



Press release

COUNTRY-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS 2015: FURTHER EFFORTS NEEDED FOR A SOCIAL TRIPLE A

Brussels, BELGIUM, 19 May 2015

The European Commission presented its country-specific recommendations for 2015 based on its three priorities for EU level economic policy: a coordinated boost to investment, a renewed commitment to structural reforms, and pursuing fiscal responsibility. The European Commission claims to have added a fourth focus: improving employment policy and social protection for stronger social cohesion. However this focus is lost due to the unbalanced emphasis given to economic growth and competitiveness, letting the political pressure to fight poverty and social exclusion fade away.

Some of the Country Specific Recommendations released by the European Commission are positive, encouraging for instance six Member States to work for stronger social inclusion (e.g. Recommendation 4 to Hungary to “*improve the adequacy and coverage of social assistance and unemployment benefits.*”). However, the real picture behind the full package of CSRs is one of fiscal consolidation and priority to economic growth and competitiveness, demonstrating the overall package’s incoherence in its political willingness to address the social situation and reduce poverty and social exclusion.

Secretary General of Eurodiaconia Heather Roy says “*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. These Country Specific Recommendations demonstrate how far we are from this reality. 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. This should have been the message sent by this year’s Country Specific Recommendations.*”

Eurodiaconia continues to call for an integrated approach to economic, fiscal, employment and social policy as essential to ensure a lasting recovery. In this context, Eurodiaconia encourages ambitious investments in adequate social protection systems, as an inseparable part of social investment that need to be maintained and improved to prevent further deterioration of the social situation and prevent higher costs in the long-term. This should be more strongly reflected in the political direction given by the European Semester in general and its Country Specific Recommendations in particular.

Eurodiaconia is a dynamic, Europe wide community of organisations founded in the Christian faith and working in the tradition of Diaconia, who are committed to a Europe of solidarity, equality and justice. Eurodiaconia is based in Brussels and currently has 43 members in 32 countries

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