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Social Investment Package: taking stock of achievements one year on

A series of steps have been taken by the European Commission and EU Member States in the 12 months following the Commission's adoption of a comprehensive strategy for structural reforms in social policy to help Member States better protect and invest in people: the [Social Investment Package](#) (SIP) (see [IP/13/125](#), [MEMO/13/117](#), [MEMO/13/118](#)). The SIP gives guidance to Member States on adopting more efficient and effective social policies in response to the significant challenges they currently face. These include high levels of financial distress, growing inequality, increasing poverty and social exclusion, and record unemployment, especially among young people. These are combined with the challenge of ageing societies and smaller working age populations, which test the sustainability and adequacy of national social systems. The SIP has offered Member States extensive guidance on investing in children, active inclusion, health and long term care, homelessness and social policy innovation.

EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, László Andor, said: "*The situation is challenging: since 2008 there have been 7 million more people living in poverty or social exclusion, which is a total of 125 million more people at risk of destitution today, with a lot of divergence amongst and inequalities within EU countries. However we have shown that investing in people and social cohesion pays off and avoid much higher costs at a later stage. Progress has been made in modernising welfare states throughout Europe. The Commission continues to work with Member States to support the structural social reforms necessary and developments will be monitored through the European Semester exercise.*"

Achievements in the past year

The Commission has worked together with Member States on a methodology to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of social policies. The concept is introduced in detail in the report on [Employment and Social Developments in Europe 2013](#), published on 21 January 2014 (see [IP/14/43](#)). The methodology can spot key social challenges in the European Semester, the EU's yearly cycle for coordinating economic, employment and social policies.

The Commission has also started work on so-called "reference budgets", that help Member States to design efficient and adequate minimum income support. It has also delivered on its commitment to propose new rules to make bank accounts cheaper, more transparent and accessible to all ([IP/13/415](#))

To step up investment in children, the Commission has created a [European Platform for Investing in Children](#) which collects and disseminates evidence-based innovative good practices in such areas as early childhood education and care or parenting support. It is also organising capacity-building seminars in particular in Member States which have received Country Specific Recommendations on fighting child poverty.

New [rules setting out an EU Social Entrepreneurship Fund](#) were adopted ([MEMO/13/209](#)), and the Commission organised a high-level [conference to disseminate good practise in supporting social entrepreneurship](#) ([IP/14/20](#), [MEMO/14/11](#)).

Additionally, from 2014 onwards, the [Employment and Innovation \(EaSI\) programme](#) brings together three EU programmes managed separately between 2007 and 2013: [PROGRESS](#), [EURES](#) and [Progress Microfinance](#). Its objectives are amongst others to support development of adequate social protection systems, and increase access to financial means to social entrepreneurs ([IP/13/1212](#)).

The new programming period of the [European Social Fund](#) has allocated at least 20% in each Member State to be used for social inclusion and this will help to support social investment in line with the priorities set through [Country Specific Recommendations](#). Furthermore, the [European Fund for Aid to the Most Deprived](#) will, in the same time period, provide material assistance in the form of food or basic consumer goods or social inclusion measures to the most deprived and children.

Building upon the European Year 2012 on active ageing, the Commission has also published the [Guiding principles for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations](#) and the [Active Ageing index](#).

The Commission is also working in partnership with stakeholders, policy-makers and the civil society in the framework of the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion. The [3rd Annual Convention of the Platform](#) debated how the Social Investment Package is implemented at country level and fostered shared ownership and commitment for action. In addition, the Commission signed 14 partnership agreements with organisations active in the field of social inclusion and social investment. Furthermore, the [European Code of Conduct on Partnership](#) allows national Stakeholders to be better involved in forthcoming programmes co-funded by the EU funds which address social investment issues ([IP/14/05](#)).

All measures undertaken and planned are published in [a roadmap available on the Commission website](#).

Member State response

In line with the SIP, Member States have already taken steps to modernise their welfare systems by adopting integrated strategies to fight poverty and social exclusion and structural reforms. Some Member States have adopted a social investment approach by refocusing spending on children in a targeted and efficient way in order to break the intergenerational transmission of poverty. For example, on 10 June 2013 Belgium presented a national child poverty action plan which explicitly refers to the Commission Recommendation '[Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage](#)' and contains 140 concrete actions aimed at improving access to adequate resources and affordable quality services. Germany, France, Hungary, Latvia, Poland and the UK also took initiatives to extend child enrolment in early childhood education and care as part of their strategies to improve opportunities for children.

Many Member States also took measures for reducing poverty and supporting inclusion in the labour market, such as:

- Belgium, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Spain and Poland focussed on an active inclusion approach and adopted national strategies which combine initiatives on income support, access to services and active labour market measures.
- Cyprus, Ireland, Croatia, Poland and Sweden increased resources allocated to active labour market policy measures for 2013
- Bulgaria, Hungary; The Netherlands and Portugal adopted measures to improve the labour market situation of unemployed and disadvantaged people.
- Hungary, Estonia, Belgium, the UK and Spain took steps towards administrative simplification.
- Spain, The Netherlands, UK, Hungary, Slovakia, Latvia adopted measures to tackle homelessness and improve access to housing.

Background

The Commission's [Social Investment Package \(SIP\)](#) was adopted in February 2013. It:

- seeks to strengthen people's current and future capacities, and improve their opportunities to participate in society and the labour market;
- focuses on integrated packages of benefits and services that help people throughout their lives and achieve lasting positive social outcomes;
- stresses prevention rather than cure, by reducing the need for benefits. That way, when people do need support, society can afford to help;
- calls for [investing in children](#) and young people to increase their opportunities in life.

Who benefits?

- Children and young people – early support to break the inter-generational transmission of disadvantage and address the severe [youth unemployment](#) problem
- Jobseekers – integrated and more accessible support for finding work, such as [skills development](#)
- Women – more equal opportunities, better access to the labour market and thus better social protection, notably in retirement
- [Older people](#) – more opportunities for active participation in society and the economy
- Disabled people – support for independent living and adapted workplaces
- [Homeless people](#) – help with reintegration into society and work
- Employers – a larger, healthier and more skilled workforce
- Our societies – higher productivity, higher employment, better health and social inclusion, more prosperity and a better life for all.

For more information

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