How can the European Pillar of Social Rights support the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals?

Recommendations to the European Commission by the subgroup on “Equality, Justice, Inclusion and Decent work” of the Multi-Stakeholder Platform on the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the EU, June 2018
Equality, Justice, Inclusion and Decent Work:

How can the European Pillar of Social Rights support the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals?

Recommendations, 18th June 2018

Foreword

These recommendations were produced in the subgroup on "Equality, Justice, Inclusion and Decent work" of the multi-stakeholder platform on the implementation of the SDGs in the EU¹. They are based on the contributions made by the sub-group members during their meeting on 18 May 2018.

The recommendations were adopted by the subgroup on 15th June 2018. This short paper aims to highlight synergies between the SDGs and the Principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights (proclaimed by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission at the Social Summit in Gothenburg, Sweden, on 17 November 2017).

- Sub-group members: Business Europe; COFACE Families Europe; Concord; CSR Europe; ENEL; EPHA; ETUC; ETUCE; EUA; European Youth Forum; ESADE; EPHA; Social Platform; Food Drink Europe;

- Observers: EEAC; United Nations

I. Building synergies between SDGs and Pillar principles

There are structural changes in European societies and European labour markets, such as digitalization and demographic change, which need to be addressed to ensure that current and future generations are fully equipped to cope with such transitions, while safeguarding the environment, ensuring decent working conditions, as well as protecting EU common civic and democratic values.

If firmly placed at the heart of the EU’s 2030 agenda, the SDGs will become essential instruments to support EU Member States to achieve inclusive, person-centred, and sustainable development, with no one left behind. This is especially true for those SDGs which aim to achieve no poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being, quality education, gender equality, affordable and clean energy, decent work and economic growth, reduced inequalities, sustainable communities, and more.

There is broad consensus in the SDG platform, moreover, that the European Pillar of Social Rights (proclaimed by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission at the Social Summit in Gothenburg, Sweden, on 17 November 2017) also provides a framework to create an even more social, resilient and sustainable Europe, and address some of the challenges that Europe is facing.

The Pillar is a compass for renewed upward convergence towards better EU working and living conditions. It includes a set of principles, which aim to make existing social rights a reality for citizens, as well as to strengthen the current EU social acquis. The European Commission aims to implement the Pillar both at Union and Member State level, respecting EU and national competences, by proposing a number of legislative and non-legislative initiatives. In this regard, the European Commission recognises the role of social partners and civil society in the implementation of the Pillar. Recent initiatives of the European Commission and first concrete proposals include a focus on work-life balance, transparent and predictable working conditions, access to social protection and working time, consisting of a mix of measures including legislation, strategic coordination of national policies, monitoring and evaluation, as well as innovation and funding. The European Semester process is also underlined as a key tool for implementation of the pillar. The Pillar principles cover various areas including health and safety at work, childcare, education, inclusion of persons with disabilities, secure and adaptable employment, long-term care, housing, and more, whose implementation will require EU leadership and action at the appropriate level through legislative and/or non-legislative instruments.

There are numerous cross-cutting synergies between both the SDG and Pillar frameworks, not least:

- Quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning;
- Gender equality, equal opportunities, and fighting discrimination in all its forms;
- Promoting inclusive societies through the economic and social inclusion of migrants, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, and other marginalised groups;
- Ensure smooth and quality transitions from education to work, support labour market integration and make sure that young people have access to quality opportunities, and are not discriminated in the labour market;
- Inclusion of persons with disabilities in line with the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ratified by the EU and all of its Member States;
- Protection and investment in children in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by all EU Member States, promoting their health and well-being;
- Quality employment, tackling precariousness and in-work poverty by ensuring fair working conditions and access to social protection for all workers, and ensuring that the right framework exists for employers to make this a reality;
- The crucial role of social partners and civil society in reaching the goals and principles outlined in both frameworks.
- The importance of the SDGs and the Pillar of Social Rights as key channels for the implementation of international human rights treaty obligations.
II. **Essential conditions for the European Pillar of Social Rights to become a transformative ecosystem for implementation of the SDGs**

The Pillar needs to be firmly placed as a key framework for implementation of the SDGs, in post-2020 policy and legal frameworks, underpinned by the following:

- **The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the EU Treaties**, and namely Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union on the aims of the Union being inter alia to “promote the well-being of its peoples and to work for the sustainable development of Europe based on balanced economic growth and price stability, a highly competitive social market economy, aiming at full employment and social progress, and a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment. The Union shall combat social exclusion and discrimination, promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of the child.”

- **Legislative action must be taken in line with EU competences**, in consultation with the EU social partners and civil society, in order to enshrine social and human rights in law where appropriate. The Pillar of Social Rights already includes several proposals for legislative measures to ensure minimum standards across Europe while respecting the principle of subsidiarity and the national specificities of Member States.

- **Transparent, inclusive and participatory methods that guarantee civic space and involve all stakeholders in equal weight**, as shapers and implementers of change. The Partnership Principle in the current EU budget regulations is an example to follow. It calls for close cooperation between public authorities, economic and social partners and bodies representing civil society at national, regional and local levels throughout the whole programme cycle consisting of preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The implementation of such a principle must be strengthened and must apply to both implementation of the SDGs and the Pillar of Social Rights, whilst recognizing the competences of the different actors concerned.

- **Directing EU financial investments** and setting clear objectives where sustainability is mainstreamed to drive long-lasting change for Europeans. Heads of State and Government are at a crossroads to decide on the priorities of the future EU budget post-2020. Taking into account the effects of migration flows, the forthcoming Brexit, digitalisation and new forms of work, globalisation and business re-organisation, the security crisis, the growing ageing population, and the need to update and develop quality and inclusive European education systems, now is the time to invest in transformative actions for systems change where EU money can have “added value” and support initiatives that otherwise would or could not happen at local level. The European Pillar of Social Rights must be at the heart of the future EU budget, with a view to building sustainable and inclusive societies.
- **Space for transnational exchanges to drive innovation locally** must be provided in order to allow for the systems change needed to achieve the SDGs by 2030. Local leaders, including youth leaders, should be empowered to go beyond their comfort zone through appropriate ecosystems which allow them to test new ways of working, and upscale successful innovations through different channels of knowledge transfer (e.g. European civil society networks). This applies to all fields related to the Pillar principles, and should target all key players including civil society organisations, local services, social economy players, social partners, and policy-makers alike with a view to driving a mix of business, service and policy innovation. The local business community is also key in driving innovation.

- **Leadership and guidance must be provided by the EU** in particular through the European Semester, which allows for monitoring, benchmarking and evaluation of national actions to drive reforms, as well as key policy frameworks and initiatives, including the EU Skills agenda, the European Youth Guarantee, which can contribute to EU implementation of the SDGs. It is essential to use existing tools such as the Social Scoreboard (which includes a number of indicators which can support monitoring of progress on different SDGs through the work of Eurostat), as well as other existing mechanisms like the Employment Performance Monitor (EPM) and the Social Protection Performance Monitor (SPPM). Existing and new indicators need to work in harmony, for effective monitoring and measuring progress on the Pillar of Social Rights and the SDGs.

**IV. Conclusions**

Such conditions would position Europe as a world leader in achieving the SDGs by 2030 and show the way towards a society and economy that invests in people, employability and inclusion.

Co-drafters:

BusinessEurope
COFACE Families Europe