



H.E. Mrs Luminița Teodora ODOBESCU
Permanent Representative to the EU

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

Brussels, 15 November 2018

Your Excellency,

On behalf of Eurodiaconia, I would like to wish you and your team every success for the upcoming Romanian Council Presidency. Your country's Presidency comes at a crucial moment for the European Union, with both the elections of the European Parliament and Member State leader's discussion on the Future of Europe taking place during the Romanian 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. Our network represents more than 45 members working in over 30 countries, including churches, such as our Romanian member the Transylvanian Reformed Church District, not-for-profit welfare organisations and other NGOs. Furthermore, we are cooperating on a regular basis with other social organisations at EU and national level. In Romania, one of our key partners is Filantropia, the social service organisation from the Orthodox Church.

Considering the upcoming European elections, it is essential to rethink how the EU can better serve its citizens and take effective action accordingly. In this context, our network welcomes the attention that you are giving to social rights and social justice in your Presidency's priorities. Building on this and based on our members' experiences and activities, we would like to share some concrete proposals related to your upcoming Council Presidency.

1. Use the Future of Europe debate to strengthen the social dimension of the European Union

The upcoming discussions on the Future of Europe during the Council meeting in Sibiu in March 2019 will be crucial for the way the European Union will evolve in the next years. The 2017 Eurobarometer Survey on the Future of Europe has shown that 60% of Europeans would like the EU to regulate more in the area of social security¹. This is also reflected by our members, for which the social dimension of the future of Europe is of highest concern. Therefore, Eurodiaconia calls on the Romanian Presidency to:

- Call on Member States to translate their commitment to the European Pillar of Social Rights into an ambitious and achievable commitment to the social dimension of the European Union;
- Call on Member States, not to reduce the EU to a single market, but to recognize the close interlinkage between economic and social policies and hence the need to better coordinate social policies in view of creating a social market economy that benefits all;
- Call on Member States to explore ways to better reconcile social and macroeconomic policies, including through social impact assessments of economic policies and by allowing for fiscal space for necessary social investments in view of pursuing increased social convergence across the EU.

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

In view of the ongoing negotiations on the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), our network would like to highlight the importance of maintaining a budget which corresponds to the ambition of the European

¹ European Commission, *Special Eurobarometer 467 – Future of Europe – Social Issues*, November 2017, p.4.





Union and enables the EU to effectively respond to the challenges it faces. Therefore, Eurodiaconia calls on the Romanian Presidency to:

- Call on Member States to make sufficient funding available in the new MFF and to allocate it in a way to effectively implement all aspects of the European Pillar of Social Rights and make sustainable investments promoting social inclusion;
- Call on 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 Member States to make enough funds available to support people at risk of poverty or social exclusion, while reaching out with targeted measures to marginalised or vulnerable groups in accordance with the Sustainable Development Agenda “leaving no one behind”.

3. 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. 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 Romanian 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.

4. Stepping up efforts to support the inclusion of Roma

As Romania has one of the biggest Roma populations in the EU, Eurodiaconia encourages the Romanian Presidency to put the issue of Roma inclusion high on its agenda. The mid-term review of the EU Framework on National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS) has shown that some progress has been made in the field of education, but a lot has still to be done. Therefore, Eurodiaconia asks the Romanian Presidency to:

- Call on the European Commission and Member States to step up their efforts in implementing the EU Framework on National Roma Integration Strategies
- Call on the European Commission and Member States to start developing a follow-up Roma strategy for the period post-2020;
- Address together with the European Commission and Member States possible ways of effectively countering antigypsyism, to allow Roma to enjoy their full human and social rights and be active members of society.

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



Rt. Rev. Kató Béla
Bishop of the Transylvanian Reformed Church District