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With EU Semester Alliance**

**The AGS behind, the Semester ahead:
What proposals to make Europe 2020 more
social, democratic and sustainable?**

**Giving a Voice to Civil Society
European Parliament - 01 March 2016**

S&D

Group of the Progressive Alliance of
Socialists & Democrats
in the European Parliament

EUROPEAN ALLIANCE FOR A

DEMOCRATIC

SOCIAL EUROPEAN SEMESTER

SUSTAINABLE





What is the Alliance?

- **A cross-sectoral coalition bringing together 17 major EU civil society organisations + trade unions, representing thousands of member organisations- EU, national, regional and local level.**
- **Aims to support progress towards a more democratic, social and sustainable Europe 2020 strategy, strengthening civil dialogue in the European Semester at national and EU levels.**
- **Builds on Adhoc Coalition, working with cross-party group of MEPs since 2011.**

Who is the Alliance?

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Why an Alliance?

Concerns about democratic legitimacy of the Strategy + European Semester

- European Semester primarily driven by economic governance goals, rather than Europe 2020
- Failure to engage civil society and social organisations meaningfully in the Semester process, particularly at national level (NRPs, CSRs)
- Weak involvement of national and EU Parliaments

Why an Alliance?

Disturbing lack of progress on Europe 2020 social + environmental targets

- **8 million more people in poverty** instead of taking at least 20 million out of poverty – shortfall of 28 million!
- **Decline in employment** instead of progress to 75%
- **Early School Leaving** - shortfall of 2.7%
- **18% reduction in greenhouse emissions** but 13 MS won't reach target by 2020, no efforts to reform environmentally harmful subsidies
- **Failure to mainstream equality/ including gender equality**

Aims and Objectives

- **Achieve progress on a more democratic, social and sustainable EU Strategy** by improving civil society and social actor's engagement in the European Semester
- **Ensure all policies, including macroeconomic, contribute to social, environmental/climate targets** and equality commitments of Europe 2020 strategy
- **Improve the legitimacy of the EU strategy**, through strengthening the engagement of civil society and social organisations in the EU decision-making process, starting at the national level.

What Actions?

- **EU Advocacy Strategy** to engage with EU institutions and stakeholders
- **A key alternative voice:** - information, dissemination, raising awareness (blog/social media).
- **3 National Pilot Alliances** – cross sectoral engagement in Semester: BG, DK, IE
- **Capacity building** of members: national /EU
- **Joint reports/inputs** – eg CSR proposals/
Assessment European Semester and Europe 2020



Civil Society Assessment: European Semester 2015 and AGS 2016

Annual Growth Survey (AGS) 2016



Signs of change towards a democratic, social,
sustainable and inclusive Europe
but still a long way to go

Mary Collins

European Women's Lobby

AGS 2016 : Signs of change but still a long way to go

Welcomes references to:

- Social investment – but more rigorous guidelines**
- Rising inequalities – but need for integrated active inclusion approach, quality work, pillar of social rights, social, environmental, equality, gender equality impact assessment to guide macroeconomic framework and quality work**

AGS 2016 Signs of change but still a long way to go

Welcomes references to:

- Social protection systems – but questions ‘confront poverty’ calls for reinforced European Social Model**
- Europe 2020 – take it out of the box bring back climate targets – link to quality green jobs**
- Coordinated European response to refugee/migration and participation in all**

AGS 2016 Signs of change but still a long way to go

Missing: Engagement strategy:

- EU Guidelines on structured dialogue with stakeholders, particularly Civil Society Organisations and Social Partners, monitor quality of engagement actively**
- Guidance note to Member States on structured dialogue**
- Financial and logistical support**
- Annex civil society contributions to the NRP**
- Partnership role of EP, also CoR and EESC**
- Euro zone/non Euro zone : two-tier Europe?**

Country-Specific Recommendations (CSRs) 2015

Delivery gap remains on a democratic,
social and sustainable Europe

Responses from the social sector

Maciej Kucharczyk

AGE Platform Europe

WHAT'S POSITIVE

European Semester 2015 - firsts attempts to promote more progressive macro-economic policies:

- Positive steps to tackle poverty and social exclusion, yet there is a lack of coherence with other CSRs
- Some attention to minimum income – CSRs to 6 MSs, yet only 3 with focus on adequacy and coverage
- Fight against tax evasion

➔ **YET, Economic and employment policies alone cannot successfully tackle poverty!**

WHAT SHOULD BE TACKLED



Too little consideration to social realities at the ground:

- Commission CSRs: Fewer “poverty recommendations”
- Rising homelessness in an overwhelming majority of MSs
- Growing gender pension gap – standing at almost 40% on average for EU28
- Cuts in social spending, e.g. housing, education, healthcare – all increasing inequalities and the risk of human rights infringements

RECOMMENDATIONS



Need to invest in people rather than just in markets:

- Adequate minimum income to live in dignity i.e. taking account of specific needs various age and population groups have
- Access to affordable and quality community-based social services e.g. childcare, HLTC, education
- Social and fiscal policies that enhance fairness and support the most vulnerable e.g. gender equality, inclusive education, progressive taxation...

Country-Specific Recommendations (CSRs) 2015

Delivery gap remains on a democratic,
social and sustainable Europe

Trade Union response

Hendrik Meerkamp

CESI

WHAT'S POSITIVE

- Some 2015 CSRs called for holistic approaches to quality & sustainable employment & job creation
 - ✓ Personalised pathways & outreach programmes (BG)
 - ✓ Integrated approaches for groups at labour market margins (HU, PL)
 - ✓ Action on pay gaps & situation of low-wagers (EE, HU)
 - ✓ Inclusive education, training & VET (BE, EE, FI, HU,...)
- AGS 2016 acknowledges trends to precarious jobs

WHAT SHOULD BE TACKLED

- **CSRs 2015**

- ✘ An overarching focus on job creation & quality work
- ✘ Concepts beyond negative activation measures

✘ **AGS 2016: A call to create substantive quality work**

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **AGS 2016**

- ➡ No more structural reforms that imply weakened employment protection & further labour market flexibilisation with less security
- ➡ More integrated active job inclusion approaches
- ➡ A social a rights pillar for a rights-based approach to jobs in macroeconomic frameworks

Country-Specific Recommendations (CSRs) 2015

Delivery gap remains on a democratic,
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Responses from the
climate and environmental sector

Constanze Adolf

Green Budget Europe

WHAT'S POSITIVE



WHAT SHOULD BE TACKLED

- Climate and energy, including Environmental Fiscal Reform are dropped in 2015

- Fossil fuels are subsidised at the EU level by up to €329 billion annually (IMF, 2015)

- Focus on growth-friendly, not sufficiently inclusive or sustainable taxation



lock-in into a fossil-fuel-based society and an unequal distribution of the burden of the crisis while a high dependence on energy imports remains

RECOMMENDATIONS I

- Energy efficiency first
 - Improving energy efficiency of buildings is an important contribution to 2020 target
 - However, unclear financial support, especially regarding refurbishment of existing housing stock. Needs a coherent social/sustainable approach

RECOMMENDATIONS II

- Investing in resource efficiency and tackling climate change
- What role for the Circular Economy Package (COM/2015/614)?
 - ➔ Integrate a Resource efficiency indicator in the MIP Scoreboard
- Paris Agreement, Art 2:
 - “Making finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development”
 - ➔ What action will EU take?

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Get engaged with us!

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Enabling civil-society to participate in the shaping of EU policies and to contribute to progress on the Targets of the Europe 2020 Strategy concerns us all!