



Joint Social Protection Committee & Employment committee meeting, January 2020:

Key messages from Social Platform

Social Platform overarching key messages on the European Semester Autumn Package presented to the Social Protection Committee and the Employment Committee:

- The title change to “Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy” reflects the importance of sustainability, but an opportunity was missed by not adding the element of inclusiveness into the title as well. Without recognising that growth must be sustainable and inclusive, we are not making the right transitions.
- The Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy refers to competitive sustainability remaining the guiding principle for Europe’s social market economy. “Competitive sustainability” is not the way to grab the hearts and minds of people in Europe. People are calling for the EU to focus more on social rights, inclusiveness, fairness and social rights, together with sustainability. If we focus on competitive sustainability, we see again fairness falling behind economic and now also environmental considerations.
- It is crucial to ensure fair and inclusive societies, which involves paying particular attention to the regions, industries and workers who will have to make the largest changes to achieve the EU’s significant transitions towards becoming climate-neutral by 2050. But we also need to pay attention to the most disadvantaged groups of people who have already been left behind or are at risk of poverty and social exclusion, and will be especially vulnerable to the changes needed to achieve this transition. It must be ensured that they do not bear the costs of this transition.
- The European Semester will from now on support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through the coordination of economic, social and environmental priorities. We are missing a coherent social and sustainable long-term strategy that integrates all the different proposed initiatives and priorities: the United Nations SDGs, a European Green Deal that is truly inclusive and the European Pillar of Social Rights and its action plan. This strategy also needs targets that build on the Europe 2020 strategy and that are taken seriously.
- Investment, including public social investment remains below pre-crisis levels. Significant public and private investment will be needed to achieve this transition, especially social investment that fosters social rights, reduce poverty and inequality as part of long-term inclusive and sustainable development and wellbeing, such as universal social protection/minimum income, early childhood education and care, primary and secondary education, training and active labour market policies, affordable and social housing, and healthcare and long-term care.
- The societal transitions that are necessary in Europe must be developed with the European Parliament, Member States and social partners, but also with civil society organisations.

Unfortunately, they were not mentioned directly in the ASGS. Civil society organisations can provide valuable insights and support for policy implementation and can play a key role in the design and implementation of policy reforms. They are part of the fabric of the transition that needs to be pulled together with urgency to achieve the transitions we need. If they are going to happen, we must bring everyone along.

- We welcome that a first preliminary survey has been done by European Commission Semester officers to assess the degree of civil society's involvement in policy formulation in the framework of the European Semester. We believe that a more detailed analysis on this issue would be extremely valuable to gain a better understanding of the barriers that many civil society organisations face when trying to get involved in the European Semester process.