



Time for ambition: The EU needs a strong Social Fund to live up to its commitments

JOINT STATEMENT



The European Union has begun talks on the next long-term EU Budget, which will determine how billions of euros are invested in Europe's future. Initial discussions suggest potential cuts to crucial social investment programmes. **Proposals to merge funding mechanisms significantly risk weakening support to key actions and programmes for labour market integration, training, and social inclusion.**

Europe needs a strong EU budget, alongside broader economic, social and environmental policies. **A stand-alone Social Fund will be key to reduce inequalities, promote social innovation and achieve high employment levels, strengthening the Single Market and making Europe more competitive on a global scale.** This is echoed by the European Parliament's Employment and Social Affairs Committee[1].

The European Union has committed to lift at least 15 million people, of which at least 5 million children, out of poverty by 2030[2]. This is an essential goal that can be achieved only if backed by concrete action, sufficient resources, and political ambition to enable more social cohesion and inclusion.

In 2023, an alarming 94.6 million people in Europe were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Despite marginal improvements on previous years, shockingly, nearly one in four children are trapped in this cycle[3]. National civil society organisations are also reporting a rise in extreme forms of poverty, with more requests for food support and help with paying bills, in particular for housing and energy.

Rising disparities will deepen even further with no support for those who need it most. This is about the life of people and communities and triggers broader socio-economic concerns and political instability.

Considering the current geopolitical, security, and socio-economic context, **it is essential that the EU stands firm and ensures that its social priorities are safeguarded.** Decisively investing in people who need support will strengthen social rights, prevent polarisation, support enterprises, and will ensure that all communities fare well socially and economically.

[1] <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20250217IPR26976/meps-demand-strengthened-and-separate-european-social-fund-plus-post-2027>

[2] https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/social-protection-social-inclusion/addressing-poverty-and-supporting-social-inclusion_en

[3] <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/ddn-20240619-1>

In the past years, the EU's Cohesion Policy has proven vital for investing in people, particularly in the most disadvantaged regions. At the core of this success is the **European Social Fund+, which has been instrumental in creating jobs, providing critical training, driving social inclusion reforms, and alleviating the most urgent needs of people experiencing or at risk of poverty.** This Fund has supported each and every one of us, our friends, families and local communities, along with our local businesses, social economy, social and other crucial services. Planned, managed, and monitored in close cooperation with different levels of government and local organisations, it has the ability to adapt to both regional needs and broader global challenges, **enhancing employability, and reinforcing the European model of Social Market Economy. There is still time to set the track right** and ensure a strong community-driven social fund, well aligned to local and regional needs, that sustainably strengthens societies and invests directly in those who need it most and in their potential.

With strategic use, a stronger European Social Fund can uphold human rights, strengthen social cohesion, build a better skilled workforce, improve long-term economic sustainability, and foster productivity and innovation – ensuring thriving regions and enhancing Europe's global competitiveness.

To conclude, the next long-term **EU Budget must include:**

- A strengthened **stand-alone European Social Fund, with increased funds**, not less.
- **Earmarked funding for training and jobs, social inclusion measures, and fighting child poverty** including addressing basic needs across key programmes.
- **A strong partnership principle**, ensuring cooperation between public authorities, local organisations, social partners, social economy and civil society, well aligned to local and regional needs, to maximise impact and efficiency. This should include capacity building programmes.
- **Measures that drive quality employment and social reforms** to help improve welfare systems, care, training and support services, empowering those at risk of poverty and social exclusion. This means keeping the current enabling conditions, that link eligibility for funding to accessibility, inclusion, and the protection of fundamental and social rights.

We stand ready to support policymakers in developing and implementing these priorities and ensuring a stronger, inclusive, and more prosperous Europe.

List of Signatories from European organisations:

European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD)
Red Cross EU Office
Social Services Europe (SSE)
Social Economy Europe (SEE)
Social Platform
European Public Service Union (EPSU)
Lifelong Learning Platform (LLL)
Association de Recherche et de Formation sur l'Insertion en Europe / Association for Research and Training on Integration in Europe (ARFIE)
Association for the Advancement of Assistive Technology in Europe (AAATE)
Autism Europe
Caritas Europa
CEC - Acting for Social Inclusion
Centre for European Volunteering (CEV)
COFACE Families Europe
Confederation of European Firms, Employment Initiatives and Cooperatives (CEFEC)
Diesis Network
Dynamo International Street Workers Network
EARLALL – European Association of Regional and Local Authorities for Lifelong Learning
ERGO Network
Eurodiaconia
Eurocarers
Eurochild
EuroHealthNet
European Ageing Network (EAN)
European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN)
European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA)
European Association of Institutes for Vocational Training (EVBB)
European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)
European Disability Forum (EDF)
European Federation for Family Employment and Home Care (EFFE)
European Federation of Ethical and Alternative Banks and Financiers (FEBEA)
European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA)

