

## **EASPD Briefing Paper**

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# **Analysis of the European Parliament position on the first ever Anti-Poverty Strategy**

## **2026 Report**



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## Introduction

In 2024, [93.3 million people](#) in the European Union (EU) (21% of the total population) were still at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE). Among them, [one in four were children](#) (20 million). To fight back, the EU has set ambitious targets. Under the 2021 [European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan](#), it committed to reducing the number of AROPE people by at least 15 million by 2030, including at least 5 million children.

Recent crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, sharply rising living costs, the challenges of the digital and green transitions, and the shift in priorities towards economic competitiveness and geopolitics have further complicated the fight against poverty. EU's response includes initiatives like the EU Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) to address the consequences of the pandemic, the European Child Guarantee to ensure access to essential services for children in need, and the Social Climate Fund to support vulnerable households in the green transition.

The [2025 Annual Report of the Social Protection Committee](#) reports a general improvement in 2024 in the social situation in the EU, but a reduction of just over 1 million in the number of people AROPE and of 0.5 million for children, meaning limited progress towards the 2030 poverty reduction target. Poverty remains widespread across the continent, with significant regional disparities. Countries like Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, and Spain reported the highest rates of people at risk, [exceeding 25%](#), while others like Austria, the Netherlands, Slovenia, and Czechia had rates below 16%.

Civil society organisations and the European Parliament have long called for a more comprehensive, adequately funded, and inclusive approach to address the root causes of poverty, with the second asking for an [overarching EU Anti-Poverty Strategy](#) since 2021.

The European Commission responded to this call by announcing its first-ever EU Anti-Poverty Strategy, included in the [2024-2029 European Commission's political guidelines](#) and foreseen for 2026 (around May-June). It will seek to address the root causes of poverty, provide essential protection to those most in need, and ensure social inclusion across the Union and ultimately eradicate poverty by 2050.

The **Committee on Employment and Social Affairs** (EMPL) of the European Parliament was tasked to draft an **own-initiative report** (INI report) stating the position and political priorities of the European Parliament on the development of the Strategy.

The European Parliament adopted the [Report on the Anti-Poverty Strategy](#) on 12 February. Its position is groundbreaking and **echoes many of the key points of EASPD positions**. This sends a strong political signal to the European Commission, urging it to deliver a strategy that leaves no one behind and addresses the complex drivers of poverty.

## EASPD's role

The European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD) is the leading voice of disability services across Europe. Representing over 20,000 services in 50 different countries, we promote human rights and equal opportunities for people with disabilities through effective and high-quality support.

Our work focusses on key areas essential to quality support provision. This includes Inclusive Living, Employment, Education, Early Childhood Intervention, Person-Centred Technology, Workforce Development and Human Resources, Arts, Culture & Sport, and Policy Impact.

To take part in this process and make the voice of disability support services heard, EASPD drafted a [Position Paper](#) which calls for equal access to high-quality, accessible, and affordable social services, as a key pillar within the Anti-Poverty Strategy as well as joining several coalition advocacy efforts, including of the [EU Alliance on Investing in Children](#). EASPD's recent [contribution](#) to the second phase of the Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities reinforces and complements our position.

## Key findings: Key pillars for a comprehensive Anti-poverty strategy

The report recognises poverty not just as an economic problem, but as a complex, multidimensional, intersectional, intergenerational, and systemic violation of human rights. It explicitly states that poverty is both, a cause and a consequence of discrimination, which **disproportionately affects vulnerable groups** such as people with disabilities, children in institutional care, people facing chronic illness or addiction, women and girls, LGBTQIA+ + individuals, older and younger people, Roma and travellers, single parents, informal carers, single parents, people from racial or ethnic minorities.

The European Parliament points out that poverty intersects with gender-based violence, digital exclusion, housing insecurity, and with the **lack of access to public services**, notably education and healthcare, **and other essential services**. While "everyone in the EU has the right to access essential services of a high quality accompanied by support measures for those in need", the report acknowledges that obstacles do prevent vulnerable groups from accessing these services.

