

3 November 2022

Dear Executive Vice-President Dombrovskis,  
Dear Commissioner Schmit,

Ahead of the Autumn package, Eurodiaconia would like to share with you some observations and recommendations. As you may know, Eurodiaconia is a network of 58 organisations founded in the Christian faith, fighting poverty and promoting social justice in 33 countries across Europe and representing over 30 000 health and social service providers.

This summer we have conducted a study among our members to understand which are the most urgent social concerns they see in their countries and regions. The outcomes of the study are reflected in our “Report on the State of the Social European Union”, which you can find [here](#).

Unsurprisingly, the three central topics of concern among our membership are:

- **a rising number of persons at risk of poverty**, including rising child poverty and in-work poverty, as well as worries about rising homelessness;
- **pressure on the care sector**, due to demographic change, insufficient funding and lacking workforce;
- **providing quality reception and integration services** to all refugees.

Based on those observations and ongoing exchange with our members throughout the year, we would like to share with you 8 key priorities, which we believe should urgently be addressed by the Annual Sustainable Growth Survey and throughout the 2023 European Semester process:

1. **Strengthen social protection schemes to make them adequate and crisis proof.** The current inflation has led to a cost-of-living crisis, which is disproportionately affecting vulnerable households, but is also putting middle-income families under increasing pressure and at risk of poverty. The 2023 European Semester should focus on the adequacy, accessibility and resilience of social protection systems, which should include mechanisms to quickly adjust to changing needs and become effective safety nets for everyone living in the EU.
2. **Ensure full implementation of the Child Guarantee to protect children from poverty.** With rising inflation, families and children might be among the first to face higher risks of poverty. Therefore, it is crucial that Member States are requested to submit and implement ambitious, participatory and comprehensive Child Guarantee national action plans. The

European Commission should also ensure that Member States monitor and tackle multiple discrimination against migrant and Roma children.

- 3. Leverage the full potential of the EU Platform on Combatting Homelessness to achieve the target of eradicating homelessness by 2030.** Many Member States are currently facing housing crises, with insufficient affordable housing available and numbers of evictions expected to increase with the current cost-of-living crisis. It is therefore crucial that Member States are encouraged throughout the European Semester process to adopt comprehensive national housing and homelessness strategies, which include preventive, integrated and housing-led approaches.
- 4. Invest in social services for a more resilient society.** With ongoing crises which are affecting people in many different ways, investment in adequate, available, accessible and affordable quality social and care services is crucial. Investing in people in this way will make the entire society more resilient, as situations of financial bottlenecks, social exclusion, destitution, mental health problems and many more personal crises can be cushioned by early interventions. We call on you to urge Member States not to cut social budgets and address people's needs through well-resourced social services, including those provided by not-for-profit social services providers.
- 5. Follow-up on the European Care Strategy to encourage the development of high-quality, person-centred care services.** In many Member States care services are facing important challenges such as labour shortages and difficulties in accessing sustainable funding in order to respond to increasing care needs in our ageing societies. In addition, rising energy prices are increasingly putting care providers at risk. It is essential that the European Semester encourages Member States to reform care provision in order to make it an attractive sector for work and deliver quality and person-centred care services to all those in need of it.
- 6. Ensure quality reception and integration of refugees and migrants.** With the outbreak of the war, the Temporary Protection Directive has been activated granting refugees from Ukraine access to social protection and the labour market in the EU. The European Commission should use the European Semester process to monitor the implementation of the Temporary Protection Directive and ensure that refugees have effective access to their rights. Furthermore, the reception and integration of refugees from other regions of the world should be monitored and ensured that their access to reception and integration services is not deprioritised and is adequate.

7. **Improve consultation and involvement of civil society.** Thanks to their involvement and work at the local and grassroots levels, civil society organisations are aware of emerging social trends and needs long before they are visible in the statistics. Furthermore, they are key partners in the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights. These are two out of many reasons to involve them closely in the decision-making, including in the European Semester process and the development and implementation of the National Resilience and Reform Plans (NRRPs). While civil society involvement at EU level is established, this is not the case in most EU Member States and urgently needs to be addressed in the Autumn Package.
  
8. **Implement the pilot of a Social Imbalance Procedure.** The implementation of a Social Imbalance Procedure would be an essential step towards a stronger dimension of the European Semester. It would allow to detect social imbalances earlier and help address them in a more efficient way. We strongly encourage the European Commission to move forward with a pilot with those Member States interested.

We hope you find this input useful and that it will be taken into account in your work. We thank you for your interest in our work and for the attention you will be giving to this letter, and in doing so, for the consideration you are giving to our members' work and experience. Eurodiaconia remains available to discuss further these points.

Yours sincerely,



Heather Roy

Secretary General  
Eurodiaconia