

POVERTY WATCH KEY FINDINGS

1. In the current times of crisis, - in particular, the rising inflation, high cost of living and long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, - people experiencing poverty are struggling to cover their vital daily expenses and relying heavily on food banks.
2. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that poorly-structured healthcare systems are not accessible or affordable for everyone, in particular for people experiencing poverty. The past two years have also led to a deterioration of people's mental health.
3. Although new emergency social benefit schemes were created across Europe to ease the impact of these unequal times of crisis, social benefits remain inadequate to face inflation thus failing to lift people out of poverty. Additionally, many vulnerable groups still struggle to access social benefits, be it because of the strict eligibility criteria or inadequate measures to address the non-take-up issue.
4. The war in Ukraine has hurt European economies still recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic and has exacerbated the energy crisis, leading to a highly volatile market and skyrocketing prices. This has increased the number of people living in energy poverty (unable to keep their houses adequately heated or cooled) and is disproportionately impacting low-income households, already left to make impossible choices between energy, rent and food.
5. The number of homeless people has risen, yet the supply of affordable social housing remains extremely low. Those able to live in social housing, report them being overcrowded and providing inadequate living conditions (humidity problems, architectural barriers and/or poor insulation). On top of that, the private rental sector, left unregulated, comes with extremely prohibitive costs. Altogether, this situation endangers people's right to live in affordable and decent houses and disproportionately impacts people experiencing poverty and vulnerable groups.
6. Over-reliance on digitalisation leads to social inequalities as the poorest or most marginalised cannot access important information and their fundamental rights. The digitalisation of European economies and public services is negatively impacting people experiencing poverty, due to unequal access to the internet and devices and lack of digital skills.
7. As the crisis has impacted some demographic groups disproportionately, gender poverty is on the rise. Women make up the majority of single parents and bear the burden of unpaid domestic work, including care work. In the labour market, women have lower wages and/or are more likely to be unemployed or employed through precarious contracts. Gender poverty is directly related to child poverty and addressing the gender poverty gap, including pay and care gaps, is fundamental.

POVERTY WATCH KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Adopt an integrated, comprehensive and structural anti-poverty strategy that tackles the systemic root causes of poverty and make Europe more resilient to future crises. To achieve this, EU and national stakeholders must:

1. Ensure meaningful participation of people experiencing poverty, including children, in the policy design, implementation, monitoring and assessment of this anti-poverty strategy and any policies/legislation that affect them. People experiencing poverty have direct knowledge and expertise of its impact on their daily lives and the gaps that need to be filled in current policies for a decent life.
2. Guarantee the right to adequate wages and a decent income for all in all stages of life, that match inflation and cost of living and that are benchmarked by reference budgets of goods and services.
3. Ensure the right to quality, accessible and affordable essential services through a rights-based approach, including:
 - free/affordable, universal and quality healthcare, including mental, early, long-term, reproductive and dental care;
 - universal, quality, affordable, accessible and inclusive public education;
 - affordable social housing;
 - green, affordable and accessible public transport;
 - affordable and clean energy.
4. Tackling the digital divide must be a priority at the EU and national levels, but the socio-cultural resistance to using digital tools, especially amongst the ageing population, cannot be disregarded. Digitalization should be an option rather than an obligation.
5. EU and national investments for refugees and migrants' support and integration are of extreme importance, along with measures to stop the double standards and systemic racism evident in the different treatment of Ukrainian refugees and racialised migrants.
6. Tackle intersectional discrimination and exploitation of vulnerable groups and provide a safe space for human rights and social rights defenders and for civil society organisations.
7. Collect disaggregated data by age, race, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, immigration status and nationality to account for the multiple systemic barriers faced by vulnerable groups and provide an intersectional approach to anti-poverty policymaking.
8. Effectively address tax evasion and avoidance for a better distribution of income and wealth and reject austerity cuts to recuperate public debt and deficits.
9. The eradication of poverty can only take place by de-escalating conflicts and seeking people-centred solutions for justice in conflict and war-affected countries.



**Funded by
the European Union**

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Commission. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

This publication has received financial support from the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation "EaSI" (22-2025). For further information please consult: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/easi>