## 1. Access to high-quality and community-based essential services

The European Parliament calls the European Commission and Member States to increase public investment to support "**universal access to high-quality public services, and goods and services of general economic and social interest**". But it also acknowledges the challenges: service fragmentation, rising demand, and insufficient funding, exacerbated by demographic ageing. It also recognises the high number of people still living in institutions in the EU, at least 1.4 million people, a figure likely underestimated due to poor data, as mentioned in the report.

The report demands to accelerate deinstitutionalisation, with a focus on community-based care and family support, aligning with the EU's long-standing commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

## 2. Housing as an element of deinstitutionalisation

The European Parliament urges the Commission to ensure the European Affordable Housing Plan meets the needs of all, especially those in poverty, children, and marginalised communities. It specifically supports:

- **Housing First** programmes to prevent homelessness.
- Affordable housing as a **tool for deinstitutionalisation** (DI), preventing family separation due to housing insecurity<sup>1</sup>.

This call aligns with the [EASPD recommendations in our Position Paper on Housing](#) about improving accessibility standards and including housing policies as a part of DI policies.

## 3. Family-centred early childhood intervention (ECI) to break the cycle of poverty

The European Parliament's report recognises that "the first years of children's lives are crucial to their physical, mental, cognitive, social and emotional development, and to their lifelong fulfilment" and that "insufficient prevention and family support services undermine families' ability to care for their children in community settings."

The report backs [EASPD's Position Paper](#) by calling for family-centred ECI to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty. This includes universal access to affordable, high-quality healthcare, prenatal to paediatric; targeted early childhood intervention services to promote the development, well-being and social inclusion of children; and integration of health, education, and social services to support children and families.

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<sup>1</sup> This is a key point of the EASPD position on housing <https://easpd.eu/publications-detail/housing-as-a-path-to-inclusion-and-independent-living/>.

#### 4. Education: inclusion, not segregation

The report highlights that segregation in education, particularly for children with disabilities but also Roma children, fuels social exclusion. It calls for concrete actions, including leveraging the potential of technologies, in line with [EASPD's position](#) on the second phase of the Disability Rights Strategy. Measures include accessible physical infrastructure, inclusive curricula, investment in **assistive technologies** and AI for personalised learning, and training for teachers on inclusive pedagogies.

Quality early childhood education and care services have a central role to break the cycle of poverty early by supporting the healthy development of children and ensuring equal educational opportunities.

#### 5. The Child Guarantee as an essential element to fight child poverty

The resolution positions the [European Child Guarantee](#), which aims to ensure every child in need has access to healthcare, education, housing, and nutrition, as a central element of the anti-poverty strategy. Its key ask aligns with EASPD and the [EU Alliance for Investing in Children's call](#) for a bold, integrated, and adequately funded approach to eradicate child poverty. This includes the following:

- To allocate around **20 billion euros** to the Child Guarantee.
- Member States to allocate **at least 5 % of ESF+ funds** to specific projects and structural investments combating child poverty, with at least 10 % earmarked for the Members with child poverty and social exclusion levels exceeding the EU average.
- Quality childcare to support parental employment, especially for women.
- Prevention of family separation, institutionalisation to be the last resort.
- Foster care systems to ease transition from institutions to family-based care.
- Monitoring mechanisms to identify poverty-related family separation.
- Develop integrated support and coordination mechanisms based on **partnerships between educational, healthcare and social services**.

#### 6. Mental health and wellbeing

The European Parliament stresses that poverty and mental health are mutually reinforcing. It urges Member States to take actions, notably, for young people by strengthening mental health and psychosocial support services, ensuring adequate training for professionals, and integrating mental health in poverty reduction policies. All of these recommendations align with [EASPD Position on Guaranteeing Choice and Control: Transforming Mental Health and Psychosocial Disability Support](#).

