevention, access to services essential to people's well-being and integration in society. It states that combating poverty is a collective responsibility that demands co-ordinated efforts at EU, national, regional and local levels.

The Commission also pledges to increase the participation of people living in poverty, via structured dialogue, in the design, implementation and monitoring of public policies that affect their lives. Methodologies to guarantee the participation of people living in poverty already exist, such as the tool for the Inclusive and Deliberative Elaboration and Evaluation of Policies (IDEEP) developed by ATD Fourth World in collaboration with the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, and must be made full use of to make progress on this point.

Thirdly, the Strategy accepts that prejudice and stigma blight the lives of the most vulnerable and, consequently, the Fundamental Rights Agency will produce a legal analysis on the impact of poverty and socio-economic status on discrimination.

Furthermore, ensuring access to essential services, such as education and training, care and health services, is underlined as a key part of supporting those already experiencing poverty.

Lastly, the Commission calls on all Member States to appoint a national Anti-Poverty Co-ordinator at the highest political level and to put forward national anti-poverty strategies and joined-up actions to both combat and reduce poverty.

However, at the same time, the Strategy also has a number of elements that raise questions and concerns, including:

The Strategy states that living in dignity is a fundamental right to be respected and protected, and that poverty undermines social cohesion, weakens democracy and holds back Europe's economic potential. This is a missed opportunity to be more ambitious, to name poverty as a violation of human rights and prioritise social justice over purely financial considerations.

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The emphasis on framing employment as the primary pathway out of poverty is a simplistic response to the multi-dimensional reality of poverty and opens the door to reducing the argument to one of personal responsibility when systemic factors play such the largest role in trapping people in poverty.

A more measured response on employment would highlight the success of the *Territoire Zéro Chômeurs de Longue Durée* programme of local initiatives and pilot projects bringing new jobs and training to economically depressed areas with high rates of long-term unemployment as a model to learn from and expand upon.

Measures to bridge the European Child Guarantee and Youth Guarantee are long overdue, as is the pledge to intensify outreach to young people in need in areas with high unemployment rates but reducing the challenges faced by young people to employment and productivity fails to offer a genuinely holistic approach that could make genuine change possible.

ATD Fourth World has long campaigned for a revised and expanded definition of poverty to take into account the hidden dimensions of poverty in all of its complexity. The promise to improve EU monitoring of poverty is welcome but the announcement of new indicators to measure the impact of affordability components on poverty runs the risk of focusing once again on material aspects of poverty and ignoring the way it is experienced by people on a daily basis.

The focus on tackling the non-take up of benefits is the correct approach to improving the situations of the most disadvantaged groups. However, it is equally important to revise eligibility criteria and have policies ensure that all people in need are entitled to receive adequate support and can access it without difficulties.

Finally, implementation of the Strategy will require additional, dedicated EU funding. The ongoing Multiannual Financial Framework 2028-2034 negotiations, which appear set to reduce available resources for social investment and remove the 5% ESF+ earmarking on fighting child poverty, illustrate the need for clear budgetary commitments moving forward.

All in all, the release of the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy is an important step towards prioritising the fight against poverty at the top of the European political agenda and ATD Fourth World stands ready to engage with and support the Strategy in its efforts to fight poverty across the European Union.

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