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Answer given by Executive Vice-President Mînzatu
on behalf of the European Commission
(25.2.2025)

In line with the Treaties, the primary responsibility for social inclusion policies lies with the Member States. The Commission supports Member States in addressing poverty and social exclusion. The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan proposed an ambitious and realistic EU target to reduce the number of people at risk of poverty or exclusion by at least 15 million by 2030. All Member States have defined national targets relating to this EU headline target. A number of EU initiatives¹ that directly relate to poverty reduction and their implementation at national level will be key to achieve the EU target. EU funding, including the European Social Fund Plus² and the European Regional Development Fund³, supports social inclusion.

The number of persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) has declined by around 1.6 million in the EU since the reference year of the EU target (from 2019 to 2023), with a rate of 21.4% of the population in 2023. Trends in the Member States have been heterogeneous with some increases in some Member States and declines in others. This also shows that the policies put in place by the Member States and the EU in recent years have been mitigating to a large extent the negative social impacts of the pandemic, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine as well as by the high energy prices and increases in the costs of living.

Looking forward, the target remains within reach, but this will require further substantial efforts. The Political Guidelines 2024-2029⁴ announced a new action plan for implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights and the first-ever EU anti-poverty strategy, which will aim to help people to get access to the essential protections and services they need, along with addressing the root causes of poverty.

¹ European Child Guarantee, Council Recommendation (EU) 2021/1004 of 14 June 2021 - <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32021H1004>

Directive on adequate minimum wages, Directive (EU) 2022/2041 - <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32022L2041>

Council Recommendation on adequate minimum income ensuring active inclusion, Council Recommendation (EU) 2023/C 41/01 of 30 January 2023 - <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32023H0203%2801%29>

European Platform on Combating Homelessness, Lisbon Declaration on the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness of 21 June 2021

Council Recommendation on Access to social protection, Council Recommendation (2019/C 387/01) of 8 November 2019 - <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32019H1115%2801%29>

Commission Communication on the European care strategy COM/2022/440 final - <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52022DC0440>

Commission Communication on better assessing the distributional impact of Member States' policies, COM(2022) 494 final - <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A52022DC0494>

² European Social Fund Plus - Regulation (EU) 2021/1057 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 establishing the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1296/2013 - <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021R1057>

³ Regulation (EU) 2021/1058 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund - <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021R1058>

⁴ https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/e6cd4328-673c-4e7a-8683-f63ffb2cf648_en?filename=Political%20Guidelines%202024-2029_EN.pdf