

CHILD POVERTY IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

An analysis of how the 'Europe 2020' poverty target affected child poverty development trends in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom



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A special thank you to...

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I. Executive summary

Child poverty is a phenomenon that is most often not associated with countries located in the European Union (EU). Unfortunately, child poverty is an issue very close to home. The following research takes an in-depth look at child poverty in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom (UK) from the perspective of the 'Europe 2020' Strategy; an EU Strategy that consists of five targets from which one of them specifically focuses on the reduction of poverty in the EU. The main research question relates to how the Strategies' poverty target affected child poverty related development trends in both the Netherlands and the UK between 2015 and 2018. The research question is supported by a variety of sub-questions that function as the objectives to find the answer.

At first, a theoretical framework that introduces the most relevant terminology is established. This framework is based on three distinct terms, namely 'child poverty', 'AROE', and the 'Europe 2020 poverty target'. This framework is then followed by the methodology, which explains that the answers to the sub-questions and main research question are established by pursuing qualitative research that is comprised of both primary secondary data. The secondary data is both qualitative and quantitative in nature and is utilized for the creation of the literature review. The primary data on the other hand is solely qualitative of nature and is utilized for the creation of the results chapter. Both the literature review as well as the results chapter are structured on the basis of the three sub-questions. Both chapters highlight a great variety of child poverty related developments, such as the introduction of the Child Guarantee or the intensification of the European Semester. Additionally, a multitude of matters are identified as causes for children to live in poverty, such as the parent's labour market situation and debt. And at last, both chapters establish a future hypothesis. In the analysis, both all findings compared and contrasted in order to establish a well-grounded conclusion. By combining all this data, the analysis established that child poverty is a very complicated and wide concept. The scope of this research is simply too small to identify all relevant child poverty related developments, there is no set list of identifiable causes for children living in poverty and the creation of a future hypothesis is extremely hard with a phenomenon that knows so much subjectivity.

It is simply impossible to say whether the Europe 2020 poverty target has affected the development of child poverty in both the Netherlands and the UK between 2015 and 2018. Child poverty is a multidimensional concept that has often no other choice than to rely on subjectivism. For the future however, it can be argued that there needs to be increased collaboration between the Member States and the EU, and that the UK must properly map out child poverty and carefully reconsider its future steps now they are leaving the EU.

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III. Abbreviations

AROPE – At Risk of Child Poverty or Social Exclusion
CPAG – Child Poverty Action Group
CEMR – Council of European Municipalities and Regions
CESA – Committee on Employment and Social Affairs
DWP – Department for Work and Pensions
EC – European Commission
ECPGC – Ending Child Poverty Global Coalition
ESF – European Social Fund
EU – European Union
EYPP – Early Years Pupil Premium
FRA – Fundamental Rights Agency
IFS – Institute for Fiscal Studies
LSE – The London School of Economics and Political Science
MSEA – Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment
NDPB – Non-departmental public body
NCCP – National Center for Children in Poverty
NRP – National Reform Programme
SCP – Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau
SER – Social Economic Council
SMCP – Social Mobility and Child Poverty's Commission
SP – Stability Program
SCT – Social Community Team
SZW – Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid
TFEU – The Functioning of the European Union
UK – United Kingdom
WHD – Warm Home Discount

1. Introduction

Poverty, and especially child poverty, is a phenomenon that is most often not associated with countries located in the European Union (EU) (FRA, 2018). But unfortunately, child poverty is an issue very close to home (FRA, 2018). With a connection to the Europe 2020 Strategy, this chapter seeks to provide background information on the topic of child poverty in the European Union in its entirety and in the Netherlands and the UK individually.

1.1 Context

A Dutch opinion panel called '*EenVandaag*', asked 100 young people currently living in poverty in the Netherlands about how they experience life in the consumerist society we live in today (van Mosselvelde & van Egmond, 2015). Nearly two thirds (64%) of the children that were questioned, argue that poverty is continuously stigmatized, which coincides with the fact that 49% of the children feel ashamed about the situation they live in; "It is always difficult to feel excluded when other people have bought the newest gadgets. I do not even invite people over to my home, because we only have a few pieces of furniture" (van Mosselvelde & van Egmond, 2015). In the United Kingdom (UK), children are experiencing similar events as the children that were questioned in the Netherlands (Butler, 2014). Most of the bad experiences relate to bullying and shaming with regards to the lack of money, gadgets and clothing (Butler, 2014; United Nations, 2014). Both children from the Netherlands as well as from the UK are disappointed in their governments and partly blame them for their personal situations (van Mosselvelde & van Egmond, 2015; Bulman, 2019). Two statements are made, namely that the Dutch government is not handling in accordance with the needs of the people actually experiencing poverty related issues (van Mosselvelde & van Egmond, 2015) and that by cutting family benefits, the British government is continuously harming families in financially unstable situations (Bulman, 2019).

Despite the fact that the Netherlands and the UK are considered developed nations and developed nations are often not directly associated with poverty (United Nations, 2014), the above sections clearly show that this is a misconception and that both countries are indeed experiencing child poverty related issues (FRA, 2018). However, the fact that both countries are facing a similar issue does not mean that the issue manifests itself in the exact same way. On the surface, the Netherlands and the UK might seem alike, but every country is different, also in light of child poverty. The Netherlands, for example, can be found in the top five of countries with the lowest share of children at risk of poverty (Eurostat, 2017). Whereas children living in the UK have a change that is above average to be at risk of poverty (Eurostat, 2017). Additionally, each country is different in eradicating certain issues and therefore, a comparison of the two countries is extremely interesting.

Within the timeframe this research is concerned with, both the Netherlands as well as the United Kingdom were part of the EU (European Union, 2020). Because a great variety of relevant poverty and child poverty related initiatives are developed at the EU level, the EU is frequently referred to in this research. Additionally, EU related information is often provided for perspective and therefore, figure 1 is created to illustrate an overview of the child poverty rates between 2015 and 2018 in the EU in its entirety and in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom individually (Eurostat, 2015; Eurostat, 2017; Eurostat, 2018; Eurostat, 2019). Figure shows that the EU in its entirety and both Member States have decreased child poverty rates in comparison with 2015 (Eurostat, 2015; Eurostat, 2017; Eurostat, 2018; Eurostat, 2019). However, the child poverty rates are still too high. Michael O’flaherty, director of the ‘European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights’, states: “Child poverty has no place in Europe, one of the world’s richest regions. Now we need action, so that the EU and its Member States honour their commitments to uphold the rights of children to give them a better future” (FRA, 2018). Fortunately, the EU agreed upon the fact that action is indeed needed to successfully combat child poverty (European Commission, 2010, p. 3). One of the initiatives that made sure that combating child poverty remained an actual issue on the EU political agenda is the Europe 2020 Strategy (European Commission, 2010).

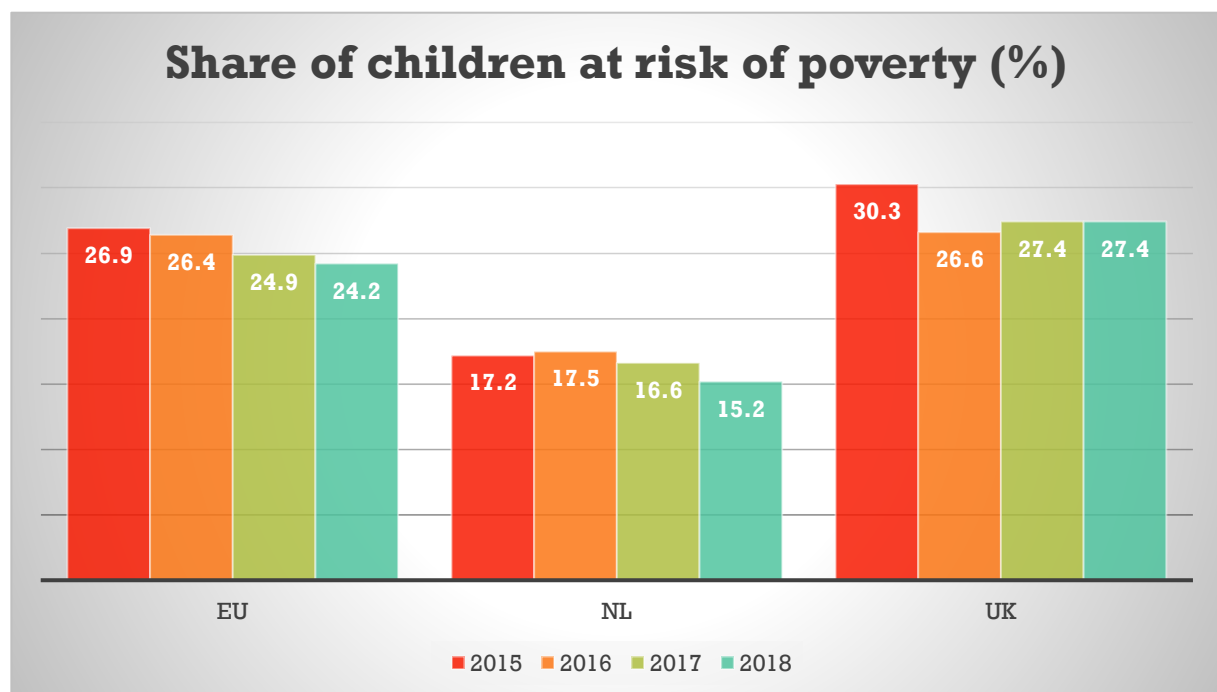


Figure 1. Share of children at risk of poverty (Eurostat, 2015; Eurostat, 2017; Eurostat, 2018; Eurostat, 2019).

The Europe 2020 Strategy is “a European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth” developed by the European Commission (European Commission, 2010). The strategy was developed in 2010 and was seen as a possibility for the EU to conquer the losses suffered during the economic

crisis of 2007-08 (European Commission, 2010). However, to be able to do this, certain factors had to be taken into account and that is why the European Commission decided to develop five different, but interrelated targets that will support each other with the goal of strengthening the EU economy by 2020 (European Commission, 2010). The five targets function as a body for the Europe 2020 Strategy (European Commission, 2010). For this research, one of the five targets will be addressed and researched extensively and that is the target of reducing the number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion by 20 million

1.2 Research- and sub-questions

To be able to properly investigate how the development of child poverty in the Netherlands and the UK was affected by the Europe 2020 Strategy, a research question was formulated. The research question is supported by a variety of sub-questions that function as the objectives to find the answer to the research question.

Research question:

“How has the ‘Europe 2020’ poverty target affected the development of child poverty in both the United Kingdom and the Netherlands between 2015 and 2018?”.

Sub-questions:

1. How has child poverty developed between 2015 and 2018?
2. What are identifiable causes for child poverty?
3. What is the future hypothesis on child poverty in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom?

1.3 Structure of the dissertation

To properly answer the research question, a structure will be followed. The introduction provides background information on the topic of child poverty in the European Union, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom and additional context relevant information related to the Europe 2020 Strategy is provided. After the introduction, a theoretical framework is developed that elaborates upon terms that are of high relevance for properly understanding this research. The theoretical framework is then followed by the methodology, which highlights and justifies the methods used throughout the research. It shows not only that secondary data was obtained, but also how primary data was conducted, such as semi-structured interviews. The literature review presents a clear overview of existing literature on the topic of child poverty, such as existing theories developed by different scholars and/or European institutions. The following chapter, the analysis, compares and contrasts both secondary and primary data in order to answer the sub-questions that were set up for this research. Lastly, taking all data into account, a conclusion will be drawn.

2. Theoretical framework

The main purpose of this research is to find out whether and how the development of child poverty, in both the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, was affected by the Europe 2020 Strategy between 2015 and 2018. To find a proper answer to this question and to be able to understand the content of this research, a variety of terms is elaborated upon.

2.1 Child poverty

It is argued by multiple authors that child poverty is a complex and context-specific term that is not properly explainable on the basis of one simple definition (Brozaitis, Makareviciene, Lipnickiene, Janeckova, & Cibaite, 2018, p. 18). A variety of approaches to child poverty can be identified, they are analysed in the section below.

2.1.1 The 'monetary approach'

The monetary approach, also known as the money-metric or the income approach, is the most widely used approach and refers to the lack of economic resources that are available to a household or an individual (Brozaitis, Makareviciene, Lipnickiene, Janeckova, & Cibaite, 2018; Thorbecke, 2005; Tsui, 2002). The monetary approach is based on a poverty line that both functions as a threshold and is based on income. This threshold is necessary to be able to determine whether a household or an individual can be considered poor (Brozaitis, Makareviciene, Lipnickiene, Janeckova, & Cibaite, 2018; Thorbecke, 2005; Tsui, 2002). According to the monetary approach, all children living in households that rely on an income that is below the poverty threshold are considered poor (Brozaitis, Makareviciene, Lipnickiene, Janeckova, & Cibaite, 2018; Thorbecke, 2005; Tsui, 2002).

The previously mentioned poverty lines are determined on either relative- or absolute poverty thresholds (Brozaitis, Makareviciene, Lipnickiene, Janeckova, & Cibaite, 2018). The absolute poverty threshold refers to a lack of resources in the context of covering for basic necessities, such as food and clothing (Arndt & Tarp, 2017). It does not directly refer to other people's income and is mainly used to measure what is needed to reach a minimum standard of living (Arndt & Tarp, 2017, p. 11). Relative poverty, on the other hand, is the most commonly used term to define poverty in the EU. In 1984, the European Commission formulated poverty as: "persons, families and groups of persons whose resources are so limited as to exclude them from the minimum acceptable way of life in the Member States in which they live" (Council Decision 85/8/EEC, 1984, p. 1). Today, the EU primarily measures poverty by making comparisons between the wealthy and the non-wealthy members of the EU society (Brozaitis, Makareviciene, Lipnickiene, Janeckova, & Cibaite, 2018, p. 19).

2.1.2 The 'rights-based approach'

The rights-based approach was introduced by the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and highlights that there is a great variety of factors that contribute to the well-being of children (Brozaitis, Makareviciene, Lipnickiene, Janeckova, & Cibaite, 2018). According to the CRC, an adequate standard of living is a human right and children have the right “to be free from deprivations across crucial aspects of their lives including their health, education, nutrition, care and protection” (Brozaitis, Makareviciene, Lipnickiene, Janeckova, & Cibaite, 2018). The rights-based approach is mostly used by studies that want to identify the multiple dimensions of child poverty (Gordon, Nandy, Pantazis, Pemberton, & Townsend, 2003, p. 1).

The rights-based approach takes on a multidimensional approach to child poverty. The State of the World's Children, formulated a definition for multidimensional child poverty, namely: “the deprivation of the material, spiritual and emotional resources needed to survive, develop and thrive, leaving them unable to enjoy their rights, achieve their full potential or participate as full and equal members of society” (Fajth & Holland, 2007, p. 8). As illustrated in figure 2, multidimensional child poverty relates to all the crucial aspects the CRC referred to in 1989 (Brozaitis, Makareviciene, Lipnickiene, Janeckova, & Cibaite, 2018, p. 20).

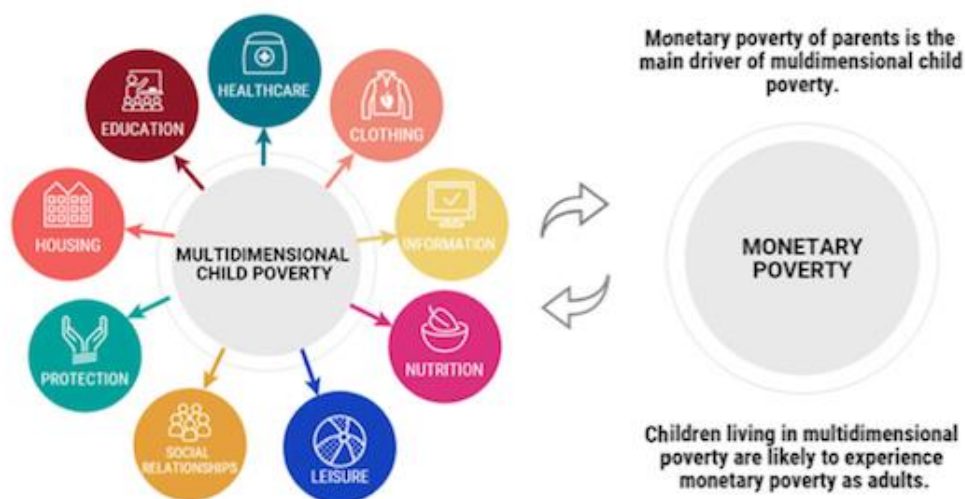


Figure 2. Multidimensional Approach to Child Poverty (Brozaitis, Makareviciene, Lipnickiene, Janeckova, & Cibaite, 2018, p. 20).

Figure 2 additionally illustrates that monetary related issues are often still one of the main drivers of child poverty but that monetary and multidimensional poverty are not always interconnected; it is possible for children to be poor in an exclusively multidimensional sense without the presence of monetary related matters (Unicef, 2017, p. 1). This means that if monetary related matters would

resolve, children could still experience problems related to health, education or protection for instance (Unicef, 2017, p. 1).

Now that two distinct approaches to child poverty are highlighted, the next section follows with an elaboration. This section looks at how child poverty is measured statistically.

2.2 At Risk of Poverty or Social Exclusion

To be able to measure poverty, the EU designed the 'At Risk of Poverty or Social Exclusion' indicator, also known as the 'AROPE' indicator (Eurostat, 2019). The AROPE indicator is defined as "the share of the population in at least one of the three conditions: 1. "at risk of poverty, meaning below the poverty threshold"; 2. "in a situation of severe material deprivation"; 3. "living in a household with a very low work intensity" (Eurostat, 2019). The first condition simply means that people living in a household with a disposable income that is beneath the average poverty threshold, are at risk of poverty (Brozaitis, Makareviciene, Lipnickiene, Janeckova, & Cibaite, 2018, p. 22). The second condition portrays a situation in which people are at risk of poverty if they live in a household that experiences a lack of basic resources (Brozaitis, Makareviciene, Lipnickiene, Janeckova, & Cibaite, 2018, p. 22). The third and last condition refers to people living in a household in which working-age adults, aged 18 to 59, have not worked as much as they could have worked in the past 12 months (Brozaitis, Makareviciene, Lipnickiene, Janeckova, & Cibaite, 2018, p. 22).

Important to note is that the AROPE indicator was not designed for children in particular and is therefore not a child-specific measurement tool. This is because the AROPE indicator mainly focuses on households rather than on the individual people living in these households (Brozaitis, Makareviciene, Lipnickiene, Janeckova, & Cibaite, 2018). However, it is still the most commonly used measurement tool in the field of child poverty in the European Union (Menne, 2019).

Additionally, the AROPE indicator is one of the key indicators for monitoring the 'Europe 2020' poverty target that was set up with the Europe 2020 Strategy (Eurostat, 2019). The 'Europe 2020' poverty target will be elaborated upon in the next section.

2.3 Europe 2020 poverty target

As the successor of the 'Lisbon Strategy' that was launched in 2000 and ended in 2010 (Eurostat, 2013), the European Commission developed the previously mentioned Europe 2020 Strategy (European Commission, 2010, p. 3). As mentioned in the introduction, the Europe 2020 Strategy is "a European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth", that was mainly developed as a means of

strengthening the EU economy after the losses that were suffered during the economic crisis of 2007 (European Commission, 2010, p. 3). The European Commission decided to develop five different, but interrelated, targets that would serve as the objectives to reach this goal (European Commission, 2010, p. 3). These targets are as follows: 1. “75% of the population aged 20-64 should be employed”; 2. 3% of the EU’s GDP should be invested in R&D”; 3. “The “20/20/20” climate/energy targets should be met (including an increase to 30% of emission reduction if the conditions are right)”; 4. “The share of early school leavers should be under 10% and at least 40% of the younger generation should have a tertiary degree”; 5. “20 million less people should be at risk of poverty” (European Commission, 2010, p. 3).

This research solely focuses on the poverty and social exclusion target that was adopted in June 2010 (Eurostat, 2019, p. 4). This target primarily aims at reducing the number of people living at risk of poverty or social exclusion by 20 million (Eurostat, 2019, p. 2). To put this into perspective, at January 1st 2015, 508.2 million people were living in poverty in the EU (Eurostat, 2015, p. 1). This is 26,9% of the total EU population (Eurostat, 2016). The Commissions’ aims of reducing the population living at risk of poverty by 20 million, translates into a reduction of 3,9% by 2020 (Eurostat, 2019, p. 2).

All ‘Europe 2020’ targets are aimed to be translated into national targets, which happened in most EU countries and can be consulted in the National Reform Programmes (NRP) (Eurostat, 2019). For the Netherlands, the target is as follows: “Reduce by 100.000 the number of persons (aged 0-64) living in a jobless household (compared to 2008)” (Eurostat, 2017). The United Kingdom on the other hand, did not set a national target in accordance with the Europe 2020 Strategy (Eurostat, 2017). Unfortunately, it not entirely clear why the UK was reluctant to do so. However, the UK still developed child poverty related targets but then on the basis of national UK acts on child poverty (Eurostat, 2017). These targets are concerned with absolute- and relative poverty, combined low income and materials deprivation, and persistent poverty (Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2015, p. 112). These targets will be elaborated upon in the literature review.

Now that the most relevant terms for this research are highlighted, the next section seeks to discover the most suitable method of data collection and the most relevant types of sources. Additionally, it looks into both research ethics as well as limitations.

3. Methodology

In the process of conducting research, it is crucial to know what is needed to meet the research objectives. It is important to determine what method of data collection is most suitable for this research and which type of sources are suitable answering the research question and its sub-questions. This chapter provides the reader with not only information regarding the methods applied throughout this research, but also with information on research ethics and the limitations this research came across.

3.1 Research methods

Before conducting any type of research, it is important to establish whether to follow the quantitative or qualitative research method. Quantitative research is argued to be “measurable empirical data expressed in numbers” (Greetham, 2019, p. 169), whereas, qualitative data is “expressed in words describing attitudes, feelings, opinions, customs and beliefs” (Greetham, 2019, p. 169). An additional difference is that qualitative research is more in depth, where quantitative research is less narrow and broader of character (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). Due to the more theoretical nature of the research question and the fact that this research is concerned with the complexity, detail and context of the research problem, mainly qualitative research was conducted. However, to ensure that all important aspects of the research topic are covered and that the results are reliable and accurate, the qualitative research is comprised of both primary and secondary qualitative and quantitative sources, which will be elaborated upon in the following sections.

According to Bryman (2016), quantitative research is mainly associated with a deductive approach (p. 24) in which the researcher’s main aim is to test an already existing theory by doing research in a particular domain (Bryman, 2016, p. 21). Additionally, the deductive approach is, in broad terms, explained as the approach that entails the conduction of numerical data (Bryman, 2016, p. 149). An inductive approach, on the other hand, is mainly associated with qualitative research (p. 23) and is comprised of the idea that a theory is created on the basis of data collection rather than the other way around (Bryman, 2016, p. 23). It also refers to the method of approaching research with an open question and without a particular hypothesis (Streefkerk, 2019), which is why the inductive approach is most suitable for this research.

Besides establishing both the method of data collection and the research approach, it is equally important to know the nature of the research. There are three distinct natures of research; exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory research (Barcik, 2016). Exploratory research is when “the

initial research changes into a hypothetical or theoretical idea" (Barcik, 2016). Exploratory research can be applied in two distinct ways. One can either use and apply already existing theories in the field of interest or one can develop these theories in the process of doing research (Barcik, 2016). Descriptive research, on the other hand, "attempts to explore and explain while providing additional information about the topic (Barcik, 2016). Descriptive research is mainly describing phenomena and often builds upon exploratory research (Barcik, 2016). Lastly, there is explanatory research, which "tries to explain relationships between variables" (Barcik, 2016). Explanatory research is often viewed as the last step in doing research since it builds upon both exploratory as well as descriptive research and its main purpose is explaining (Barcik, 2016). This research looks at "how" something happened by exploring existing data and by providing new additional information on the matter, which means that this research is descriptive of nature.

Lastly, there is primary and secondary research. For this dissertation, both types of research are conducted. Primary data, to begin with, can be both quantitative and qualitative and is created by the original researcher (Bryman, 2016, p. 11) with the main purpose of addressing a specific research problem (Hox & Boeije, 2005, p. 593). The primary data created for this research is qualitative of nature and is comprised of multiple interviews with professionals in the field of child poverty in either or both the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, which is elaborated upon in the next chapter. Secondary data can be both qualitative and quantitative in nature as well and "is created by someone who did not directly experience or participate in the events or conditions under investigation" (USC Libraries, 2019). It is the collection of already existing data in the field of research one is looking into (Sarantakos, 2013). The secondary data collected for this research is both quantitative and qualitative in nature. The quantitative secondary data collected for this research is mainly concerned with statistical numerical findings and are derived from official EU websites, such as 'Eurostat'. Whereas the qualitative secondary data is comprised of existing literature that was written on the matter of child poverty and is derived from a great variety of websites, books, journals and reports.

3.2 Qualitative interviews

As previously mentioned, primary data can be both quantitative and qualitative in nature and is created by the original researcher (Bryman, 2016, p. 11) with the main purpose of addressing a specific research problem (Hox & Boeije, 2005, p. 593). Due to the theoretical nature of this research, qualitative interviews are conducted with professionals in the field of child poverty in either or both the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. To ensure the reliability and the accuracy of the results, it is important not to solely rely on data that was originally collected by someone else and created with a

completely different purpose (Hox & Boeije, 2005, p. 593). The secondary data is therefore used with the aim of providing context and background information. Whereas, the primary data is utilized for the providence of in depth information that originates from professionals with hands-on experience in the field of the research problem. Interviewing as the method of primary data collection is also a good way of identifying values, believes and motives, and attitudes (Richardson, Dohrenwend, & Klein, 1965). Additionally, it ensures comparability, because the researcher is provided with the opportunity to make sure that all questions are answered by the participants (Bailey, 1987). And, with a personal interview, the participants are ought to formulate a response without the assistance of a third party, which gives room to objectivism (Bailey, 1987).

3.2.1 Interview structure

When conducting an interview, it is important to decide on a certain interview method. There are three distinct interview types, namely structured, unstructured and semi-structured interviews (Greetham, 2019, pp. 194-195). The structured interview method is mainly used for quantitative research and is established through a fixed set of questions with a fixed set of answers that are the same for every participant (Greetham, 2019, pp. 194-195). The unstructured interview method is the complete opposite and has no fixed set of questions (Greetham, 2019, p. 195). It refers to a situation in which the data collection mainly relies on the interaction between the researcher and the participant (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1990). The semi-structured interview method lies between the previously mentioned methods and are partly prepared beforehand (Greetham, 2019, p. 195). They contain a certain amount of flexibility in which the researcher has the room to change the sequence of the questions or add questions (Barriball & White, 1994, pp. 328-335). The participants are also allowed to add content relevant information besides solely answering the questions (Barriball & White, 1994, pp. 328-335). For this research, two distinct interview methods are used, namely the unstructured and the semi-structured interview method. These exact methods were decided upon because of the background of the participants, which is elaborated upon in sub-paragraph 3.2.3.

The interviews are transcribed manually on the basis of the 'Intelligent Verbatim Transcription' method. This method mainly focuses on the process of recording any form of recorded speech with the aim of transforming it into written text (Miller, 2012). When using this method, one cuts out irrelevant phrases and words to increase the readability of the transcript (Miller, 2012). For this research, five interviews are conducted in total. One of the interviews is a personal face-to-face interview and is recorded with a mobile phone. One other interview is conducted through e-mail and the remaining three interviews are conducted over a phone call and are recorded with the recording application of a computer.

3.2.2 Research Ethics

When writing a dissertation, it is extremely important to ensure the ethical conduct of the research. As O'Leary (2014) stated: "The power to produce knowledge requires responsibility for integrity in its production" (p. 50). For this research, the APA Ethics Code is used as a guideline for approaching the research ethically, especially the interview participants and the content of the interviews. The APA Ethics code is comprised of five (A-E) general principles (APA, 2017):

- A. Beneficence and Nonmaleficence
- B. Fidelity and Responsibility
- C. Integrity
- D. Justice
- E. Respects for People's Rights and Dignity

Principle A refers to the importance of doing no harm (APA, 2017). As a researcher, it is extremely important to safeguard the rights of whom you work with. If a conflict occurs, it is the researcher's responsibility to minimize the risk of harm that can be done to the people one works with (APA, 2017). Principle B addresses the fact that a researcher must be aware of its responsibilities towards the people one works with (APA, 2017). Principle C refers to the integrity a researcher must uphold towards the people one works with (APA, 2017). Trust is an important factor when people are involved and therefore, accuracy and truthfulness are extremely important (APA, 2017). Researchers are ought to avoid unclear commitments and to keep their promises (APA, 2017). Principle D recognizes that justice and fairness entitle all people and that research must take precautions to prevent unjust practices from occurring (APA, 2017). Principle E emphasizes the importance of respect. Researchers must respect the people whom works with and the rights of these individuals to privacy and confidentiality (APA, 2017). Researchers must be aware of cultural, age, ethnicity and religious differences and additionally, respect these differences (APA, 2017).

