



European Anti-Poverty Network Ireland

Press Statement - for immediate release

15th April 2019 Contact: Irene Byrne 087 7914782

European Anti-Poverty Network Ireland calls on Government to commit to bench marking social welfare rates to 'adequacy'.

EAPN Ireland has welcomed recent plans announced by the Government to bench mark social welfare rates however cautions that social welfare payments must be set at a rate that allows people to live with dignity.

EAPN Ireland has concerns that the proposal to Bench mark social welfare rates, under the Social Welfare, Pensions and Civil Registration Act 2018, will be futile unless the intention is to provide recipients with an adequate level of social welfare that will bring people above the poverty line and achieve a Minimum Essential Standard of Living.

EAPN Ireland Director Paul Ginnell stated: *"We are asking Minister Regina Doherty to recognise the need to bench mark social welfare rates at a point that ensures those who depend on it have an income that is above the poverty line and can obtain a Minimum Essential Standard of Living (MESL), a standard below which nobody should have to live."*

He went on to say: *"The MESL study, as conducted by the Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice, involves rigorous research that would provide the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection with a suitable method for benchmarking and enables welfare payments to operate as a tool that helps to lift people above the poverty line."*

EAPN Ireland rejects any notion that social welfare rates should be linked to the Consumer Price Index (CPI), and stresses that CPI has little relevance to the circumstances of those who engage with the welfare system.

Mr. Ginnell concluded: *"Unlike CPI, MESL research is rooted firmly around the actual cost of living for low income households, and therefore provides a real life reference point for the purposes of benchmarking welfare rates."*

EAPN Ireland welcomes the opportunity for further engagement Minister Regina Doherty and the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection on this issue.

Notes:

- EAPN Ireland is an Established in 1990, the **European Anti-Poverty Network, Ireland** is a network of groups and individuals working against poverty. It is the Irish national network of the **European Anti-Poverty Network** ([EAPN Europe](#)), which has two decades of experience in lobbying for progressive social change across Europe. EAPN Ireland is made up of over two hundred local, regional and national anti-poverty organisations and individuals.
- The poverty line in Ireland The **poverty line** is agreed as 60% of the median (middle) income. Anyone with an income which is less than 60% of the median (middle) income is referred to as being either relatively poor or 'at risk of poverty'
- Minimum Essential Standard of Living is a standard which nobody should be expected to live below and is decided by members of the public (See: [budgeting.ie/](#))
- The Consumer Price Index or CPI measures the overall change in the prices of goods and services that people typically buy over time.
(See:<https://www.cso.ie/en/interactivezone/statisticsexplained/consumerpriceindex/whatisthecpi/>)