

Statement from EU civil society organisations: The EU must protect welfare states at any costs

We, 11 EU civil society organisations, are writing to express our concerns following NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte declarations in front of the Sub-Committee on Security and Defense of the European Parliament on Monday, 13th January 2025 and at the World Economic Forum on Thursday, 23rd January 2025. During his intervention, he called on the EU member states to increase national military defense spending and encouraged them to consider re-shuffling some parts of the national spending on pensions, health, and social security.

We represent organisations working on social rights, anti-poverty, homelessness, mental health, anti-discrimination, racial justice, Roma rights, rights of persons with disabilities, undocumented migrants, children, family support, young people and older people. We and our members are at the frontline to testify of the dire state of social exclusion in the EU.

Austerity policies already had a harsh impact on public investments and social protection, with disastrous effects on the human rights and dignity of the most vulnerable. However, the EU's commitments under the European Pillar of Social Rights and the UN poverty reduction targets cannot be achieved without adequate financial means, both at the EU and national levels.

2025 is a pivotal year, with the renewal of the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan, the adoption of the EU Affordable Housing Plan, the preparation of the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy, the renewal of the EU equality and anti-discrimination strategies, and the start of the discussions on the Multiannual Financial Framework post-2027.

Adequate funding of the welfare state as social investment is at the core of peaceful and thriving societies, putting in place strong social safety nets to ensure people and families are resilient to shocks. This is of geopolitical importance for ensuring a strong European Union in the face of the digital, demographic and green transitions. At a time when its 2024-2029 guidelines put a strong focus on security and defence, **we are calling on the European Commission, member states and the European Parliament to prioritise and protect social spending in the face of increased pressure to redirect funds toward military and defence budgets, and to protect social welfare amidst competing budgetary pressures.**

The 95 million people living in poverty cannot wait anymore. This is about human dignity, democracy, human rights, social cohesion and the capacity of the EU to protect the most vulnerable.

Signatories:

European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN)

Caritas Europa

COFACE Families Europe

Emmaüs Europe

Eurochild

Eurodiaconia

European Network against Racism (ENAR)

European Roma Grassroots Organisations (ERGO) Network

FEANTSA

PICUM (Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants)

Social Platform