Oslo and Brussels, 7 May 2021

The Road to Porto: at the crossroads of Social Europe

On 8 May, the Heads of State and Governments of EU Member States and leaders of EU institutions meet in an Informal meeting following the Social Summit of the 7 May in Porto (Portugal) to reinforce their commitment to a more Social Europe. The momentum could not be more important, as united EU action based on solidarity is needed more than ever to lead the way for Europe's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, which devastating impact will be felt in the decades to come.

During the Social Summit, EU leaders will show their political commitment to the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights (Social Pillar) and its Action Plan. Proclaimed at the Gothenburg Social Summit in November 2017, the Social Pillar lays down 20 principles aimed at improving the working and living conditions of people in the EU. The Action Plan is the Social Pillar's implementation guide, outlining actions to be taken to ensure its implementation.

Through its 20 principles, the Social Pillar principles touches upon many areas of life - all of which are important to build more socially just, more equal and more resilient societies. For the Horizon 2020 EUROSHIP project, the Social Pillar's potential to reduce poverty is most promising, as the project aims at assessing current gaps in social protection against poverty and social exclusion in Europe.

Territorial divergent poverty levels threaten the wellbeing of European citizens and challenge EU ambitions for an inclusive and cohesive Europe. In 2019, more than 107 million people in the EU were living at risk of poverty and social exclusion. This amounts to 21.4 per cent of the population – approximately one in five people. Moreover, certain *groups are disproportionately affected by the prevalence of poverty and social exclusion. The Action* Plan aims at reducing this number by at least 15 million by 2030. While this falls short of the target in the Agenda 2030, the commitment of EU Member States to jointly reach this target by setting their own ambitious national targets is a pre-condition for success.

We are facing an unprecedented health, economic, employment, and social crises caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has exacerbated pre-existing social and health inequalities and brought to the surface the weaknesses of existing health and social protection systems. This crisis has especially impacted people in vulnerable situations, who already started out in a position of disadvantage compared to other groups. In addition, the impact of intersectional discrimination is particularly evident where people experiencing multiple forms of discrimination face a compounded risk and burden. In the EUROSHIP project Social Platform and researchers in eight European countries work together to provide new insights into how the European Union can support Member States in working towards realization of the Social Pillar. EUROSHIP will analyse and assess EU and national measures aimed at poverty reduction in order to formulate recommendations to boost social citizenship for persons facing risks of poverty and social exclusion.

The time to take united EU action is now to ensure the Porto Social Summit really paves the way towards a Social Europe for all!

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