Joint statement: The coalition on the Anti-Poverty Strategy urges the European Commission to take a strong and decisive stance

article, socio-economic rights, non-discrimination

In May 2026, the European Commission is set to launch the first EU Anti-Poverty Strategy, a long-awaited milestone for the Union's social agenda. However, in the face of the EU's failure to consider poverty in newly adopted frameworks, the Coalition on the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy urges the Commission to ensure the strategy is ambitious, human-rights based, and backed by adequate funding.

The launch of the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy by the European Commission in May 2026 comes at a critical moment: in 2024, **at least 93.3 million people in the EU were at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2024, equivalent to 21% of the population**. When it comes to children, the figures are even starker: 19.5 million children were at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2024, amounting to 24.2% of all children in the EU, nearly one in four. In recent years, the drivers of poverty have grown increasingly complex, shaped by the impacts of an unsustainable economic model, unrelenting austerity measures, the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath, energy crises, racism and discrimination, ever-hardening migration policies, the digital transition, anti-rights mobilisation targeting vulnerable communities, and the climate crisis, without, so far, a comprehensive and ambitious policy response at the EU level.

In the last months, the European Commission has started to deliver on the social commitments made at the start of its mandate. However, the Coalition regrets that in several newly adopted frameworks, the European Commission **has consistently deferred responsibility for addressing poverty related issues** to the forthcoming EU Anti-Poverty Strategy, rather than **mainstreaming them across policies. This approach is evident in the Anti-Racism Strategy**, the **Gender Equality Strategy 2026-2030, the LGBTIQ+ Equality Strategy 2026-2030 and the Intergenerational Fairness Strategy.** While the Coalition welcomes the adoption of the Affordable Housing Plan and the inclusion of key provisions to address homelessness and homeless people as a priority group, the coalition regrets the lack of broader poverty mainstreaming within the document. Similarly, the **Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2028-2034** raises serious concerns, as it weakens current resources available for social inclusion and poverty eradication, and largely overlooks marginalised groups, either by omitting them from key proposals such as the European Social Fund, or by overfocusing on defence, security and competitiveness.

Against this backdrop, the Coalition on the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy reiterates its call: The European Commission needs to deliver a **strong and comprehensive human rights-based EU Anti-Poverty Strategy** working towards prevention and eradication of poverty. It must tackle the structural and systemic root causes of poverty, recognise its intersectional and systemic nature, address all people affected, including non-EU citizens, and deliver immediate, clear, and adequately funded actions that **simultaneously** provide direct relief and fortify welfare systems for the long term.

Furthermore, it should be made coherent and mutually reinforcing with other EU policy frameworks and instruments, including the European Semester, the renewed European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) Action Plan, the Union of Equality and its composing strategies, the European Child Guarantee, as well as other economic, digital, climate, fiscal, migration and state aid and public procurement policies – supported by the **definition of**

robust indicators to ensure its seamless integration into future monitoring and evaluation exercises.

In the same way, **meaningful participation** of people experiencing poverty as a non-homogeneous group, civil society organisations and trade unions is crucial at all stages of the process. In particular, the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy must be grounded in **clear, ambitious targets and indicators co-designed** with the involvement of persons experiencing poverty through the creation of a Committee of People Experiencing Poverty (PeP Committee). Such a Committee must be representative of the different forms of poverty, including the most extreme ones, for instance homelessness.

As the fight against poverty cannot happen at the EU-level alone, the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy must also inform and nurture **national and local Anti-Poverty Strategies** to guarantee results. It must explicitly recognise local actors, including local authorities, non-profit social service providers and NGOs, as the key engines of poverty eradication, ensuring they have the resources, autonomy, and technical support to implement localised, context-sensitive solutions. In synergy with the European Child Guarantee, the Strategy must bridge the "capacity gap," ensuring that even the smallest or most under-resourced local authorities are not left behind, but are instead empowered through targeted investment in administrative capacity to access and scale proven best practices.

Without an ambitious EU Anti-Poverty Strategy backed by adequate EU funds, commitments made by the European Commission at the beginning of its mandate risk remaining narrow in scope and representing only a limited toolbox. With the launch of the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy approaching, the Coalition recalls the following: **the fight against poverty cannot be confined to a single strategy or framework.**

What people experiencing poverty across the EU urgently need is not only political commitment, but both a strong Anti-Poverty Strategy and **concrete action to ensure they are not left behind in other policy frameworks**.

Statement endorsed by the following members of the Coalition on the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy:

- AGE Platform Europe
- ATD Fourth World
- Caritas Europa
- COFACE Families Europe
- EAPN (European Anti-Poverty Network)
- ESWA
- Eurochild
- Eurodiaconia
- European Roma Grassroots Organisations (ERGO) Network
- FEANTSA
- IGLYO – The International LGBTQI Youth & Student Organisation
- ILGA Europe
- Save the Children
- SMES Europa
- TGEU – Trans Europe and Central Asia

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