

5 March, 2021

Eurodiaconia welcomes the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan

Yesterday, 4 March, the European Commission launched the long-awaited [Action Plan](#) outlining concrete measures for the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

As a European network of 52 members in 32 countries delivering social services and advocating for social justice, we are determined to see the rights enshrined in the Pillar turned into reality. **Eurodiaconia has been continuously engaged in the 10-month-long consultation process** on the Action Plan, and we are delighted to see some of [our input](#) in the final Plan.

Poverty and social exclusion is the most blatant form of deprivation of human rights and dignity, therefore, we welcome the newly designated **EU headline target on poverty**, which says that by 2030, at least 15 million people should be lifted out of poverty and social exclusion.

While we are happy to see a concrete poverty reduction target, **we hope that across the European Union our ambition will be higher** so that the reality of [Goal 1](#) of the Sustainable Development Goals, to which the Action Plan wishes to align itself, will be reached. Greater ambition is needed to respond to the devastating socio-economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. **An EU poverty target is not sufficient** without the EU Member States also setting such a target and making all efforts to achieve it. Without doing so, poverty, social exclusion and material deprivation will remain a reality for at least every fifth person living in the EU for the decades to come.

Eurodiaconia also welcomes the **EU headline target on employment**, aiming for at least 78% of the population aged 20 to 64 to be in employment by 2030, and the **EU headline target on skills**, setting out that at least 60% of all adults should participate in training every year by 2030. Nevertheless, to avoid so called 'creaming' of the easiest to reach and to ensure that truly no one is left behind, **active outreach measures are needed** towards those who are the farthest from the labour market and who struggle with attaining basic skills. Moreover, both the targets and all the elements of the Action Plan **must be underpinned by strong and consistent anti-discrimination measures**, as discrimination is one of the root causes of inequality, poverty and exclusion.

The European Pillar of Social Rights properly states that everyone has the **right to access adequate, enabling, and good-quality social services**. The members of Eurodiaconia, with more than 2 million employees and volunteers, provide daily support to millions of people in need of social services. We thus know that **the ambition of the Social Pillar cannot be achieved if the Action Plan does not include measures concerning the provision of social services**. The implementation must address the financing, legal framework, employment and workforce challenges of the sector. COVID-19 has led to increased demand for social services, yet the sector suffers from the shortage of qualified staff and lack of investment. Therefore, the action plan should improve the sector's attractiveness through better working conditions and opportunities for lifelong training and re-skilling.

The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan provides hope for the people in Europe at a time when Social Europe is a priority to the majority. **Eurodiaconia is therefore committed to the support and implementation of the Social Pillar and its Action Plan**, and we are ready to mobilize all our expertise to safeguard its successful implementation for the sake of creating a Social Europe for *all*.