

European Public Health Alliance Seminar

European Parliament – 4th December 2012

*Where are children in the EU's
poverty reduction target and social
inclusion strategies?*

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Policy Context 1: significant progress since 2001

- **2001:** not on agenda but became very important part of Social OMC
 - **Key elements**
 - indicators and data; research reports; conferences; peer reviews
 - NAPs/inclusion; Council conclusions
 - development of strong network
 - NGOs (e.g. Eurochild, EAPN, Caritas, Coface, ATD, EPHA, Eurocities), UNICEF, OECD, Foundations (e.g. KBF), academics, some MS & officials
 - **Key learning**
 - multi-dimensionality, integrated responses, participation, early intervention, social investment
 - **Some highlights**
 - 2007 a special thematic year on child poverty and well-being
 - 2008 SPC report (*Child poverty and well-being: Current status and way forward*)
 - 2008-2010 19/27 MS prioritised in NSRSP&SI
 - 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty & Social Exclusion: key theme
 - 2010 - 2011 EU Trio of Presidencies (Spanish, Belgian, Hungary)
 - conference and reports: Joint political statement
- **2011:** European Commission commitment to a Recommendation

Policy Context 2: Lisbon Treaty and Children’s Rights

- Lisbon Treaty (into force since 1 Dec 2009)
 - The *horizontal social clause* now provides the legal basis for mainstreaming SP&SI objectives across “**Union**” policies
NB: “Union” in Treaty refers to EU as a whole AND individual MSs
 - Protection of children’s rights now part of EU’s objectives for EU’s internal and external policies
 - EU Charter of Fundamental Rights now part of the EU Treaty
- More on children’s rights: Adoption in 2011 of EU Agenda for the Rights of the Child

Policy Context 3: Europe 2020 Strategy

- 20 million social inclusion **target**
- **National Reform Programmes** (NRPs) expected to cover in a **balanced way** national programmes for “smart, sustainable and **inclusive** growth”
- *Flagship: European Platform Against Poverty and Social Exclusion* expected to address child P-SE as one of its key issues (1st Annual Convention)
- *Reinvigorated Social OMC*, incl. **National Social Reports** (NSRs) which are expected to complement the social pillar of NRPs.

Policy Context 4: Recent developments

Positive

- Progress towards **Recommendation**
 - Strong support: various EU bodies (EP, EESC, CoR), key stakeholders (NGO networks, UNICEF)
 - *SPC advisory report to the EC on tackling and preventing child poverty, promoting child well-being* (June 2012) ➔ ambitious Council Conclusions of 4 October 2012
 - Cypriot EU Presidency conference
- Work on indicators and especially **deprivation** and **well-being**
- **National Roma Integration Strategies**
- Recommendation to be “mainstreamed” as part of **EU Social Investment package** (?)
- **Ireland’s EU Presidency** in 2013 (?)
 - rights of child in constitution; child poverty target

