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The only way out of these crises is to put people and planet at the centre of policy-making

Green Ministers' statement on social policy

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- **Henri Kox**, Minister for Housing and Minister for Internal Security, Luxembourg
- **Krista Mikkonen**, Minister for Environment and Climate Change, including Housing policy, Finland
- **Dr. Wolfgang Mückstein**, Minister for Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, Federal government, Austria
- **Sarah Schlitz**, State Secretary for Gender Equality, Equal Opportunities and Diversity of the Federal Government, Belgium

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This week's Social Summit in Porto is a unique opportunity for heads of State to recognise, through **firm commitment to ambitious and concrete actions**, that the only way out of today's health, social and environmental crises is to **put people and the planet at the centre of all recovery policies**.

The Summit must recognise that **social and environmental sustainability are complementary goals** that must be addressed in concert for us to succeed.

The **pandemic has exacerbated already unacceptable inequalities** and **hit some people much harder** than others. The EU's **EPRS Action plan and Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) must prioritise their needs**.

We welcome the **explicit requirement to address social issues in the National Recovery Plans** and underline the following areas as **priorities for action**:

- **Women** continue to shoulder the brunt of the multiple crises. **Gender equality policies - the**

second pillar of the EPSR - are urgently required, including the Directive on **Binding Pay Transparency Measures** and swift adoption of the **Women on Boards Directive**.

- Special emphasis should be put on **eradicating discrimination**, especially to tackle racism, marginalisation of people living with disabilities and gender-based violence: we must revive the EU's long-blocked **anti-discrimination Directive**, and new measures need to be taken to **end gender-based violence** by adopting an inclusive EU Directive to combat it and by categorising it as an EU crime. It also goes without saying that **ratification of the Istanbul Convention** on violence against women by the European Union and its governments can no longer wait.
- We need to greatly improve **access to childcare and care for dependants** and we must recognise the **essential role** of those who invest their time helping others and providing crucial services by **investing in the "care economy"**, and making sure **all workers are rewarded properly** for their labour via the Directive on **Adequate Minimum Wages**.
- **Access to decent, affordable, well-insulated housing** where people can live in dignity must be recognised as a right, not a privilege. Many in the EU have had **no decent home to be confined to or work from during the crisis**. Market forces have not delivered on housing and the ECB's interventions to prop up asset markets and phenomena such as AirBnB have driven up prices and rents even more. **Public sector action is essential**, through, for example, **binding targets for public investment in affordable housing** and **rent controls** where necessary.
- With at least 700,000 people in the European Union who don't even have a home, ambitious steps needs to be taken to **end homelessness by 2030** at the latest. This extreme form of exclusion can no longer be tolerated in the 21st century.
- People who were already marginalised and discriminated against before the Covid crisis will now require **urgent action to lift them out of poverty**, including through EU legislation to guarantee a **minimum income** for those most at risk of exclusion.

Out of these crises comes an historic opportunity. We need to seize it now to push for a triple-win recovery that is good for the people, the planet and the economy. The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to which we are strongly committed, provide a good framework for tackling these issues with a holistic approach.

We need to **move beyond outdated economic models based on exploitation of people and the planet**, blind growth and complex global supply chains that have proved so fragile.

A green and just society where we can all prosper is within our reach and we will work tirelessly to make it happen: This is our commitment to the people of Europe.

Signed by:
Joe O'Brien, Minister for Community Development & Charities, Ireland
Roderic O'Gorman, Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Ireland
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