

Call for Action for a comprehensive, sustainable Europe 2030 strategy with a strong social dimension

Introduction

In 2018, well before the COVID-19 pandemic, there were 110 million Europeans at risk of poverty, of whom 23 million were children.

The European Union as well as the entire world are on the verge of a new economic crisis, which is expected to be even more severe than in 2008. According to the European Commission forecast¹, the outbreak of the COVID19 pandemic is expected to lead the EU into a deep economic recession.

This recession will push more people into poverty, and will further affect those already at risk. The closure of thousands of social services across Europe has already impacted the living conditions of millions of children and adults in need of daily care and support, as well as those of their families and informal caregivers. The COVID19 crisis will directly contribute to growing health and socio-economic inequalities between and within EU Member States.

In 2010, the European Union adopted the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth². The Strategy came as a response to the financial crisis that emerged in 2008-2009 and left millions of people unemployed and at risk of poverty or social exclusion. A target was set to lift 20 million out of poverty and social exclusion by 2020. Disappointingly the poverty reduction target was the only target that was not substantially met³.

The Europe 2020 Strategy is coming to an end this year.

The European Parliament⁴ and the Council of the EU⁵ have called for a long-term EU Strategy in line with the commitments made on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. **The European Commission, however, has not presented until today any adequate successor to the Europe 2020 strategy, that would set the European Union's vision and steer the EU's priorities in the long term.**

The European Green Deal⁶, although crucial to fight climate change and ensure a better, cleaner and healthier future for all, is not integral enough to be seen as the overall post-2020 EU strategy.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-performance-and-forecasts/economic-forecasts/spring-2020-economic-forecast-deep-and-uneven-recession-uncertain-recovery_en

² <https://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/pdf/COMPLET%20EN%20BARROSO%20%20%20007%20-%20Europe%202020%20-%20EN%20version.pdf>

³ According to the SPC&EMCO review of the Strategy, among the reasons that the target was not met due to the austerity policies that were put in place to tackle the financial and economic crisis of 2008/09. In addition, the European Commission and its Member States deprioritised focusing on quality of jobs and their impact on citizens, on account of 'simply' meeting the percentages of the EU having more people in work, resulting for example in in-work poverty and rise in precarious types of job contracts.

⁴ http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2019-0220_EN.html?redirect

⁵ <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-13432-2019-INIT/en/pdf>

⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/european-green-deal-communication_en.pdf

With 1 in 4 Europeans⁷ already at risk of poverty and social exclusion and with the catastrophic consequences of the COVID19 pandemic, the EU needs an ambitious, comprehensive and overarching strategy that would encompass the short and long term challenges that it is currently facing.

The EU Alliance for Investing in Children, with the support of the Social Platform and SDG Watch Europe, agree with the European Parliament's and Council's position and **call the European Commission to launch a proposal for a Europe 2030 strategy** that will combine the promotion of:

- ✓ Equality and wellbeing, poverty reduction and social inclusion,
- ✓ inclusive and sustainable economic recovery, stability and growth,
- ✓ environmental protection by implementing the European Green Deal
- ✓ digital transformation

The Strategy should be aligned with the United Nations 2030 Agenda and its SDGs and the Paris Climate Agreement (UNFCCC). The Strategy's social dimension should be also aligned with the European Pillar of Social Rights, which will set an ambitious poverty and child poverty reduction target, and which will guide EU Member States' policy making.

A call for a comprehensive, sustainable Europe 2030 Strategy that balances the social, economic and environmental dimensions and that takes into account the most pressing social needs

We call the EU institutions to:

- a) **Propose and adopt a comprehensive, sustainable Europe 2030 strategy with a strong social dimension**

The social aspect of the Europe 2030 Strategy should incorporate the principles outlined in the European Pillar of Social Rights in alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The announced Action Plan on the Pillar of Social Rights should include an integrated anti-poverty strategy and the European Child Guarantee.

The European Child Guarantee should take a comprehensive approach in tackling child poverty, in line with the European Commission Recommendation on Investing in Children⁸, considering (and improving where necessary) parents' access to resources, children's access to quality and inclusive essential services and children's right to participate in cultural activities and decision making⁹.

- b) **Set an ambitious target to tackle poverty and child poverty in the EU with a mid-term review**

In line with SDG 1, the EU should set an ambitious target to end extreme poverty by 2030 and to reduce the risk of poverty and social exclusion by 50%. This target should take into particular account the furthest left behind¹⁰.

