



March European Council meeting: Ensuring a Social AAA through an integrated approach to the European Semester

17 March 2015

Dear Heads of State and Government,
Dear Council President, Dear President of the European Commission, Dear Commissioners,

In the context of discussing guidance to Member States for the preparation of their national reforms and stability or convergence programmes and your exchange of views on the economic situation in the EU, concluding the first phase of the European Semester for 2015, we call on you to consider also the *social* situation of the EU and the social and employment impact of economic and fiscal policy guidance. Economic policy reforms that have a negative impact on the most vulnerable in our societies and which compromise access and availability of quality social and health care services can no longer be pursued.

An integrated approach to economic, fiscal, employment and social policy is essential to ensure a lasting recovery. The EPSCO Council of the 9th March concluded *“an integrated approach of employment and social concerns, aligned to economic policies, is a prerequisite for successfully tackling unemployment.”* The closing statement of the Annual Growth Survey 2015 was that there is a *“clear need to monitor social progress and the impact of reforms over time”*.

Ambitious investments in adequate social protection systems, as an inseparable part of social investment, need to be maintained and improved to prevent further deterioration of the social situation, and prevent higher costs in the long-term. The EPSCO Council also endorsed the Joint Employment Report (JER), one of whose key points is the modernisation of social protection systems with protection for all and investment in human capital. The JER pointed out, *“Social protection systems activate those that are able to access the labour market, protect those most excluded from the labour market and shelter individuals from risks in their lifecycles”*.

The 2015 AGS started to recognise the importance for civil society and national public authorities to work together for a better ownership of the European Semester process, and we welcome the publishing of the 2015 Analytical Documents earlier in the year as a tool to enhance the space for stakeholder involvement. Eurodiaconia would therefore like to reiterate its call for meaningful stakeholder involvement in the European Semester at national level, in order to draw on all resources to reinforce policy ownership, improve outcomes and contribute to legitimize the European Semester process.

If Europe is to have the AAA social rating it needs for future stability and cohesion, the European Semester must be driven by a balanced approach to economic and social policies. We ask that you carefully consider these proposals and remain at your disposition for further information.

Sincerely,

Heather Roy, Secretary General

