Preliminary results of the International workshop “SDGs priorities and challenges of social policy in the Eastern Partnership Countries”

Eastern European Social Policy Network

Alexandre Sidorenko and Veronica Sandu
Bridge Building function of the European Centre

The Bridge Building (BB) function aims to connect the research knowledge and policy evidence between the UN European region countries and the European Union (potential) candidate countries and the countries of the Eastern Partnership.

As a tool for the bridge building, the Eastern European Social Policy Network (EESPN) forum brings together researchers and policymakers to better understand and to advance social welfare policies. The work of the EESPN has three main pillars:

1. Knowledge exchange and transfer
2. Development of joint research projects and policy advice
3. Networking and generating public fora
International workshop ‘SDGs priorities and challenges of social policy in the Eastern Partnership Countries’

The aim of the workshop was to identify and discuss common challenges and opportunities in the area of social welfare and propose meaningful initiatives to achieve the SDGs of the social pillar in the Eastern Partnership countries.

Four thematic sessions related to the social pillar of SDGs were conducted:

1. Long-term Care
2. Labour market inclusion of vulnerable groups
3. Social Protection Systems
4. Active (and healthy) Ageing
Key Questions of the International Workshop

Participants from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine and the ‘reflecting friends’ discussed the following key questions:

1. What are the common and country specific challenges and opportunities across UNECE countries in the area of social welfare?
2. What priorities have been set in the area of social policies towards achieving the SDGs of the social pillar in the Eastern Partnership Countries?
3. What needs to be done by national and international stakeholders to achieve the SDGs of the social pillar by 2030?
4. What can the European Centre and Eastern Partnership Countries do jointly to address the challenges and utilize opportunities in the area of social welfare and achieve the SDGs of the social pillar?
Challenges and opportunities

Challenges
• Strengthen institutions and their cooperation (inter-sector cooperation, at central and local level, between public and private sector (non-profit), and facilitate provision of integrated responses)
• Support in development of the legal framework (e.g., LTC) and regulatory impact assessment
• Increase coverage (care service, health insurance), adequacy and quality of social services and benefits

Opportunities
• Possibility to benefit from lessons learned from other countries
• Use of technologies for advanced programme solutions
• Exchange of good practices & scaling up methods/approaches (within and outside the region)
Needs and priorities for cooperation identified by participants:

**Long-term Care**
- Protection mechanisms for vulnerable older persons
- Deinstitutionalization of services for older persons
- Service development (guardianship for older persons, care and living arrangements, homecare)

**Labour market inclusion of vulnerable groups**
- Measures for transition from informal to formal sector
- Incentives to integrate vulnerable groups into the labour market
- Support for institutional development (e.g., labour inspectorate)
Needs and priorities for cooperation, identified by participants:

Social Protection Systems

• Development of services and protection measures for vulnerable groups (persons with disability, Internally displaced people, vulnerable youth)
• Improve efficiency of the cash benefit schemes
• Revision of the “disability model”

Active (and healthy) Ageing (AHA)

• Understand the concept in the local context
• Mainstream AHA in the strategic documents and, most importantly, ensure implementation mechanisms
• Provide adequate social welfare for older population as the first step to ageing policy (e.g., more progress on the pension reform process)
EESPN next steps

Further exchange of knowledge and expertise will be facilitated through:

• **Mutual exchange of know-how** on key issues identified during the October 2019 Workshop.

• **Two workshops** in the countries of the Eastern Partnership will be organized (long-term care and on social security systems).

• **Expert support** is offered by European Centre through internally funded projects (up to 4 small projects in 2019/2020 based on country request).

• **Regional specific analysis/research** on key issues.