

Green Ministers on Social Policy

THE ONLY WAY OUT OF THESE CRISES IS TO PUT PEOPLE AND PLANET AT THE CENTRE OF POLICY-MAKING

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 need 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

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

Ska Keller, MEP and co-President of the Greens/EFA Group in the European Parliament

Philippe Lamberts, MEP and co-President of the Greens/EFA Group in the European Parliament

Evelyne Huytebroeck, co-Chair of the European Green Party

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