



European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) Ireland  
European Parliament Elections Manifesto 2024:

# For a More Equal Europe Free From Poverty

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## INTRODUCTION

The European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) Ireland is a network of almost 160 local, regional and national anti-poverty organisations and individuals. It is the Irish national network of the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN), which links groups fighting for the eradication of poverty across Europe. The Mission of EAPN Ireland is to put the eradication of poverty at the top of the Irish and European policy agenda and empower groups working to end poverty to understand and influence policy-making.

This EAPN Ireland Manifesto puts forward our priorities for the European Parliament Elections on Friday 7 June, outlining a way forward to address its challenges and opportunities so that the EU can live up to its own values. EAPN Ireland is calling for candidates to commit to an ambitious social agenda, and to make the eradication of poverty a top EU policy priority.

## THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT'S ROLE IN CREATING A MORE EQUAL EUROPE FREE FROM POVERTY

### THE EUROPEAN UNION'S FUNDAMENTAL VALUES

*"The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail."*

*Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union.*

The EU's fundamental values are **respect for human dignity and human rights, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law**, as included in the EU Treaties which also include the 'Social Clause' and the Charter of Fundamental Rights. These values must provide the foundation to develop a stronger Social Europe, with better, more inclusive social standards and rights for everyone in Europe, through an integrated strategy to deliver on them.

The commitments in the European Pillar of Social Rights, and the target for reducing poverty and social exclusion, provide a minimum standard for an integrated approach for addressing poverty in Ireland and the EU. The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan contains a headline poverty and social inclusion target to reduce the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion by at least 15 million by 2030, including 5 million children.

## POVERTY IN THE EU

Despite these values and commitments, and the overall wealth of the European Union (EU), poverty, social exclusion and inequality remain very real problems in the EU, causing misery for many people across the region, curtailing their fundamental rights, limiting their opportunities to achieve their full potential, bringing high costs to society and the economy, and hampering a sustainable future for all.

The most recent figures (2022) show that 95.3 million people in the EU were at risk of poverty or social exclusion, the equivalent of over one in five people or 21.6% of the EU population. Women, young adults aged 18-24 years, people with a low level of educational attainment, unemployed persons, and people living in households with dependent children were more likely to be at risk of poverty or social exclusion than other groups in the EU. In addition, some groups and communities disproportionately affected by poverty and social exclusion are often not effectively captured in official data and statistics.

## THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

**It is important to remember that the European Parliament is the people's voice in the EU – the Members of Parliament (MEPs) are directly elected by and represent the citizens of the EU.**

The European Parliament is responsible for ensuring that the fundamental values of the EU are realised in its laws and policies, and has a crucial role in creating a more equal Europe free from poverty. The Parliament shares joint power with the Council of the EU, which represents the national governments, to adopt, amend and make EU law, to decide on the EU's budget, and oversees their implementation. It has the power of supervision over the EU's activities, including the work of the Commission and other EU bodies. It can approve or reject the nomination for European Commissioners and put written and oral questions to the Commission and the Council.

EU policy, good and bad, has an impact on all our lives and the Parliament has a crucial role to ensure all EU policy is consistent with improving the quality of life of everyone in the EU and moves us closer to ending poverty and inequality. The achievement of a vision for a more inclusive and just social Europe free of poverty can only be achieved if all EU policy supports its realisation.

## FOR A MORE EQUAL EUROPE FREE FROM POVERTY

We are calling for candidates to commit to an ambitious agenda that puts social rights and the eradication of poverty at the heart of all EU policy. This means a Europe where each of us has access to an adequate income, to affordable and quality essential services and to decent jobs. A Europe that puts social inclusion, equality and social rights at its heart and leaves no one behind.

**To achieve a more equal Europe free from poverty, candidates must commit to working...**

- For a More Equal Europe**
- For a Europe Free From Poverty**
- For a Europe That Leaves No One Behind**
- For a More Inclusive, Participative and Representative Europe**

## FOR A MORE EQUAL EUROPE

Candidates must commit to putting people and the creation of a more Social Europe at the heart of all EU policy. This means:

- Ensuring all EU laws and policies contribute to realising the fundamental values and rights of the EU, including ensuring economic, social and environmental policies are effectively balanced and mutually reinforcing to build a fairer, more inclusive and more sustainable economy and society.
- Developing policies to ensure the effective redistribution of wealth, including through progressive taxation, to reduce inequality and support social investment.
- Making sufficient funds and resources available through EU budget processes in order to deliver on these goals.
- Putting in place stronger governance, monitoring and reporting processes so all policies are consistent with these goals, and fully and effectively implemented, without any discrimination.

