

This factsheet is part of the study “Collection of good practices of non-monetary measures in the area of Women and Poverty” (EIGE/2015/OPER/18). This study was commissioned by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and implemented by the Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini (FGB). EIGE provides high quality research to support better informed policy-making at EU and Member State levels, in the critical areas of concern of the BPfA chosen by the EU Presidencies. EIGE developed an online platform on gender mainstreaming that provides access to a database of researches and good practices collection on specific area of the BPfA.

“ POVERTY:

Poverty is a complex and multidimensional problem. It goes beyond a lack of basic resources required for survival, and extends to deprivation from civil, social and cultural activities, as well as exclusion from opportunities for political engagement and social mobility

(Council of the EU 2007). ”

The Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth establishes a headline target to reduce the number of people in poverty by at least 20 million.²

The Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016-2019 includes a focus on economic independence for women, earnings gaps for women, and integrating a gender-equality perspective in EU interventions.³

WOMEN AND POVERTY

Women are more likely than men to be at risk of poverty. In 2014, 25.35% of women experienced poverty, compared to 23.6% of men in the same year (Eurostat 2014).⁴ Their experience of poverty is more severe in terms of the nature and intensity of deprivation and exclusion (Stratigaki 2015).⁵ Mainstream data underestimate the extent of women's poverty because poverty indicators assume that household resources are shared equally among family members and fail to address the intra-household dimensions of poverty (Meulders & O'Dorchaí 2013).⁶

Poverty is a structural problem and is embedded in gender inequality in the public and private sphere. Women and men experience poverty

in different ways and their routes into and out of poverty are gender-specific. The risk and experience of poverty is further influenced by other social characteristics, such as age, ethnicity, migrant background, disability or household composition. Intersection of gender and these characteristics, therefore, needs to be taken into consideration in all measures addressing poverty and social exclusion (EIGE, 2016).⁷ Gender-based violence is a further specific causal factor. The different risks of poverty for women and men through the life cycle, from early childhood to old age, have been recognised (Council of the EU 2016).⁸

Challenges:

- Poverty has increased during the economic crisis and resources allocated to poverty alleviation have been reduced⁹.
- Austerity measures impact negatively on women with the creation of less regulated labour markets, the downgrading of status and pay in public sector employment and the defamilialisation of care¹⁰.
- Policy action in response to poverty tends to focus on income and access to employment, ignoring the multi-dimensional nature of poverty.

GENDER ADEQUATE DATA SYSTEMS

Issues in data systems:

- Data gaps in relation to particular social groups
- The need to combine both individual and household-based indicators

The EU-SILC (Statistics on Income and Living Conditions) provides sex-disaggregated data to analyse poverty at the household level in terms of income, material deprivation and labour status. It also allows for some analysis of poverty at the individual level. The LFS (Labour Force Survey) provides further data to analyse in-work poverty.

Certain poverty issues, for example in relation to migrants and minority ethnic people including Roma, cannot be properly analysed through the EU-SILC due to issues of scale. Administrative data collected at national and local levels is rarely adequately systematised and available for policy monitoring.

1 Council of the EU (2007) Review of the implementation by the Member States and the EU institutions of the Beijing Platform for Action - Indicators in respect of Women and Poverty, Brussels, 31 October 2007 - 13947/07 ADD 1 SOC 377

2 Europe 2020, A European Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth, Communication from the Commission, COM2010(2020), Brussels, 2010.

3 Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016-2019, European Commission, SWD (2015)278, Brussels, 2015.

4 Europe 2020 Indicators – Poverty and Social Exclusion, Eurostat, 2014 - http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Europe_2020_indicators_-_poverty_and_social_exclusion#Which_groups_are_at_greater_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion.3F

5 Stratigaki, M, The positive impact of a gender sensitive approach to the fight against poverty, Main causes of female poverty in Workshop on Main Causes of Female Poverty, Workshop for the FEMM Committee, Directorate General for Internal Policies, European Parliament, 2015.

6 Meulders & O'Dorchaí (2013), The Working Poor: Too Low Wage Or Too Many Kids? American International Journal of Contemporary Research Vol. 3 No. 7; July 2013.