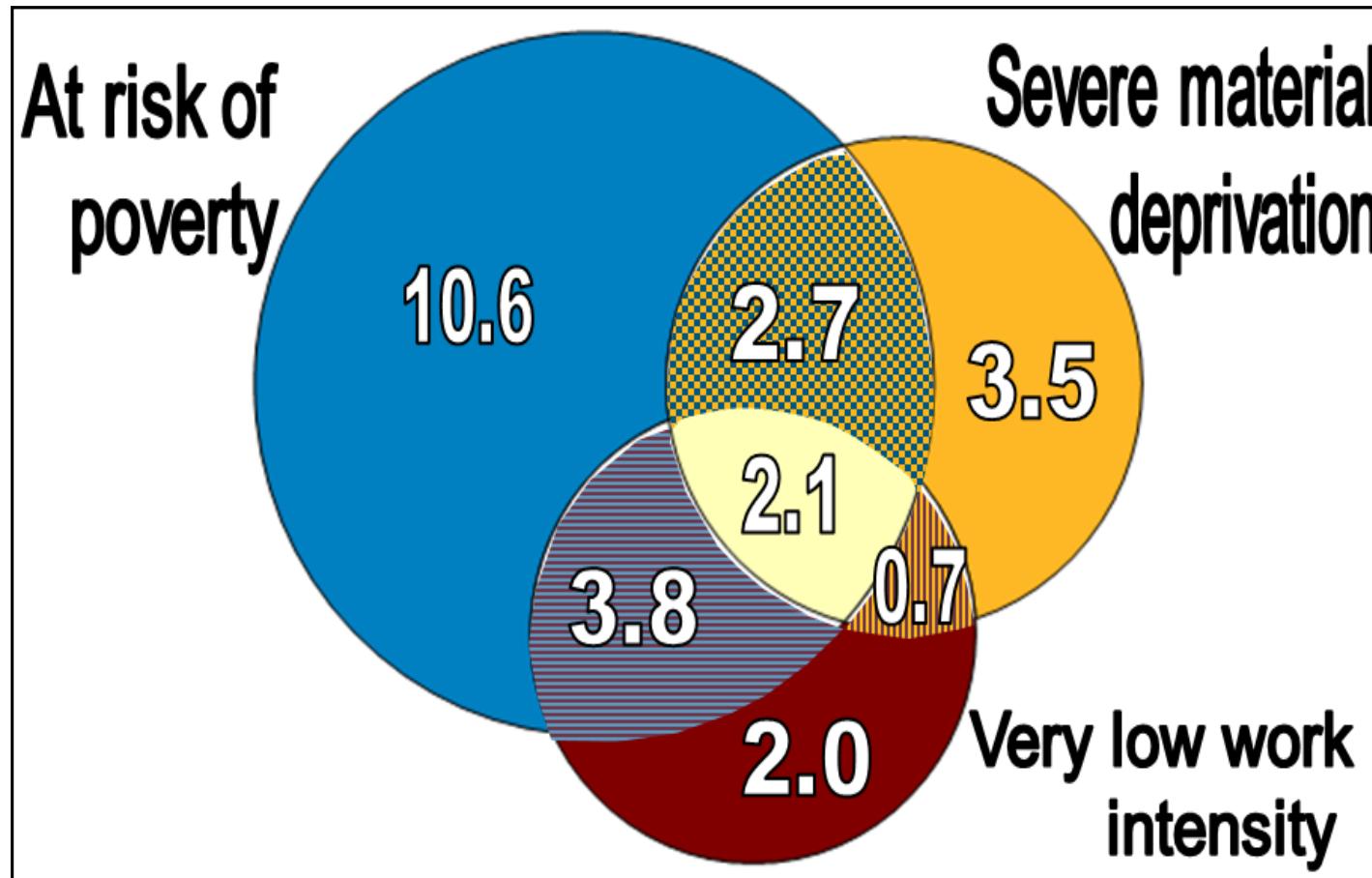
Negative

- 2011 & 2012 **NRPs** - very weak inclusion pillar and very few focus on children
- 2012 **NSRs** mainly very weak or non existent & limited interest in strengthening
- Lack of EU (or most MS) child poverty and well-being (sub-) **target**
- Still tendency to take too **narrow approach**: employment & educational disadvantage
- Impact of **austerity** hitting families and children

Need for Child Poverty Target

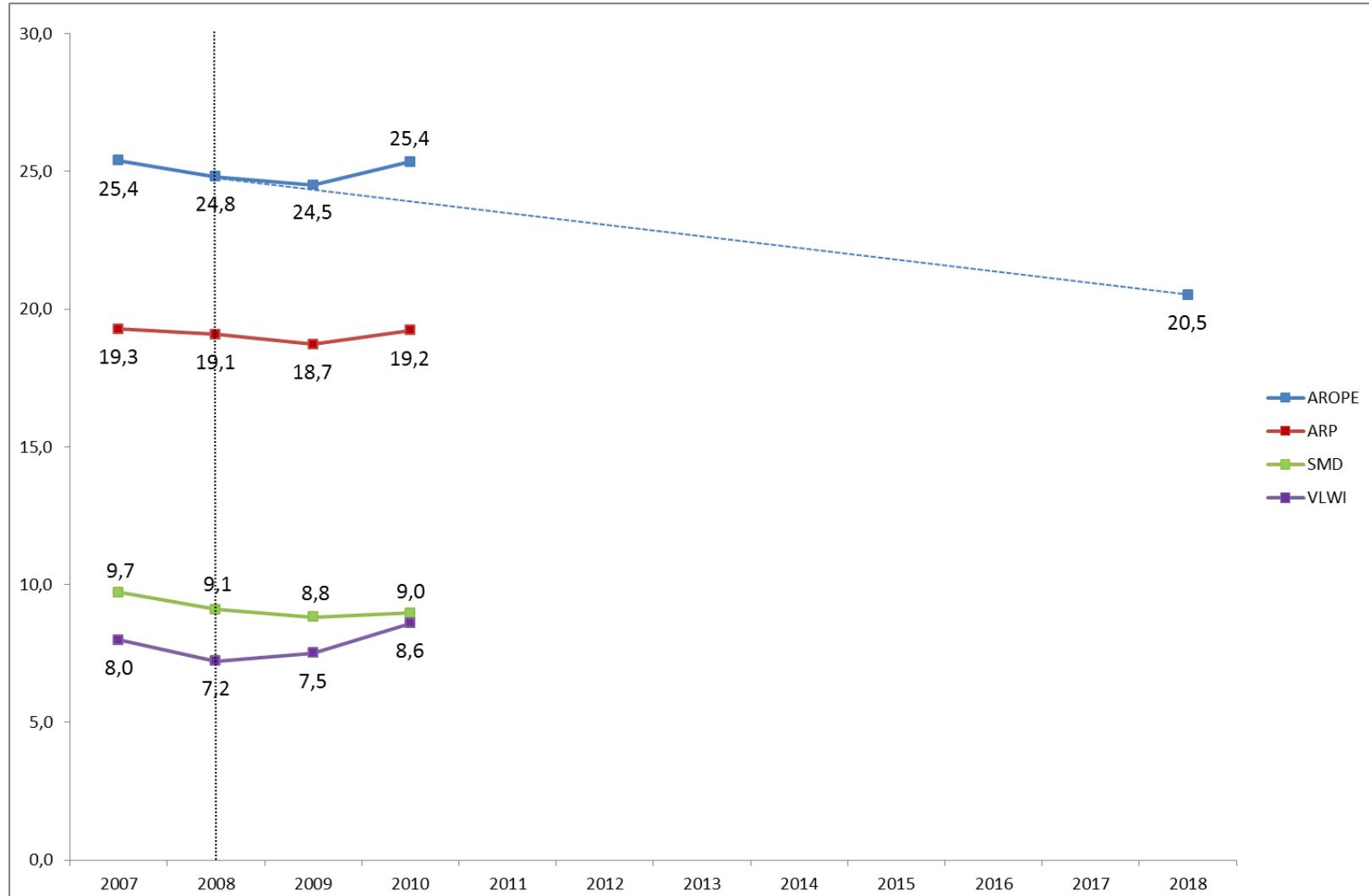
- 2010: 25.4 million children (0-17) are **AROPE** - i.e., according to the Europe 2020 Strategy definition they live in a household...
 - whose income is below the income poverty threshold; and/or
 - who is severely materially deprived; and/or
 - who is jobless or with a very low work intensity
- Compared with 2009: **+ 0.9 million**
- Wide variation across countries (from 14-15% to >40%)... but in **22** out of 27 MSs, children **more at risk** than adults:
 - EU-27 average: 27% children AROPE vs. 23.4% for total population, i.e. almost 4pp higher
 - 5 exceptions: SE (~ equal risk). DK, SI, FI, CY (lower risk for children)