To ensure the ethical awareness of the research, an extensive ethics form needs to be filled out and signed. This form is available in the appendices chapter. Additionally, the interview participants are asked to sign a consent form that explained their rights and all the important information concerning this research. If they signed the form, they agreed to take part in the interview.

3.2.3 Interview participants

Multiple interviews are conducted with relevant specialists in the field of child poverty. To be able to sufficiently explore the research topic, it is decided to interview participants within the same field, but with different expertise's. In this section, further explaining will be given with regards to the specialists.

The face-to-face interview was with a financial analyst working for the European Commission. As this participant wishes to stay anonymous, he is therefore referred to as the Financial Analyst. For this interview, the unstructured interview method was used. This method is deemed suitable because of the background information the participant provided the researcher with. The e-mail interview was with Neil Cowan, policy and parliamentary officer for the UK Poverty Alliance. For this interview, the structured interview method was used as he was sent a set list of questions. Then there is the third participant who works for an organisation that among other societal difficulties fight child poverty. This was a telephone interview based on the semi-structured interview method. As she wishes to stay anonymous, she is referred to as Dutch Process Manager. The fourth participant works as a European Commissioner. This was a telephone interview based on the semi-structured interview method as well. As he wishes to stay anonymous, he is referred to as the Commissioner. The fifth and last participant is professor Jonathan Bradshaw. Bradshaw is professor in Social Policy and emeritus at the University of York. The interview with Bradshaw was a telephone interview and is based on the semi-structured interview method.

3.3 Research limitations

The limitations of a research refer to the characteristics that had a certain influence or impact on the research findings (USC Libraries, 2019). These limitations will be elaborated upon in this chapter.

Due to the fact that this research addresses a contemporary EU strategy and the strategy will continue to develop after the end of this dissertation, the scope of the research has to be limited. Additionally, the Europe 2020 Strategy is concerned with a timeframe of ten years, which is beyond the scope of this bachelor thesis. Therefore, the time frame is narrowed down to four years. In this timeframe, the research will look at the strategy between 2015 and 2018, which indicates another limitation, the strategy ends in 2020. Since the strategy ends in 2020, the conclusions of this research might only be of value for a short period of time. Additionally, a limitation arises regarding the interviews. The fifth interview conducted for this research could only be conducted through e-mail because of time constraints. This made it impossible to send more than five questions and therefore, the information is rather limited in comparison to the other interviews that were conducted either with a face-to-face interview or a telephone call.

3.3.1 Data collection

For this research, qualitative research that is comprised of both quantitative secondary data as well as qualitative primary and secondary data is conducted. Most of the secondary data can be found online and can be accessed through online libraries. Data that can be found online can also be removed or amended in certain cases, which creates certain unreliability. Despite the fact that the primary data conducted for this research adds an in-depth dimension to this research, it also poses another limitation. Since this research is aimed at an EU strategy, it is important that the interview participants have extended knowledge related to this EU strategy or relevant aspects of the Strategy. Most of the people with this knowledge are either EU representatives or employees of large social organisations. This makes it hard to approach them. Additionally, this research focuses on both the Netherlands and the UK. Dutch interview participants were found in a relative short amount of time. Whereas potential interview candidates from the UK were hard to find and even harder to get in contact with. In the end, the search for an interview participant from the UK has not been entirely successful and therefore, the primary data on the UK is somewhat limited in comparison with primary data on the Netherlands.

The next chapter seeks to provide answers to the three sub-question on the basis of both qualitative and quantitative secondary data.

4. Literature review

4.1 Background information

Before looking into the child poverty developments that took place between 2015 and 2018 in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, this section provides background information on both countries.

4.1.1 The Netherlands

The Netherlands is a country that shows lower child poverty rates in comparison to many other EU Member States (Eurostat, 2017). However, also in the Netherlands, child poverty is still an issue with detrimental consequences (Verwey-Jonker Institute, 2013, p. 5).

According to the European Commission, one of the Dutch governments' priorities is the creation of a prosperous environment for Dutch children to grow up in (European Commission, 2019). To be able to create such an environment, the Dutch government initiated an integrated approach, which functions in a way that all aspects of society are developed in a sense that child poverty will no longer be an option (European Commission, 2019). This will mainly be realized on the basis of financial investments (European Commission, 2019). The ideal stable environment is an environment in which parents enjoy sufficient income, are assisted with the prevention of creating high debts, children are provided with essential care and have access to early education (European Commission, 2019). The most important actors in this process are, at the central level, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs Welfare and Sports, and the Ministry of Health. At the local level, local authorities, such as non-profit organisations are the most important actors (European Commission, 2019). Then there is the Children's Ombudsman, which is a public authority that monitors the central and local governments and is allowed to provide advice regarding the development of laws and policies affecting children's rights (European Commission, 2019).

4.1.2 The United Kingdom

The United Kingdom is a sovereign state made up of multiple countries, namely England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland (BBC, 2019). The United Kingdom has a population of approximately 62.8 million people (BBC, 2019) and even though the United Kingdom is a great economic power (BBC, 2019), millions of children are growing up in a disadvantaged socioeconomic environment (Butler, Child poverty above 50% in 10 UK constituencies, 2019).

According to the European Commission, the United Kingdom is ought to be flexible when it comes to the creation of plans and arrangements in the field of child poverty because of all the different

government layers that are involved in this matter (European Commission, 2019). The responsibility for family leave and social assistance, for example, is carried out by the UK government (European Commission, 2019). Whereas, the responsibility for health and education is carried out by the countries individually (European Commission, 2019). All the different strategies and plans are all addressed differently across each country located in the UK (European Commission, 2019). (effect of this?)

As previously mentioned, the UK does not have a national target that correlates with the Europe 2020 Strategy (Eurostat, 2017). However, the UK does have the in 2010 established 'Child Poverty Act' (CPAG, 2019). Despite the fact that the 'Child Poverty Act' was not created within the timeframe of this research, the act has been of great significance and served as a precedent for many policies and strategies that were established between 2015 and 2018 (CPAG, 2019). Therefore, it is important that this strategy is briefly highlighted. The Act was established with the main aim of significantly reducing child poverty by 2020 (CPAG, 2019). The Act functioned as a motivation for governments to reach the UK-wide child poverty targets (CPAG, 2019). The four targets set up by the Act are as follows (Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2015, p. 112);

1. Relative low income (Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2015, p. 112): "the proportion of children who live in households with income below 60 percent of the current media". The target is reducing this percentage to 10 per cent by 2020 (Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2015, p. 112).
2. Combined low income and material deprivation (Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2015, p. 112); "the proportion of children who live in households with income below 70 per cent of the current median who experience material deprivation". The target is reducing this percentage to 5 per cent by 2020 (Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2015, p. 112).
3. Absolute low income (Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2015, p. 112); "the proportion of children who live in households with income below 60 per cent of the 2010/11 median. The target is reducing this percentage to 5 per cent by 2020 (Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2015, p. 112).
4. Persistent poverty (Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2015, p. 112); "the proportion of children who live in households with income below the current median in at least three of the previous four years". The target is reducing this percentage to 7 per cent by 2020 (Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2015, p. 112).

Another important strategy that was developed before 2015, but continued being active until 2017, is the 'Child Poverty Strategy 2014-17' (HM government, 2014, p. 11). This strategies' main aim was to reduce child poverty on the basis of three targets: 1. "Supporting families into work and increasing their earnings"; 2. "Improving living standards"; 3. "And preventing poor children becoming poor adults through raising their educational attainment" (HM government, 2014, p. 11).

4.2 Child poverty developments between 2015 and 2018

In this section, child poverty development trends that took place between 2015 and 2018 are highlighted. To be able to see the country specific developments in perspective, this research starts by briefly looking at child poverty development trends in the EU in its entirety.

4.2.1 The development of child poverty in the European Union

Figure 3 illustrates how the share of children at risk of poverty has developed between 2015 and 2018 (Eurostat, 2016, p. 1; Eurostat, 2017; Eurostat, 2018; Eurostat, 2019). In percentages, the share has gone down from 26,9% in 2015 (Eurostat, 2016, p. 1) to 24,9% in 2018 (Eurostat, 2018). This section highlights which developments might have influenced this decrease.

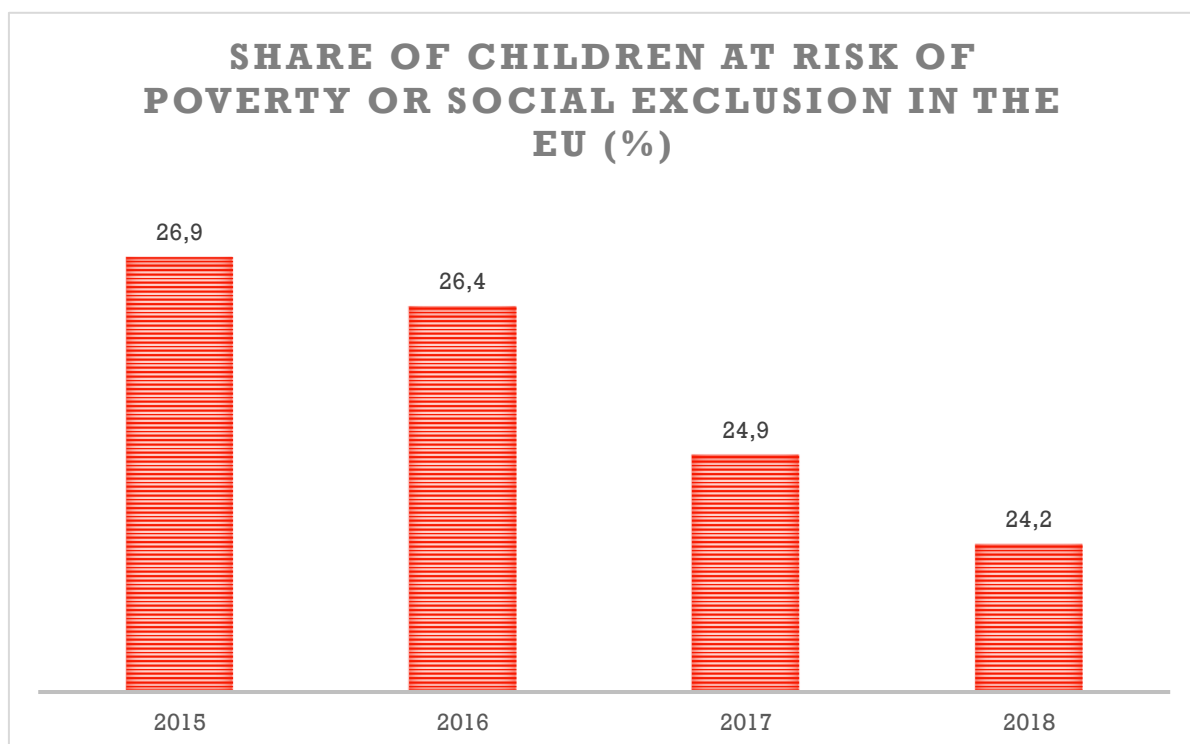


Figure 3. Share of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU (Eurostat, 2016, p. 1; Eurostat, 2017; Eurostat, 2018; Eurostat, 2019).

Over the years, multiple significant developments took place within the EU. The first development is the streamlining and intensification of the 'European Semester' (Ministry of Economic Affairs, 2015). The European Semester is an EU framework that coordinates economic and budgetary policy (Ministry

of Economic Affairs, 2015). The Semester works with phases; they first publish the 'Alert Mechanism Report' and the 'Annual Growth Survey' in November (Ministry of Economic Affairs, 2015, p. 1). Then in April, Member States create 'National Reform Programmes' (NRP's) and 'Stability Programs' in which they report on how they are reaching the Europe 2020 targets, how policies are being implemented at a national level, and how EU guidance is considered and addressed (Ministry of Economic Affairs, 2015, p. 1). Lastly, the European Commission assesses both programs, after which new country specific recommendations are proposed by the European Council (Ministry of Economic Affairs, 2015, p. 1).

Additionally, Europe 2020 related progress is also processed in the countries' NRP's (Ministry of Economic Affairs, 2015). This means that the EU Member States do not only keep track of the progress they make but also of the improvements that might be necessary (Ministry of Economic Affairs, 2015). The NRP's provide a table at the end of the document with the specific measurements a country takes and the corresponding qualitative impact of these measurements (Ministry of Economic Affairs, 2015, pp. 20-21). After that, the NRP looks at the concluding status of the Strategy (Ministry of Economic Affairs, 2015, p. 22). This way, the countries as well as the European Commission can properly track each Member States' progress.

Then there is the 'Child Guarantee' (European Commission, 2015). The Child Guarantee is an EU initiative that was proposed in 2015 to serve as guidance for Member States in the process of promoting children's well-being and tackling child poverty (Eurochild, 2019). The Guarantee aims for a world in which children have access to a basic set of key services (Eurochild, 2019). These key services consist of free healthcare, free education, decent housing, adequate nutrition, and free childcare (Eurochild, 2019). For the EU to be able to actually provide children with these key services, the Child Guarantee is planned to be integrated into the 2021-2027 EU budget (Eurochild, 2019). Additionally, for the EU to be sure of the Member States' motivation, only the Member States who set up a policy framework on child poverty reduction have access to the budget (Eurochild, 2019).

Another development that is considered to be of significance is the 'Agenda for Sustainable Development', which was adopted in 2015 (Save the Children, 2016, p. 9). The agenda consists of 17 'Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)' and an additional 169 targets (Save the Children, 2016, p. 9). As argued by Stewart and Okubo, both working for the 'Global Coalition to End Child Poverty', children have not yet received enough attention in this worldwide struggle against poverty and the SDG's provide the world with a chance to change this (Stewart & Okubo, 2017). Goal 1, which aims at ending child poverty in all its forms everywhere, is the first explicit commitment between countries to effectively measure child poverty and strengthen or amend policies in a way that the poverty reduction

target is met by 2030 (Stewart & Okubo, 2017). 'Save the Children' highlights that some scepticism towards the SDG's exist since it is argued they might be too international to be applicable to the EU (Save the Children, 2016, p. 9). However, they argue that in combination with compatible policies, the Agenda is an extremely useful tool to realise the eradication of poverty and social exclusion within the European Union (Save the Children, 2016, p. 9).

The 'European Pillar of Social Rights', also known as the 'Social Pillar', is the third significant development (Eurochild, 2017, p. 4). The Social Pillar was launched by the European Commission in 2017 with the main aim of "delivering new and more effective rights for citizens" (European Commission, n.d.). The strategy can be divided into three distinct categories, namely "equal opportunities and access to the labour market", "fair working conditions", and "social protection and inclusion" (European Commission, n.d.). The Social Pillar acknowledges that it is a fundamental right for children to be free from poverty (Eurochild, 2017). According to Jana Hainsworth, Eurochild's Secretary General, this strategy is a step towards increased recognition of children's rights (Eurochild, 2017). In the same year, the EU started funding a Preparatory Action to explore the feasibility of the 2015 Child Guarantee (Eurochild, 2017).

In 2018, the European Commission proposed the 'European Social Fund+' (ESF+) (Eurochild, 2018, p. 8). The ESF+ will function as the European Union's main financial tool in the fight against child poverty once it gets adopted (European Commission, 2018). Just like the Child Guarantee, it will be included in the 2021-2027 budget (European Commission, 2018).

Besides the ESF+ proposal, another financial tool was proposed, namely the sixth 'Multiannual Financial Framework' (MFF) (FRA, 2018). The MFF is a financial framework that presents the maximum amounts that can be spent on certain categories (European Parliament, 2018). The MFF is the EU's long-term budget, which usually covers seven years (European Parliament, 2018). This means that the sixth MFF would cover 2021-2027 (European Parliament, 2018). According to the FRA, the MFF is can be identified as one of the tools that reflects the EU priorities, among which child poverty (FRA, 2018).

The next section highlights the most relevant child poverty developments that took place between 2015 and 2018 in the Netherlands.

4.2.3 The development of child poverty in the Netherlands

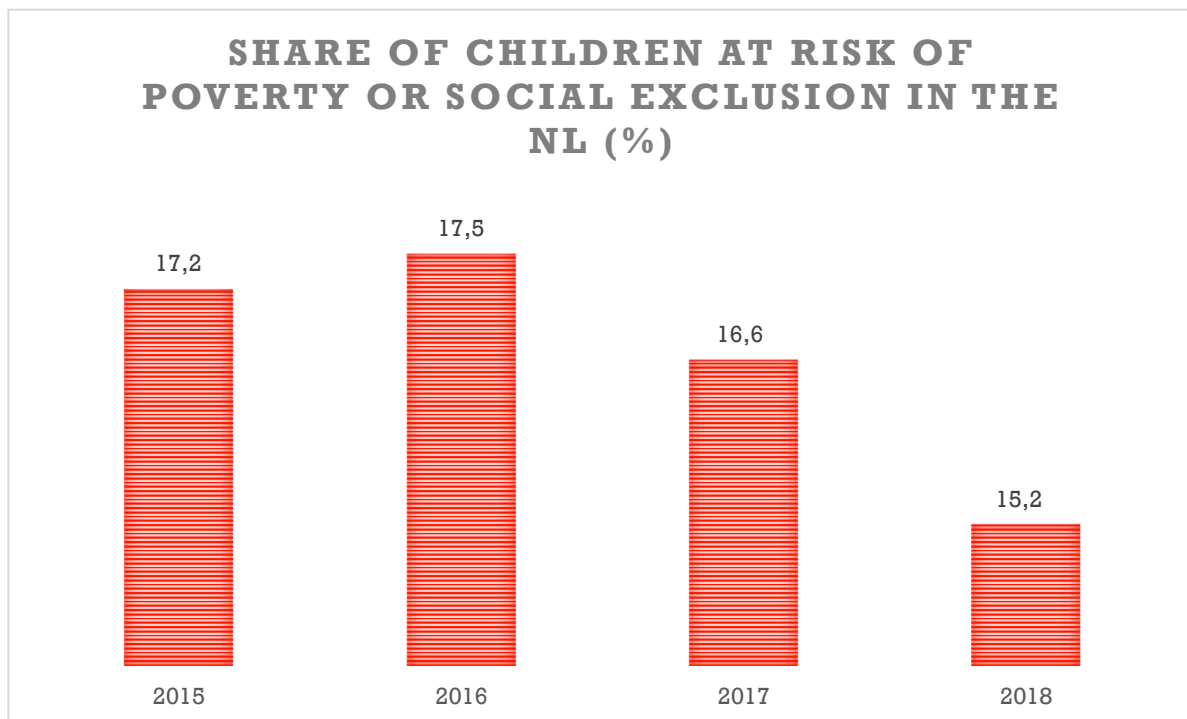


Figure 4. Share of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the NL (Eurostat, 2016; Eurostat, 2017; Eurostat, 2018; Eurostat, 2019).

Figure 4 illustrates that after reaching a high in 2016 (Eurostat, 2017), the share of Dutch children living at risk of poverty have significantly been dropping between 2016 and 2018 (Eurostat, 2018; Eurostat, 2019). They went from 17,2% in 2015 (Eurostat, 2016), to 15,2% in 2018 (Eurostat, 2019).

The first relevant development took place in 2016 and was a decision by the Dutch government. The Dutch government decided to put aside 3.5 million euros for the subsidization of social organizations (European Commission, 2016, p. 20). Among other things, this investment was used for the providence of personal financial incentives (European Commission, 2016, p. 25). This was decided upon because research showed that mothers with young children were extremely sensitive to financial incentives since it made them better capable of combining work and the care of children (European Commission, 2016). Another relevant policy measure was the promotion of collaborations between public and private parties as a means of reaching target groups more effectively (European Commission, 2016, p. 17).

In 2017, another financial decision was taken. The Dutch government decided to annually put aside 100 million euros for municipalities and relevant local organisations (Rijksoverheid, 2018). The majority of the Dutch municipalities decided to invest a large part of this sum directly into their child poverty policies (Rijksoverheid, 2018). However, an increasing number of municipalities decided to invest the

money directly into certain resources meant for children, such as free tickets for school trips or free sport subscriptions (Rijksoverheid, 2018). With these actions, the Dutch municipalities were already able to reach more children in contrast to 2016 (Rijksoverheid, 2018). However, according to Tamara van Ark, the Dutch Secretary of Social Affairs and Employment, there is still a significant amount of room left for improvement (Rijksoverheid, 2018).

In the same year, two important advisory reports were written by 'The Social-Economic Council of the Netherlands' (SER) and the Children's Ombudsman. The SER is an organ that advises both the Dutch cabinet and the Parliament on socioeconomic policymaking (Sociaal-Economische Raad, 2017). The Children's Ombudsman has similar tasks but their main job is protecting children's rights (Rijksoverheid, n.d.). The report written by the SER is called 'Growing up Without Poverty' and argues that the Dutch government must increasingly look at the root causes of child poverty and prevent it from spreading (Sociaal-Economische Raad, 2017, p. 9). The report written by the Children's Ombudsman is called 'A Promising Future for all Children' and provides the Dutch government with four general advices: 1. Implement a more integral approach; 2. Motivate and guide families to stabilize their current situations; 3. Look at individual situations to be able to provide adequate help; 4. Directly ask children what they need (Kinderombudsman, 2017, p. 6). Additionally, both authorities agreed upon setting a quantitative target (Van Ark, 2018, p. 1) in which the number of children is annually brought down with a set percentage (Sociaal-Economische Raad, 2017, p. 15). This target is ought to provide the national policy on child poverty with a direction (Sociaal-Economische Raad, 2017, p. 15).

As a response to the advice reports formulated by The Social-Economic Council and the Children's Ombudsman in 2017, a new approach to child poverty was developed in 2018 (Van Ark, 2018, p. 1). The new approach emphasizes a collaboration between the Dutch government and the Union of Municipalities with the purpose of actually realizing the previously mentioned quantitative reduction of children at risk of poverty in the Netherlands (Van Ark, 2018, p. 1). The Dutch government aims at reaching this target on the basis of four ambitions: 1. All children that live in poverty are provided with the opportunity to participate; 2. Aim at reducing low income households with children; 3. Periodical insights of children living in poverty; 4. Map well-working examples of the fight against child poverty (Van Ark, 2018, pp. 3-9).

The next section highlights the most significant child poverty developments that took place between 2015 and 2018 in the United Kingdom.

4.2.5 The development of child poverty in the United Kingdom

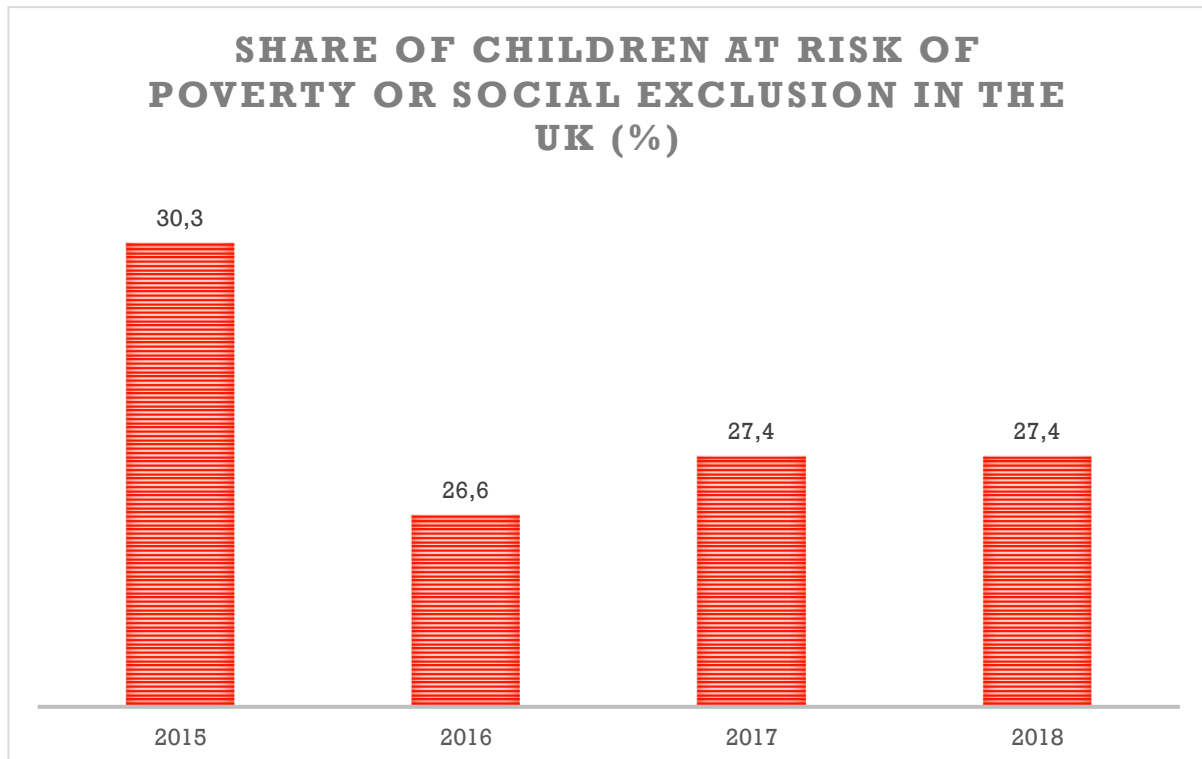


Figure 5. Share of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the UK (Eurostat, 2016); (Eurostat, 2017); (Eurostat, 2018); (Eurostat, 2019).

Figure 5 provides this research with an overview of the UK child poverty rates between 2015 and 2018 (Butler, 2018; Eurostat, 2016; Eurostat, 2017). The table shows an extreme high in 2015 (Eurostat, 2016) after which the rates dropped in 2016 (Eurostat, 2017). In 2017 the rates started to increase again (Eurostat, 2018) after which the amount of children at risk of poverty remained the same in 2018 (Butler, 2018).

The first relevant development took place in 2015, when the UK government created the 'Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission' (SMCPC) (European Commission, 2019). The SMCPC is a non-departmental public body (NDPB) that monitors UK child poverty reduction and the improvement of social mobility within the UK (Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2015). One of the recommendations made by the European Council was for the UK to continue putting effort in this matter (UK Government, 2016, p. 6). As a response to this recommendation, three measures for fighting the root causes of child poverty were developed: 1. Helping people find employment and making work pay; 2. support low-income household with their living standards; 3. And, changing the outcomes of children in low-income household by improving educational opportunities (HM government, 2014, p. 11).

In the same year, the UK government decided to repeal the four previously mentioned targets that were determined during the creation of the 2010 'Child Poverty Act' (NHS Health, 2017, p. 1). This is elaborated upon in the next section.

In 2016, a multitude of developments took place. The 2010 'Child Poverty Act' was abolished and replaced by the 'Welfare Reform and Work Act' (CPAG, 2019). This new Act imposes a legal duty on the UK government to inform the Parliament on relevant progress made in the field of child poverty (UK Government, 2016, p. 4). Secondly, it imposes a legal duty on the government to publish relevant data (UK Government, 2016, p. 4). Additionally, the Act changed the name of the 2010 'Child Poverty Act' into the 2010 'Life Changes Act' (UK Government, 2016, p. 4). It replaced income related targets with other measures that could improve the lives of children and it renamed the SMCP, which is now known as the 'Social Mobility Commission' (SMCP) (UK Government, 2016, p. 4). Even though a visible decrease in child poverty rates could be detected in 2016, the 'Resolution Foundation', an independent UK think tank that was designed to improve the lives of those living with low income, argued that relative poverty will only keep on rising and will be twice as high in 2020 (CPAG, 2019).

One year later, more developments took place. Firstly, the UK government introduced the two-child limit (Butler, 2019). "The two-child limit restricts the child element in universal credit and tax credits worth 2,780 pounds per child per year to the first two children" (Butler, 2019). The main reason behind the introduction of this limit was to motivate people that were permanently relying on family benefits to work (Butler, 2019). However, criticism arose because of these cuts. According to Katherine Sellgren, news family reporter at BBC News, the limit devastates families (Sellgren, 2019). This is agreed upon by the Church of England and the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG), who claim that this new policy is unfair and does not successfully support families in need (Sellgren, 2019). The CPAG adds that these cuts especially hit the families that were already underperforming financially (CPAG, 2017, p. 5). The cuts to universal credit were supposed to lift approximately 300.000 out of poverty, instead, it is now predicted that a million more children will fall into poverty and 900.000 children that were already living under disadvantaged circumstances will only fall further into poverty (CPAG, 2017, p. 5).

Secondly, the UK Prime Minister Theresa May made a statement saying that it is the UK's priority to tackle child poverty and disadvantage (HM Government, 2017, p. 46). Just as in 2015, May emphasized the importance of addressing the root causes of child poverty to be able to effectively fight it (HM Government, 2017, p. 46). As a result of this speech, the 'Improving lives: helping workless families' policy paper was published (HM Government, 2017, p. 46). This paper was designed with the main aim of providing a framework for positively changing the prospects of children growing up in workless

households (HM Government, 2017, p. 47). This framework is comprised of four different objectives: 1. Helping parents getting back to work; 2. Monitor and reduce conflicts between parents; 3. Work with relevant authorities to address the needs of parents with children; 4. And, help parents get back to being employed after a period of drug or alcohol dependency (HM Government, 2017, p. 47).