## FOR A EUROPE FREE FROM POVERTY

Candidates must commit to the development of a comprehensive, rights-based, person-centred, integrated EU Anti-Poverty Strategy that tackles poverty, social exclusion and inequality, for all groups, through the life course, based on and to address the multidimensional nature of poverty. This means:

- Introduce stronger legislation for social rights to ensure at least a floor of minimum standards are in place across the EU.
- Ensure access to an adequate income for all, including through introducing a Minimum Income framework directive for adequate, accessible and enabling welfare supports
- Ensure access to decent employment for all through quality standards for all jobs and an end to precarious working conditions.
- Ensure access to affordable high-quality, universal essential public goods and services for all including health and social care, education and training, childcare, housing, transport, energy, water and sanitation and internet.
- Ensure everyone can achieve their right to access the education and training needed for full participation, including life-long learning, literacy and numeracy and digital skills.

## FOR A EUROPE THAT LEAVES NO ONE BEHIND

To create a more Social Europe that is fair and inclusive mean ensuring no one is left behind. This require strengthening the focus on groups and communities most at risk of poverty and social exclusion, and supporting additional tailored strategies for key target groups, tackling discrimination, including socio-economic discrimination, and ensuring their inclusion in the Green and Digital Transitions.

- People living in areas of social disadvantage:** Ensure policies and funding are tailored to effectively address the underlying causes of the issues impacting on families and individuals living in disadvantaged areas or in precarious tenure experiencing cumulative disadvantage by being separated from satisfying employment, from an adequate income, from social networks and from decision making processes and structures.
- Refugees, Migrants and Asylum Seekers:** Ensure migration and asylum policy is based on respect for human rights, solidarity and equal treatment, including fair and effective asylum procedures,

adequate reception conditions, safe and legal pathways to protection, and well-designed integration initiatives. This must be supported by adequate funding and resourcing, and effective monitoring and accountability mechanisms.

- Disabled People:** Implement and strengthen the EU *Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. Ensure all policies and programmes are in full alignment with the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)*. Develop additional and targeted measures to address structural barriers to social inclusion, including ableism and discrimination, the poverty gap and the employment gap, and the additional cost of disability.
- Roma and Travellers:** Implement and build on the European Council *Recommendation on Roma equality, inclusion and participation*. Develop integrated, multidimensional, and coherent policy responses that address the barriers to social inclusion, tackle discrimination and inequality, ensure equal access to rights, resources and services.
- People experiencing homelessness and housing exclusion:** Build on the *European Platform on Combating Homelessness*, and adopt an EU Homelessness Strategy to deliver on the commitment to end homelessness by 2030. Enable the greater use of EU funds to address homelessness, develop social housing, and tackle housing affordability.
- Children:** Progress the implementation of and strengthen the *European Child Guarantee*, including through increased funding. Ensure that addressing child poverty and well-being are mainstreamed and at the heart of all relevant EU policy.

## FOR A MORE INCLUSIVE, PARTICIPATIVE & REPRESENTATIVE EUROPE

To effectively address the major challenges facing Europe, and to deliver the changes needed to bring about fair and inclusive societies, the EU must put people at the heart of political decision-making. The most effective decisions are made when those most impacted are involved, and the European Parliament must contribute to this by promoting more inclusive and participative democracy.

- Ensure and promote the full, effective and meaningful participation and empowerment of people, groups and communities experiencing and most at risk of poverty and social exclusion, and the organisations working with them, in policy design, implementation, monitoring and assessment, recognising they have direct knowledge and expertise regarding the impact on their daily lives and the gaps that need to be filled in policies for a decent and dignified life.
- Ensure the protection and promotion of civil society space and organisations, strengthen trade union rights, adequately resource civil society organisations to participate meaningfully in EU processes, and recognise civil society organisations as equal social partners in social dialogue.
- Specific support and resourcing should be given to facilitate the direct engagement of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion.



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

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