Distribution of children AROPE by type of risk, Millions, EU-27, 2010



- When EU leaders launched the Europe 2020 Strategy (June 2010), they agreed an EU SI target to be reached by 2020, namely:
reduce by 20 million the No. people AROPE in EU, i.e. from 115.2 million (2008 data) to 95.2 million (2018 data) → minus 17.4%
- Currently: **no specific EU target** for reduction of No. of children AROPE. So: let's assume that countries would only be expected to ensure that this No. also decreases by 17.4%
→ By 2020, the No. of AROPE children should decrease by 4.3 million (from 24.8 [2008 data] to 20.5 million [2018 data])
- Of course: such a reduction would be insufficient because children are largely overrepresented in the AROPE group and it is urgent to invest more in them. But trend required for this strictly proportional effort clearly shows that there is a long way to go (see next slide)

Evolution of No. of children AROPE (blue) + No. of children below the poverty risk line (red), severely materially deprived (green) and in very low WI households (purple), Millions, EU-27, 2007-2010/8



Importance of linking child poverty and child well-being

- Better ensures a focus on **prevention** as well as alleviation of Child P-SE, which is required for achieving LT progress
- Puts children's **rights** at the centre of policy-making
 - ➔ in a child WB approach, the first priority of policies is to meet the needs of children here and now and to invest in children's future *well-becoming*
- Ensures a **holistic** approach, focusing not only on income but also on education, health, housing, environment, recreation, sport, culture... (3 pillar approach)
- Emphasises children's **development** and thus children's **participation** and **empowerment**

Importance of a rights' based approach

- key to the **prevention of child poverty**
 - if rights are respected & enabled then they are unlikely to live in poverty
- puts the needs of the **child at the centre of policy-making**
 - becomes a core political obligation not just a possible policy choice
- puts the focus on addressing the **specific needs of the child** here and now
 - not just on improving the position of their families and the communities in which they live
- UNCRC provides useful framework for a **comprehensive strategy** to prevent and reduce child poverty and promote well-being
- links the well-being of children with the well-being of **parents and families**
 - UNCRC recognises that the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding
- puts focus on the importance of /enforcing strong **anti-discrimination** legislation
- emphasises the **right of the children to be heard** and to participate in decisions

Immediate Priorities

- Ensure Recommendation focuses on **child well-being**
- Emphasise investment in children must be at centre of **Social Investment Package**
 - make link to demographic deficit as well as to rights
- Agree a **sub-target** for children AROPE (+more MS)
- Adopt an **implementation and monitoring plan**
 - SPC working group
 - cross DG group (EMPL, EAC, SANCO, JAI, REGIO etc.)
 - build into EPASE
- Improve timeliness of **data & indicators** and increase benchmarking & clustering
- Make CP&WB priority for next **EU Presidency trio**
- Mainstream in **2013 governance cycle**: AGS, NRP, NSRs and CSRs
- Ensure a priority in next **EU Structural Funds**
 - EU Multi-annual Financial Framework (2014-2020): 20% of European Social Fund (ESF) resources to tackle poverty and social exclusion
 - maintain PROGRESS support for exchange/learning, research, networking, participation
- **Mainstream** child poverty and well-being
 - in austerity/bail out packages
 - all EU policy areas
 - use ex-ante social impact assessments
- Agree (& then monitor) guidelines for **participation** of children and parents
 - as part of overall guidelines for involvement of stakeholders in Europe 2020
- Enhance **exchange & learning** and raise **public awareness**
- Link better with **gender equality** and **anti-discrimination** agendas