Lastly, as a response to the removal of the repealed 'Child Poverty Act' income targets, Scotland initiated the 'Child Poverty (Scotland) Act' (NHS Health, 2017, p. 1). Scotland opted out of the UK approach and believed that they could eradicate child poverty by designing their own targets (NHS Health, 2017, p. 1). A big difference between the two Acts is that the Scottish Act aims at reaching its targets by 2030, whereas the Act that is now known as the 'Welfare Reform and Work Act', aims at reaching its targets by 2020 (NHS Health, 2017, p. 2). Scotland is the only UK country that works with statutory income targets (NHS Health, 2017, p. 1).

In 2018, the first plan under the 'Child Poverty (Scotland) Act' was published, namely the 'Every Child, Every Chance' plan (Campbell, 2019). According to Angela Constance, Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities, this plan can be considered a first step in the process of eradicating poverty under the 2017 Act (Scottish Government, 2018, p. 2).

The plan is backed by a 50-million-pound investment that must encourage the Scottish government to reach its targets (Scottish Government, 2018, p. 4). The targets are as follows:

- 1 "Fewer than 10% of children living in families in relative poverty";
- 2 "Fewer than 5% of children living in families in absolute poverty";
- 3 "Fewer than 5% of children living in families living in combined low income and material deprivation";
- 4 "And, fewer than 5% of children living in families in persistent poverty" (Scottish Government, 2018, p. 8).

4.2.7 Comparison

Both the Netherlands as well as the United Kingdom have experienced significant child poverty related developments. This section compares the developments both countries went through between 2015 and 2018.

The first and most visible difference relates to the percentage of children aged 0 to 17 that were at risk of poverty between 2015 and 2018. In 2015, 17,2% of Dutch children aged 0 to 17 were at risk of poverty (Eurostat, 2016), whereas the United Kingdom had a child poverty rate of 30,3% (European

Commission, 2019). Even though this significant difference, they both experienced a decrease in child poverty rates when comparing 2015 with 2018 (Eurostat, 2016; Eurostat, 2018; Van Ark, 2018; European Commission, 2019). Another difference can be identified when looking at the national targets for fighting child poverty. The Netherlands decided to set a national target in accordance with the Europe 2020 Strategy (Eurostat, 2017), whereas the United Kingdom decided to set targets on the basis of national acts on child poverty (Eurostat, 2017). Additionally, it is important to note that there is a difference between the Netherlands and the UK with regards to its jurisdictions (BBC, 2019). Where the United Kingdom has three distinct legal jurisdictions (BBC, 2019), the Netherlands only has one. Scotland, for example, has the ability to go against national Acts and come up with their own Acts and targets (NHS Health, 2017, p. 1). Both countries believe there needs to be an increased focus on the root causes of child poverty (Sociaal-Economische Raad, 2017, p. 9; HM Government, 2017). They think that this is necessary to be able to effectively fight child poverty (Sociaal-Economische Raad, 2017, p. 9; HM Government, 2017).

The next chapter of this research seeks to highlight a list of identifiable causes of child poverty.

4.3 Identifiable causes of child poverty

This section looks into the identifiable causes of child poverty. From the literature it became apparent that overall, both countries experience similar events causing children to grow up in disadvantaged socioeconomic circumstances. These causes appear to be the parents' labour market situation (Eurostat, 2019), the parents' educational level (Eurostat, 2016), the composition of the household (HM government, 2014, p. 65) and debt (Verwey-Jonker Institute, 2013, p. 14; HM government, 2014). On the basis of literature originating from both the Netherlands as well as the United Kingdom, this section looks into the causes of child poverty that can be identified in both countries.

4.3.1 Parents' labour market situation

Labour is often the main source of income and is therefore of great significance for the environment children grow up in (Eurostat, 2019). Growing up in a low-income household does not only cause material deprivation it often also results in limited access to healthcare, high risk at future unemployment and high levels of school dropouts (European Commission, 2016). This is agreed upon by Kerris Cooper, co-author of a study published by the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) (Rustin, 2017). She states that household income has "a significant impact on everything from children's cognitive and educational outcomes to their social development and physical health" (Rustin, 2017). Besides low-income households, low work intensity households are also a source of

hidden problems (Eurostat, 2019). The European Commission argues that children growing up in low work intensity households have a 67.2 % chance of being at risk of poverty, whereas children growing up in a medium work intensity household have a 27.5% chance of being at risk of poverty (European Commission, 2016). This clearly indicates the significance of employment (European Commission, 2016), which is also emphasized by Kamp (2015, p. 4).

A rather unknown problem are the families from which both parents are employed and where poverty is still an issue (Divosa, 2017, p. 5). These families often do not apply for possible financial arrangements, simply because they lack knowledge concerning these arrangements (Divosa, 2017, p. 5). Therefore, it is extremely hard for municipalities to map employed families with children living in poverty and to accurately fight this problem (Divosa, 2017, p. 6).

4.3.2 Parents' educational level

In general, higher levels of education often lead to jobs with higher earnings and a greater chance at employment (HM government, 2014, p. 60). In an earlier mentioned article published by 'Eurostat', it is stated that a decrease in child poverty rates partly depends on the education level reached by the parents of the children (Eurostat, 2016). In this article, Eurostat claimed that 65.5% of all children living in households managed by parents with an education level not higher than lower secondary education, were at risk of poverty (Eurostat, 2016). Whereas, only 10.6% of the children raised by parents with a tertiary level of education were at risk of poverty (Eurostat, 2016). This is agreed upon by the organisation 'Save the Children' (Save the Children, 2016). They acknowledge that children have a higher risk of growing up in a disadvantaged socioeconomic environment when parents have a lower level of education (Save the Children, 2016, p. 17). Therefore, it can be said that the educational level of parents has a significant effect on the attainment of the children (HM government, 2014, p. 60). It is argued to be a downwards spiral; material poverty is often followed by educational poverty (Save the Children, 2016, p. 5), which in turn results in sustaining the transmission of intergenerational disadvantage (European Commission, 2016).

4.3.3 Composition of the household

The family size is also identified as a significant cause of child poverty (HM government, 2014, p. 65). Children that grow up with two or more siblings have an increased risk of growing up in a disadvantaged socioeconomic environment (HM government, 2014, p. 66; Divosa, 2017). An explanation for this phenomenon is that families with three or more children simply require higher income; there are more mouths to feed (HM government, 2014, p. 66). Additionally, it is proven that larger families have an increased amount of care related responsibilities (HM government, 2014, p.

65), which in turn, impacts the parent's labour market situation (HM government, 2014, p. 66). Furthermore, the number of parents present in a household also plays a part; it can be said that children who grow up in single parent households have a 46.7% chance of growing up under disadvantaged circumstances (Eurostat, 2019). Whereas, children growing up in a two-parent household only have a 16.3% chance of being at risk of poverty (Eurostat, 2019). This is agreed upon by both the previously mentioned research conducted by the UK government (HM government, 2014, p. 66) and a research conducted by 'Divosa', a Dutch Union comprised of the heads of Dutch municipalities (Divosa, 2017, p. 4).

4.3.4 Debts

For a research conducted by the Dutch Children's Ombudsman, approximately 500 children who are currently living in poverty, were asked to answer poverty related questions (Verwey-Jonker Institute, 2013). Besides unemployment and low income, 44% of the children named debt as one of the most significant reasons behind their situation (Verwey-Jonker Institute, 2013, p. 60). Debt as a cause of child poverty is also acknowledged by the previously mentioned British research, which refers to a situation in which low-income households have fewer financial resources to be able to pay bills (HM government, 2014, p. 79). Low-income households appear to have more difficulty with accessing credit and borrowing seems to cost more for low-income households (HM government, 2014, p. 79). There is no clear causal relation between debt and future poverty, however, debt does cause current income poverty, which has a clear impact on families and especially the children living in these families (HM government, 2014, p. 79).

After establishing four main identifiable causes of child poverty, the next section seeks to develop a future hypothesis on child poverty for the EU in its entirety and for the Netherlands and the UK individually.

4.4 A future hypothesis

Over the years, different opinions arose with regards to the feasibility of the Europe 2020 targets (Darvas, 2018; BBC, 2019; European Commission, 2014; Raibagi, 2019). This chapter highlights what the EU in its entirety, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom could do to reach the desired outcomes once the 'Europe 2020' deadline has passed.

4.4.1 European Union

In 2014, the European Commission hosted a high-level conference to review the first years of the Europe 2020 Strategy (European Commission, 2014). During this conference, it became clear that not only the majority of the participants strongly agreed on the fact that addressing poverty lies with the Member States and that it is their job to set ambitious targets (European Commission, 2014, p. 2) but also that the poverty target would not be reached if Member States did not step up their efforts (European Commission, 2014, p. 4). Both arguments were strongly emphasized by both László Andor, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (European Commission, 2014, p. 4) and Maria Preca, President of the Republic of Malta (European Commission, 2014, p. 4). Four years after the conference took place, the EU is still far away from reaching its poverty target (Eurostat, 2019). 'Save the Children' is convinced that the current EU measurement tools are insufficient and do not yet measure the root causes of child poverty, which makes it harder to effectively address the matter (Save the Children, 2016, p. 43). They are convinced that additional sub-indicators of child poverty and social exclusion, based on their previously mentioned 'Investing in Children' strategy, could strengthen the initial process of the Europe 2020 Strategy (Save the Children, 2016, p. 43). Additionally, they believe that there needs to be an increased focus on children with special needs, the geographical areas children live in, the possible migrant background of children and additionally pay attention to children from ethnic minority groups (Save the Children, 2016, p. 43). In a policy agenda published by the 'End Child Poverty Global Coalition' (ECPGC) (ECPGC, 2016), it becomes clear that together with László Andor and Maria Preca, the coalition shares the idea of child poverty being a responsibility shared by all of society (ECPGC, 2016, p. 17). The Child Guarantee that was proposed in 2015 is ought to be included in the 2021-2027 EU budget and is expected to be of great significance for the future fight against child poverty (Eurochild, 2019).

4.4.2 The Netherlands

The latest data on Dutch children living at risk of poverty or social exclusion (Eurostat, 2018) shows the Dutch national poverty target will be extremely hard to reach by 2020 (Eurostat, 2016). The 2019 Dutch NRP presents that the Netherlands must continue putting effort in their already existing approach; the integral approach (European Commission, 2019, p. 36). Additionally, just like the overall EU approach, the Dutch NRP stresses the importance of addressing poverty from a multidimensional perspective (European Commission, 2019, p. 36) because child poverty is much more than material deprivation; it calls for increased attention to not only parental employment, but also to housing, education, health, and debt (European Commission, 2019, p. 36). To be able to do this, the Dutch local government will both continue making investments and support local municipalities in their fight against child poverty (European Commission, 2019, p. 36) as well as continue promoting collaborations between

municipalities, ministries, private-sector parties and certain civic organisations and effectively assist families (European Commission, 2019, p. 35). The Dutch government is convinced that the future involvement of stakeholders is of such significance that it will play a big part in reaching the poverty target, maybe not by 2020, but at least after the deadline has passed (Kamp, 2015, p. 3).

4.4.3 The United Kingdom

The latest data on child poverty indicates that the UK poverty target will not be reached by 2020 (Butler, 2018). This was already predicted by the UK Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) in 2015 (Parliament, 2015). They argued that, “under any plausible scenario” (Parliament, 2015), the poverty target will not be reached (Parliament, 2015). The IFS explained that even if the then incoming UK government amended certain policies, the future outcome would have been the same and the target would still not be met (Parliament, 2015). The SMCPD believes that the former UK government was aware of the unrealistic poverty target but did not show any transparency regarding the matter (Parliament, 2015), which made them argue that if the new UK government would acknowledge the unrealistic character of the poverty target, the 2010 Child Poverty Act could be amended in a way that more realistic goals could have been set (Parliament, 2015). Just like Save the Children (Save the Children, 2016, p. 43) and the Dutch central government (European Commission, 2019, p. 36), the SMCPD believes that for the UK to reach the poverty target, the government must increasingly look at the multidimensional character of child poverty and provide a more rounded and effective approach (Parliament, 2015).

Additionally, an all changing event took place on the 17th of October 2019. On that exact date, the UK accepted the terms upon which the UK would leave the EU (Rijksoverheid, 2020). Then, on the 31st of January 2020, the UK officially left the EU (de Boer, 2020). However, there is still a transition period of eleven months, which can be extended for two years if desired (Rijksoverheid, 2020). This means that until the 31st of December 2020, all EU regulations and rules will continue to exist and apply to the UK (Rijksoverheid, 2020). In this transition period, the UK and the EU will negotiate all relevant details that, among other things, relate to citizen’s rights, cooperation and security (Rijksoverheid, 2020). Negotiation between the UK and the individual Member States will be done by the European Commission on the basis of the mandate it is provided with by the Member States (Rijksoverheid, 2020).

Thoughts on Brexit’s influence on child poverty are very present. According to Saphora Smith, digital reporter at NBC news, deprived areas greatly benefited from the billions of the euros in EU funding that will now cease to exist (Smith, 2018). Philip Alston, UN special rapporteur on child poverty,

predicts that the Brexit will result in a great increase of child poverty rates (Smith, 2018), which is acknowledged by the IFS, who predicts that 37% of all UK children would be living in poverty by 2022 (Smith, 2018). In 2018, this was 27,4% (Eurostat, 2018). “British compassion for those who are suffering has been replaced by a punitive, mean-spirited and often callous approach”, Alston argues (Smith, 2018).

For the future, the UK government believes that employment is the way out of poverty, but in 60% of all families that face financial hardship, at least one member is employed (Smith, 2018). Clarity will follow once the transition period has officially come to an end, and thus, time will tell.

The next section provides a brief comparison on the future hypotheses of the EU, the Netherlands and the UK.

4.5.4 Comparison

Both the Netherlands as well as the United Kingdom have their own future plans for fighting child poverty. This section compares the two countries’ future plans.

Both countries are not expected to reach their national poverty target (Butler, 2019; Eurostat, 2019). However, the desire to eventually reach the targets is present in both countries (Kamp, 2015; Parliament, 2015). They have rather corresponding plans for the future. The Dutch NRP stresses the importance of a multidimensional approach to fighting child poverty (European Commission, 2019, p. 36) and this is also agreed upon by the UK Parliament (Parliament, 2015). Both governments believe that effectively fighting child poverty will need a more rounded approach (European Commission, 2019, p. 36; Parliament, 2015).

The next chapter seeks to provide answers to the sub-questions on the basis of the results originating from the qualitative interviews that were conducted for this research.

5. Results

This chapter processes the results that originate from the qualitative interviews that were conducted for this research. With reference to the methodology, this chapter is of great significance for the reliability and accuracy of this research (Hox & Boeije, 2005) since it is important to not only rely on secondary data (Hox & Boeije, 2005). This chapter is ought to function as deepening of the research conducted for the literature review, which was mainly gathered with the purpose of providing context and background information. The results are processed on the basis of the questions that were designed for this research and are outlined in the introduction. Some of the interviewees wished to stay anonymous and are therefore named by their function titles.

5.1 Child poverty developments between 2015 and 2018

The literature review highlighted a great variety of child poverty related developments that took place between 2015 and 2018 in the European Union in its entirety and in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom individually. The section provides relevant specialists in the field of child poverty with room to express their opinions on significant child poverty developments.

5.1.1 The Netherlands

When being asked about the most significant child poverty developments in the Netherlands, the Dutch Process Manager highlights a multitude of developments, both positive as well as negative ones (Process Manager, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 9-10). She starts by highlighting the end of the recession of 2007-08 (Process Manager, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 9). She explains that the end of the recession led to the Netherlands shifting from 1 in 9 children growing up in poverty to 1 in 12 children growing up in poverty (Process Manager, personal communication, 6 November 2019, page 9). These two developments are both acknowledged by the Commissioner (Commissioner, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 6-7). He explains that child poverty rates were at an extreme high during the crisis of 2007, but that the improved economy made it easier for people to find paid jobs (Commissioner, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 6). Since being jobless is one of the main reasons for being poor he argues, the economic recovery caused a decrease in child poverty rates he explains (Commissioner, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 6).

The next section provides the UK specialists in the field of child poverty to express their opinion on relevant child poverty related developments that took place between 2015 and 2018.

5.1.2 United Kingdom

When being asked about relevant child poverty related developments that took place in the UK between 2015 and 2018, both Jonathan Bradshaw as well as Neil Cowan argue that most developments are linked to policies that were set up by the UK government (Neil Cowan, personal communication, 17 February, 2020, page 1). They both refer to the significant cuts in family benefits and the introduction of a two-child limit (Jonathan Bradshaw, personal communication, 30 January, 2020, page 2-3 + Neil Cowan, personal communication, 17 February, page 1). The two-child restricts the UK government to financially support families with more than two children Bradshaw explains (Jonathan Bradshaw, personal communication, 30 January, 2020, page 3). Bradshaw argues that it is the large families that suffer the most because these families have more mouth to feed and are now in serious financial trouble (N. Willemsen, personal communication, 30 January, 2020, page 3).

Cowan states that financial cuts took place because of austerity problems that resulted from the financial crisis in 2007-08 (Neil Cowan, personal communication, 17 February, 2020, page 1). Bradshaw adds that the United Kingdom is the only country in the world that restricts benefits by family size, and he believes this to be a terrible development (Jonathan Bradshaw, personal communication, 30 January, 2020, page 3).

Besides the government policies that resulted in benefit freezing and the two-child limit, Cowan highlights the rollout of Universal Credit as a development that has driven people into poverty and destitution (Neil Cowan, personal communication, 17 February, 2020, page 1). He additionally claims the UK government did not make any significant attempts at making child poverty a priority between 2015 and 2018 but that the Scottish government did initiate a significant development, namely the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act (Neil Cowan, personal communication, 17 February, 2020, page 1). The Act sets ambitious targets for reducing child poverty, which means that Scotland is the only part of the UK that has statutory targets for reducing child poverty (N. Willemsen, personal communication, 17 February, 2020, page 1).

Furthermore, Bradshaw highlights the European Union's interest in collective matters such as child poverty as a good development (N. Willemsen, personal communication, 30 January, 2020, page 4). The EU-SILC survey, which consists of data on Income and Living Conditions in the EU is an example of this continuous interest (N. Willemsen, personal communication, 30 January, 2020, page 4). European initiatives like the EU-SILC survey are a big contribution to the EU-wide understanding of child poverty he explains (N. Willemsen, personal communication, 30 January, 2020, page 4).

The next section provides a brief comparison on the Dutch and UK findings that came out of the qualitative interviews that were conducted for this research.

5.1.3 Comparison

When being asked about the most significant child poverty related developments, the first thing that stands out is that both the Dutch interviewees were rather united in their answers and the interviewees from the UK were as well. However, these united answers did not coincide with each other. The child poverty developments in the Netherlands are characterized by a government that tries to fight the matter, but often does not always succeed, where the UK government appears to only make it harder for children to get out of poverty, as claimed by the UK interviewees. The Scottish government on the other hand has been showing initiative with its Child Poverty Act.

The next section looks into the identifiable causes of child poverty and how they are similar or different in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom based on the findings from the qualitative interviews.

5.2 Identifiable causes of child poverty

Multiple identifiable causes for child poverty can be identified from the literature review. This section gives ground to specialists from both the Netherlands and the United Kingdom to share what they believe are the main causes for child poverty to exist.

5.2.1 The Netherlands

When being asked to name the main causes of child poverty, the Dutch Process Manager highlights non-inclusive education as a first cause of child poverty (Process Manager, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 7). She explains that Dutch education is becoming decreasingly inclusive (Process Manager, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 9). The neighbourhood a child comes from has become increasingly determining she explains, which should not be the case (Process Manager, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 9).

The second cause is the Dutch tax-system the Process Manager argues (Process Manager, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 9). While referring to 'Koen Caminada', professor at the University of Leiden, she explains that we are decreasingly capable of directly supporting families with what they need (Process Manager, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 9). Instead, the Dutch government is providing these families with an allowance system that is way too complicated

and is bringing families into poverty rather than helping them come out of poverty (Process Manager, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 9).

Lastly, the Process Manager explains that housing is a big problem (Process Manager, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 10). Having a roof to live under is priority number one, for everyone she argues (Process Manager, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 10), which is agreed upon by the Commissioner who explains that material deprivation is definitely one of the causes of child poverty (Commissioner, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 4).

However, the main cause of child poverty the Commissioner argues, are the parents that suffer from joblessness. These parents are not able to make enough money to support a family and provide children with everything they need (Commissioner, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 4).

Additionally, the Commissioner argues that there are some aggravating factors, such as household composition, that can worsen or strengthen the main causes (Commissioner, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 4). A child that grows up in a single parent household is more likely to be poor than a child that grows up in a traditional family with two working parents (Commissioner, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 4). Almost 20% of all EU children grow up in families where there is only a single parent to take care of the family income (Commissioner, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 4).

Lastly, he emphasizes the problem of 'the working poor' (Commissioner, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 5). The working poor is a group of parents that have a paid job but are underpaid and still experience insufficient income (Commissioner, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 5). It is hard to map these families, which makes it a less visible problem, even though it is rather relevant (Commissioner, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 5).

The next sections seeks to provide child poverty specialists from the UK to share what they believe are the main causes for child poverty to exist.

5.2.2 United Kingdom

Bradshaw argues that child poverty is caused by a multitude of issues (Jonathan Bradshaw, personal communication, 30 January, 2020, page 2). Examples are, inadequate child benefits, austerity policies, low wages and/or unemployment (Jonathan Bradshaw, personal communication, 30 January, 2020,

page 2). He argues that these causes are most likely a result of decisions that were taken by the right-wing political parties that have been in place since 2010 (Jonathan Bradshaw, personal communication, 30 January, 2020, page 2). When being asked about the nature of these decisions, he explains that these political parties aimed at saving as much money as possible by making cuts to public expenditure and that it was just a politically strategic decision (Jonathan Bradshaw, personal communication, 30 January, 2020, page 2).

Cowan agrees with Bradshaw on low-income and insecure employment as causes for child poverty (Neil Cowan, personal communication, 17 February, 2020, page 1). Additionally, the developments in social security policy, such as the benefits freeze and the two-child limit that Cowan highlighted as developments, also contribute to an increase of children living at risk of poverty in the UK and are considered as causes (Neil Cowan, personal communication, 17 February, 2020, page 1). Furthermore, he claims that the minimum wage the UK government holds on to, does not protect people from in-work poverty, which occurs when the total income of a working household is not sufficient to meet the needs of a family (Neil Cowan, personal communication, 17 February, 2020, page 1).

Bradshaw claims that the causes of child poverty can be considered EU wide causes since child poverty has gone up in half the countries of the European Union since 2010 (Jonathan Bradshaw, personal communication, 30 January, 2020, page 3). He explains that the majority of the EU Member States operate with a similar strategy and that many EU Member States have suffered from cuts in the social security budget after the financial crisis (Jonathan Bradshaw, personal communication, 30 January, 2020, page 3). Families with children were hit harder than families consisting of older people. Bradshaw argues that this happened because older people have the opportunity to vote and children do not (Jonathan Bradshaw, personal communication, 30 January, 2020, page 3).

The next section briefly compares the causes that were identified by the interviewees in both the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

5.2.3 Comparison

When comparing the shared knowledge of the specialists, it appears that the Netherlands and the United Kingdom are rather different when it comes to the specific causes of child poverty. The only corresponding cause that was mentioned by the different specialists is low employment or complete unemployment. Which is argued by the Commissioner (Commissioner, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 4), Bradshaw (Jonathan Bradshaw, personal communication, 17 February, 2020, page 1), and Cowan (Neil Cowan, personal communication, 17 February, 2020, page 1).

Where the Dutch specialists name a great variety of causes, such as non-inclusive education, housing, household composition and the Dutch tax system, the specialists from the United Kingdom mainly share their discontent with regards to the UK Government. They both lay emphasize on the increase in child poverty rates because of bad government decisions.

As the previous section looked into the identifiable causes of child poverty, the next section highlights the interview's opinions on how these causes might be addressed at the EU level. And how a child poverty reduction might be realized.

5.3 A future hypothesis

The Europe 2020 Strategy expires at the end of 2020 and since both the Netherlands and the United Kingdom are far from reaching its targets, this section looks into their future plans regarding child poverty.

5.3.1 The European Union

The Financial Analyst argues that to be able to effectively address child poverty we need to break it down and make a distinction between poverty in general and child poverty, then find the factor that is most relevant in addressing child poverty and then find an agreeable target that fits this total idea (Financial Analyst, personal communication, 4 November, 2019, page 15). However, he explains that this is not the current direction the Dutch social policy is going and thus, he doubts whether child poverty will ever be addressed that way (Financial Analyst, personal communication, 4 November, 2019, page 15).

He additionally claims that the European Semester will integrate the UN Sustainable Development Goals into social policy making in the European Union (Financial Analyst, personal communication, 4 November, 2019, page 16). This is agreed upon by the Commissioner. He explains that once the 'Europe 2020' deadline has passed, the Commission will hire multiple consultants and academics who will then do an evaluation on the strategy and come up with new advices (Commissioner, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 13).

The Commissioner believes that besides the Sustainable Development Goals, the European Pillar of Social Rights will play a role in the future of poverty eradication (Commissioner, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 13). Principle 11 of the European Pillar of Social Rights is focused on children. He explains that the new president of the Commission, Mrs. von der Leyen, will

actively try to implement this agenda together with the EU Member States (Commissioner, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 13). He adds that there must be an increased focus on social mobility since an increasing amount of people, especially from disadvantaged backgrounds, are worried about that (Commissioner, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 13).

The Commissioner adds that a proposal for the 'Child Guarantee', an initiative that advocates for all EU children growing up under disadvantaged circumstances, is currently being developed by the Commission (Commissioner, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 11). This Guarantee will basically call on the Member States to do more for the children experiencing poverty (Commissioner, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 11). The Commissioner believes that EU funding could play an important role in this process (Commissioner, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 11). When being asked if this Guarantee would have also been developed if the Europe 2020 Strategy had not been in place, the Commissioner acknowledges that it is impossible to know that (Commissioner, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 11). But he believes that the Semester's specific recommendations did have some effect on how the Member States approached child poverty (Commissioner, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 11).

5.3.2 The Netherlands

The Dutch Process Manager argues that we should follow the solution Koen Caminada stands for (Process Manager, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 9). This solution entails the simplification of the Dutch tax system in which we collect taxes for two reasons; 1. To be able to pay for collective interests, such as education and health; 2. And, to prevent people from falling through the cracks (Process Manager, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 3-4). He argues that we have become worse in preventing the latter and that it is easy to solve this problem (Process Manager, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 3-4). The tax-system needs to be simplified and be made more effective (Process Manager, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 9).

Additionally, she argues that the millions of euros that are now spent on initiatives, such as the food bank, need to be spent on inclusive education (Process Manager, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 12). She refers to Nadja Jungmann, professor at the University of Utrecht, who argues that executive skills are of great significance for children to be able to choose their own future path, separate from that of their parents (Process Manager, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 12).

5.3.3 The United Kingdom

Bradshaw has little confidence in the future of the United Kingdom when it comes to addressing child poverty (Jonathan Bradshaw, personal communication, 30 January, 2020, page 5). He argues that the future government is proceeding with the cuts to social expenditure and that there is little prospect for new child poverty related policies in the UK (Jonathan Bradshaw, personal communication, 30 January, 2020, page 5). This is agreed upon by Cowan, who explains that the UK government have not been making any attempts at making child poverty a priority (Neil Cowan, personal communication, 17 February, 2020, page 1). On the basis of the increased EU poverty rates, Bradshaw predicts that no EU country will reach its poverty targets (Jonathan Bradshaw, personal communication, 30 January, 2020, page 5). He does explain that it is difficult to know how one country will meet its targets when the 'Europe 2020' poverty target is more of an EU-wide target (Jonathan Bradshaw, personal communication, 30 January, 2020, page 5).

Bradshaw highlights the new European Social Charter, a treaty that aims to guarantee fundamental economic and social rights (Jonathan Bradshaw, personal communication, 30 January, 2020, page 5). He explains that even though the EU does not have any powers to force governments to act upon and it can only influence the Member States, the Charter is very welcome (Jonathan Bradshaw, personal communication, 30 January, 2020, page 5). Even though Bradshaw has little confidence in the UK tackling the Sustainable Development Goals, he does believe that the Sustainable Development Goals are a good initiative since it creates an obligation for all Member States to set targets (Jonathan Bradshaw, personal communication, 30 January, 2020, page 5). Bradshaw believes that if the UK government increases family cash benefits, in particular universal child benefits, child poverty will decrease (Jonathan Bradshaw, personal communication, 30 January, 2020, page 6). Supporting parents is the most effective way of reducing poverty in families with children he argues (Jonathan Bradshaw, personal communication, 30 January, 2020, page 6).

Cowan argues that for the future, the responsibility for addressing child poverty lies with both the UK government and local authorities (Neil Cowan, personal communication, 17 February, 2020, page 1).

The next section compares the future hypotheses created by both the Dutch and British interviewees.

5.3.4 Comparison

The question related to the future of the Europe 2020 Strategy resulted in a great variety of answers. The Sustainable Development Goals appear to play a part in multiple answers. The Commissioner (Commissioner, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 13) and the Financial Analyst

(Financial Analyst, personal communication, 4 November, 2019, page 16), two of the three Dutch specialists, believe that the EU will integrate the UN Sustainable Development goals in to EU policy making. Bradshaw, the UK specialist, does not necessarily say the goals will be integrated into EU policy making, but he does argue that it is a good initiative for the EU to work with (Jonathan Bradshaw, personal communication, 30 January, 2020, page 5).

Besides the SDG's, both Bradshaw (Jonathan Bradshaw, personal communication, 30 January, 2020, page 5) and the Commissioner (Commissioner, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 13) believe that the European Social Charter, which established a European Pillar of Social Rights, will be of great influence in the future fight against child poverty.

The next chapter combines the findings from both the literature review and the results chapter in order to provide ground for analysis. This, in turn, provides the opportunity to draw up a conclusion that leads to answering the main research question.

6. Analysis

In this chapter, the findings that were presented in both the literature review and in the results chapter are analysed in order to answer the sub-questions that were set up for this research. This chapter firstly analyses the child poverty developments that took place between 2015 and 2018 in the European Union, the Netherlands and the UK. Secondly, it identifies the causes of child poverty. Thirdly, a hypothesis focused on future developments and possible solutions related to child poverty in the Netherlands and the UK is created on the basis of both the primary and the secondary data. Ultimately, this analysis provides this research with the opportunity to draw up a conclusion that leads to answering the main research question.

6.1 How has child poverty developed between 2015 and 2019?

Many different developments could be identified from both the secondary as well as from the primary research conducted for this dissertation. This section seeks to analyze the most relevant developments

6.1.1 European Union

The first relevant development that took place in the European Union between 2015 and 2018, was the streamlining and intensification of the European Semester (Ministry of Economic Affairs, 2015). The literature explains that the European Semester is an EU framework that coordinates economic and budgetary policy and additionally, provides the EU Member States with the opportunity to properly keep track of their progress and measurements related to the Europe 2020 Strategy, including the national poverty targets (Ministry of Economic Affairs, 2015, pp. 20-22). This might seem like a convenient framework in the fight against child poverty since Member States are accurately reviewing their actions. However, only one of the interviewees, the Financial Analyst to be particular, mentioned the European Semester in light of this research (Financial Analyst, personal communication, 4 November, 2019, page 3). This makes the convenience of the European Semester questionable, in light of child poverty. If the European Semester is as important as the Financial Analyst argues, one could say that its position would be better known among the interviewees. However, he explains that the European Semester is not particularly focused on poverty and that it depends on the interests of the Member States how well the European Semester functions (Financial Analyst, personal communication, 4 November, 2019, page 3). This turns the tide. Now, it might be argued that the Member States are not putting enough effort in fighting child poverty and that the European Semester is only able to have a prominent role once the Member States increase their effort. Which is something they should do regardless of what is expected of them.

The second relevant development is the Child Guarantee that was proposed by the EU in 2015 (European Commission, 2015). The Child Guarantee is an EU initiative that was proposed to serve as guidance for Member States in the process of promoting children's well-being and tackling child poverty (Eurochild, 2019). This initiative was also mentioned by the Commissioner (Commissioner, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 11). He explains that this Guarantee aims at providing children with certain basic rights, such as the right to nutrition, healthcare, education, good housing, and childcare (Commissioner, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 11). When being asked if this Guarantee would have also been there without the strategy, the Commissioner admits that it is hard to say what would have happened without the strategy (Commissioner, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 11). He explains that they did notice an increased effort among the Member States because of the country specific recommendations (Commissioner, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 11). This statement can be considered contradictory to what was established in the previous section. If the Commissioner argues that an increased effort can be detected among the Member States and the Financial Analyst claims that the strength of the Semester depends on the Member States efforts and interests, it is odd that the European Semester's role has barely mentioned. In light of this research and its findings, it could be argued that the interests of both the Semester and the Member States are working at cross purposes. They should work more collaboratively to bring out the best in each other and to make this child poverty eradication process work.

Both developments clearly show the discrepancies that exist around certain EU developments. These discrepancies are mainly based on the subjectivity of the expert's opinion, which yet shows how difficult and complicated a matter as child poverty is. Both experts are from the same field of expertise yet have other opinions on the same matter.

The next section seeks to analyse the child poverty developments that took place between 2015 and 2018 in the Netherlands.

6.1.2 The Netherlands

Between 2015 and 2018, multiple relevant developments took place in the Netherlands. At first, there is an advisory report written by the Children's Ombudsman (Rijksoverheid, n.d.). This report provides the Dutch government with four general advices: 1. Implement a more integral approach; 2. Motivate and guide families to stabilize their current situations; 3. Look at individual situations to be able to provide adequate help; 4. Directly ask children what they need (Kinderombudsman, 2017, p. 6). This integral approach really became the centre of the Dutch approach to child poverty (European

Commission, 2019, p. 36). Despite the interviewees' professional and relevant backgrounds, none of them specifically mentioned this approach. When taking the professional backgrounds of the interviewees and the importance of the Children's Ombudsman advisory reports into consideration, this is quite surprising. It could therefore be argued that the Dutch government should increasingly promote this approach among relevant parties, such as Divosa, to create more familiarity. Furthermore, familiarity could lead to better conscientisation and with increased conscientisation people are better able to accurately handle certain matters.

Partly related to the previous section, the Dutch Process Manager explains that there is an increased focus on personal contact and help (Process Manager, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 3, 10). Municipalities are increasingly trying to support families by directly asking them what they want and need (Process Manager, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 3, 10). This way, organizations are increasingly able to look at individual situations, both from the parents and the children perspective, to be able to provide more adequate help and guide families to stabilize their situations (Process Manager, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 3, 10). The Dutch Process Manager actually mentions the exact advices created by the Children's Ombudsman, which would mean that the advices are actively influencing decision-making on a municipal level. However, she does not specifically mention the Children's Ombudsman, which makes it hard to assess this statement.

Despite the fact that the Process Manager recognizes these advices, she explains that she is not aware of any of the European Union involvement in the matter of child poverty (Nina Willemsen, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 5, 12). This can be considered questionable, since the advices were provided by the Children's Ombudsman and were ordered by the Dutch government who in turn want to reach their national targets that were set up in line with the Europe 2020 Strategy. Just like the proposed Child Guarantee, it is difficult to evaluate what would have happened without the Strategy. And this example clearly illustrates that even when these advices are a consequence of the Strategy, there are parties unaware of this, which makes it extremely hard to evaluate the Strategy.

The next section seeks to analyse the child poverty developments that took place between 2015 and 2018 in the United Kingdom.

6.1.3 The United Kingdom

When looking at both the secondary as well as the primary research, the differences rather than the similarities stand out. The literature highlights a great multitude of different development, such as the introduction of the Welfare Reform and Work Act in 2016 (CPAG, 2019), which imposed certain legal duties on the UK government (UK Government, 2016, p. 4), the introduction of a policy paper that increasingly looked at the root causes of child poverty (HM Government, 2017, p. 46), the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act, which was designed by the Scottish government because of their decision to opt-out of the general UK approach (NHS Health, 2017, p. 1), and the introduction of the two-child limit (Butler, 2019; Sellgren, 2019). They decided to do this because the UK removed their statutory income targets and Scotland believes that statutory income targets are the right targets to decrease child poverty (Scottish Government, 2018, p. 4).

Both experts were especially focused on developments that were related to cuts in family benefits, such as the two-child limit, which they both mentioned multiple times (Nina Willemsen, personal communication, 17 February, 2020, page 1). They both claim that these developments are linked to UK policies that were set up by the government as a response to the financial crisis of 2007-08 (Nina Willemsen, personal communication, 17 February, 2020, page 1). Bradshaw claims that these cuts were partly established because of austerity problems (Nina Willemsen, personal communication, 30 January, 2020, page 2-3). Bradshaw explains that because of these cuts, it is the larger families that suffer the most. These families simply cannot pay all of their expenses and by that, properly support their family (Nina Willemsen, personal communication, 30 January, 2020, page 2-3).

When analyzing these findings, the overlapping answers of the UK experts immediately stand out. Besides one other development mentioned by Bradshaw, both UK experts really only mention the cuts to family benefits, and especially their discontent regarding these cuts. This feeling of discontent can also be felt when reading the literature. Even though the cuts were established to serve as an incentive for families to start working again, many families argue that these cuts have only worsened their situation (Butler, 2019). Despite the obvious negative effects of the cuts, the UK government continues to limit their spending on public welfare, which implies that the situation will only be getting worse and parents will decreasingly be able to save their children from disadvantage. When taking all findings into consideration, cuts to family benefits are not the way to go. These families need guidance and support, not a radical incentive to motivate them to find work. Such an incentive only nurtures stress and it is generally known that stress only demotivates. Finding a job while feeling stressed and demotivated will not improve these situations.

6.2 What are identifiable causes for child poverty?

From the literature it became apparent that overall, both countries experience similar events causing children to grow up in disadvantaged socioeconomic circumstances. Bradshaw claims this is because the majority of the EU Member States operate with a similar strategy (Jonathan Bradshaw, personal communication, 30 January, 2020, page 3). The causes discussed in the literature are the parents' labour market situation (Eurostat, 2019), the parents' educational level (Eurostat, 2016), the composition of the household (HM government, 2014, p. 65) and debt (Verwey-Jonker Institute, 2013, p. 14; HM government, 2014).

Labour is often the main source of income and is therefore of great significance for the environment children grow up in (Eurostat, 2019). This is agreed upon by the Commissioner, who even claims that joblessness is the main cause of child poverty (Commissioner, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 4). Both Bradshaw and Cowan agree with the Commissioner on the determining influence that low-income (N. Willemsen, personal communication, 17 February, 2020, page 1) and unemployment have on the situations families live in (N. Willemsen, personal communication, 30 January, 2020, page 2).

The parent's educational level was not specifically mentioned by any of the interviewees, however, the Dutch Process Manager did emphasize the importance of inclusive education among children (Process Manager, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 7). Taking this statement into account, it could be argued that both are intertwined as the literature explains that the parent's educational level has a significant effect on the attainment of children (HM government, 2014, p. 60). If the children's attainment is indeed affected by the educational level of the parents, a lack of inclusive education could worsen the situation children live in.

According to the Commissioner, household composition is rather an aggravating factor that worsens the main causes than a significant cause on its own (Commissioner, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 4). Even though the literature claims it to be one of the main causes, the literature also explains that the household composition can have effects on the amount of care related responsibilities and the labor market situation of the parents (HM government, 2014, p. 66), which in turn confirms the Commissioner's statement on the household composition being a possible aggravating factor.

Debt is not mentioned as a cause by any of the interviewees, however, some additional causes were mentioned. The two experts from the UK for example, both repeat what they said about the cuts in

family benefits and the two-child limit. They believe that developments like these contribute to an increase of children living at risk of poverty in the UK and can therefore be considered a cause (N. Willemsen, personal communication, 17 February, 2020, page 1). The Dutch Process Manager mentions the Dutch tax system as an additional causes, because she believes that the Dutch government is increasingly providing Dutch families with an allowance system that is way too complicated and is bringing families into poverty rather than helping them come out of poverty (Process Manager, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 7).

This chapter clearly indicates that there is not one set list of identifiable causes for child poverty. Opinions are highly divided, which again emphasizes the multidimensional character of child poverty. Where the literature claims that household composition is one of the main causes of child poverty, the Commissioner argues that it is just an aggravating factor. And where the literature also claims that debt is of great significance for the situation children are growing up in, debt is not mentioned by any of the experts. In light of this research, it could be said that there is a great variety of things or events that contribute to the situation children live in and that these causes are often intertwined with one another, but that there is not one clear answer to this sub-question, which in turn makes the answer subjective and rather free of interpretation.

The next section seeks to provide a future hypothesis on child poverty in the European Union, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

6.3 What is the future hypothesis on child poverty?

Since the Europe 2020 Strategy is approaching its end, certain questions arise. Will there be a new strategy? Will child poverty remain a priority? What will happen in the UK now that they left the EU? This chapter seeks to create a future hypothesis on child poverty, which is based on both the literature and the expert opinions.

6.3.1 The European Union

Both the Financial Analyst (Financial Analyst, personal communication, 4 November, 2019, page 16) and the Commissioner (Commissioner, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 13) argue that the Europe 2020 Strategy will not be replaced by a specific European successor, but that the UN Sustainable Development Goals will be integrated into EU policy making. Bradshaw argues that the Sustainable Development Goals are a good initiative since they create an obligation for all Member States to set targets (Commissioner, personal communication, 30 January, 2020, page 5).

The Commissioner believes that besides the Sustainable Development Goals, the European Pillar of Social Rights and the Child Guarantee will play a role in the child poverty eradication process (Commissioner, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 13). The European Pillar of Social Rights aims at “delivering new and more effective rights for citizens” (European Commission, n.d.). The Child Guarantee on the other hand, will basically call on the Member States to do more for the children experiencing poverty (Commissioner, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 11). From a conference hosted by the Commission in 2014, it became clear that the majority of the participants believed that for the EU to reach the poverty target, the Member States need to step-up their efforts (European Commission, 2014, p. 4). This coincides with the motivation behind the introduction of the Child Guarantee as explained by the Commissioner (N. Willemsen, personal communication, 6 November, 2019, page 11). And just like the Child Guarantee, the Sustainable Development Goals are also in the position to provide the Member States with a certain drive to continue fighting child poverty.

When analyzing this data, the (lacking) effort of the Member States appears to be a recurring theme. Certain EU frameworks only function with the right effort of the Member States, an EU guarantee was specifically designed to motivate the Member States and it is emphasized by the interviewees that the probable successor of the Strategy might also have the power to increase the Member States’ drive to fight child poverty. Taking all this into account, it is questionable whether the Member States have done enough between 2015 and 2018. Relevant developments might have taken place, but no real change was made. Increased collaboration is needed can be argued. The distance between relevant EU institutions and local organizations need to be decreased and the exchange of relevant information needs to be increased. Collaboration is the only way for child poverty to decrease.

6.3.2 The Netherlands

The 2018 Dutch NRP states that the Netherlands will continue putting effort in their already existing approach; the integral approach (European Commission, 2019, p. 36). Additionally, child poverty should be addressed from a multidimensional perspective (European Commission, 2019, p. 36), because child poverty calls for increased attention to not only parental employment, but also to housing, education, health, and debt (European Commission, 2019, p. 36), which is agreed upon by both Dutch interviewees. To be able to realize the previously mentioned increased attention, the Dutch local government will not only continue making investments and support local municipalities in their fight against child poverty (European Commission, 2019, p. 36) but it will continue promoting

collaborations between municipalities, ministries, private-sector parties and certain civic organisations and effectively assist families (European Commission, 2019, p. 35).

In light of this research, it can be argued that the Dutch NRP outlined a rather accurate plan for the future. Throughout this entire research, the multidimensional character of child poverty has been emphasized and it was just established that increased collaboration is needed to accurately fight child poverty. It can be argued that because of these exact reasons, the Dutch child poverty rates have been one of the lowest of all EU Member States. If the Dutch method of working will continue to pay off is difficult to argue and if this method will work for other Member States is even harder to argue since every Member State has their personal socioeconomic circumstances.

6.3.2 The United Kingdom

The little confidence Bradshaw has in the UK with regards to the future of child poverty (N. Willemsen, personal communication, 30 January, 2020, page 5) gets confirmed by the literature, which indicates that the UK poverty target will not be reached by 2020 (Butler, 2018). Save the Children (Save the Children, 2016, p. 43), the Dutch central government (European Commission, 2019, p. 36) and the SMCPC believe that for the UK to reach the poverty target, the government must increasingly look at the multidimensional character of child poverty and provide a more rounded and effective approach (Parliament, 2015). Both UK experts believe that as long as the UK government is proceeding with the cuts to social expenditure, there is little prospect for new child poverty related policies in the UK (N. Willemsen, personal communication, 30 January, 2020, page 5). Bradshaw believes that if the UK government decides to increase family cash benefits, in particular universal child benefits, child poverty will decrease (N. Willemsen, personal communication, 30 January, 2020, page 6).

Additionally, because the UK left the EU on the 31st of January 2020, they are now in transition to completely separate themselves from the EU (Rijksoverheid, 2020). Assuming there will be no extension period, the transition (Rijksoverheid, 2020) and the Strategy (European Commission, 2010) both end on the 31st of December 2020. In light of the Brexit, it is extremely hard to create a hypothesis on child poverty in the UK. In the base, this is hard for every Member States, but because it is unclear what kind of effect the Brexit will have on the UK it is extra hard.

Taking all this into account, the future of UK children living under disadvantaged circumstances is rather unsure. Currently, they are not doing particularly well and both experts correctly argue that if the government continues their current way of eradicating child poverty, there is little prospect for the future and in turn, for the families and children suffering the most. The only chance for the UK

child poverty rate to decrease is for the UK the government to turn the tide and abolish current cuts to social expenditure. Additionally, in light of child poverty, the Brexit does not seem to be the right decision. In the future, the UK will not be able to enjoy the advantages of a united front; it will no longer be part of anything that is EU related. This also means that the UK will no longer receive EU funding, which means that the UK loses billions of euros. Taking this into consideration, the UK might even need to make more cuts to social expenditure. This will only worsen the situation of children already living under disadvantaged circumstances and will most likely drive other families into poverty as well. The UK must carefully reconsider its future steps and clearly map child poverty and their eradication strategy.

7. Conclusion

Even though child poverty is most often not associated with countries located in the European Union, it actually is an issue very close to home. Both the Netherlands and the United Kingdom face the issue of child poverty. However this does not mean that the issue manifests itself in a similar way. As the Netherlands can be found in the top five countries with the lowest share of children at risk of poverty, children living in the UK have a chance that is above average to be at risk of poverty. This makes a comparison highly interesting and therefore, with overall EU related information on the side, this research compared both the Netherlands and the United Kingdom in light of child poverty.

Between 2015 and 2018, many relevant child poverty related developments took place in the European Union in its entirety and in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom individually. Developments varying from the intensification of the European Semester to the introduction of policy initiatives and from the subsidization of social organizations to the creation of child poverty acts. Additionally, a multitude of causes for child poverty could be identified, such as parent's labor market situation and household composition. However, when comparing the secondary with the primary research, it is yet again emphasized that child poverty is known to be a multidimensional term and that there are many things that contribute to the situation children are living in. This also means that it is impossible to establish one set list of identifiable causes. Lastly, this research tried to develop a future hypothesis for child poverty in the EU, the Netherlands and the UK. Overall, the EU aims at motivating Member States to step up their effort. Which coincides with the guiding role the EU has in the process of eradicating poverty. The Netherlands will continue putting effort in their integral approach and continue considering child poverty as a multidimensional term. For the UK it is difficult to create a future hypothesis since the Brexit brings a great amount of uncertainty and the experts argue that there are no real prospects for child poverty related policies in the UK.

Coming back to the main research question, it is extremely difficult to say whether the Europe 2020 poverty target has affected the development of child poverty in both the Netherlands and the United Kingdom between 2015 and 2018. It has clearly been established that many relevant developments took place within the timeframe of this research, but taking all data into account, it might also be megalomaniac to think that these developments took place because of a Strategy that has no real powers to force upon and can only guide and assist Member States where needed. And thus, to conclude, child poverty is an extremely complicated and wide concept that has often no other choice than to rely on subjectivism. And partly because of this subjectivism, it is impossible to answer the

main research question. Because it is not only impossible to say how the Strategy has affected child poverty between 2015 and 2018, it is also impossible to say if the Strategy had any effect at all.

Taking all this into consideration, it can be argued that for child poverty to decrease, concrete action is needed. For the EU and the Netherlands this would mean Increased collaboration. The distance between relevant EU institutions and local organizations need to be decreased and the exchange of relevant information needs to be increased. Additionally, the division of powers should be clear. This research established that within relevant professions, not everyone is aware of the EU involvement in the eradication of poverty for example. When the division of powers is clear, a certain division of tasks can be established. Once the right party knows what steps to take, more accurate action can be taken. For the UK, it is different. Since they are leaving the EU, they are also missing out on EU funding. This might mean that the UK needs to make more cuts to social expenditure, which is already one of the main drivers of UK child poverty. This will most probably worsen the situation and will most likely drive other families into poverty as well. The UK must carefully reconsider its future steps and clearly map child poverty and their eradication strategy.

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9. Appendices

A) Student ethics form

Before completing this form you should read the APA Ethics Code

(<http://www.apa.org/ethics/code/index.aspx>). If you are planning research with human subjects, you should also look at the sample consent form available in the Final Project and Dissertation Guide.

a. Read section 2 that your supervisor will have to sign. Make sure that you cover all these issues in section 1. b. Complete section 1 and, if you are using human subjects, section 2, of this form, and sign it.

c. Ask your project supervisor to read these sections (and the draft consent form if you have one) and ask him/her to sign the form.

d. Always append this signed form as an appendix to your dissertation. This is a knock-out criterium; if not included the Final Project/Dissertation is awarded an NVD.

Section 1. Project Outline (to be completed by student)

(i) Title of Project: Child Poverty in the European Union: *An analysis of how the 'Europe 2020' poverty target affected child poverty development trends in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.*

(ii) Aims of project:

The aim of this project is to find out whether and/or how the 'Europe 2020' poverty target affected child poverty development trends in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom between 2015 and 2018. To establish an in-depth dissertation, both primary and secondary research in the field of child poverty is conducted.

(iii) Will you involve other people in your project – e.g. via formal or informal interviews, group discussions, questionnaires, internet surveys etc. (Note: if you are using data that has already been collected by another researcher – e.g. recordings or transcripts of conversations given to you by your supervisor, you should answer 'NO' to this question.)

"YES"

If yes: you should complete the section 2 of this form.

Section 2 Complete this section only if you answered YES to question (iii) above.**(i) What will the participants have to do? (v. brief outline of procedure):**

1. Answer the invitation for the interview; 2. If the invitation is accepted, a date on which the interview will take place must be found; 3. Before the interview commences, the interviewee needs to sign the 'informed consent form'; 4. During the interview, the participants need to answer questions that were designed for them. Additionally, the participants are free to add any relevant information; 5. After transcribing the interviews, a thank you e-mail will be send, which then can be replied to by the participants; 6. An extra e-mail will be send when the thesis deadline is approaching, reassuring if they interviewees are addressed properly (anonymous or by name). Answering this e-mail will be their last task.

(ii) What sort of people will the participants be and how will they be recruited?

The backgrounds of the participants vary. Since this research evolves around an EU Strategy, I will be looking for at least two interviewees who can provide me with professional background information on the topic. Additionally, I want to interview two Dutch professionals from both an organization that is committed to fighting child poverty and a Dutch municipality and two British people with the same professions. All participants will either be contacted by phone or by e-mail, in which I will provide them with background information on my research and kindly ask them if they would want to participate in an interview or if they could refer me to someone they know who might be of value for my research.

(iii) What sort of stimuli or materials will your participants be exposed to? Tick the appropriate boxes and then state what they are in the space below**Questionnaires:****Pictures:****Sounds:****Words: X****Other:**

(iv) Consent: Informed consent must be obtained for all participants before they take part in your project. By means of an informed consent form you should state what participants will be doing, drawing attention to anything they could conceivably object to subsequently. You should also state how they can withdraw from the study at any time and the measures you are taking to ensure the confidentiality of data. A standard informed consent form is available in the Dissertation Manual. Appendix the Informed Consent Form to your Final Project/Dissertation as well.

(vi) What procedures will you follow in order to guarantee the confidentiality of participants' data?

Firstly, the limits of confidentiality will be discussed with the participants (APA Art. 4.02). After discussing the limits of confidentiality, the participants are then asked to sign an 'Informed Consent Form'. Then, permission regarding recording must be asked (APA Art. 4.03). Furthermore, intrusion of privacy needs to be minimized and thus, the content of the interviews can only be discussed with persons that are concerned with this research, in this case, the thesis supervisor and the second reader. At last, records are stored on a private device, will only be used for the purpose it was recorded for and will be disposed after the research is done (APA Art. 6.02).

Student's signature:



Date 03.05.2020

Supervisor's signature: IK Duesterhoeft

Date 4 May 2020

(if satisfied with the proposed procedures)

B) Interview 1 – Dutch Process Manager
(i) Informed Consent Form

1) Research Project Title: Child Poverty in the European Union: An analysis of the effects of the 'Europe 2020' poverty target on child poverty development trends in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

2) Project Description (1 paragraph)

This project aims to find out whether and how the 'Europe 2020' poverty target affected child poverty development trends in both the Netherlands as well as in the United Kingdom between 2015 and 2018. An answer to this question will be established by conducting both primary and secondary research

If you agree to take part in this study please read the following statement and sign this form. I am 16 years of age or older.

I can confirm that I have read and understood the description and aims of this research. The researcher has answered all the questions that I had to my satisfaction.

I agree to the audio recording of my interview with the researcher.

I understand that the researcher offers me the following guarantees:

All information will be treated in the strictest confidence. My name will not be used in the study unless I give permission for it.

Recordings will be accessible only by the researcher. Unless otherwise agreed, anonymity will be ensured at all times. Pseudonyms will be used in the transcriptions.

I can ask for the recording to be stopped at any time and anything to be deleted from it. I consent to take part in the research on the basis of the guarantees outlined above.

Name redacted at request of interviewee (original version is available).

Date:

6-11-2019

(ii) Interview Transcript

DPM = Dutch Process Manager

N = Nina

N: Ik zou je graag willen vragen of je jezelf zou kunnen voorstellen.

DPM: Is het goed als ik jou even op de speaker zet?

N: Zeker weten. Absoluut.

DPM: Mijn naam is ... en ik ben procesmanager bij Divosa. Divosa is een vereniging van gemeentelijke directeuren in het sociaal domein. Dat betekent dat wij gemeenten vooral ondersteunen, van elkaar laten leren en de uitvoering van het sociaal domein. Wij kijken met ze mee; wat loopt er goed wat loopt er niet goed? En wat betekent dat voor de wetgeving die in Den Haag gemaakt wordt dat anders moet. Dus wij lobbyen ook nog eens. Dat zijn een beetje de basistaken die wij doen. Binnen Divosa ben ik verantwoordelijk voor onder andere fiscale zekerheid; alles omtrent armoede en schulden. Heel specifiek, de komende twee jaar ben ik de projectleider voor het project 'Kinderarmoede' waarbij wij gemeenten gaan helpen om meer kinderen te bereiken en kinderen beter te bereiken. En we hebben binnen Divosa ook allemaal een regio. Ik spreek de gemeenten in het Noorden van Nederland, dat wil zeggen Drenthe, Groningen en Friesland.

N: En is Divosa voor die gemeenten dan ook vaak een direct aanspreekpunt.

DPM: Ja. Gemeenten gebruiken ons, omdat wij alle informatie die er is in het sociaal domein vaak duiden voor gemeenten. Dus onze nieuwsberichten en website wordt veel gebruikt door gemeenten als bron van informatie, als achtergrondinformatie, maar ook met voorbeelden van "hoe zou ik dit aan kunnen pakken?". Wij koppelen gemeenten. Wij zijn geen adviseurs, maar wij koppelen de vraag van een gemeente aan een gemeente die al bezig is met die vraag, al antwoorden heeft misschien of wij organiseren daar iets op door veel met kennisinstituten en universiteiten bijeenkomsten te organiseren.

N: Oke. Nee duidelijk. Dankjewel daarvoor. Had jij je nog een beetje ingelezen over de Europa 2020 strategie of moet ik dat nog een beetje uitleggen?

DPM: Ik heb me een beetje ingelezen met die links die jij gestuurd had, maar voor mij is het helemaal nieuw.

N: Oh echt?

DPM: Ja. En ook dat de Europese Unie zeg maar zich op dit niveau met armoede bemoeit is ook nieuw en ik heb nog nooit een gemeente gehoord die dit kent en die überhaupt vanuit deze opgave aan het werk is.

N: Nee. Nou dat is al bijzonder nieuws dan.

DPM: Ik ben wel benieuwd, misschien kun jij de context even schetsen waarbinnen die allemaal gebeurt.

N: Ja, zeker. Voordat deze strategie er was, was de Lissabon strategie er. En die was door de EU opgezet om de EU goed te laten herstellen van de economische crisis. En op die manier om de EU economie een van de sterkste wereldwijd te maken. Die Lissabon strategie is toen verstreken en toen dachten ze, we hebben nog niet bereikt wat we wilden bereiken, we gaan weer een nieuwe strategie invoeren. Dat is de Europa 2020 strategie geworden. Die heeft uiteindelijk nog steeds het hoofddoel om de economie draaiende te houden, maar die is dan nu wel opgedeeld in vijf verschillende doelen die samen ervoor moeten zorgen dat dit doel behaald wordt. En een van die doelen is om in de EU 20 miljoen minder mensen in armoede te laten leven en daar vallen kinderen natuurlijk ook onder. En dat is eigenlijk even kort gezegd wat het inhoudt. En per jaar wordt er per land een plan opgezet en wordt er gekeken naar progressie die wordt gemaakt of niet en wij als Nederland hebben ook een specifiek nationaal doel om te behalen. En daarom verbaast het mij zo dat je net zei dat gemeentes hier helemaal niet van weten.

DPM: Want hoe verhoudt zich dit, want daar was ik wel nieuwsgierig naar, tot de SDGs? Want daar heeft Nederland zelfs de opgave om armoede te halveren, dus een grotere ambitie dan Europa.

N: Nou, de SDGs zijn natuurlijk de opvolgers van de MDGs en deze wilde zich nog meer richten op armoede, ongelijkheid en het milieu en ik heb dan een aantal dagen geleden iemand van de EC gesproken dat na deze Europa 2020 strategie, willen ze eigenlijk deze SDGs gaan invoeren als compleet nieuwe strategie.

DPM: Ja, dat snap ik. Want die hebben een tijdlijn tot 2030.

N: Ja klopt. Dus die gaan nog tien jaar verder.

DPM: En zijn nog ambitieuzer. Ik weet niet zo goed als een EU iets beslist hoe dat op lokaal niveau zou kunnen landen. Misschien weet jij dat? Zou het ministerie van sociale zaken bijvoorbeeld een filter zijn voor gemeente?

N: Nou dat is wel een goede vraag, ik heb het hier ook over gehad met die meneer. Hij zei dat het idee is dat ze op EU niveau denken ze na over doelen die je zet als eigen lidstaat. En het idee is dan dat het van bovenaf naar beneden gaat en dat het op die manier wordt verwerkt in de gemeentes. En hoe dat proces precies gaat weet ik niet moet ik eerlijk zeggen, want dat is heel ingewikkeld en betreft zo veel stappen. Maar dat is het idee ervan. Dus dat het op nationaal niveau eigenlijk wordt bedacht en dat het dient als voorbeeld en dat ze dat daarna dan verder in gaan voeren op lokaal niveau.

DPM: Ja want ik weet niet of jij ook iemand van het ministerie van sociale zaken gaat spreken?

N: Nee, nu niet, maar daar sta ik altijd voor open. Dus daar kan ik altijd nog naar kijken.

DPM: Ja, want dat zou wel interessant zijn. Want wat er nu gaande is op gemeente niveau even voor jouw beeld. De doelen van EU2020 gaan over halvering van armoede. Terwijl de focus van het ministerie nu ligt, en wat ook de enige rol kan zijn van gemeenten, is de gevolgen van armoede verzachten. En dat is natuurlijk iets heel anders. Want het een gaat over ons sociale zekerheidsstelsel; wat wij bijvoorbeeld een minimum loon vinden en het feit dat wij bij 75% van de huishoudens belasting teruggeven. Dus bij 100% innen we het en we geven heel veel terug. Dus we zijn niet heel doelgericht gezinnen en huishoudens aan het ondersteunen die het nodig hebben. Ik weet niet of jij Koen Caminada kent?

N: Nee.

DPM: Dat is een hoogleraar van de Universiteit van Leiden. Ik zou zijn website even bekijken, want hij heeft super interessante analyses.

N: Wat was zijn achternaam?

DPM: Koen Caminada. Koen is met een K en Caminada met een C.

N: Ja ik heb 'm gevonden.

DPM: Je moet even zijn presentaties bekijken, want hij doet met universiteiten onderzoek naar hoe effectief Nederland is in mensen uit de armoede halen en houden via ons belastingstelsels. En hij heeft gesproken op ons jaarcongres afgelopen September en hij kan gewoon haarfijn laten zien hoe Nederland daar dertig jaar lang al minder effectief in wordt en nog sterker, als het gaat om gezinnen met kinderen zijn wij eigenlijk het slechtste jongetje van de klas aan het worden. En daar heeft hij een prachtige presentatie over gegeven en die staat op zijn website. Want alles wat hij doet gelooft hij dat je dat moet delen, dus alles is op zijn website terug te vinden. Maar hij heeft het dus ook over de fundamentele discussie; "belastingen innen we met twee redenen". De eerste is zodat we kunnen doen wat we met elkaar hebben afgesproken dat belangrijk is, zoals gezondheid en onderwijs. En het tweede is dat we mensen niet door de onderkant laten zakken. En dat laatste zijn wij steeds slechter in geworden. Maar dat is een discussie waar gemeenten niet in zitten. Gemeenten zien de gevolgen daarvan, maar dit is inkomenspolitiek en hier mogen gemeenten niet aan doen. Zij zien wel de gevolgen, zij zien steeds meer (zeker in crisistijd waar jij het over hebt) tweeverdieners waarvan een de baan kwijtraakt, een hypotheek, een huis dat onder water stond. En die klopten dan aan bij de gemeenten voor inkomensondersteuning, maar dat was een doelgroep die we niet eerder gezien hadden als gemeenten. En wat je nu ziet; de crisis is voorbij, maar de woningmarkt zit zo op slot op het moment dat je ziet dat de vaste lasten die mensen betalen enorm hoog liggen. En dat we dus nog steeds huishoudens zien met een inkomen echt ruim boven het minimumloon, maar dat ze bijvoorbeeld ergens in het westen wonen, zoals bijvoorbeeld in Zoetermeer, waar je acht jaar op een wachtlijst staat voor een sociale huurwoning, dus het aan het eind van de maand toch niet redden.

N: Nou, daar had ik ook over gelezen, dat er eigenlijk heel slecht wordt gekeken naar mensen met een normaal inkomen die het inderdaad toch niet redden. Daar wordt vaak geen aandacht aan gegeven. Of dat het niet mogelijk is of omdat het moeilijk in kaart te brengen is.

DPM: Het Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau heeft vorig jaar een prachtig rapport gepresenteerd over de werkende armen. Dus dat is een interessante. En de SER heeft de opdracht gekregen van de Tweede Kamer om dat rapport te gebruiken om concreet met oplossingsmogelijkheden te komen.

N: Ja daar heb ik wel een aantal artikelen van open staan.

DPM: En de SER komt in februari met haar rapport over werkende armen, maar ze hebben natuurlijk al een prachtig rapport geschreven over kinderen in armoede in 2017.

N: Nou daar wilde ik nog even op inhaken, omdat jij zei dat jullie vooral eigenlijk de gevolgen zien van armoede en dat gemeentes uiteindelijk niet echt in staat zijn om preventief te werk te gaan.

DPM: Nou, wel preventief in de zin dat je kinderen kansen geeft, maar niet preventief in de zin dat er voldoende inkomen is.

N: Dus dan bedoelt ie dat er niet genoeg banen zijn of?

DPM: Nou wij kunnen in de sociale structuur natuurlijk het een en ander betekenen, want armoede betekent ook redelijk geïsoleerd opgroeien en niet kunnen meedoen aan de dingen die wij normaal vinden in Nederland. En dat kunnen wij aanpakken als gemeenten door sporten mogelijk te maken, door het meedoen op school mogelijk te maken. In eerste instantie heeft een kind natuurlijk vooral recht op ouders die voldoende verdienen en daar kunnen wij niet zo heel veel aan doen. Daar kunnen wij in toenemende mate minder aan doen, omdat we ook zien dat de flexibilisering van de arbeidsmarkt ervoor zorgt dat je steeds meer werkende armen hebt. Dat is ook de conclusie van het Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau. Dus ja wij helpen mensen bijvoorbeeld vanuit een uitkering naar werk, maar dat is een enorme logistieke operatie van een combinatie van kleine baantjes of baantjes zoals bij een organisatie zoals Picnic, waar je op papier 40 uur per week mag werken, maar in de praktijk misschien maar 24 uur aan het werk bent, maar daardoor ook geen aanspraak kunt maken op betaald worden voor 40 uur. En als je ziek bent krijg je helemaal niks betaalt. En dat zijn allemaal dingen die liggen buiten de macht van gemeenten.

N: Maar vind jij dat dat wel binnen de macht van gemeenten zou moeten liggen?

DPM: Nee hoor, nee. Omdat je dan het verschijnsel zou kunnen krijgen dat je in Groningen wel goed betaald krijgt en in Eindhoven niet. Dus daar wil je geen lokale verschillen in. Nee inkomenspolitiek is denk ik heel goed dat dat voorbehouden is aan het Rijk.

N: Nou dan is dit even een mooie intro. Dan had ik ook nog een paar vragen. Ik heb ook heel erg gekeken naar bijvoorbeeld de definitie van kinderarmoede, want die is eigenlijk heel breed.

DPM: Super ingewikkeld.

N: En ik heb er zo veel over gelezen en ik vroeg me dan af, is er een (enigszins) algemene definitie waar jullie als organisatie je aan houden.

DPM: Dat is een ingewikkelde, want ook die kent weer twee kanten. Je hebt namelijk 'kinderarmoede voor morgen oplossen' en dan richten wij ons op de ambitie dat wat gemeenten doen dat dat zo goed mogelijk is, dus dat wat gemeente aan voorzieningen geven dat dat aansluit bij de behoefte van het kind. De discussie is bijvoorbeeld 'de mobiele telefoon'. En weet je, daar ga ik niet voorschrijven wat goed is, maar dan willen we juist dat gemeenten het kind vragen wat het nodig heeft.

N: Dus het kind erbij betrekken?

DPM: Precies, meer naar het kind luisteren. Maar er is ook een lange termijn visie over kinderarmoede en die gaat veel meer over kansengelijkheid en inclusie. En daar gaat het er vooral over dat je eigenlijk wil voorkomen dat kinderen afhankelijk zijn van voorzieningen van bijvoorbeeld een jeugdsportfonds of een leergeld, maar dat we met elkaar het zo hebben geregeld in Nederland dat je gewoon kunt meedoen ongeacht wat het inkomen van je ouder is.

N: Ja dat had ik ook gelezen inderdaad.

DPM: En daar zien we zorgwekkende ontwikkelingen; als je bijvoorbeeld kijkt naar onderwijs in Nederland, die onderwijswet zegt dat onderwijs tot 18 gratis is. In de praktijk heb je de vrijwillige ouderbijdrage, heb je schoolreisjes, heb je de in toenemende mate de digitale leermiddelen waar ouders allemaal voor moeten betalen. Dus in de praktijk zien we dat ouders met een laag inkomen in toenemende mate voor het volgen van onderwijs afhankelijk zijn van hoe goed zij de gemeenten of stichting leergeld kunnen vinden. Nou, op korte termijn hebben we de ambitie, we willen het zo goed mogelijk, maar de lange termijn insteek kan natuurlijk niet zijn dat wij deze kinderen allemaal afhankelijk willen laten zijn van die weg, maar dat onderwijs gratis is. En wat met studieboeken gelukt is een aantal jaar geleden, er is gewoon lesmateriaal dat hoort erbij en dat bekostig je via school, wil je eigenlijk gewoon via de onderwijsstructuur ook zo laten lopen (17:43).

N: Maar schoolboeken voor middelbare scholen bijvoorbeeld, zijn die ook gratis nu?

DPM: Die zijn gratis, behalve dat ik van ouders heb gehoord dat er op sommige onderdelen alweer een eigen bijdrage zitten. Dus ook daar, ik dacht het is gratis, hoera. Maar dat schijnt toch in de praktijk links en rechts alweer anders te zijn.

N: Toch gek, dat er dan toch oneffenheden te vinden zijn. Dat je denkt dat zoiets is geregeld, maar dat het dan toch niet helemaal klopt.

DPM: En zie daar de discussie die momenteel volop woedt over ons onderwijssysteem; waar we zo een dertig jaar geleden besturen verantwoordelijke hebben gemaakt voor ons onderwijs, zie je dat schoolbesturen gaan voor het belang van hun school, terwijl er natuurlijk een collectief belang is dat boven dat schoolbestuur ligt en daar is niemand meer van. Dus ook in onderwijs hebben wij

langzamerhand een soort van marktwerking geïntroduceerd waardoor het belang van een school nu voorop staat en niet het collectief belang van onderwijs als grootste pilaar van kansengelijkheid.

N: Dus als ik mag concluderen is dus kinderarmoede heeft te maken met zo veel facetten; met korte termijn, met lange termijn, met educatie, met inkomen van ouders. Er is eigenlijk niet een definitie?

DPM: Nee, ik weet niet of je de ambities hebt gelezen van Tamara van Ark? Staatssecretaris van Sociale Zaken. Zij worstelt dus al heel erg met wie zijn überhaupt die kinderen die wij arm vinden? Want zij vindt dat zelf een inkomensgrens, zij noemt dan bijvoorbeeld 120% van het sociaal minimum. Terwijl als jij in Rotterdam woont, je op 170% van het sociaal minimum je het ook gewoon niet rond weet te breien. Dus wij zeggen, kijk naar het besteedbaar inkomen. En het besteedbaar inkomen op landelijk niveau meten is nog niet mogelijk. Dus kan een Ministerie dat al niet als ambitie aanwijzen, want daar kan ze geen resultaten uit presenteren.

N: Nee, maar zal dat ook ooit mogelijk zijn? Want er zijn natuurlijk ook mensen die het wat minder breed hebben en die zullen noodgedwongen misschien ook zwart gaan werken.

DPM: Nee, zeker. Daar heb je gelijk in. En het lastige is altijd, als je dan eenmaal die cijfers hebt, wat heb je dan precies? Die ambities van EU 2020, wat zegt dat dan uiteindelijk?

N: Ja, het is heel subjectief eigenlijk.

DPM: Ja... En tegelijkertijd sprak ik iemand gister en zij heeft een bedrijf dat heet 'Geluks BV' en zij gelooft gewoon dat we moeten meten hoe gelukkig mensen zijn en dat we er alles aan moeten doen dat mensen gelukkiger zijn en daar zit dan alles in. En dat doe je gewoon door het mensen te vragen. Dus dan kan je alle CBS toestanden overboord gooien en gewoon 16 miljoen inwoners vragen of ze gelukkig zijn.

N: Oh wauw, wat een mooie insteek.

DPM: Ja hè? Er is een land in het Midden-Oosten, die heeft dit al ingevoerd. De overheid heeft maar een taak en dat is mensen gelukkiger maken. En de overheid toetst dus; doe ik het goed? Door gewoon ieder jaar te vragen "bent u gelukkig?".

N: Ja en als mensen dan aangeven waardoor ze gelukkiger kunnen worden, kan daar natuurlijk weer op ingespeeld worden.

DPM: Precies.

N: En als dan, laten we het wel even de definitie noemen, de definitie van kinderarmoede zo moeilijk te definiëren is. Hoe meet Divosa kinderarmoede dan?

DPM: Nou ja, als je het dan weer over de korte termijn hebt, over het project dat ik nu run; wat de doelstelling daarvan is over twee jaar is dus toch, omdat wij in opdracht van het Ministerie werken, kinderarmoede betekent gezinnen met een inkomen tot 120/130/100% van de bijstandsnorm, afhankelijk van de inkomensgrens die gemeenten gebruiken voor haar armoedebeleid.

N: Dat is dus regionaal?

DPM: Nee lokaal zelfs. En de ambitie daarbinnen is 100% van de kinderen die opgroeien op het niveau van 100% van de bijstandsnorm moet de gemeente bereiken met hun kind pakketten. En 70% van de inwoners boven die grens, tussen de 100 en laten we zeggen 120%, moeten ze ook bereiken. En dat is dus een redelijk smalle definitie.

N: Nee dat is inderdaad redelijk specifiek. Want ik ben bijvoorbeeld tijdens het schrijven van mijn scriptie de AROPE-indicator tegengekomen. Die staat voor 'At Risk of Poverty and Social Exclusion'. En die heeft dan drie condities waar je aan moet voldoen en dat is dan dat je onder de armoedegrens leeft (maar ja, wat is die armoedegrens), dat je in een situatie zit waardoor je geen toegang hebt tot bepaalde basismaterialen en dat je in een huishouden woont waar je ouders eigenlijk niet volop werken van wat ze zouden kunnen doen. Dat is dus de meetstaf van de EU, dus ik ben dan altijd erg benieuwd of gemeenten daar ook bekend mee zijn.

DPM: Nee zeker, dat is dan ook iedere keer de discussie tussen het CBS en het Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau. Het CBS die een hard inkomensgrens hanteert en het Sociaal cultureel planbureau die deze definitie meer hanteert, namelijk het laag maar toereikend inkomen of zo iets. Dus het Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau rekent veel meer vanuit de landelijke standaard; wat is rijk wat is arm? Wat heb je nodig? En kijkt daarnaar. Terwijl het CBS gewoon een inkomensnorm hanteert. En dat is voor gemeenten allemaal leuk en aardig, maar dat zijn nationale cijfers terwijl de lokale verschillen juist zo groot zijn. Daardoor hebben gemeenten vaak een minima effect rapportage die zij laten maken door het 'Nibud' en die gaat over "als je hier naar lokaal kijkt, wat de gemiddelde huurprijzen zijn?".

Lokaal is de samenstelling van de bevolking he, wat zou dan een goede inkomensgrens zijn waarop wij huishoudens nog ondersteunen en tegelijkertijd er niet voor zorgen dat ze niet meer gaan werken om uit de armoede te komen. Want die armoedeval is natuurlijk ook iets waar gemeenten zeer voorzichtig in zijn, je wil wel uiteindelijk dat mensen zelfredzaam worden door werk. Terwijl we ook weten dat het heel spannend is om te gaan werken met weinig zekerheid, wetende dat je ook alle rechten van je kind op sporten kwijtraakt, vanuit de gemeenten. Maar die indicator kennen we en dat is ook wat het Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau ieder jaar onderzoekt. Het ingewikkelde is, hoe zorgen we ervoor dat die aantallen van AROPE afnemen? En daar wordt ie lastig, want wie heeft daar welke rol in en wie draagt daar hoe aan bij? Dus uiteindelijk heeft het Ministerie van Sociale Zaken gezegd, wij willen dat gemeenten dit doen. En dat is dus 100% bereiken van iedereen die niet werkt en 70% van de mensen die werkt, maar onvoldoende inkomen heeft.

N: Ja dat had ik gelezen inderdaad. En wat mij ook zo opviel, want jij zegt die verschillen op nationaal en lokaal niveau. Ik vond dus op Eurostat, het CBS van de EU, vond ik hele andere cijfers dan die ik vind op gemeentelijk niveau.

DPM: Ja, dat klopt. En dat heeft ook weer te maken met afrondingen en dergelijken hoor.

N: Ja maar het zijn flinke verschillen.

DPM: Ja, ook weer andere definities waarschijnlijk. Appels en peren misschien, ik weet het niet.

N: Nou, dan had ik nog een andere vraag; wat zijn, in jouw ogen of in de ogen van Divosa, nou echt de hoofdoorzaken van kinderarmoede in Nederland? Als je er bijvoorbeeld drie mag noemen?

DPM: Als ik er drie mag noemen? Dat is inclusief onderwijs, want onderwijs wordt steeds minder inclusief.

N: Omdat er steeds minder kinderen bij betrokken kunnen worden in verband met financiën bijvoorbeeld?

DPM: Ja, precies. En ook omdat het steeds meer uitmaakt waar jij woont of jij goed onderwijs kunt genieten. Dus we horen van alles over het lerarentekort, maar als je de PO Raad spreekt, de brancheorganisatie van het basisonderwijs, die zeggen: ja, het lerarentekort is groot, maar in wijken waar het al slecht gaat is het echt schrikwekkend groot. Dus waar je juist wil investeren in kansengelijkheid, gaat het al erger mis op het moment. Het tweede is denk ik ons belastingstelsel.

N: Zou je dat kunnen toelichten?

DPM: Het feit dat wij steeds minder goed worden, zie het onderzoek van Koen Caminada, in het gericht ondersteunen van gezinnen in armoede. We brengen ze eerder in de schuldhulpverlening met ons ingewikkelde toeslagenstelsel en we geven ze niet wat ze nodig hebben. In ieder geval niet voldoende.

N: Ik had wel in meerdere artikelen gelezen, ook van de Rijksoverheid, dat ze daar wel naartoe zouden willen.

DPM: Ja en dat doen ze op dit moment door allerlei regelingen links en rechts te nemen, dus dan wordt het kind geboden budget weer verhoogd.

N: Dat had ik gelezen ja.

DPM: Terwijl, het pleidooi van een Koen Caminada is, die regelingen maken het verschil niet en een effectief belastingstelsel is niet 100% innen en 70% teruggeven. Een effectief belastingstelsel is dan wat minder innen en 10 tot 15% gericht teruggeven. Dus waarom betalen ouders met een laag inkomen kinderopvang, moeten zij bij de belastingdienst opgeven hoeveel, krijgen zij uiteindelijk via de belastingdienst 80% terug, waarom betalen die ouders niet 20%?

N: Dit is een interessante manier van kijken. En de derde?

DPM: Ja ik zit even te zoeken hoor.

N: U mag er ook straks op terugkomen.

DPM: Ja precies, want er zijn zo veel dingen. Wonen is natuurlijk ook een van de zaken die we steeds weer terug zien komen. Gewoon een dak boven je hoofd is natuurlijk behoefte nummer een. Het onbetaalbaar worden van woningen is ook echt een issue. Waar de Kinderombudsman ook voor aan de belt trekt. Het heeft ook gewoon te maken met het feit dat wij als samenleving... we zijn natuurlijk

rijk en daarom is de standaard van wat je zou moeten kunnen en zou moeten hebben, ligt gewoon heel hoog in Nederland.

N: Ja, absoluut.

DPM: En de zichtbaarheid daarvan, via social media en dergelijken, is heel groot. Dus los van of wij echt zien dat het arm is, het gevoel van armoede kan er al snel zijn in zo een samenleving die wij nu hebben.

N: Nou, en daarbij, de meneer die ik een aantal dagen geleden sprak, die had ook gezegd dat omdat Nederland het eigen relatief goed doet, versloft het ook sneller.

DPM: Ja, klopt. Terwijl, ik kom uit ontwikkelingssamenwerking en ik dacht “armoede in Nederland, waar heb je het over?”, maar wat ik heb geleerd in ontwikkelingssamenwerking is dat je pas weet wat armoede is als je rijkdom gezien hebt.

N: Ja, dat geloof ik ja.

DPM: En dat is in Nederland echt een heel ware uitspraak.

N: Ja... het is lastig wat betreft de oorzaken. Maar om daarop verder te gaan wie dat dat zou moeten aanpakken. Wat is Divosa's mening daarover? Want je zei net wel dat je vindt dat gemeentes daar niet helemaal voor moeten zijn.

DPM: Nou, wat ik vind is dat in de basis is een rijks verantwoordelijkheid om gewoon voldoende te bieden aan iedereen. Dat ben ik echt helemaal met Koen eens, daar is ons belastingstelsel voor. Daarom hebben wij de staat van Nederland zoals wij die hebben. Maar, waar gemeenten van zijn is lokaal ondersteuning bieden aan diegene die kwetsbaar zijn. En ondersteuning kan op allerlei manieren en kwetsbaarheid kan ook op allerlei manieren, maar wat we niet ambiëren is mensen langdurig en intensief afhankelijk maken van die lokale ondersteuning.

N: Nee, want ze moeten natuurlijk uiteindelijk ook weer zelf verder. Of stappen maken.

DPM: Precies, ja. Dus in de basis ligt er gewoon een rijks verantwoordelijkheid om de onderkant te garanderen. En op lokaal niveau ligt er echt een verantwoordelijkheid om daar waar die onderkant even doorgebroken wordt om te stutten en te steunen.

N: Ik kijk voor mijn scriptie naar die periode 2015-2019, wat is in jouw ogen de belangrijkste ontwikkeling geweest in die tijd?

DPM: Nou dat de recessie voorbij was en dat we dus zien dat we van 1 op de 9 kinderen naar 1 op de 12 kinderen gingen qua armoede. Volgens de SCP cijfers. Dus dat is een positief iets. Tegelijkertijd had de SER ook al geconstateerd dat armoede maar voor een derde bepaald wordt door de economische conjunctuur.

N: Oke.

DPM: Dat is wel een interessant rapport voor je hoor. En dat is de SER en kinderarmoede. Ik kan 'm je zo even mailen.

N: Oh ja, heel graag.

DPM: Ik mail 'm je wel even ja. Maar we zien dus wel... Wat ik vind dat dus in 2015 belangrijk was, ook omdat het kabinet daar heel veel in investeert. Is de afhankelijkheid van organisaties zoals 'Leergeld' en 'jeugd Sport en Cultuur Fonds'. Die krijgen miljoenen dus miljoenen op jaarbasis en je ziet dus dat dat gepresenteerd wordt als de oplossing voor de kinderen in armoede. En dat vind ik echt een slechte ontwikkeling.

N: Zou je dat kunnen toelichten?

DPM: Ja, we willen gewoon in de basis gaan voor inclusie. We willen niet in de basis de lat heel hoog leggen en zorgen dat mensen een springstok vinden. Het is de omgekeerde wereld. Door voorzieningen voorop te stellen, voorzieningen notabene die vooral met particulier geld betaald worden. Het kan niet zo zijn dat wij zeggen dat wij een kenniseconomie zijn en dat kinderen onze toekomst zijn en dat wij ze in toenemende mate afhankelijk laten zijn van particulieren initiatieven zoals een voedselbank, zoals een Leergeld, om mee te komen.

N: Nee dat ben ik helemaal met je eens.

DPM: En tegelijkertijd zie ik dat dit kabinet de discussie over wat is de basis waar wij voor aan de lat staan, niet voert en de aandacht blijft houden op voorzieningen.

N: Ja, precies, oke. Dus wat zou in jouw ogen, het ideale toekomstplan zijn.

DPM: Dat het koffertje van Koen Caminada met de oplossing de volgende kabinetsperiode ingevoerd wordt. Dat alle gelden die wij nu geven aan Leergelden, aan het onderwijs op allerlei verschillende manieren, want daar ligt heel veel geld op de plank wel. Dat we dat gewoon stoppen in inclusief onderwijs.

N: Dus onderwijs is eigenlijk een van de belangrijkste aspecten?

DPM: Ja. Ik denk als jij... ik weet niet of je de Rijksuniversiteit Groningen gaat bellen die al jaren onderzoek doet naar overerving van armoede? Maar je doorbreekt het door kinderen weer de capaciteit te geven om anders te reageren op dingen dan dat ze vanuit huis hebben meegekregen.

N: Nee dat geloof ik zeker.

DPM: En dat ga je thuis niet voor elkaar krijgen. Misschien wil het wel hoor, met jeugdhulp en dergelijken en opvoedondersteuning, maar daar ga je via school ook een heel belangrijke bijdrage in kunnen leveren. En Nadja Jungmann, van de Hogeschool Utrecht, noemt het executieve vaardigheden van kinderen centraal stellen.

N: Dat ze natuurlijk ook voor zichzelf een pad vinden die anders is dan dat van hun ouders.

DPM: Precies.

N: En zijn er nu, momenteel, belangrijke ontwikkelingen op gemeentelijk niveau die belangrijk zijn?

DPM: Klein en groot. De ontwikkeling die wij zien en die wij ook gaan stimuleren de komende twee jaar is dat kinderen meer gezien gaan worden. Het was heel lang bijvoorbeeld de vader die in de

spreekkamer van de sociale dienst zat om de weg naar werk te bespreken, maar niet het gezin dat gezien werd om te vragen “wat doet dit nu met jullie?” als jullie in deze situatie zitten en “wat heb je dan van ons nodig?”.

N: Ja precies.

DPM: Dat vind ik een belangrijke ontwikkeling en is ook de kern van mijn projecten de komende tijd. Een andere belangrijke ontwikkeling is iets totaal nieuws wat in Amsterdam nu op 15 scholen gaat gebeuren. Dat is een familieschool heet dat; waar kinderen van 8 tot 8 naar school kunnen. Waar ontbijt bij school is, waar alles naar school wordt gebracht; sporten, cultuur, extra taalonderwijs, beroepsoriëntatie. Dus een aantal directeuren hebben daar gemerkt we hebben lerarentekort en we krijgen het allemaal niet rond, BSO's die aangeven ook bij de kinderopvang hebben we geen mensen meer. Nu gaan ze op wijk niveau, alle kracht die er in de wijk zit, gaan ze ie inzetten om kinderen van 8 tot 8 op school te zetten. Ze krijgen ook avondeten daar. En je mag ze vanaf half 6 ophalen, maar als het je qua werk niet lukt mag je ze zelfs om 8 uur ophalen.

N: Het is eigenlijk een soort kostschool idee, op een goede manier.

DPM: Ja. En ik ben zelf heel nieuwsgierig wat het op gaat leveren. Het wordt een beetje het Scandinavisch model. Het is de brede school ++, maar hier ga je gewoon alles bij elkaar harken wat er gebeurt rondom een kind. Dat wordt een interessante pilot.

N: En dat is in Amsterdam op 15 scholen?

DPM: Ja in Amsterdam op 15 scholen en in Rotterdam-Zuid loopt het al 8 jaar, maar dan niet van 8 tot 8. Daar heeft Marco Pastors, projectleider van het National Programma Rotterdam-Zuid, heeft het voor elkaar gekregen om bij alle scholen in die wijken twee uur extra onderwijs te geven middags. Dat extra onderwijs betekent ook sport en cultuur komt naar je toe, maar zij zijn daar heel erg bezig met het vroegtijdig schoolverlaters te verminderen en de werkloosheid te verminderen. Door op de basisschool al te beginnen met beroepsoriëntatie en met extra aandacht voor taal en rekenen waar nodig.

N: Nou, ik moet zeggen dat als ik er zo over nadenk ik dat misschien ook wel had willen hebben.

DPM: Ja, nou ja, moet je kijken. Ja, want het lukt hem. Het voordeel aan Marco Pastors is, hij heeft 20 jaar budget en dat is anders dan een lokale democratie die iedere vier jaar opnieuw zijn speerpunten formuleert, dus colleges die iedere vier jaar opnieuw gekozen worden. Twintig jaar is voor schoolbesturen een termijn waarop ze kunnen zeggen wij durven aanpassingen te gaan doen, want wij weten dat twintig jaar dit beleid vastgehouden wordt. En dat is het voordeel wat Marco had, in acht jaar tijd ziet hij de CITO-scores bij alle wijken omhoog gaan.

N: Wauw.

DPM: Dat is de enige indicator die hij gebruikt om te kijken of het project werkt. Dat is ook nog een mooie als je het hebt over armoede en kinderen.

N: Nou ik ben benieuwd hoe het zal gaan, interessant. Heeft dit project een naam?

DPM: Volgens mij pemni school of eight to eight school? Zoiets. Goed Nederlandse term, het was iets op z'n Engels.

N: Ik ga het even opzoeken.

DPM: En de Aldi doet daaraan mee, want die heeft via de 'Alliantie Kinderarmoede' gecommitteerd de taak "geen enkel kind gaat zonder ontbijt naar school".

N: Oh wauw. Dus ook bedrijven zetten zich in om daaraan mee te helpen. Nou super.

DPM: En dus ook bedrijven in Amsterdam die in een keer allerlei potentiële ouders zien die geen gehannes meer hebben met kinderopvang, want je kind zit gewoon op school dus je kunt gaan werken.

N: En dat is natuurlijk ook de vermindering van regeltjes overal omheen. Niet weer apart een kinderopvang en weer apart een rekening betalen.

DPM: Ja. Hoe het financieel allemaal gaat lopen weet ik allemaal niet, ik spreek binnenkort de projectleider van het Ministerie van OCW, want die moeten die mogelijk maken.

N: Wie waren dat? Het Ministerie van?

DPM: OCW, onderwijs.

N: Oh ja.

DPM: Ik denk dat er nog niet zo heel veel openbaar over is. Wij hadden ons najaarscongres als Divosa, maar die workshop gaat niet door.

N: Maar 7 november was er wel iets had jij gezegd?

DPM: Morgen is dat he? Ja zeker. Dat is op de Hogeschool van Amsterdam en dat is gewoon gratis. Dat gaat over schulden en armoede.

N: Ik ga toch nog even kijken of ik daarlangs kan gaan. Dan wil ik je in ieder geval voor deze vragen heel erg bedanken.

DPM: Graag gedaan!

(iii) Interview translation

DPM = Dutch Process Manager

N = Nina

N: I would kindly like to ask you if you could introduce yourself.

DPM: Is it ok if I put you on speaker?

N: Absolutely.

DPM: My name is... and I am the process manager at Divosa. Divosa is an association of municipal directors in the Dutch social domain. This means that we mainly support municipalities by stimulating municipalities learn from each other. And we are focused on the execution of the Dutch social domain. We watch them and ask ourselves; "what is going well and what is not?". And what does this mean for Dutch legislation developed in the Hague that should then be changed. Lobbying is one of our other occupations. These are our main tasks. And within Divosa, I am, among other things, responsible for economic security and everything concerning poverty and debt. To be specific, the coming two years I will be the process manager for the project '*Kinderarmoede*'. With this project, we assist municipalities in reaching more children and especially with reaching these children in a more proper manner. And within Divisa, different employees are occupied with different Dutch regions. I mainly focus on municipalities in the Northern part of the Netherlands; Drenthe, Groningen, and Friesland.

N: And does Divosa also function as a point of contact for municipalities?

DPM: Yes. Municipalities also use us as a source of information since we have a lot of information that is relevant within the social domain. So, our news items and web site are heavily used by municipalities. Not only as a source of information, but also with certain questions, such as "how to handle this case?". We try to connect municipalities. We do not see ourselves as advisors; we connect the question of one municipality with another municipality that might already have an answer to that question. We then try to host meetings where these municipalities can connect with universities and relevant knowledge institutes.

N: Ok. That is clear. Thank you. Did you read up on the literature I sent you on the 'Europe 2020' strategy or should I explain the context?

DPM: I read the links you sent me, but the strategy is completely new to me.

N: Really?

DPM: Yes. Also, the fact that the European Union is so heavily involved with child poverty. I have never heard about a municipality that is familiar with this strategy, let alone work from the strategies' perspective.

N: Well, that is some revelation.

DPM: I am really curious. Maybe you could provide some context?

N: Yes, of course. Before this strategy came into force, the European Union followed the Lisbon Strategy. The Lisbon Strategy was designed in order to let the European Union recover from the financial crisis of 2007-08. And by that, make the EU economy one of the strongest. When the Lisbon Strategy expired and the EU did not yet reach its targets, they decided to develop another strategy. And that became the 'Europe 2020' Strategy. This strategy still has the main goal of strengthening the EU economy, but this goal is divided into five different goals. One of those goals is reducing all people living in poverty by 20 million. Shortly said, that is what this strategy entails. And every year, all the different EU countries are provided with country specific recommendations, which are used as a basis for new goals within the EU countries individually. In the Netherlands, we also have a national goal to reach the poverty reduction. That is also why I think it is odd that you just told me that municipalities are not known with this Strategy.

DPM: And how does this relate to the SDG's? Because with the introduction of the SDG's, the Netherlands created the ambition to reduce the Dutch poverty rate by a half. Which is an even bigger ambition than that of the EU.

N: Well, the SDG's are the successors of the MDG's and are even more focused on child poverty, inequality and the environment than the MDG's. I did speak to someone working for the European Commission a couple of days ago and he did tell me that the SDG's might be the successor of the 'Europe 2020' Strategy.

DPM: Yes. I understand because the SDG's only expire in 2030.

N: Yes, that is right. They have 10 years extra.

DPM: And are more ambitious. I don't know what happens at the local level if the EU decides something. Do you know? Does the Ministry of Social Affairs function as a filter for municipalities?

N: Well, that is a good question, I have also spoken about this with the gentleman. He explained that at the EU-level they discuss Member State particular goals and that these goals will trickle down and get processed by the municipalities. But how that process actually works, I don't know I must admit. It is a really complicated matter and concerns so many steps. But the idea is that things are settled on a national level and are implemented at local level.

DPM: Yes, because I don't know if you are planning on contacting someone from the Ministry of Social Services?

N: No, not right now but I'm always open to it. So, I can check that out.

DPM: Yes, that would be interesting. For your perception, so that you know what is going on at the municipal level. The Europe 2020 targets are about halving the amount of people in poverty while the current focus of the Ministry lies with softening the effects of poverty and that is the only thing municipalities can do. Because one thing concerns our social security system; for example, what we consider minimum wages and the fact that 75% of the Dutch households are getting tax refund. So, at 100% we collect it and refund it. So, we are not very specifically and effectively supporting families and households who need it. I don't know if you know Koen Caminada?

N: No.

DPM: He is a professor at the University of Leiden. You must check out his website because he has published interesting analyses.

N: What was his last name?

DPM: Koen Caminada. Koen is with K and Caminada with C.

N: Yes, I found him.

DPM: You must look at his presentations. Together with other universities, he conducts research on how effective the Netherlands is in getting and keeping people out of poverty through our tax system. He has also spoken at our yearly congress last September and he very clear shows that the Netherlands has become less and less effective. In fact, when it is about families with children, we are doing really worse in contrast with others. He gave a great presentation about this, which you can find on his website. He believes that everything he does must be shared. So, you can find everything on his website. But he also speaks about the fundamental discussion; "Taxes are collected for two reasons". To be able to pay for collective interests, such as education and health, and to prevent people from falling through the cracks. And we have become worse in the latter. But municipalities are not a part of this discussion. Municipalities do see the outcome of this all, but municipalities are not allowed to interfere with income politics. They are increasingly noticing the effects (especially in times of crisis where you talk about) of dual-income households where one partner loses his/her job, a mortgage, an house that is too expensive. These kind of people would go to their municipality for income support but that was a target group we had never seen. And what we now see is that the crisis is over and that the housing market is not showing any flexibility and that the fixed costs that households need to pay are sky high. And that there are still households with an income that is above average that decide to move to the west part of Holland, like for example Zoetermeer where you have to wait for eight years before having a real shot at social housing and that they are still not able to make the ends meet at the end of the month.

N: Well, I have read about this. That there is no real attention for the families with an average income who are still not able to make the ends meet. This group of people is not provided any attention or help. Or that this problem is just hard to map.

DPM: Last year the '*Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau*' presented a great report about the working poor. That's an interesting one. The House of Representatives instructed the SER to use this report to come up with possible solutions.

N: Yes, I have saved some articles about that on my computer.

DPM: In February, the SER will present a report about the working poor, but of course they already wrote a great report about child poverty in 2017.

N: Well, I like to elaborate on this because you said you mainly notice the effects of poverty and that in the end, municipalities are not capable to work preventively.

DPM: Well, we can work preventive in a sense of providing children with opportunities but that you preventively in the way that there is sufficient income.

N: You mean there are not enough jobs? Or?

DPM: Well, we can be of some value in the Dutch social structure because poverty also means a rather isolated way of growing up and not being able to participate in things we think are normal in the Netherlands. And we, as municipalities, can fight this by enabling sports, by enabling participation at schools. Initially, a child is entitled to have parents that capable of earning enough money. However, we can't do a lot in that sense. We are decreasingly able to help with this because we notice that the flexibilization of the job market has been one of the reasons behind the increasing amount of the working poor. We hardly do anything about it. That is also the conclusion of the '*Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau*'. So yes, we help people transition from living from an allowance to finding a paid job, but that's a huge process. Take an organisation, such as Picnic. You will be officially allowed to work for 40 hours but in reality you only work for 24 hours. But this also means you cannot claim a 40-hour salary. When you get ill, you don't get paid at all. Municipalities do not have any control over this.

N: But do you think that it should be within the municipal powers?

DPM: No not at all. Because then there could be a possibility that workers in Groningen receive a good salary and workers in Eindhoven do not. You don't want any local differences. No, I think income politics are well reserved for the State.

N: Well then, this was a great introduction. I had some more questions. I looked into, for example, the definition of child poverty, because that really is quite broad.

DPM: Super complicated.

N: I have read so much about it and I wondered; is there a (somewhat) general definition that you use in your organization?

DPM: That's a complex one, because this knows two sides. There is the 'solving child poverty before tomorrow'. Where we aim at doing the best we municipalities can. So that the supplies the children are provided with actually fit the needs of the child. For example, there is discussion about the

mobile phone. And you know what, I am not going to order what is right, but we want the municipalities to ask the child what it needs.

N: So, involve the child?

DPM: Exactly, listen to the child. But there is also a long-term vision about child poverty and that's more about equity and inclusion. This means you want to prevent children from becoming dependent on resources like a youth sports fund or tuition fees but that it is arranged in a way you can participate no matter the income of your parents.

N: I have actually read that.

DPM: And there are some worrying developments. For example, if you look at Dutch education, the education act tells us that education should be free of charge up until 18. In practice there is the parental voluntary funding, schooltrips and an increased use of digital teaching materials, which all need to be paid for by the parents. So, in practice we notice that parents with low income are increasingly dependent on whether they can find their way to municipalities and the social organizations that provides help concerning matters like this. Currently, we have the ambition to arrange things as good as possible, but in the long run we cannot create a situation where we let those children be dependent on that path. Education should be free of charge. And what we already accomplished with certain schoolbooks, which costs are now paid by the schools, is also what we want to accomplish with the complete Dutch education system.

N: But Schoolbooks for college for example, are those free of charge right now?

DPM: Those come for free, except, I heard from some parents that certain parts already require a contribution. So, I thought they were finally free of charge, but no. In practice it seems to be different here and there.

N: It is strange, I think. That there are still so many discrepancies that can be detected. You expect everything to be arranged accordingly but actually it isn't.

DPM: And there you have the discussion that evolves around our educational system. About thirty years ago, we provided school boards with the responsibility to take care of our educational system provide our children with. Nowadays we notice that these school boards only have interest for their own school, while there is a joint concern that must prevail over that school board. But this is not the case anymore. So, also in education we have gradually introduced market forces, whereby the importance of the school prevails instead of the common value of education as most important pillar of equity.

N: So, if I may conclude; child poverty concerns a lot of aspects; with short term, with long term, with education, with parental income. There is actually not one single definition?

DPM: No, I don't know if you have read the ambitions of Tamara van Ark? State Secretary for Social Affairs. She has been struggling with the question of when we actually say a child is poor? She

believes we need to look at the income threshold. For example, 120% of the social minimum. However, when one lives in Rotterdam, it is possible that they cannot make the ends meet with 170% of the social minimum. So, we believe we should be looking at the disposable income of an household. Scaling the disposable income at a national level is not yet possible though. So, a ministry can't use that as an ambition because there will be no results to present.

N: No, but will that ever be possible? Because there are also people who have less money and will, maybe out of necessity, start work illegally.

DPM: No for sure. You are right about that. The hard part is, once you have the numbers, what is it you've actually have? The ambitions of EU 2020, what does that actually tell us?

N: Yes, in fact, it is really subjective.

DPM: Yes... Yesterday I talked to someone who owns a company called the 'Happiness Company' and she believes we have to put effort in measuring the level of people's happiness and do our best to increase happiness. You can do this simply by asking people how they feel. So, we can throw all CBS situations overboard and just ask 16 million people if they are happy.

N: Oh wow, that is a great way of looking at it.

DPM: Yes, isn't it? A country in the Middle-East already initiated this. The government has only one task, and that is making people happy. And the government simply checks if they are doing well by annually asking people if they are happy.

N: Yes, and when people explain what can increase their happiness, an adaptation can be made.

DPM: Exactly.

N: And if, let's call it the definition, the definition of child poverty is so hard to define. How does Divosa measure child poverty?

DPM: Unclear what the interview says.

N: So, this is regional?

DPM: No, even local. And the ambition for the municipalities is to reach the children that are currently growing up within households that are 100% dependent on allowances. And 70% of the inhabitants that are above that limit, between 100% and let's say 120%, they need to be reached as well. This is a rather narrow definition.

N: No, that's indeed rather specific. Because during the writing of my dissertation, I came across the AROPE-indicator, which stands for 'At Risk of Poverty or Social Exclusion'. People are at risk of poverty if they meet three criteria; 1. "at risk of poverty, meaning below the poverty threshold"; 2. "in a situation of severe material deprivation"; 3. "living in a household with a very low work intensity". This is how the EU measures poverty. I am curious if municipalities are familiar with this approach?

DPM: No for sure. This is the on-going discussion between the CBS and the '*Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau*'. The CBS which uses a strict income limit and the '*Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau*', which doesn't utilize this definition anymore. They look at the low but sufficient income or something like that. So, the '*Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau*' calculates from the perspective of the national standard; what defines rich, what defines poor? What do you need? While the CBS just uses an income norm. That is all fun and games, but those are national numbers while the local differences are quite big. That is why municipalities often have a minimum effecto report, which is produced by the '*Nibud*' and is about "what are the average rental prices if you look at this from a local perspective?". Local is the composition of the population, right? What would be a satisfying income limit, where we support households but yet don't discourage them to work in jobs to get out of poverty. In the end, you want people to become self-reliant by working. In the meantime, we know it's scary to work with little security, knowing your child is losing all rights to play sports provided by municipalities. But we are familiar with this indicator and that is actually what the '*Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau*' is annually looking into. The complexity of it is, how do we ensure that the AROPE rates decrease? And that's where it gets difficult. Because who fulfils which role and who contributes in what way. So finally, the Ministry of Social Services made a statement saying that it should be a municipal responsibility. This means that 100% of all people that are unemployed need to be reached and 70% of the people that are employed but with an insufficient income needs to be reached.

N: Yes, I have read that actually. What stood out were the differences that could be detected when considering both the national as well as the local level. Eurostat, the EU CBS, provided completely different data in comparison with data that came directly from the municipalities.

DPM: Yes, that's right, but that is due to rounding off and such.

N: Yes, but there are big differences.

DPM: Yes, probably also different definitions. Apples and oranges maybe, I don't know.

N: Well, I have another question; what are, in your opinion or in the opinion of Divosa, the main causes of child poverty in the Netherlands? If you have to mention three causes?

DPM: If I can mention three? Education because education is becoming decreasingly inclusive.

N: Because an increasing number of children are not able to participate due to financial issues for instance?

DPM: Yes exactly. Also, because it increasingly matters where you live. So, we hear a lot about the shortage of teachers, but when you talk to the PO Raad, the inter-branch organisation of primary education, they say: "Yes the shortages of teachers are significant, but even more significant in disadvantaged neighbourhoods". So, where you want to invest in equality of opportunity, it goes wrong at this very moment. Secondly, I think, is our tax system.

N: Could you elaborate?

DPM: The fact is that we are becoming worse, taking Koen Caminada's research into account, in directly supporting families living in poverty. We push them into debt counselling with our complicated benefits system and don't provide them with the resources they need.

N: I have read multiple articles among which an article from the Dutch government that that is something they want to change.

DPM: Yes, and right now they are doing this by creating all sorts of regulations. For example, increasing the child budget.

N: Yes, I read something about that.

DPM: Koen Caminada's plea is that those regulations will not make a difference. An effective tax system does not mean that a government can collect 100% and return 70%. An effective tax system should collect less and return 10% to 15%. Why do parents with low income that pay for childcare get 80% of their money back? Why do they not pay 20% instead?

N: That is an interesting way of looking at it. And the third cause?

DPM: Yes, I am thinking.

N: We can also come back to this question later on.

DPM: Yes ok. There are just so many things. Housing is also something we increasingly hear about. Having a roof to live under is a human's number one need. The increased housing prices is also a serious issue. Which is also something the Children's Ombudsman advocates for. Taking all this into account, we can also blame the society we live in... We are a rich country with high standards, which automatically becomes the standard for everyone living in the Netherlands.

N: Yes, definitely.

DPM: Partly because of social media, visibility increases rapidly. Apart from how much poverty we can actually see, emotional poverty also increases because of our society.

N: Well, the gentleman I talked about the other day also explained that because the Netherlands is relatively doing rather well, we experience a lack of motivation.

DPM: Yes, that is right. I have worked in development cooperation and I always said to myself: "Poverty in the Netherlands? What are you talking about?". But what I have learned in development cooperation; once you have seen wealth, you know what poverty is.

N: I believe you.

DPM: With regards to the Netherlands, that is a very accurate statement.

N: Yes... Coming back to the causes, it is just complicated. But to elaborate on who is actually responsible for fighting poverty; what is Divosa's opinion on this? Because you just said that it should not solely be a municipal responsibility.

DPM: Well, I believe that in the core it is the government's responsibility to sufficiently provide its citizen. I completely agree with Koen on that; we need an effective tax system for this. That is why

the Dutch state is as it is. But municipalities are able to provide support on a local level. But what we do not want is to make people dependent on local support.

N: No, I understand. They need to become independent so that they can move on individually.

DPM: Exactly. So, in the core it's a government responsibility to take care of the citizens who tend to fall through the cracks. The government should fix those cracks.

N: For my thesis I am looking at a certain timeframe, namely 2015-2018. What do you believe has been the most relevant child poverty related development?

DPM: Probably the end of the recession. We went from 1 in 9 children living in poverty to 1 in 12, according to SCP data. That is very positive. At the same time, the SER made a statement arguing that poverty is only partly determined by the economy.

N: Ok.

DPM: I think that is an interesting report for your thesis; the SER and child poverty. I can send it to you.

N: Oh yes, please.

DPM: Yes, I will send it. But what I think is an important development that took place in 2015, partly because the government invested in this, is the dependency of social organizations, such as '*Leergeld*' and the '*Jeugd Sport and Cultuur Fonds*'. Annually, they collect millions of euros, which is presented as the solution for child poverty. I believe that to be a very bad development.

N: Could you elaborate?

DPM: Yes. In the core, we want to achieve inclusion. We do not want to aim for standards that are too high and just hope people will fight for that standard. That is the world upside down. By prioritizing the providence of resources, we are making children increasingly dependent on private initiatives, such as the food bank. This cannot be the case if we claim to be a knowledge-based economy.

N: I totally agree with you.

DPM: At the same time, I Dutch government continuous to prioritize the providence of resources.

N: Yes. Ok. So what do you believe will work for the future?

DPM: That Koen Caminada's plea gets integrated into the future approach for fighting child poverty. That all the money we are now investing in social organisation is invested in inclusive education.

N: So education is one of the most important aspects?

DPM: Yes. I do not know if you are planning on talking to someone from Groningen University? They have been doing research on the inheritance of poverty. We can discontinue this process by providing children with the capacity to think for themselves. So that they do not need solely need to rely on what their parents have taught them.

N: That makes sense.

DPM: You cannot achieve this from within the children's homes. Maybe in combination with mediators but education can be a very important aspect in this process. Nadja Jungmann, working for Utrecht University, calls it the centralization of children's executive skills.

N: So that they pave their own path, separate from their parents.

DPM: Exactly.

N: Are there currently any relevant developments at the municipal level going on?

DPM: Yes. The development we detect and which we will stimulate for the coming two years is personal attention for the children. At first, it would be the father that asked for help to find employment. It should be us asking the family in its entirety what they need.

N: Yes, exactly.

DPM: I believe that to be a relevant development. This development is at the core of my projects for the near future. Another development that is important is something completely new, which is the family school. This will be tested on 15 different schools in Amsterdam. At a family school, children will attend school from 8 AM until 8 PM. They have breakfast at school, they play sports at school, get extra education on languages and they are even assisted with professional orientation. Multiple school directors realized that there was a lack of teachers; at the after school day care as well. With the family school, they want all teachers from one specific neighbourhood to be available for family school. Everyone is provided with dinner. Parents can decide whether to pick their children up at 6 PM or not.

N: This sounds a bit like boarding school but in a positive sense.

DPM: Yes. Personally, I am very curious what family school will bring us. It is a bit like the Scandinavian model. The family school simply takes all important aspects of education into account. It will be an interesting pilot.

N: This will be tested on 15 schools in Amsterdam?

DPM: Yes, on 15 schools in Amsterdam. In Rotterdam they have been doing this for 8 years. Not from 8 AM until 8 PM though. Marco Pastors, project manager for the National Program for Rotterdam established two extra hours of education on particular schools. This also means extra sport and culture. In Rotterdam they are particularly focused on the decrease of early school leavers and unemployment. By simply paying more attention to professional orientation at a young age, they want to improve this.

N: Well, if I now think about it. I think I would have wanted to go to a family school.

DPM: Well, look. Marco Pastors is really getting there. He was provided with a 20-year budget, which is extremely helpful. If a school is provided with a 20-year budget, then it is easier to make changes and to just try new things. Over these past 8 years, the grades of all students in these neighbourhoods increased.

N: Wow.

DPM: That is the only indicator he uses to see if the project is working. Which is something extra you could use for measuring child poverty.

N: Well, I am curious about his progress. Did he name the project?

DPM: I think Pemni School? Or Eight to Eight school? Something like that. It was something English.

N: I will look it up.

DPM: The Aldi also contributes to this project. Through the '*Alliantie Kinderarmoede*', the Aldi decided to launch the 'no child should go to school without breakfast' campaign.

N: Wow. So, big companies are also involved. That is great.

DPM: Many companies notice that parents experience less struggles with their children and the day care. Because they are in school anyway and you can go to work.

N: Which again correlated with the decrease of regulations. Not another day care and another bill.

DPM: Yes. I do not know anything about the financial arrangements though. I will talk to the project manager of the Ministry of OCW soon.

N: Who are that? The Ministry of?

DPM: The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

N: Oh ok.

DPM: I do not think there will be a lot of information available yet. Divosa was planning on having a congress, but that was cancelled.

N: There is something on the 7th of November, right?

DPM: Tomorrow you mean? Yes. We have organized a meeting at the Amsterdam University. It is free. It is about debt and poverty.

N: I will check if I can visit this meeting. But for now, I would like to thank you.

DPM: You are welcome!

C) Interview 2 – Financial Analyst
(i) Informed Consent Form

1) Research Project Title: Child Poverty in the European Union: An analysis of the effects of the 'Europe 2020' poverty target on child poverty development trends in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

2) Project Description (1 paragraph)

This project aims to find out whether and how the 'Europe 2020' poverty target affected child poverty development trends in both the Netherlands as well as in the United Kingdom between 2015 and 2018. An answer to this question will be established by conducting both primary and secondary research

If you agree to take part in this study please read the following statement and sign this form. I am 16 years of age or older.

I can confirm that I have read and understood the description and aims of this research. The researcher has answered all the questions that I had to my satisfaction.

I agree to the audio recording of my interview with the researcher.

I understand that the researcher offers me the following guarantees:

All information will be treated in the strictest confidence. My name will not be used in the study unless I give permission for it.

Recordings will be accessible only by the researcher. Unless otherwise agreed, anonymity will be ensured at all times. Pseudonyms will be used in the transcriptions.

I can ask for the recording to be stopped at any time and anything to be deleted from it. I consent to take part in the research on the basis of the guarantees outlined above.

Name redacted at request of interviewee (original version is available).

Date:

9/11/2019

(ii) Interview Transcript

FA = Financial Analyst

N = Nina

FA: Hello, I am ... and I am the European Semester Officer here in the Netherlands since January 2019, so fairly recently. Before, I did various things, for example, when the strategy on the Semester and EU 2020 was set up I was economic advisor to the Belgian Prime Minister and there I was responsible for the design of the Belgian part of the EU 2020 strategy. After that, I have worked in the coordination unit of DG Economics and Finance, which is one of the DG's in the European Commission, which is most heavily involved with the European Semester. I have worked on country surveillance for France, also in the context of the Semester. And finally, I have also worked at the Economic and Finance committee, which is one of the committees preparing ECOFIN, so the meeting of Ministers of Finance where also the Semester was actively discussed. My background is in economics.

N: Thank you very much. I would kindly want to ask you if you could tell me about the setting up of the EU 2020 strategy with a link to the European Semester.

FA: I think, the strategy came first and so before, you had the Lisbon strategy and the Lisbon strategy was mainly made to make the EU economy the most competitive in the world. It was set against the challenge of ageing and globalisation and climate change. And, with the change of Commission there was a need for a new strategy, which was the EU 22 strategy. This was meant to be more holistic in a sense that it covered all areas. With all areas, I mean also the social dimension and also climate change. And the intention was to integrate all parts of the strategy. And you had five goals in that strategy, one of which was poverty, you had the R&D goal, you had the climate change goal. When designing the strategy, it was already controversial that poverty was among the targets and also the definition of how to set the target was quite controversial at that time. In the end there were three indicators chosen. Some countries were reluctant to set poverty targets. Also, the NL was quite reluctant I seem to remember at that time.

N: And now there is a national target. But the UK still does not have a national target.

FA: Yes. So, one of the things of the controversy is to which extent we should coordinate at the EU level on poverty. But anyway, the Commission was quite firm on having the poverty target, and also in later strategies. As always, the Semester holds on to a holistic view by emphasizing the social dimension. We recently for example, proposed the social pillar. The EU 2020 strategy, certainly in the beginning, was to some extent overshadowed by the macroeconomic development at that time, which were those of crises. You first had the banking crisis in the States, which came to Europe. Then you got a sovereign debt crisis that started in Greece, but contagated a number of other countries. And as a quid pro quo for the rescue of Greece, there was a strengthening of surveillance, which was both fiscal and macroeconomic. And one of the elements of the macroeconomic surveillance is the European Semester. Where again, you get an attempt to put everything in one basket, in a sense that the Semester is saying that all surveillance that we have is done under the same Semester umbrella, whereas previously you had several separate dimensions. And so, the Semester tried to unify the surveillance, both fiscal and macroeconomic all in one. And the goal of the Semester is to achieve EU 2020. But it is fair to say that the exact linkages between the Semester and EU 2020 have not always been very clear. If you look at a country report you will see that the bulk of it is about looking at macroeconomic problems. You of course have a social section and a poverty section and then at the end of the report, in an annex, you see the EU 2020 goals and how you achieve them or not. Also, in the executive summary, you do have a paragraph on the EU 2020 goals. So first important lesson from a general perspective is, the Semester was more prominent than the end goal the EU 2020 strategy because of the need for Europe to sort out the macroeconomic mess that was created.

N: Because of the crises?

FA: Because of the crises. And so, EU 2020 goals were at the back of our minds, mostly. That said, if you look back or if you look at where we are now, for a number of goals we did quite well. Employment is doing quite well, R&D we have made some progress, climate okay. Poverty is of course not necessarily a goal that we achieved. Certainly not in all Member States what we wanted to achieve.

N: But still, progress is made.

FA: Progress is made. And there, of course, we see that the crises had an impact on achieving the EU 2020 goals. And I think we were right to say that we need the sound economic fundamentals before you can reach the EU 2020 targets. One element, from my background, that is important is the focus of the Semester is not necessarily on poverty. We try to do that, but it is not necessarily there. This,

of course, depends a little bit on the interests of the Member States itself. So, the Commission is powerful if stakeholders and Member States are interested in something; if the national media plays up the debate and if the Commission is seen as being an important voice in the debate. And so, on some of the dimensions of the Semester, like on fiscal, the role of the Commission is very clear. And then you see it has a voice in the debate and that the EU 2020 strategy in the Semester can have traction. On poverty, well first, it might not be as highlighted in the Semester as some want and then the Commission is not always seen as a relevant actor in the debates. This also has to do with Member States. Are they actively pursuing it or not? And are they actively reporting? And are they finding it interesting to have a policy debate with the Commission? In some countries, I think poverty has come to the forefront. For example, in Greece, our policies were quite attacked because they let to poverty, according to some. Then the question always is of course whether our policies lead to poverty or the situation before it has inevitably let to a surge in poverty. As said, the economic fundamental needed to be addressed. But all the criticism and what I said about holistic views. In the end, it created a push factor for our fiscal policies to be more holistic and to take into account other dimensions of the strategy. And so, for example, in fiscal policy we now have an investment exception, we have unusual event clauses that every time there is a natural catastrophe or something else, we can take into account these issues. And I think, certainly the last five years, our fiscal policy has become much more social than before. An interesting dimension is also how the Council works. So, the Council is where Member States meet. The ECOFIN Council is a very powerful Council.

N: Can you repeat that?

FA: ECOFIN Council. So, the Council where Ministers of Finance meet is very powerful. For a number of reasons: one is that they meet each month. The second is that Ministers of Finance are powerful people in their national governments. A third factor is that you have the Eurogroup, which is the Minister of Finance of the Euro area. They meet separately. And so, for a number of reasons the ECOFIN Council is very powerful and manages to have a good grip on macroeconomic policies and Semester policies. The Council of Minister of Employment, comes together less often.

N: Why is that? For example?

FA: Why is that? That is a good question.

N: If they know it could be beneficial to meet more often, why?

FA: Well... to some extent, the ECOFIN Ministers come together a lot because also there is a lot of issues to discuss. Whereas, on employment, Member States, such as the Netherlands, which is a very social country as you know. And also, Scandinavia, which are very social countries, but they don't see a big role for the EU in social policies. And although they are social countries, they find that the social welfare schemes of the Southern European Member States are to be reformed. And that's not to the liking of the Southern European Member States. So, somehow, although the quality of the work done by the Employment Ministers and the preparatory bodies of these Employment Ministers is excellent and is to some extent even better than what happens in the filiar of the Ministers of Finance, the Employment Ministers meetings are seen as less powerful, also because they have less tools to some extent. What are the tools of the Semester? You don't get a fine because you don't meet the poverty target. You get a fine if you don't meet your deficit. You could, in principle, get a fine for your deficit. And so, while you have five equal EU 2020 strategy goals, the interaction with the Semester for some of these goals is stronger than with other goals. And then the toolbox the Commission has for some of them it is a very hard tool box and that is for fiscal surveillance. And for others, like poverty, our toolbox is much weaker. Making it more difficult to have good dialogue with the Member States, according to me.

N: But, child poverty is, besides the social aspect, also a fiscal matter right?

FA: In which sense?

N: In the sense that employment is a big part. Employment has to do with finances. I mean, for me, it sounds relatively easy to include poverty in a better way than they do it at this moment.

FA: Well... our fiscal surveillance framework is initially based on two targets. The 3% deficit target and the 60% debt target. So, your deficit cannot be too high, and your debt cannot be too high. So, if you meet these two conditions, we initially didn't ask any questions. Why? Because we are believing in subsidiarity and for the monetary union there is only one thing that is important and that is sustainable public finances. You can say, your public finances are not sustainable if there is a lot of child poverty, to which we fully agree and that is why we make a holistic strategy. But Member States don't want us to put our noses in the choices they make in national budgetary matters and how to invest in child poverty is one choice you make and that is a national choice. So initially, our fiscal framework is not meant to look in that detail to the choices Member States make.

N: So, you would say that, actually the Member States are primarily responsible for addressing child poverty?

FA: Yes. Just to finish off, our fiscal surveillance framework evolved, became more complex. And Member States, as the rules were so strict, then said: hold on, we have high poverty, we have a crisis, you cannot ask us to deliver the fiscal efforts you want us to deliver. And now, with the evolved policy framework were getting more into the muddy ground of what Member States do with your fiscal policy. And is that a reason to be less fast to consolidate your public finances, because if you have a social crisis, it might not be the best time to address your public finances. That is one thing. So, what do we do on poverty? It is generally, well, what was the 'Open Method of Coordination' under the Lisbon Strategy, I have the impression this is still very much what happens with regards to poverty. We discuss good practices, but that is what we directly do. We of course now have the Social Pillar of Rights, where we have set goals. Also, what we try to do is to put a policy framework on what Member States do. And what we try to do is we agree on what is good policy? What is good common sense? On things, such as child poverty. And then, Member States can implement it in their state.

N: So, it is more of an example for the Member States?

FA: Of course, how the Semester works; we look at 28 countries and if we see, for example, on child poverty that a country is doing very badly. We start looking into it and we have recommendations saying: look, your child poverty is too high, this is bad because these kids don't get education and you will get generational poverty. And then we will make recommendations. These recommendations are to be read in the national media. They do generate a debate. There are associations that represent the poor and we are in dialogue with them within the Semester and that helps. What we mainly do, for example in Greece, we try to create healthy macroeconomic conditions and in our believe, healthy macroeconomic conditions are very important to be able to have a modern social welfare model. So my job here in the Netherlands is to some extent easy because, macroeconomic conditions are very healthy, which makes it easier to make choices to address child poverty. Whereas, if your macroeconomic conditions are a mess, like what happened a while ago in some Member States. You see child poverty going up and then you can say to the Commission: hold on, you should worry about child poverty. Where we say: yes, but we first need to address the macroeconomic conditions.

N: Exactly, the fundamentals.

FA: But also there, we always try to recommend the main things that need to change. So, in these macroeconomic adjustment programs, we say: these you really need to change. But also there the temptation for us exists to say you need to meet this fiscal target. How you do it, that doesn't matter to us. And I have seen numbers that show that child poverty has gone up, whereas poverty for the elderly has not come up that much. And the simple reason seems to be, that elderly can vote and the children cannot. And you have seen in a lot of countries that child poverty went up, while this didn't happen for the older ones. And I think that is, well, it is a general shortcoming of the methodology we use as a condition. Namely, you focus on the big picture, but you see that it leads to unwanted side consequences. To some extent, if you go through a very big crisis, it is quite inevitable that poverty goes up, but from a purely economic point of view, you do not want children to be particularly harmed by it because they are the future. And so, you would want that investment in education remains at a high level. And as I said before, at some moment we noticed that the consolidation done by Member States was particularly effecting investment. And that is why Juncker, for example, came with the investment plan. Where he said: we need to invest more. And then we also changed our fiscal policy so that investment was treated lighter than other issues. And so we did adjust our policies.

N: Okay. So, the main task of the European Semester with a fiscal example of how they function?

FA: So, the Semester works in a number of phases. The first phase you have the Annual Growth Survey, where we set the priorities for the EU. These priorities are mostly threefold, there was investment, social and fiscal/financial. And then we make a specific country report where we analyse the situations in the countries. Have you seen the one for the Netherlands?

N: You mean the NRP?

FA: No, the NRP is the Dutch thing. Before the Dutch thing there is a European Commission document.

N: Yes I think I have them, the country profiles.

FA: Hold on, I can download it. So, they are 80-page documents.

N: I don't think I found those.

FA: Country reports. And that is the main document in which we analyse the situations in the Member States.

N: I got referred to some other country profiles.

FA: These country profiles are probably more specific with regards to child poverty. So, the Annual Growth Survey is in November, the Commission proposes it. The Member States in the Council make Council conclusions in which they broadly agree, but on some specific topics there is convoluted language to show that there is no full agreement. Mostly that is because within the Council, Member States have different positions than others. And then, in February, you get a country report. And that is an 80-page document, where you have macroeconomic imbalances, public finances, financial sector, labour market, education and social policies, competitiveness, reform and investment, an overview table.

N: And these are open to the public?

FA: Yes, nearly everything is open to the public. And so, there you have, as said, in the summary there is normally one paragraph on the EU 2020 goals. And you also have something on poverty, even in the executive summary. And then you have a specific section on poverty in each Member State. So, based on that document. Then, the Member States make their NRP's, based on the NRP's and our analysis and the country report, we make recommendations. And these recommendations could have a social dimension. And I don't have the overview, but there are countries with child poverty and education aspects. And then, based on these recommendations, we go into a policy dialogue with the Member States. For each report the Commission does, there is always a debate with the Member States, not only with the Member States individually, but also with the Council, where all Member states are together. I can send you the report.

N: Yes, that would be great.

FA: And so, while we strive to be holistic, so that we have only one report for the entire spectrum of social and economic policies, there are of course specific separate country profiles.

N: Yes. I have a question related to this. Does the European Commission propose certain goals for the countries or they just discuss them with the countries and the countries make the goals themselves?

FA: So, the EU 2020 strategy; initially the process was that we invited Member States to set their goals. But at some moment, there were discussions that some of the goals (so we had set EU wide goals) and then we asked Member States to deliver their goals and we had agreed the EU wide goals already with the Council, but then the Member States set their national goals and the sum of the national goals did not always add up to the EU goals.

N: Yes, so they weren't consistent?

FA: Yes. And then we had a debate. It is a long time ago, so I am not sure anymore on which of the goals there was a discrepancy. But I do remember that we got tables with, these are the goals of the EU Member States, they don't add up, please be more ambitious.

N: So, in the end, which goals count? The national (EU) goals or the local goals?

FA: So, we have the EU goals that we want to achieve as an EU. And then we have the national goals that the national governments want to reach. For us, it is quite important that the Semester, that there is national ownership of the Semester. In the end, nothing counts, because we cannot enforce the goals. But ideally, we have a national debate on setting these goals and then develop a strategy to implement these goals. And then you are there. What doesn't help is that you set goals, because the EU asks for it and then don't do anything to reach these goals. And there, in some Member states these goals really help and in other Member States no one cares. And my general impression is that in the Netherlands, that these goals are not a guiding factor in the Dutch policies. In other Member States, these goals are taken more seriously. And some goals are quite known, for example the 3% R&D target is a general concept that everyone knows. On poverty targets, I am not sure if a lot of people know about it.

N: But that also has to do with the fact that some countries are maybe a bit more developed than other countries? Or that the Netherlands already thinks it's doing quite well, so that they are okay with their own rules.

FA: Yes. Perhaps one addition. We of course also invest a lot in Member States, via the structural funds. And so, there is also a specific part on employment. The social fund. And with that we of course also work on child poverty. So, what I said on the Semester providing macroeconomic balance; first we evolved the Semester so it is more investment targeted and we have our regional and social funds that are an important contribution to social policies. For example, in the Netherlands it is very little, but in Greece it is 3% of its GDP. So these can be quite big sums. And then, I don't know the country well. But I can imagine that a child poverty target from the EU is not their main way to look at child poverty. I can imagine that the UK cares about child poverty and has its strategy for it, but it is difficult for me to imagine it is EU 2020 related. To some extent, I think, the Semester doesn't live that much in the Netherlands.

N: No?

FA: No.

N: And that is because? We are doing quite well?

FA: You are doing quite well, you have good institutions that think about long-term problems. And so, you don't have a perceived need for EU coordinated policies. I come from Belgium. There the situation is slightly different in a sense that you have some strong national administrations, but overall, the strategy departments and the forward-looking elements of the administration is much weaker than in the Netherlands. You have competences at various levels. So, regional versus federal. And there is no clear hierarchy. So, the regional and the federal have the same competence. And so their EU coordination is a good umbrella to do national coordination. You also have the Belgian press, which is very much a megaphone of what the Commission says. So, if the Commission says there is a problem with that policy in Belgium. It is be all over the national media, whereas here, the Commission says there is a problem with that or that, national media says we already know because that or that person we trust has already said that already. And so, we don't have a strong voice in the debate. There is no need to umbrella regional versus federal. In Belgium for example, child poverty is a regional competence. Whereas the labour market is regional and federal. And so, their Semester competence is more prominent and needed then here in the Netherlands. But I can imagine that if you interview stakeholders or others on the role of EU 2020 for child poverty, that some might say: hold on, what is EU 2020.

N: I noticed that when I was looking for interviewees in Dutch organisations, that I increasingly found more organisations that already referred to the strategy. But it is almost 2020 already, which relates to another question; do you think that targets will be reached? By the end of next year?

FA: To be honest, I don't know. Also, for me, child poverty is not a target.

N: Why? Could you explain?

FA: You have five targets. R&D, climate, employment, poverty.

N: And education.

FA: And education. And you had sub-targets, but I think for poverty, you had three indicators. But none were child poverty.

N: I am doubting about the indicators now. Do you refer to the indicators to measure child poverty?

FA: No, for me child poverty is not one of the five EU 2020 targets.

N: No, but you said something about that there weren't any indicators in the sub-targets.

FA: So, for me, the headline targets are 75% population, 3% R&D, 20% climate, early school leavers should be under 10% and at least 40% of the younger generation should have a tertiary degree and then 20 million less people should be at risk of poverty. So, that are the five main targets, for this target I remember you have three indicators to measure it. For example, serious risk of...

N: Material deprivation. Those were the three indicators I was referring to.

FA: But then, child poverty is the sub-target.

N: Well, the difficult thing about those indicators; they aren't child specific. They are mainly and primarily focused at poverty in general.

FA: And so, there might be a child poverty target. Set by EMCO?

N: EMCO?

FA: EMCO is the Ministers of Employment. From my memory, the overall poverty target was not going to be reached.

N: Yes, that is also what I read in many articles. Okay, to conclude. In your opinion, child poverty must be mainly addressed at the Member State level, right? So, the European Commission and the European Semester are there to provide a certain framework and that the rest must be addressed by the Member States. And how they implement those targets. Right?

FA: I think, yes. It will be difficult to address child poverty primarily at the EU level, because it is a multidimensional problem.

N: It is just not specific enough?

FA: Well... there are so many dimensions. And most of these dimensions are national. And so, you need a good child poverty strategy, which brings together education, looks at the situation of the parents. And of course, in a macroeconomic framework, look at education and employment. And then to some extent, policing.... No. The communal level needs to come in.

N: Housing, education, healthcare, nutrition, leisure.

FA: None of this is primarily EU. What we can do is, put the framework conditions in place. So, sound macroeconomic. We can invest, but also there, cohesion funding and social funding is done by the Member States. And then, in the Semester we can exchange best practices. We can point some Member States that are doing particularly bad, we can put pressure on them; saying, look, you need to address child poverty. But, it would be wrong, and that is what the Commission does, we say: child poverty is very important, address it, because that is the future of your economy and you lose an important resource if children are poor. So, all these things we can do. But we cannot develop a child poverty strategy on the ground. Because, the situations in the Member States is too different and practically, we don't have the competences.

N: I am always wondering, why can't certain targets be enforced with penalties, for example? I mean, if there are country specific recommendations, targets are amended specifically for these countries.

You could say; we put on a penalty if you do not reach your target. Don't you think that would put more pressure on how the country will implement it?

FA: We have, in principle, we have penalties for fiscal. We have ever used them. Why? Because, well, you nearly open up a philosophical debate on when penalties work and when they don't work. When can you punish a child? When it does something that's wrong? It understands that it did something wrong and you react immediately. But on fiscal surveillance, is a Member State doing something wrong? Does it understand what it's doing wrong?

N: Yes. Probably.

FA: And can you immediately react because of it? There are a lot of things that are not so logical. And then, we are acting with sovereign nation states and punishing a sovereign nation state is not easy. We do set fines for things, we fine Member States that don't have water sanitation in place. Well, we can in theory, but practically we do not. We do fine Member states. But we fine them because of very precise violations of directives. These directives say: well, your water sanitation doesn't meet that standard. You are fined. And that works, because to some extent, it can be quite political. But it is very objective why we fine. Would a fine work on "you don't meet your child poverty target"?

N: No, it's too broad.

FA: It's too broad. What did they do wrong? Difficult to say. You can always say, it was my predecessor. You can also say, we didn't meet your water installation purity level because my predecessor didn't do his job. But, in my view, fines work for very specific things.

N: But, don't you think that in the future, maybe, if child poverty is more specifically at an EU level, that it could work? So that if the EU would make it more specific and that if the EU Member States agree to that, that it would be possible? Or will it never be specific enough?

FA: Well, I don't say we will never meet the child poverty targets. In general, a certain philosophy of the Semester is, we encourage Member States, we want ownership. It is not a fining strategy. I think there are reasons why fines work and why they don't work. I don't think putting fines for child poverty is the way to go.

N: I was thinking about employment of parents. That we would break it into pieces.

FA: Member States are very reluctant. But you could indeed say, if you don't have that employment strategy in place, you are either fined or you don't meet the conditions to get money from the regional and cohesion funding. So that you condition certain funding on reaching certain social criteria.

N: So that would be possible in the future maybe? To do that with child poverty?

FA: As I said, child poverty, as such...

N: If we would break it into pieces.

FA: We would need to distinguish; we need to find the factor that is most important to address child poverty. And there you would need to find an agreeable target and then...

N: It is a long process...

FA: It is not the way that the social policy direction is going, and so, I doubt that is how we address child poverty. So, I think the national dimensions remains quite important. What's important for us in the Semester, is that we keep it holistic. So that child poverty is something we take into account, it is one of our indicators. If we see there is a problem, we look at it and also, when looking at our policies where we have a lot of say, like trade, competition, fiscal, that we think about the consequences they might have on child poverty. And I think we have gone a long way in making our own analysis within the Commission, more holistic. I think the OECD is even better at it, they really think social policy in their economic analysis. At least, they were fostering in understanding the poverty dimension in their economics. And that's the way to start going. And, for example, by integrating the SDG's into the European Semester, we are certainly going into the direction of "we want a holistic view". The danger of the holistic view is that you focus on too many objectives and that there is too much noise and you don't see a clear picture. And my personal analysis, as you also say, child poverty is to some extent a derived consequence of multiple factors. If you then look at the Semester and how we should think about it. Child poverty is a tell-tale, like with sales, something is going wrong, but you shouldn't then address child poverty, you should look at the other things. And so that is a great challenge and a great debate we have with Member States. It should be focused on the macroeconomics; how do we do our analysis and where do we focus? If we focus on everything, you don't focus on anything.

N: Okay, then I have one last question: is there already a follow-up strategy?

FA: So, as just mentioned. The president elected has announced that the European Semester will integrate the SDG's, these are the goals of the UN. And these goals have a different target, also poverty and an environmental target, but poverty is certainly in the SDG's. While we are still reflecting on how exactly to do it, what I understand is that there will not be a specific European successor to the EU 2020 strategy. But that we will, basically, own the SDG's of the UN. And set them as goals to reach.

N: So those can be seen as sort of new strategy?

FA: Yes.

N: So, we had the Lisbon strategy, the EU 2020 strategy, and now actually the SDG's as an overall target. Well, thank you very much.

FA: You are welcome.

D) Interview 3 – Commissioner
(i) Informed Consent Form

1) Research Project Title: Child Poverty in the European Union: An analysis of the effects of the 'Europe 2020' poverty target on child poverty development trends in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

2) Project Description (1 paragraph)

This project aims to find out whether and how the 'Europe 2020' poverty target affected child poverty development trends in both the Netherlands as well as in the United Kingdom between 2015 and 2018. An answer to this question will be established by conducting both primary and secondary research

If you agree to take part in this study please read the following statement and sign this form. I am 16 years of age or older.

I can confirm that I have read and understood the description and aims of this research. The researcher has answered all the questions that I had to my satisfaction.

I agree to the audio recording of my interview with the researcher.

I understand that the researcher offers me the following guarantees:

All information will be treated in the strictest confidence. My name will not be used in the study unless I give permission for it.

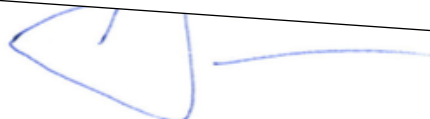
Recordings will be accessible only by the researcher. Unless otherwise agreed, anonymity will be ensured at all times. Pseudonyms will be used in the transcriptions.

I can ask for the recording to be stopped at any time and anything to be deleted from it. I consent to take part in the research on the basis of the guarantees outlined above.

Name redacted at request of interviewee (original version is available).

Date:

6 Nov 2019



(ii) Interview Transcript

C = Commissioner

N = Nina

Side note: the interviewee did not always speak as loud and clearly as wished for, therefore, small parts might be lacking.

C: Op de Beke

N: Goedemiddag, met Nina.

N: Good afternoon, this is Nina.

C: Dag Nina, hoi.

C: Hello Nina, hi.

N: Hallo, goedemiddag.

N: Hello, good afternoon.

C: Had je al eerder proberen te bellen? Ik was er niet om 15:00.

C: Did you already try calling me? I was not there at 15:00.

N: Ja ik had twee keer gebeld, maar dat geeft niet.

N: Yes, I called twice but no problem.

C: Sorry sorry.

N: Kan gebeuren.

N: Those things happen.

C: Maar ik ben er. Ik maak even de deur dicht dat praat wel makkelijker.

C: But I am here. I will close the door, this will talk easier.

N: Helemaal goed.

N: Great.

C: Ja. Dan zet ik hem ook op de speaker. Zeg eens wat.

C: Yes. Then I will put it on speaker as well. Can you say something?

N: Hallo.

N: Hello.

C: Ja ik versta je.

C: Yes, I can hear you.

N: Helemaal goed. Ik wil u ten eerste hartelijk bedanken voor het vrij maken van tijd om mij hierbij te helpen. Dan is mijn eerste vraag of u de mail nog had ontvangen met het formulier wat ik u had gestuurd?

N: Great. At first, I would really like to thank you for helping me with this interview. My first question for u is if you received the form I sent you?

C: Ja. Die moet ik even tekenen en dan krijg je hem terug.

C: Yes. I will sign it and then I will send it back.

N: Super. Dat is fijn. En daarbij is dan mijn tweede vraag, en daar kunt u ook nog later antwoord op geven, heeft u de wens om anoniem te blijven?

N: Great. I appreciate it. My second question, which you can also respond later to, do you wish to stay anonymous?

C: Ja ik zou wel anoniem willen blijven. Het moet niet zo zijn dat antwoorden terug te leiden zijn naar.

C: Yes, I would like to stay anonymous. I do not want answers to lead back to me.

N: Nee precies, helemaal goed. Zou u misschien iets dichterbij de telefoon kunnen gaan zitten, want ik hoor u niet heel goed.

N: I understand, that is fine. Could you maybe sit close to the phone? I cannot hear you properly.

C: Ja doe ik doe ik.

C: Yes, I will.

N: Oke helemaal goed. Dan heb ik nog een laatste vraag; vind u het vervelend als het gesprek in het Engels gedaan wordt of vindt u dat niet erg?

N: Great. Then my last question, do you mind if we continue this interview in English?

C: Wat jij wil, wat jij het makkelijkste vindt. Ik werk meestal in het Engels dus.

C: What is most convenient for you. I am used to working in English.

N: Ik ook, dus dan zou ik het graag in het Engels doen.

N: Well, me too. So, I would like to continue in English then.

C: Everything in English.

N: Everything in English today. My first question for you is, could you briefly introduce yourself?

C: I am an official worker for the European Commission. In the DG of Social Affairs Employment and Inclusion. And I am responsible for the coordination of the 2013 'Investing in Children Recommendation'. Coordinating the poverty policy within the European Commission.

N: I can hear you very badly at the moment.

C: Do you want me to repeat what I just said?

N: Yes. Only the last part.

C: Ah, only the last part. I will keep the microphone in my hand. Now it is easier I guess?

N: Yes. Much better. Much better.

C: I will speak into the microphone. So, I work for DG Employment. As a Commission Official, a policy officer. My area is child poverty and for that, the European Commission adopted a recommendation in 2013, calling for the Member States to do more. And the coordination of the implementation of that recommendation is my job. Because the coordination with the DG Employment, but also coordination with other DG's. Because my colleagues (indistinct chatter) all work on children, different aspects of children. The poverty aspect of well-being is my job.

N: Okay. Thank you very much.

C: You are welcome.

N: I think you have read my research question and I am looking at child poverty in both the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. And I am looking at how the EU 2020 strategy affected the developments in those countries. So, my first question for you (I noticed that it is very hard to find a narrow definition of child poverty) is, which definition of child poverty does the European Commission build on?

C: Actually we have a definition of child poverty, it is called the 'At Risk of Poverty and Social Exclusion'.

N: The AROPE indicator?

C: Then you know it consists of three parts, you have relative income, you have material deprivation and there is growing up in a low work intensive household. If you combine these three aspects and a survey is done every year, with about 1,5 year delay, you get a number. And if I am not mistaken, for the Netherlands it is around 16%.

N: Yes, that is correct.

C: And for the UK something like 25%. So we have a definition of poverty which we use.

N: But isn't more of a measurement tool instead of a definition?

C: Well, "meten is weten" as they say in Dutch.

N: Yes, that is true.

C: Of course, poverty can be such a wide concept, but already these three dimensions make it quite a good indicator. Relative income poverty, so for instance even in rich countries like Luxembourg or the Netherlands there you have poor people. Why? Because they are below the poverty line. Income inequality itself has an impact on poverty, even if your stomach is full. Most poor people in Europe do not suffer for lack of nutrition, but of malnutrition. But you have that element in there, you have deprivation; are you missing out on very important items that are absolutely essential for your life? Do you have extra's to have a warm nutritious meal every night. And then the third one is, are you growing up in a household where somebody is working? But of course, poverty is much wider. Another way of looking at poverty is a dynamic way and is about the equal opportunities.

N: And education and healthcare?

C: Yes. Education and healthcare. Housing. There are enough children growing up in inadequate housing. The AROPE at least allows us to distinguish between countries in Europe. You probably saw from the statistics.

N: Yes I did.

C: The indicator is higher in Eastern and southern Europe and in Greece. Italy. The Czech Republic has the lowest poverty rate.

N: Yes. They are doing really well.

C: Of course there are many explanations for this. This is a side way, but if you look at happiness... countries that are happy are almost always homogenous. If you have a very heterogenous country then things become more complicated because it is not easy for groups of people that are somewhat different from each other to live next to each other. There is always risk of conflict.

N: Yes. Definitely.

C: Finland was always the country that was doing best when it came to education. Lately, Finland has been going down in the rankings. Finland is also a country where in big cities you have minorities, you have migrants, you have children with problems. And it is not so easy to get everybody on board and leave no child behind. You can see this in the ranking.

N: Okay. And you mentioned, for example, homogenous versus heterogenous... this brings me to the question, what do you think are the main causes of child poverty?

C: The main causes of child poverty are often the parents that do not have a paid job, make enough money to support their family. Material deprivation, that's the main cause. And then there are a number of aggravating factors; if you grow up in a large family for instance (more than three children), then you are more likely to be poor. If you grow up in a family where there is only a single parent. Almost 20% of all children in the EU, and there are countries where it is 35%, one provider has to earn the living, has to look after you, pay attention to you, that is not easy.

N: So you would say that most of the causes are family related?

C: No. Whether you have a job or not that I would say is the most significant one. But if you have no job and you are raised by a single parent, the chance for you to be poor is three times higher than when you grew up in a traditional family with a father and a mother or at least two providers. But, belonging to a minority is of course an aggravating factor. Having a migrant background. All these things make it more difficult. In Eastern Europe, part of the Roma minority.

N: Yes, I read about them.

C: There are about 10 million Roma people in Europe, they are often very poor. They are being discriminated, have no access to paid jobs. These are all aggravating factors.

N: So, would you say that the causes are similar in most of the EU Member States?

C: No no. In the UK, much of the poverty in the UK has to do with single parent families that are not working.

N: Teenage pregnancies?

C: That has gone down. That is not such a big problem anymore. What certainly is a problem is unplanned pregnancies. If women in their twenties become pregnant, not really planned. And then, in the end, they will raise the child alone, because the bloke doesn't stay around or whatever. And then you suddenly have a single parent family. That is also in the US a big problem. In the Netherlands it is less of a problem.

N: Can you speak up a little again?