European Forum of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (EfVET)
European Confederation of Industrial and Service Cooperatives (CECOP)
European Council for Non Profit Organisations (CEDAG)
European Microfinance Network (EMN)
European Network Against Racism (ENAR)
European Network for Professionals working with People with Hearing Impairments (HIPEN)
European Network for Vision Impairment Training Education and Research (ENIVTER)
European Network of Cities and Regions for the Social Economy (REVES aisbl)
European Network of Social Integrations Enterprises (ENSIE)
European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR)
European Students' Union
European Union of the Deaf (EUD)
European Youth Forum
Hope and Homes for Children
Housing Europe
Impact Europe
Inclusion Europe
Institut de la Protection sociale européenne (IPSE)
International Association of Mutual Benefit Societies (AIM)
International Step by Step Alliance (ISSA)
Lumos
Make Mothers Matter (MMM)
Mental Health Europe
Microfinance Centre (MFC)
OBESSU - Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions
Philea - Philanthropy Europe Association
PICUM - the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants
RREUSE
Samaritan International
Save the Children
SOS Children Villages
SOLIDAR
World Federation of Roma Journalists

List of Signatories from national organisations:

Albania

Down Syndrome Albania Foundation
Roma Active Albania

Armenia

Bridge of Hope

Austria

Arbeit plus - Social Integration Enterprises Austria
Erste Social Finance Holding GmbH
Hilfsgemeinschaft der Blinden und Sehschwachen
Lebenshilfe Österreich
Sozialwirtschaft (SWO)

Belgium

BRUXEO - Confédération des Entreprises à Profit Social/Confederatie van Social-Profit
Ondernemingen
De Markgrave
Dominiek Savio vzw
Emino vzw
Groep Gidts vzw
HUBBIE
Groep Maatwerk
KOCA
Katholiek Onderwijs Vlaanderen
KONEKT vzw
Mariasteen vzw
Mediander
MPC Sint-Franciscus
OLO-Rotonde
Institute for international assistance and solidarity (asbl)
Stan Trefpunt Verstandelijke Handicap vzw
Vlaams Welzijnsverbond vzw

Union des entreprises à profit social (UNIPSO)

Zonnelied

Bulgaria

Agency for Social Development "Vision"

Integro Association

National Alliance for Social Responsibility

NET foundation

SIS CREDIT

Croatia

Health Life Academy

Cyprus

Agios Stefanos Foundation

Christos Stelios Ioannou Foundation

Ngo LC Youth

Prosvasi Ngo

Training Centre LCEducational

Czechia

APSS: Association of Social Services Providers of Czechia

Slovo 21 z. s.

Germany

Amaro Drom e.V.

Federal Association of Inclusive Enterprises / Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Inklusionsfirmen

Greece

AgroID SCE

ALMA Panhellenic Association of Adapted Activities

Autism Association of Larissa

Child and Adolescent's Center

ESTIA - Support & Social Care Center for People with Intellectual Disability

Institute of Systemic Behavior Analysis (I.S.A.S.)

MARGARITA Vocational Training Centre

"Pammakaristos" Foundation for child

Panhellenic Association of Parents Guardians & Friends of Multiply Disabled Visually Impaired People "Amimoni"

Panhellenic Confederation of Unions of Social and Solidarity Economy (PASE KALO)

PLOES - Psychosocial Research Organisation

Puzzle Social Enterprise

SYZOI Association of Parents, Guardians & Friends of Visually Impaired People with Additional Disabilities

Society for the Protection of People with Autism, Kastoria

THE NET - Greek Network of Service Providers for People with Disabilities

"THEOTOKOS" Foundation (Rehabilitation Center for Children & Young Adults with Developmental Disorders)

Union of Cretan SSE Cooperatives and Enterprises (CretanSCENT)

Finland

Lahti Diaconia Foundation

Oulu Deaconess Foundation

Silta-Valmennus ry

Tukena

Vates Foundation

Western Finland Diaconia Foundation

France

Conseil Français des personnes Handicapées pour les affaires Européenne et internationales (CFHE)

EUROPLIE

La voix des Roms

Mutualité Française

Hungary

ÉTA National Association

Iceland

National Association of Intellectual Disabilities (Þroskahjálp)

Ireland

Disability Federation Ireland
Horizons Foundation
Irish Social Enterprise Network
The Wheel

Italy

AIAS Bologna
Anziani e non solo soc. coop. soc.
Associazione Romni APS
Associazione Rowni-Roma Women Network Italy APS
Associazione Scuola Viva onlus
Collagene VI Italia APS
Fondazione Imoletta ETS
Fondazione Paideia Ente Filantropico
RITMI - Rete Italiana di Microfinanza
UILDM – Unione Italiana Lotta alla Distrofia Muscolare

Latvia

Civic Alliance-Latvia
Latvian German Association
Latvian Society of the Blind
Social Entrepreneurship Association of Latvia
Visas iespējas

Lithuania

Public Institution Roma Community Centre

Moldova

Alliance of Active NGOs in the field of Child and Family Social Protection (APSCF)
Asociația Raională de Educare a Adulților Prutul de Sus (AO AREAP)
Association Alliance of Organizations for Persons with Disabilities
CCF Moldova – children, communities, families
Keystone Moldova
Parteneriate Pentru Fiecare Copil / Partnerships for Every Child

New Zealand

Assisting Different Abilities Peoples Trust

North Macedonia

Republic centre for support of persons with intellectual disabilities (RCPLIP-PORAKA)

Poland

The Wrocław Hospice Foundation for Children

Romania

ADV Romania Group

Bucovina Institute Association

Federation of Nongovernmental Organisations for Social Services-FONSS

RISE – