



Eurodiaconia's key messages to the Austrian Presidency of the Council of the EU

Brussels, 13 April 2018

Dear Ambassador Marschik,

On behalf of Eurodiaconia, I would like to wish you and your team every success for the upcoming Austrian Council Presidency.

Eurodiaconia is a European network of social and health care providers founded in the Christian faith and working in the tradition of diaconal service, which are committed to promoting social justice. The network represents more than 40 members working in over 30 countries, including churches, not-for-profit welfare organisations such as Diakonie Austria and other NGOs. Based on our members' experiences and activities, we would like to share some concrete proposals related to your upcoming Council Presidency.

Eurodiaconia understands that the Presidency's Motto will be "A Europe that protects". While it might be right that European citizens need to be protected against external threats, our network considers that a truly protecting Europe has also a responsibility towards its most vulnerable people, and has the responsibility to protect every person living in its territory from poverty and social exclusion.

In their daily work our member organisations provide support to persons most in need at the local level, adapting their services to the concrete needs and circumstances. While responses to social issues need to be given at the most local level, they are nevertheless European in nature, as many EU Member States are facing the same difficulties, such as the integration of high numbers of migrants, investment needs for social infrastructure and housing. In addition, the single market brings many opportunities, but also challenges and the EU must ensure that its citizens are protected from social risks while moving from one country to another.

Eurodiaconia would therefore like to draw your attention to three policy areas which will be of importance during the Austrian Presidency to ensure a Europe that protects.

1. Integration of migrants

Throughout the last years high numbers of migrants have come to Europe to find work or protection from conflicts. Ensuring their good economic and social inclusion needs to be a priority for the coming years throughout Europe, in order to continue building inclusive and cohesive societies. Efforts need to be made at all levels, including the European level, which can positively contribute by setting minimum social standards and providing a platform to exchange best practices. In line with the initiatives set out in the Action Plan on the Integration of Third Country Nationals, Eurodiaconia encourages the Austrian Presidency to:

- Call on Member States to support employment opportunities for migrants, also within the social economy and the not-for-profit sector, making use of its job creation potential. At a time when many social service providers are experiencing growing staff shortages, migration can be an important resource for future professionals, if managed correctly;
- Call on Member States to provide adequate employment services in order to facilitate labour market access and societal participation. Targeted services are necessary to meet the support needs of particularly vulnerable migrant groups, including migrant women and migrant persons with disabilities;
- Call on Member States to safeguard adequate access to quality social and healthcare services for migrants, and not to criminalize social service providers supporting undocumented migrants.

Page 1 of 2





2. Promoting the effective implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights

Eurodiaconia believes that the recently proclaimed European Pillar of Social Rights has the potential to be a key instrument for building more inclusive societies protecting people from social risks. The 20 principles constitute a promising and comprehensive foundation for improving labour market access and strengthening social protection. To achieve upwards social convergence at its full potential, it is imperative that these principles are effectively implemented at national level. To this end, Eurodiaconia asks the Austrian Presidency to:

- Call on all Member States to effectively implement the principles in their national contexts, in order to prevent a rise in social divergence between Eurozone and non-Eurozone countries;
- Call on Member States to recognise the importance of civil dialogue and to ensure space for meaningful civil society involvement in developing and monitoring the Pillar's implementation process;
- Call on the European Commission to clarify the linkage between the European Pillar of Social Rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly regarding the reduction of poverty and the creation of quality employment, in order to make them mutually reinforcing.

3. Making social inclusion a key element of the next Multiannual Financial Framework

In view of the upcoming negotiations on the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and the future of EU funds, our network would like to highlight the importance of maintaining a budget which corresponds to the ambition of the European Union and enables the EU to effectively respond to the challenges it faces. Therefore, Eurodiaconia calls on the Austrian Presidency to:

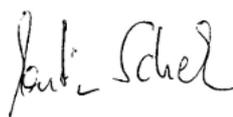
- Call on the European Commission and Member States to make sufficient funding available in the new MFF in order to effectively implement all aspects of the European Pillar of Social Rights and make sustainable investments promoting social inclusion;
- Call on the European Commission and Member States to invest in social cohesion to increase social stability and thus support the priority of guaranteeing security for all EU citizens;
- Call on the European Commission and Member States to maintain the earmarking of funds for the support to and social inclusion of particularly vulnerable groups, such as migrants and Roma;
- Call on the European Commission and Member States to provide perspectives for young people, while not forgetting other marginalised or vulnerable groups in accordance with the Sustainable Development Agenda "leaving no one behind".

We thank you in advance for the attention you will be giving to this letter, and we hope that you will give the issues highlighted in this letter careful consideration and emphasise their importance in the relevant Council configurations. I and my team remain available to discuss further these points during your Presidency.

Yours sincerely,



Heather Roy,
Secretary General, Eurodiaconia



Martin Schenk,
Deputy Director, Diakonie Österreich