C: In the Netherlands it is less of a problem. But for instance in Eastern Europe, there are a lot of poor people where somebody is working, but he/she is not making a lot of money. Despite that they are working, they don't get much in terms of social benefits. There are low child benefits, there is little support for families and children. Despite of you working, you are still poor.

N: I also read in the EU publications that it is very hard map families that have working parents. It is easier for the EU to look at children with parents that are unemployed than at families that have parents that are employed but underpaid.

C: Yes. That is called the problem of the working poor. That is not a very visible problem. That certainly explains that a part poverty in Eastern Europe and even in Southern Europe, where states are not well developed. Until recently, Greece and Italy did not have a minimum income scheme. In Greece if you had no income, bad for you. It was introduced by the Troika, the European Bank, the Commission and the IMF as a response to the crisis, so they helped Greece to build up a minimum income scheme. Where Greece itself, has not build up anything. Greece had about 40 different pension schemes, very expensive ones, but Troika thought it would be necessary to have a minimum scheme, which they now have.

N: This brings me to the next question; in your opinion, who is mainly responsible for addressing child poverty? Would you say it is the EU Member States, would you say it is the EU in its entirety? Would you say it is both?

C: No. This is very clear. The EU has no competence in the social field. The EU has competence to international trade and competition and agriculture, but not in the social area. But the Member States do, so they are responsible. The role of the EU is limited to helping Member States to advice with EU funding for example. But the EU cannot be hold responsible. There is also a legal argument. All Member States have signed up to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

N: Yes. I read about that.

C: It is the most widely signed convention of the UN. Only two countries have not signed, only North Korea and the United States. All the other countries of the world have signed. But the EU, as an

entity, has not signed. We are not bound by this convention. But of course, we feel responsible, we try to help Member States.

N: Can you speak up a little?

C: Yes. So, we try to help Member States. That is how we see our role. We help with money and we help with advice. And we have something like the European Semester, where on almost every policy area, the Member States have to write a report. Then the Commission comes up with a country report. I believe you saw that. And then on the basis of that, the Commission formulates recommendations, pieces of advice, which are then confirmed by the Council, by the other Member States. Sort of peer pressure. Then you may see a recommendation, for instance for the Netherlands.

N: So, you could say that the EU is there to assist the Member States?

C: Yes. And of course, it has no legal power to enforce something on them. But, it can give advice and peer pressure can be quite effective.

N: Yes. I agree.

C: I mean, if it comes from a neighbour with whom you like to compare yourself with, it totally has an impact.

N: And if you look at the assisting role of the EU, what would be, in your opinion, the most important developments that took place between 2015 and now. Would that be the increase in funding?

C: The most important developments with a bearing on child poverty you mean?

N: Yes, of course.

C: We have seen that child poverty has gone down everywhere. It was highest in 2010 or so, when we were in the middle of the crisis. And now, it has come down, now it is about a quarter of all children at risk of poverty or social exclusion. And that is mainly because of the situation of the economy, the recovery. More people have found paid jobs and as I said in the very beginning, not having a paid job is often the main reason for being poor. So, if that improved, that also explains why the situation has improved. Also in countries with high levels of child poverty, like Greece, Romania and Bulgaria, also there the economy has been improving and more people have found a job.

N: So, the economy is a big part of the improvements?

C: Yes, yes. The disadvantages on the other side... It has also led to an increase in inequality.

Whenever an economy is booming, some people benefit more than others. At the same time, you see an increase of inequality. But this is picked up by relative poverty, relative income poverty. It is a bit complicated, but in the recession, you see that material deprivation goes up (not having a proper meal), but relative income poverty goes down because the whole weight structure is a bit squeezed, so there is less inequality. The result of these two, has a smaller impact on poverty than you would expect, but in a recovery phase, you see the opposite; then inequality increases. Relative income

poverty increases, material deprivation goes down and again, you see the improvement in poverty, but with a smaller impact than if you would look at the constitutive part.

N: Okay. That is interesting. That is interesting to look at as well, for my thesis.

C: That is inevitable because of the indicators we use.

N: Okay. And you say that the Member States are individually responsible, but do you then believe that the municipalities are the most important actors, or do you think that local organisations are more beneficial for child poverty?

C: No, no. That is very clearly, and you can find data on that. It is the welfare state; social protection systems. What we do is that we look at the income situations after social protection and taxes. You get income and then you pay taxes and some people receive benefits. What you want to know is “what is the situation after the benefits and taxes?”. And then of course, you see that in some countries, thanks to the social protection system, poverty is reduced by 50%. So, that really is the most important thing.

N: Yes, so this is the most important actor.

C: If it wasn't for the social protection system, the Dutch poverty rate would be three times higher. That clearly is the most important factor. Then who is responsible for this system, in the Netherlands it is the municipalities.

N: So, that is probably why the Netherlands is doing relatively well in contrast to other countries, because we have such a good welfare system.

C: Compared to the UK, the social welfare system in the UK is less developed. In the end the question is: “how much poverty or inequality are you willing to accept or is acceptable?”. If you look at the Scandinavian countries, we see lower levels of poverty and higher levels of equality.

N: So, if we keep the Scandinavian model in mind, would you say that what the Netherlands and the Dutch government has been doing has been successful over the years?

C: Sorry I did not get it, compared to the Scandinavian system?

N: Well, not comparing it per se, but you mentioned Scandinavia so I was thinking about it. C: One of the things that is very different, in Scandinavia you have the right to childcare. Childcare is provided to you without a fee.

N: Yes, it is free.

C: It of course needs to be paid out of taxes; everybody pays for the childcare. In the Netherlands, you have to pay a fee to get access to childcare. Then you get some kind of reimbursement from the tax system, so there are two different ways of handling this problem. I would say that the Scandinavian system is better. It guarantees access for everybody and of good quality. The Dutch system can be complicated.

N: Yes. I heard other people say that as well.

C: You also have to make that decision you know; I can stay at home because then I don't have to pay that expensive fee, but of course then I don't get money, which is not good for my career.

N: Unemployment follows.

C: Yes. And this is not so acute in Sweden for example. You get childcare for free, it doesn't have an immediate impact on your income.

N: Could you still say the Netherlands have been successful over the years?

C: Oh yes. I mean, there is a big debate. Bit complicated. For instance, in the Netherlands, if you have a child you get 14 weeks I think of paid parental leave and that's it. In Sweden, you get up to two years of paid parental leave.

N: I know. Even for dads.

C: So, you would say; well, Sweden is doing things better. And then, we need to talk about indicators again. If you look at employment rates of Swedish women compared to Dutch women, the looks of it indicate that all Swedish women are at work, but they are not. Because they are enjoying their paid parental leave. If you are with paid parental leave, in the statistics you are counted as being in employment because your contract has not been severed, you continue to enjoy your employment contract, but you are not at work, you are home. Just like Dutch women who work part-time at home, they are also not working, but in the statistics, this is counted as being out of work. So, it looks as if Swedish women are working and Dutch women are not working, but in reality, the situation is very much the same and the only difference is that maybe Swedish women have more employment protection. On the other hand, the Netherlands has a system called AOW, which allows you to a minimum pension whether you work or not. The only requirement is that you are living in the country between 60 and 67. The Swedes don't have that. If you don't work, you don't really build up a pension and you may be entitled to minimum benefits, but that is lower than the pensions. I mean, there are different ways of financing this. I think if you would look at wellbeing in the Netherlands compared to the child wellbeing of Sweden, it is very comparable. What you see is that Sweden is higher divorce rates. In the Netherlands they are about one third and in Sweden it is about 50%. Maybe that is because Swedish women/mothers are more economically independent.

N: That could be the case, definitely.

C: Maybe it is easier to raise a child by yourself. Whether that is good for the child's perspective, I let you decide.

N: And I was wondering, if you look at the UK and the Netherlands what could be done differently at this moment?

C: The UK spends less on the welfare state and child benefits. So, there is more poverty than in the Netherlands. But there are some elements in the UK, which may be worth considering. They have a

system called 'Earn Income Benefits'. If you accept a job and you don't earn a lot, up to a certain level instead of paying taxes, you get extra money from the taxes.

N: Oh, but that also sounds quite interesting.

C: The Netherlands does something similar. They get a fixed amount if you start working. Because what is very important, you have to make sure work pays. Make work pay. If you are in a benefit situation and you have children and you get extra allowances and by accepting a paid job you would lose these extra allowances.

N: Yes. Why would you go to work then?

C: Yes. Why would you work? So, make work pay. This discussion is very important. The British have a good system for that. I think it is called the 'Earn Income Tax Credit', that's how it is called. It comes from the United States, where it was introduced in the 1970s. So, the idea that you get money instead of paying taxes. You have to get taxes from the state, but the level is reduced when your income increases. Up to a certain point where it becomes zero and then you start paying taxes, a turning point. That is a system, which is worthwhile.

N: So, for the Dutch, that British system might be beneficial? And for the British, get a better welfare system.

C: In the end, it is a political decision. The English have another problem... But now we are going to talk about Brexit.

N: You can mention it shortly.

C: Okay. Did you know that in the UK, 6% of all children go to private school?

N: Yes. I know actually.

C: They call them public schools, but they are private schools. They are fee paying schools, they are expensive. And then these 6% go to Oxford and the end up with the good jobs. People like Boris Johnson. (indistinct chatter). I think that is where the British could do something, they could get rid of their public-school system. Open it up for everybody. And we were talking about equal opportunities, there is a big difference. Whether you go to a good private school or a lousy underfunded state school. (indistinct chatter). In the Netherlands we also have quality differences between schools, but they are not so huge as in the UK. (indistinct chatter).

N: Well, I will look at it, interesting. Something else I was wondering about, yesterday I had another interview and we were discussing the poverty target of the EU2020 strategy. I mean, the target itself is focused on people in general and not on children.

C: There is no specific target for children, although NGO's asked for that. There is only a general target for the whole EU 20 million. Some Member States have said "okay, we are willing to set out targets". So, some Member States have country specific targets, but we never have targets for everyone. We certainly have no targets for children. And of course, that is something that you could

do. You could set a target. I think, at the time, the Member States were not in favour of that. It was proposed, but it got such a negative response. This was, I think, in 2005 when these targets were set.

N: That the Member States were reluctant to set targets?

C: Yes. They didn't want it.

N: Could you then still say that the EU2020 strategy even affects child poverty in the EU Member States and the EU?

C: Yes. Whether it is the strategy itself or whether it is the improvement of the economy. I mean, it is hard to detangle these two. The most prominent target of the EU2020 strategy was the employment rate. And I think it was put on 75%. And by 2020, the EU will make that target.

N: Okay. So, you would say the EU2020 strategy definitely had an effect on child poverty in the EU?

C: Yes. Sure. More people in a paid job, more people have left poverty.

N: And would you say that the strategy has affected future plans for fighting child poverty?

C: You know, the thing that is worked on the most now is the so-called child guarantee. Have you heard of that?

N: Yes. I read your articles.

C: So, that is what I am working on right now. That is an idea of the European Parliament, basically saying that every child in the EU must have access to nutrition, healthcare, education, good housing and childcare. The Parliament has given us some money to study this question, how to do that. And we are now bringing together a proposal for the new commissioner. Our new commissioner has just started. And basically, our proposal will be to call on the Member States to do more. And of course, EU funding can be used to bring this target closer.

N: But to me, it sounds like this 'Child Guarantee' would have also been there without the strategy. So that it hasn't been affected by that right?

C: Yes. That is always difficult, to say what would have happened without the strategy. Evaluate the policy and it is a zero-policy alternative. It is always complicated. We had a recommendation, that is very similar to the child guarantee, in 2013 and I think because of the recommendation, we have seen more efforts among the Member States to further increase childcare and to do something about income inequality.

N: So, the specific recommendations have had more influence?

C: I think had have some effect yes. It is always difficult to say. What would the Member States have done anyway? We think that it has had some effect. Investing in childcare, in early childhood education and care under 3. Everybody agrees that it is the most favourable thing to do. If you have the money, you should do it. That is where you can decide a child's future, in the most decisive way, it's the first years of anybody's life.

N: Yes. Of course. Definitely.

C: What you do there, you pick the benefits for the rest of your life. I can show you studies, which show that, if you invest in ECC (Early Childhood Education) you can lower early school leaving rates.

N: I would really like to read the articles and publications.

C: If you go to the OECD there are studies. (indistinct chatter). Migrant children that don't speak the language are 1 year behind and then you can see how powerful ICC is.

N: Then the last part and that is about the future. What are the most actual developments with regards to child poverty? What is the most important thing?

C: I think what most people are worried about is social mobility. When I grew up, many children from my background were able to go to university for the first time. Social mobility was very high, also by the way in the United States. But now, we think that things have become more entrenched. The idea of a meritocracy is not working anymore. The Commission had a good report, I think it is called "the social elevator is broken". Nowadays it takes parents to go to university in order to get their children into university. In the US, you also need a lot of money.

N: Yes, it is very expensive.

C: Yes. Even in Europe, where it is not so expensive, to get in University you need a sort of preparation. For many people, from a disadvantaged/minority background, it is not so easy. So, in that sense, social mobility is reduced. But that is something that many people are worried about, about what to do about that.

N: And you were saying, because the Child Guarantee, was it proposed or accepted in 2013?

C: There is one attempt to do something about it, to create a kind of level-playing field and have you heard of Robert Putnam?

N: No. I will write it down immediately.

C: He is a very famous American sociologist. He was the first one to come up with social capital. And the last book he wrote is called "the American dream and crises". It is about children, the faith of children in the US and what can be done by parents, by school systems, by communities. And I think you would very much enjoy reading that. He not only gives you a very good overview of the most recent scientific findings. The book is also illustrated with about 50 little biographies of children.

N: Oh, that is really interesting because it is very hard to find.

C: But in this book you have it. For instance, he starts with his own school. He went to school in the 60s in a certain place, so he starts to figure out what happened to the children in his class.

N: Oh, that is really interesting.

C: He uses all that throughout the book. He usually compares three children, but he always compares them within one racial group. He compares three children, one from rich parents, one from poor parents and one from middle-class income parents. So, that is one part. And then the other part is (indistinct chatter). What are the most recent findings on the role of families, that is a big chapter.

When growing up with a single mom, things are not so easy. If a boy grows up without seeing a positive role model.

N: Yes. That can be crucial.

C: If he, in school, only meets women. From kindergarten all the way to secondary school. All the teacher are women. Again, that is not a good thing. I think you would like it.

N: I wrote it done.

C: He also have given a lot of interview on Youtube. Robert Putnam.

N: Yes, I found it. Then I have one last question and that is, when the EU2020 strategy is done, what do you think would be a next development, do you think there is going to be another strategy?

C: Yes. Yes. I am sure. They will do an evaluation. We will hire a number of consultants and academics for the evaluation. Then there will be something new. And of course, we are looking at the UN. The SDGs. But of course, in the new strategy, the EU2020 strategy was very much about competitiveness (about jobs, the economy) and of course the new strategy will be very much about the environment and CO2, transition.

N: Equality is a big part.

C: Yes. And climate change. Well, hopefully this idea of equal opportunities, I would be very much in favour of it.

N: Equality is a very big part of it as well. And I think SDG 2.1 is specifically for children as well.

C: And then there is another thing, maybe it is in the paper that I send you, it is called the European Pillar of Social Rights. Have a look at that; there is a principle 11 on children and then there is a principle on minimum income and on work life balance. Our new president, Mrs. von der Leyen, she will be actively trying to implement this agenda in the Member States. Poverty is also part of it. For the people in my DG, that is the most important policy document. The Pillar of Social Rights.

N: I will take a look at it. Well, thank you very much for your time.

C: You are welcome.

N: I am looking forward to see the consent form.

C: And you send me the report once you are finished.

N: Yes? You want to read the whole thing?

C: Yes. If your final product is finished, send it to me.

N: I will. I hope it will be okay.

C: I think it will be okay.

N: Thank you very much. Have a nice day.

C: You too Nina.

E) Interview 4 – Jonathan Bradshaw
(i) Informed Consent Form

1) Research Project Title: Child Poverty in the European Union: An analysis of the effects of the 'Europe 2020' poverty target on child poverty development trends in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

2) Project Description (1 paragraph)

This project aims to find out whether and how the 'Europe 2020' poverty target affected child poverty development trends in both the Netherlands as well as in the United Kingdom between 2015 and 2018. An answer to this question will be established by conducting both primary and secondary research

If you agree to take part in this study please read the following statement and sign this form. I am 16 years of age or older.

I can confirm that I have read and understood the description and aims of this research. The researcher has answered all the questions that I had to my satisfaction.

I agree to the audio recording of my interview with the researcher.

I understand that the researcher offers me the following guarantees:

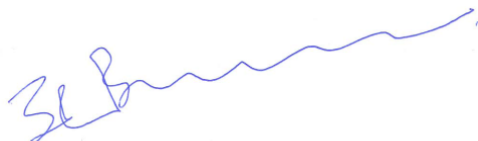
All information will be treated in the strictest confidence. My name will not be used in the study unless I give permission for it.

Recordings will be accessible only by the researcher. Unless otherwise agreed, anonymity will be ensured at all times. Pseudonyms will be used in the transcriptions.

I can ask for the recording to be stopped at any time and anything to be deleted from it. I consent to take part in the research on the basis of the guarantees outlined above.

Name: Jonathan Bradshaw

Signature:



Date: 30/1 2020

(ii) Interview Transcript

J.B = Jonathan Bradshaw

N = Nina

J.B: Hello

N: Hello Mr. Bradshaw, this is Nina from the Netherlands.

J.B: Hello

N: Hello, how are you?

J.B: I am fine. No, I am actually not fine, I have a nasty cold.

N: Oh, everyone is ill. Also here in the Netherlands.

J.B: All right.

N: I hope you will feel better soon.

J.B: Yes, thank you.

N: Well, first of all I would really like to thank you for participating in this interview. It is an honour.

J.B: Oh, not at all not at all.

N: Thank you so much. Would you mind if we start right away?

J.B: No, I don't mind.

N: Ok. I have one first question, do you want to stay anonymous or is it ok if I use your name?

J.B: No, I don't mind what you do.

N: Ok. Perfect.

N: Then I would like to ask you if you could introduce yourself.

J.B: I am professor Jonathan Bradshaw, professor in Social Policy and emeritus at the University of York.

N: Ok. Thank you very much.

N: I am going to start right away. I assume you have a lot of knowledge on child poverty in the United Kingdom.

J.B: Yes.

N: What is the definition of child poverty that most UK organisations hold on to?

J.B: We use the same definition as the European Union. The proportion of children living in households with income less than 60% of the median. And we use the same equivalence scale. The only slight difference is that the UK tends to produce data showing child poverty rates both before and after the housing costs.

N: Oh ok.

J.B: And Eurostat tends to not take into account the housing costs.

N: No, I already noticed that Eurostat and some other data related websites always show other data. Different child poverty rates.

J.B: Yes, well there are small differences in the methodologies. If you look at the UK national data and you compare it with Eurostat data, there is always a small difference. But it is not significantly different.

N: Ok. And I know the EU uses AROPE as a measurement tool. Is that the same in the UK?

J.B: Yes, we have a similar measure indeed. I think the AROPE measure came from work done in the United Kingdom by professor David Gordon and his colleagues. We also have a material deprivation indicator and we can process low income and material deprivation in our measures of child poverty.

N: Ok. So that is similar?

J.B: Yes.

N: Ok. And I already asked this question via e-mail, but what are in your opinion the main causes of child poverty in the UK?

J.B: Cuts in benefits. Freezing of some benefits, the introduction of limits to some benefits and general austerity policies since 2010. Driving up child poverty quite rapidly at the moment.

N: Ok. But if this is a known problem then why are these cuts developed in the first place?

J.B: Oh haha, because we have right-wing political parties in place since 2010 who wanted to save a lot of money on public expenditure.

N: So, it is a political matter?

J.B: Yes, the social security budget has been cut my almost 14 billion pounds since 2020.

N: Oh my god...

N: But if in the UK it is more of a political matter, you could say that the causes of child poverty in the UK are different than those in the Netherland for example.

J.B: Well I don't think you can really because if you look at the Eurostat data, child poverty has gone up in half the countries of the European Union since 2010. So, quite a lot of countries have the same strategy, they have cut social security spending in the face of the financial crisis and they tended to cut it more for families with children than have for old people.

N: And why is that?

J.B: Probably political reasons. Old people have a vote and children don't.

N: Exactly. So, it is more of a strategic decision?

J.B: Yes.

N: Who is or are, in your opinion, mainly responsible for addressing child poverty? Is that the EU or the Member States? Because I know the EU has limited competence in the Member States.

J.B: Well, the EU has hardly any competence. The open method of coordination enables some interaction between states and their sharing of information and ideas, but the EU doesn't determine tax or social security policy at all. And so, it is the national governments that are responsible.

N: Do you then think that they should work together with local municipalities for example?

J.B: Well, that depends on the arrangements of each country. But in Britain, local municipalities don't have much contribution to make because of our social security system and our tax system is a national system.

N: No, ok, so they don't really have a say in that?

J.B: No.

N: And, what would you say are the most significant developments that took place between 2015 and 2019 in the UK?

J.B: Well, some very big new cuts in particular, the introduction of a two-child limit, which restricts the amount of benefits a family can get for the first two children only. So, if you got three or more children you don't get any extra money and of course, it is large families that are more likely to be living in poverty. This one change, when it's rolled out is going to increase child poverty by 300.000 in the coming three years.

N: That is detrimental for those families, that is awful.

J.B: Yes, it is a terrible cut and we are the only country in the world that restricts benefits by family size, it is an awful policy.

N: But it is probably, again, a political strategy.

J.B: Yes.

N: And you just acknowledged that the EU has hardly no competence, but are there still developments at the EU level that relate to child poverty or not at all?

J.B: Well yes, I mean there is a lot of interest in child poverty at the EU level. The EU SILC survey consists of data on child poverty in the EU and that is certainly a big contribution to our understanding of child poverty. And also, quite a lot of EU institutions that study child poverty. So, for example I am involved in the European Social Policy Network, which writes reports on child poverty for the EU. I write the reports for the UK and the network writes reports for all the countries and they publish quite a lot of data on the European Union website. You might like to look at it. It is the European Social Network.

N: I am going to write it down immediately. And for how long has it been existing? The European Social Network?

J.B: Over 10 years.

N: So, most of the developments related to this network are very significant? Over the past five years as well.

J.B: Well, yes. Certainly, a lot of material that they publish on their websites, with comparative studies and national reports, so it is a very big source of information about what's been happening.

N: Ok, that is very good.

J.B: There are also some good books. I don't know whether you saw the book by It is a colleague working at Oxford Press who looks at what's been happening to child poverty since the financial crisis. And it has chapters describing what happened in different countries.

N: I also had an interview with someone from the European Semester and that is more financial, but he also talked a lot about the financial crisis. That is interesting.

J.B: Yes.

N: And this is quite important, because I am writing my dissertation about the Europe 2020 Strategy.

J.B: Yes.

N: And I was curious, from your point of view, has the Europe 2020 Strategy actually affected child poverty in the UK or in the EU at all.

J.B: I think the answer to that is no. In some way it is not surprising because the 'Europe 2020' was announced absolutely coincidentally with the financial crisis in 2008 and the objectives just haven't been achieved. None of the objectives have been achieved actually. And it was entirely due to the financial crisis. I think there are some countries that you can point to where it may have had an impact. Poland certainly improved its child poverty policies substantially since then. And Estonia as well. So, some countries may have been improved by the Europe 2020 Strategy, but most haven't.

N: Ok. And that is because of the crisis?

J.B: Yes.

N: And, do you think there are already future plans? Or what would be, in your opinion, a good future plan for fighting child poverty in the UK? And in the EU?

J.B: Well, we have new government in power in the UK that hasn't made any plans about child poverty. It is still rolling out the cuts the previous government announced. So, I don't think there is much prospect for new policies in the UK. The European Union has developed this new charter of social rights, which is very welcome. And it has some commitments to child poverty in it. But the real problem with the European Union is that it doesn't have any powers to force governments to act. It only has influence.

N: Yes, so they can only advice countries and guide and assist them.

J.B: And back to the Europe 2020 Strategy, do you think that no one country is going to reach their objectives?

J.B: No, none I think. We don't have data yet on 2020, I think the latest data is 2018. So, we'll have to wait a couple of years to know whether any country has reached the targets. The target was to reduce the number of people living in poverty by 20 million.

N: Yes, it is a lot.

J.B: And that certainly hasn't been achieved. Indeed, the number of people living in poverty have increased. So, it is difficult to know how one country can meet a target that is really an EU wide target.

N: And I talked with the financial analyst from the European Semester and he talked about the Sustainable Development Goals and that they are going to be an important part of the future.

J.B: Yes, they are

N: Do you believe that as well?

J.B: Well, there is an obligation on all national governments and indeed the European Union has agreed to it to abolish child poverty. It is up to the countries involved to decide how they get to measure that target and also what measure is used to achieve it.

N: But isn't that extremely inconvenient? Wouldn't it be better to just streamline everything? Or is that just not possible?

J.B: No.

N: Every country is different, I understand that, but it just feels so inconvenient when every country can do whatever it wants.

J.B: Well, the United Nations is just like the EU, it has no control over countries behaviours. It can only set targets and influence countries. And I got very little confidence that the UK is really going to tackle the SDG goals.

N: It is a good development though, that the Sustainable Developments Goals included a specific child poverty related goal, right?

J.B: Yes, it is.

N: So, you don't have any confidence in the new UK government that they will be focusing on child poverty?

J.B: No. No. Not at all.

N: Ok. I am looking at my questions, but I think you have answered them very clearly.

J.B: Can I send you a paper?

N: Yes, of course you can. It is very welcome.

J.B: Did I send you one?

N: No, you didn't.

J.B: Well, I have just written a paper on child poverty in the EU. So, I'll send it to you.

N: That would be very helpful. Then I think you have already answered all of my questions.

J.B: Very good.

N: Oh no, one last question and I am not surely sure if I already asked it, but what is your ideal plan for the future?

J.B: Well, I would increase family cash benefits. In particular child benefits, universal child benefits. That is the number one priority. I think in all countries. That is the most effective way of reducing poverty in families with children. Supporting parents.

N: Ok. Well, that's clear. You have answered all of my questions. Thank you very much and I hope you will feel better soon.

J.B: Yes, thank you so much and thank you for talking to me.

N: No, thank you. And I am looking forward to the paper.

J.B: Yes, I will send it immediately.

N: Thank you so much.

J.B: Bye-bye.

N: Bye.

F) Interview 5 – Neil Cowan
(i) Informed Consent Form

1) Research Project Title: Child Poverty in the European Union: An analysis of the effects of the 'Europe 2020' poverty target on child poverty development trends in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

2) Project Description (1 paragraph)

This project aims to find out whether and how the 'Europe 2020' poverty target affected child poverty development trends in both the Netherlands as well as in the United Kingdom between 2015 and 2018. An answer to this question will be established by conducting both primary and secondary research

If you agree to take part in this study please read the following statement and sign this form. I am 16 years of age or older.

I can confirm that I have read and understood the description and aims of this research. The researcher has answered all the questions that I had to my satisfaction.

I agree to the audio recording of my interview with the researcher.

I understand that the researcher offers me the following guarantees:

All information will be treated in the strictest confidence. My name will not be used in the study unless I give permission for it.

Recordings will be accessible only by the researcher. Unless otherwise agreed, anonymity will be ensured at all times. Pseudonyms will be used in the transcriptions.

I can ask for the recording to be stopped at any time and anything to be deleted from it. I consent to take part in the research on the basis of the guarantees outlined above.

Name: Neil Cowan

Signature: Neil Cowan

Date: 15th April 2020

(ii) Interview Transcript

1. What are identifiable causes of child poverty?

In the UK, the causes of poverty are low incomes and high living costs. In recent years, child poverty has increased in the UK - primarily as a result of changes in social security policy such as the benefits freeze, the two child limit and the benefit cap. Allied to this, in the UK we have a minimum wage that does not protect people from poverty and increasing use of insecure employment; this has led to an increase in in-work poverty in recent years too.

2. What are the most significant developments that took place between 2015-2019 in the field of child poverty?

In the UK, the most significant developments were the continuation of the UK Government's policies that have driven the increase in child poverty over the past decade (i.e. the benefits freeze, two child limit, benefit cap) as well as the rollout of Universal Credit, which has also driven people into poverty and destitution. There have been no significant attempts by the UK Government in that period to make tackling poverty a priority.

In Scotland, the most significant development in that period came in 2017, when the Scottish Parliament passed the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act. This legislation sets ambitious child poverty reduction targets, and means that Scotland is now the only part of the UK to have statutory targets for reducing poverty.

3. Who is responsible for addressing a pressing matter like child poverty? The EU or the EU Member States?

As the UK is no longer an EU member state, the key responsibility for tackling poverty here lies with the UK Government, the Scottish Government and local authorities.

4. In response to the previous question, what has the one responsible mainly been doing to realize a child poverty reduction?

I hope I have answered this question in previous responses.

5. As the Europe 2020 Strategy ends in 2020, what is the future plan for poverty reduction?

I hope I have answered this question in previous responses.