

21 November 2019

Dear Vice President Timmermans,

On behalf of the **European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN)**, the largest platform of anti-poverty organizations in Europe, representing thousands of anti-poverty organisations and activists across 32 countries, working with and for people with experience of poverty and social exclusion, we congratulate you for your nomination as **Executive Vice-President for the European Green Deal**. This role is crucial for EAPN and for the 109.2 million people (2018) at risk of poverty and social exclusion in Europe. We followed your hearing in Parliament, your Mission letter and the written questions from Parliament. We are pleased to share with you today our **key hopes and expectations of your five years as Commissioner**, on which we hope to work closely with you and your team in order to make meaningful progress for people experiencing poverty throughout Europe.

1. A European Green and Social Deal must ensure the poor don't pay for a Just Transition

You will be leading the **European Green Deal**, include the **Just Transition Fund** and **tax policies** to deliver on the EU Climate ambitions. In your EP hearing, you underlined that *'fairness must be at the centre of just transition principles. The economy must grow for the benefit of the many not the few'*. You further stressed *"we mustn't raise energy bills but lower them – 50 million energy poor is unacceptable"*. We strongly support this approach, but stress that concrete steps are needed to ensure **that the poor do not pay for this transition**. This means we need a **green and social new deal** – ensuring that environmental investment is matched by social investment to support strong, inclusive welfare states and redistributive policies which can effectively fight poverty and inequality and implement social rights. For EAPN, this means initially four key things:

- a) We need **transparent ex-ante social and distributional impact analysis** of any proposals on a Green and Social New Deal to assess **who wins, who loses and who pays**.
- b) Companies which have the **most responsibility for creating the climate emergency, must be taxed accordingly**, recognising the polluter pays principle, whilst protecting the poorest from higher taxes or bills.
- c) Investment that benefits poorer people as well as poorer regions must be prioritised – for example in **energy efficiency** particularly investing in efficient social housing to reduce **'energy poverty'** whilst ensuring that costs are not passed on in terms of higher rents or bills, whilst defending the right for all to clean, affordable energy. Investing in **'green quality jobs'** is vital, but concrete measures must be developed to ensure that integrated pathways support those who are currently excluded from the labour market, as well as those already employed in traditional energy industries.
- d) Coherently combining **environmental and social protection/minimum income** is a key priority, recognizing the risks. As the UN Special Rapporteur on Poverty and Human Rights says in the report on Climate Change and Poverty (June 2019), *"A robust social safety net and a well-managed transition to a green economy will be the best response to the unavoidable harms that climate change will bring"*¹
The same is true of the Just Transition.

2. Rights-based Post Europe 2020 strategy underpinned by Agenda 2030 SDGs/ Social Pillar

In your mission letter you have collective responsibility to help shape *"the future of our society, economy and planet"* including responsibility for delivery on the SDGs. In your hearing you underlined your support for implementing the SDGs and commitment to policy coherence, ensuring *"that the Commission does not do*

¹ https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Poverty/A_HRC_41_39.pdf



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contradictory things anymore”, which we fully support.. EAPN supports your plan to ask MS what they are concretely doing to implement the SDGs, how they will do it and which measures, initiatives and commitments are included in the different areas of their national SDG implementation plans. This should not duplicate the UN reporting framework, but feed into the European Semester process. EAPN is particularly concerned about how individual SDGs will be coherently shaped together to ensure overarching policy consistency and coherence with the macroeconomic, social and environmental goals. Civil society organizations need to be part of this discussion on how to create effective mechanisms.

To shape the future of our societies, we need an overarching **10-year comprehensive post 2020 strategy** that builds on the learning of Europe 2020. In this regard, EAPN strongly supports the Finnish Presidency EPSCO Council Conclusions which call for a *“new long-term growth strategy for the Union, aimed at ensuring that the Union becomes the world’s most competitive and socially inclusive, climate-neutral economy”*.

A post 2020 strategy, developed together with stakeholders would set coherent long-term objectives and priority targets including on poverty reduction, monitored/delivered through the European Semester and other hard law instruments underpinned by Agenda 2030, SDGs and European Pillar of Social Rights. As with Agenda 2030 it should make the eradication of poverty a pre-requisite for a sustainable socio-economic development and rebalance economic, environmental and social goals. You can see the **‘EAPN proposals for a post Europe 2020 strategy: Delivering Agenda 2030 for people and planet’** [here](#).

3. Civil Society engagement: in Green and Social New Deal and Climate Pact.

Your mission letter underlines the need to work *‘hand in hand with people across Europe’*. You will lead the work on building a new *‘European Climate Pact: bringing together regions, local communities, civil society, industry and schools’*. However, no explicit mention is made of how you will engage civil society in the design of the European Green and Social New Deal. Many of our members are already engaging in national coalitions with environmental NGOs and trade unions to promote a Green and Social New Deal. We hope you will set out transparent proposals for how you will carry out **regular structured dialogue with social civil society organizations on the Green Deal and Climate Pact** at the EU and national level as well as through the European Semester. A useful reference point is Recital 11 of the Employment Guidelines (2018) which provides a legal basis for non-governmental organisations to be treated as key dialogue partners in the European Semester (in which EAPN and members has actively engaged at all levels since 2010) and ensure that the participation of civil society assumes an equal footing to that of social partners. We have concrete proposals for how this engagement could lead to better accountability and solutions at national and EU level, in our [Position Paper on Post Europe 2020](#) and our [EAPN Assessment of the Semester 2019 – is the Semester more social?](#)

Our Political Bureau is meeting in Brussels on 4 and 5 December – we hope that you may have 30 minutes on either of these afternoons to meet with us to discuss these issues.

Yours sincerely,

Carlos Susias
President, EAPN

Leo Williams
Director, EAPN