

ANNEX 3

Summary of Group Discussions: Interactive Workshop on the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy

1. What additional structural barriers or emerging issues should the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy acknowledge?

- Data on poverty is often reported too late and fails to reflect the realities faced by groups such as the homeless and undocumented.
- There is a lack of detailed, geographically targeted data to ensure that resources are directed where they are most needed.
- Current measurements rely too heavily on financial indicators and should be expanded to include well-being and qualitative dimensions.
- The distribution of responsibilities across local, national, and regional levels remains unclear, which undermines accountability and transparency.
- Administrative requirements create burdens and significant obstacles for NGOs, especially smaller ones.
- Strategies often replicate existing systems instead of building on what already works, resulting in inefficiencies.
- People facing the highest barriers are frequently left out of support schemes because of stigma and isolation.
- Anti-poverty actions tend to be reactive rather than preventative.

2. What practical steps can ensure that material support is fully integrated into broader social policy?

- Coordinated planning and resource allocation between sectors is essential to ensure integration at both strategic and operational levels.
- Roles and responsibilities must be clarified across ministries, agencies, and service providers to support coordinated action.
- Material support must be designed to reach all groups, with special attention given to blind spots, such as people in isolated areas.
- NGOs play a critical role and should be systematically mapped and involved in planning and delivery structures.
- Linkage of material support to mainstream social protection systems and alignment with EU-level frameworks and legislation must be ensured.
- Effective integration requires regular, meaningful multi-stakeholder consultations with clear objectives and shared responsibilities.
- Existing initiatives such as food banks and social supermarkets can serve as accessible starting points to streamline approaches.
- Evidence-based policymaking, informed by expert input and data, should guide integration efforts.
- Governments should create incentives for collaboration between public, private, and civil society actors.

3. How can the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy combine short-term material assistance with long-term empowerment and inclusion?

- By strengthening accompanying measures.
- Material support should serve as the entry point to a broader, coordinated system of services that includes employment, education, and housing.
- Beneficiaries should be actively involved in the implementation of assistance programmes to enhance ownership and relevance.
- Strategies must focus on improving basic living conditions while enabling long-term empowerment through access to jobs and stable income.
- Particular attention is needed for the ecological transition and its potential impact on vulnerable populations, with the Social Climate Fund playing a key role.
- The Anti-Poverty Strategy must include specific, coherent objectives to guide the use of EU funds.

4. Which mechanisms can best strengthen the meaningful participation of people experiencing poverty?

- The strategy should adopt a bottom-up approach, grounded in the real needs of communities, to ensure that those affected can shape the responses designed for them.
- A permanent advisory body of end beneficiaries should be established at the EU level and linked to civil society to monitor the progress of APS.
- People experiencing poverty should be equipped with the necessary skills and information to meaningfully participate in strategy processes.
- Participation should include structured surveys, focus groups, and direct consultation at the design and evaluation stages of programmes.
- People experiencing poverty should be involved throughout all stages, with a clear and measurable impact on decisions, including in the earliest phases of strategy development.
- Stakeholder involvement should be broad-based and continuous, valuing the complementarities of all involved actors.
- Awareness-raising activities target a broader public audience.
- Volunteering should be encouraged as a form of engagement and empowerment for people with experience of poverty.

5. How can the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy improve the application of the partnership principle?

- Concrete coordination structures with regular, inclusive stakeholder meetings should support the strategy.
- All relevant actors, including NGOs and individuals with experience of poverty, must be systematically included in planning and decision-making processes.
- There should be a minimum of 5% NGO representation in national coordination groups to ensure balanced and meaningful input.
- Stakeholders must be given real influence, including agenda-setting power, rather than just consultative roles.
- Thematic coordination should be encouraged, covering areas such as food, housing, employment, and mental health, with a focus on cross-sectoral links.
- Platforms for stakeholder engagement must be created or strengthened to foster cooperation and policy coherence.
- A strong communication strategy is needed to raise awareness of the strategy, reduce stigma, and clarify roles.
- Capacity-building programmes should be provided to empower all stakeholders to participate effectively.
- Formats and tools for involvement must be made accessible and adapted to the diversity of stakeholders.

6. How can ESF+ and other EU funds be used more effectively to support the APS and provide material support?

- ESF+ and related funds should maintain or increase their allocations for material support, indexing them to inflation to preserve their real impact.
- Material support should be closely linked with social services to provide comprehensive support and foster long-term inclusion.
- Funds should prioritise greater investment in people, not just direct support to ensure long-term empowerment and skills development.
- Cross-fund synergies must be strengthened to enable complex, multidimensional interventions that include housing, employment, health, and education.
- Greater flexibility is needed in how funds are used, including for personalised support and digital inclusion tools.
- End beneficiaries should be actively involved in programme design and implementation to improve relevance and ownership.
- ESF+ should remain a distinct and visible funding line under the next Multiannual Financial Framework to avoid the risk of de-prioritisation.
- Coordination and shared brainstorming through initiatives like the Community of Practice can help generate practical funding solutions.