7 Beijing +20 Factsheet, Beijing+20 the Platform for Action (BPfA) and the European Union, Area A. Women and Poverty, EIGE, 2015.

8 Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion: An integrated approach, adopted by the EPSCO Council at its 3474th meeting held on 16 June 2016.

9 Europe 2020 Indicators – Poverty and Social Exclusion, Eurostat, 2014

Indicators based on a household approach can be gender-sensitive and allow an analysis of some gendered poverty patterns. However, a gender-sensitive approach requires the additional use of individual-based indicators.

Most poverty indicators measure the situation relative to a reference individual or household, most commonly the median. Analysing poverty trends in this manner does not reflect the deterioration of the median relative to previous periods in a severe recession. An individual or household can be above the median, but be considerably worse off than before in absolute terms.

WAY FORWARD:

- Reinforce evidence-based policy making with the regular publication and wider dissemination of sex-disaggregated data.
- Improve data collection on social deprivation, intra-household relations, and the specific circumstances of the most vulnerable social groups.
- Systematise administrative data and make them more readily available to inform policy-making.
- Combine the use of household indicators with individual-based indicators.
- Re-assess the relative nature of most poverty indicators.

GENDER SENSITIVE POLICY SYSTEMS

Issues in policy systems:

- Household focus rather than focus on individual
- Lack of gender analysis
- Lack of involvement of the diversity of policy actors

National anti-poverty policy tends to be based on the household. This enables attention to be paid to women living in poor households. However, it assumes that resources are equally shared among household members and fails to tackle intra-household gender inequalities in income and power relations. Poverty needs to be addressed in an individual context to address the particular experience of poverty among women. Individual income and expenditure data is required.

There is a lack of gender awareness and gender competence among most policy-makers. Gender-sensitive policy making would be ena-

bled by the involvement of national gender machineries and equality bodies, civil society organisations, and academics as partners in a participative policy-making process. In many Member States these policy actors are not adequately involved in the design and monitoring of anti-poverty policies.

This factsheet is part of the study "Collection of good practices of non-monetary measures in the area of Women and Poverty" (EIGE/2015/OPER/18). This study was commissioned by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and implemented by the Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini (FGB). EIGE provides high quality research to support better informed policy-making at EU and Member State levels, in the critical areas of concern of the BPFA chosen by the EU Presidencies. EIGE developed an online platform on gender mainstreaming that provides access to a database of researches and good practices collection on specific area of the BPFA.

WAY FORWARD

- Enhance gender awareness and gender competence in policy making.
- Address poverty at both the household and the individual level.
- Attend to women's specific disadvantage due to lack of individual economic independence, gender based violence, and widespread gender inequalities.
- Pursue an intersectional approach in policy-making to address the particular experience of women of low socio-economic status, lone mothers, women with disabilities, older women, and migrant and minority ethnic women, including Roma women.
- Pursue a dynamic approach in policy to reflect that poverty is intergenerational and takes different forms over the life course, with specific poverty traps for women at each stage.
- Adopt gender-sensitive indicators for monitoring poverty trends at the EU level to foster more gender-sensitive policy approaches at Member State level.
- Include a broader range of policy actors in a participative policy-making process, in particular the national gender machinery, including equality bodies, civil society organisations and academics.





European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) is the EU knowledge centre on gender equality. EIGE supports policy-makers and all relevant institutions in their efforts to make equality between women and men a reality for all Europeans and beyond by providing them with specific expertise and comparable and reliable data on gender equality in Europe.

More information: <http://eige.europa.eu>



Contact information:
European Institute for Gender Equality
Gedimino pr. 16, LT-01103 Vilnius, LITHUANIA
Tel. +370 5 215 7444, Tel. +370 5 215 7400

 facebook.com/eige.europa.eu
 twitter.com/eurogender
 youtube.com/eurogender
 <https://eurogender.eige.europa.eu>

ISBN 978-92-9218-971-6

doi 10.2839/83627

MH-04-16-764-EN-N