⁷ The EU has 446 million inhabitants https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/figures/living_en

⁸ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32013H0112>

⁹ For more information on the EU Alliance for Investing in Children position on European Child Guarantee please read here <http://www.alliance4investinginchildren.eu/proposal-for-a-council-recommendation-on-the-child-guarantee-for-the-wellbeing-of-all-children-across-the-eu/>

¹⁰ This could be monitored additionally by the relative median at-risk-of-poverty gap or the at risk of poverty rate¹⁰ with a threshold of 40% of median income

The European targets should be translated into national level targets. The national targets should be based on the EU AROPE¹¹ indicators; be set beyond GDP rate; and should look at the wellbeing of people not only at national level but also at regional and local levels.

The European Commission should work with Member States to ensure that their targets are adequate and to establish national sub-targets for poverty reduction among groups most at risk,¹² ensuring a just transition for these groups where Europe's shift to a low-carbon economy is concerned.

Consideration should also be given to agreeing further targets related to health, education and unemployment, especially long-term unemployment and youth unemployment, employment of persons with disabilities. The targets should be reviewed mid-term to assess the realisation of the Europe 2030 Strategy and relevant action taking.

c) Strengthen social and economic policy coordination and monitoring of the Europe 2030 Strategy

The European Commission and the Council should ensure coherence of European social and economic policy in the European Semester by integrating the social indicators of the Europe 2030 Strategy and the European Pillar of Social Rights in the European Semester monitoring cycle. The European Commission should make full use of the flexibility allowed within the Stability and Growth Pact by making use of the 'exceptional circumstances' clause to allow social investments needed to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights.

d) Allocate EU funding for the implementation of the Europe 2030 Strategy

We are calling the EU institutions to adopt the ambitious EU budget 2021-2027 and social funding programmes to tackle social and employment challenges proposed by the European Commission on 27 May¹³ and ensure that in the European Social Fund Plus:

- ✓ **the 25% of earmarking for social inclusion is increased to 27%, as proposed by the European Parliament**
- ✓ **the 2% earmarking for social inclusion of the most deprived including vulnerable children is raised to 3%, and**
- ✓ **at least 5% of the ESF+ resources is earmarked to tackle child poverty in all EU Member States.**

e) Meaningfully engage civil society and social partners in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Europe 2030 Strategy.

This unprecedented global COVID-19 pandemic requires creative and sustainable solutions. This also goes through consulting civil society organisations (European and national) representing diverse

¹¹ At Risk of Poverty or Social Exclusion

¹² For example, sub-targets may be agreed relating to groups at high risk of poverty or social exclusion (such as children, Roma people, people in migration, elderly and dependent people, people with disabilities, homeless persons).

¹³ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&furtherNews=yes&newsId=9686>

interests to understand the needs of the population and be in a good position to respond to those needs.

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was led by a thorough consultative process with civil society participating in consultations and advocating to influence national government's positions. The Multi-Stakeholder Platform (MSP) on the SDGs, established to support and advise the European Commission on the implementation of the SDGs at EU level, should be reinstated to enable a structured stakeholder engagement in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Europe 2030 Strategy.

In addition to the MSP, the EU and its Member States should meaningfully **consult children¹⁴ and families experiencing poverty** and social exclusion **and civil society organisations** representing them in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation **of the Europe 2030 Strategy**.



With the support of :

Endnote

The EU Alliance for Investing in Children has been advocating for a multidimensional, rights-based approach to tackling child poverty and promoting child well-being since 2014.

This statement was endorsed by the following partner organisations of the EU Alliance for Investing in Children:

Alliance for Childhood European Network Group;
ATD Quart Monde;
Caritas Europa;
COFACE Families Europe;
Don Bosco International;
Dynamo International – Street Workers Network;
Eurochild;
Eurodiaconia;
EuroHealthNet;
European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities – EASPD;
European Anti-Poverty Network – EAPN;
European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless – FEANTSA;

¹⁴ In line with Art 12 of the UNCRC



European Parents' Association
European Public Health Alliance – EPHA;
European Social Network – ESN;
Lifelong Learning Platform;
Make Mothers Matter;
Mental Health Europe;
Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM);
Roma Education Fund;
Save the Children;
SOS Children's Villages International
UNICEF EU office

This statement is further supported by the following organisations members of the SDG Watch Europe:

Alleanza Italiana per lo Sviluppo Sostenibile - ASviS
Culture Action Europe (CAE)
EU-CORD network
European Disability Forum
Fair Trade Advocacy Office
Inclusion Europe
IPPF European Network

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