

Draft UK EMIN statement

We are a European Minimum Income Network, launched in 2017 and present in 27 countries, most in the EU, a few not (www.emin-eu.net). Minimum incomes are the benefits of last resort for people with no other sufficient source of income. But harsh conditionality and 'austerity' cuts are rife across Europe. Italy, Spain and Cyprus don't have national schemes; like the UK, Austria has the two-child benefit cap. Many countries in Eastern Europe pay very little, or pay locally on very restricted criteria. This is especially the case in poorer countries and those with low 'flat taxes'. Even the better Scandinavian schemes such as Denmark, are less generous now.

In the EU, we want a common methodology on defining adequacy and a common effort to drive up standards. Our aim is the progressive realisation of the right to adequate, accessible and enabling minimum income in every European country, funded by fair taxation. Our goal is that schemes should pay 60% of median income in a country, reality-tested with expenditure budgets because that 60% buys you very different amounts in different countries. We are working towards a legal right to adequate minimum income in each country, so we want a Framework Directive on Adequate Minimum Income.

There are good reasons to support adequate minimum income schemes. They help people in need to live in dignity and stay active, connected to work and integrated in society. Poor quality schemes lock people in poverty. More equal societies have better health and better well-being. The schemes act as economic stabilisers for countries when times are tough. Good schemes can help to prevent 'working poor.' Relatively, schemes don't cost a lot; by far the biggest bit of the social security budget is retirement pensions.

In the UK we want government to call a halt to the roll-out of Universal Credit until they sort out the built-in problems and the roll-out problems. We want harsh conditionality stopped, more positive support for people to get sustainable, decent jobs and benefits' administration to be effective and respectful, every time. Using minimum acceptable budgets put together by panels of people from every walk of life, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation shows that benefits' in the UK are below what is needed to live in dignity, and for some groups, very far below. Our aim is that benefits are set at an adequate minimum income, tested against expenditure needed to live in dignity and uprated properly for inflation. We want to ensure that after the Repeal Bill, government does not unpick worker's rights and social rights, in a post-Brexit race to the bottom.

Tell us your story, give us your views, say what you want to see happen. We will share your views with our network to help us build our campaign. Join us.

Katherine Duffy, EMIN UK coordinator

Contact k.b.duffy@talktalk.net