## 7. Employment: Decent work, fair wages, and inclusion

The report calls on the implementation of the “[Quality Jobs Roadmap](#)”, recently developed by the Commission, to ensure a just transition for all workers, including informal workers. It recognises **social economy as a driver of inclusion**, providing jobs for marginalised groups and many of its key demands align with the EASPD recent [Position Paper on the Quality Jobs Roadmap](#).

These include equal pay for equal work; closing the gender and disability pay gaps, **lifelong learning**, upskilling, reskilling, and recognition of informal skills; strengthened public employment services with **personalised support** for long-term unemployed and low-skilled individuals; and strengthen public employment services, training pathways and job-search support systems for people with disabilities.

## 8. Valuing and recognising formal and informal care and support

The report also stresses that unpaid care work, disproportionately done by women, undermines economic security. The report calls for **stronger public care systems**, for children, older people, and people with disabilities, support for informal carers, including financial aid and respite services, and decent working conditions for professional care workers.

This aligns closely with EASPD’s stance in the recent [Turin Declaration](#) (2025) urging the EU and national authorities to recognise and elevate the status of informal carers, ensuring they receive a fair recognition, and adequate support, as well as to uphold the working conditions and status of formal carers.

## 9. Breaking the digital divide

The report recognised **digital exclusion prevails among vulnerable groups**: older people, low-income households, and people with disabilities. The European Parliament urges the Commission and Member States to ensure access to digital infrastructure and connectivity; provide basic digital skills training; and develop **inclusive digital tools**, including assistive technologies and AI, to support learning and participation.

The European Parliament also recognises the increasing use of algorithms and AI systems in essential public services and the risks of further discrimination against people experiencing poverty. It aligns with the EASPD [position](#) on unlocking the potential of AI for social services, by calling on the Commission to ensure ethical AI systems and that all regulations on AI integrate the **horizontal principle of non-discrimination**.

## 10. Participation: “Nothing about us without us”

The European Parliament insists on **meaningful participation of people with lived experience** of poverty in policy design and monitoring. It proposes an annual conference with diverse stakeholders, including people in poverty, and the recognition of **NGOs, social enterprises, and advocacy groups as essential partners** of civil society organisations.

## 11. Governance: Adequate funding and coordination

Without a strong and adequate budget, the fight against poverty will be worthless. The European Parliament's position sides the civil society and EU Funds For Social Coalition, coordinated by EASPD, together asking for the [next EU budget \(Multi Annual Financial Framework\) to deliver a fairer](#) and more inclusive Europe through adequate funding. The European Parliament calls for:

- Adequate, **sustained funding** through the Multiannual Financial Framework and national budgets.
- An **ESF+ budget** supporting social inclusion and anti-poverty measures.
- **Intersectional, multi-level governance**, coordination between EU, national, and local levels.
- Integration with other EU instruments, notably the European Child Guarantee, Social Climate Fund, and the upcoming EU Housing Strategy.

## Relevance to EASPD Members and Conclusion

The European Parliament's resolution is a strong call for robust and systemic solutions to the European Commission and the EU Member States. It represents a landmark validation of EASPD long-standing commitments, request and recommendations. It emphasises on essential services, the social economy, and services of general interest as key drivers and partners in combating poverty and promoting inclusion directly aligning with daily support that our members provide.

It recognises what we have consistently championed: that high-quality, accessible, and person-centred services are not just supportive measures but fundamental pillars of social inclusion and poverty reduction for people in vulnerable situations, in EASPD's case, people with disabilities.

This position strengthens our call for **sustainable funding, robust public-private partnerships**, and the **active involvement of service providers** in shaping policies that leaves no one behind. By placing social inclusion, dignity, and equal opportunities at the heart of the EU's Anti-Poverty efforts, the report reinforces our mission to ensure that people with disabilities and their families can be supported and be part of the society.

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