

ROMANIA

The main **challenges** identified by EAPN Romania are:

- According to the Country Report Romania 2017 of the European Commission, poverty and social exclusion remain high in Romania. A percent of 40.2 of the people remain at risk of poverty and social exclusion according to Eurostat data (the highest percentage in the European Union) and poverty is three times higher in rural than in urban areas. A high risk of poverty or social exclusion persists for young NEETs, families with children and people with disabilities. Finally, Romania has one of the highest levels of income inequality in the EU and rising.
- The levels of poverty, social exclusion and material deprivation from which children suffer in Romania are extremely high. According to Eurostat, almost 50% per cent of all children are at risk of poverty or social exclusion, which is the worst score in the European Union. Children are also vulnerable to the risk of severe material deprivation. Some 42.3 per cent of single-person households with dependent children and 47 per cent of households with two adults and more than three children suffer from severe material deprivation. These rates are alarmingly high compared to the European Union average of 20.1 per cent and 11.4 per cent, respectively. In addition, estimation show that around 300,000 children have at least one parent working abroad, the category of children left behind being one of the most vulnerable on a long run in Romania.
- Labour market outcomes improved in 2016, when the unemployment rate reached its pre-crisis low. The labour force continued to shrink, as the population is ageing and emigration remains high. Low unemployment is matched by one of the highest inactivity rates in the EU. Employment and activity rates for young people, women, the low-skilled, people with disabilities and Roma in particular are well below the EU average. Romania suffers from a high rate of in-work poverty 19%, the highest in the EU, which is mostly concentrated in rural areas, mainly in the agriculture sector.
- Although Romania encounters the second largest share of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU (after Bulgaria), the government allocate the smallest fractions of GDP for social protection. The benefits of social protection, in terms of the number of inhabitants, are in Romania almost seven times lower than the EU average. Not only that Romania does allocate little money for social protection, but the efficiency of using this money (measured as a reduction in the risk of poverty due to social transfers, compared to the pre-transfer rate) is the smallest in the EU.

The key **recommendations** identified by EAPN Romania are:

- ® Policy actions as well as legislation packages (economic and social) to tackle in-work poverty and to support quality jobs creation, in particular green and social jobs are needed.
- ® Improve access to quality mainstream education, in particular for Roma and children in rural areas. (same as the EC CSR Recommendations. The Ministry of Education and Research should support after school programs for children at risk of poverty, including

Roma children and provide hot meals, clothing and school supplies to encourage them to come to school.

- ⑩ Policy actions and interventions to address the massive emigration (migration of healthcare professionals, of educators, of youth “brain-drain”, etc. and its socio-economic negative effects (children/women, elderly left behind, depopulation, poorer quality of social/ educational/ healthcare services, in particular in rural areas, etc).
- ⑩ The Government should appoint a children’s commissioner, with a broad mandate and power to protect children’s rights. The commissioner’s office should be adequately resourced and independent.
- ⑩ The Minister of Labour and Social Justice should allocate funding for creation and implementation of integrated social services for children at-risk or affected by poverty and abuse.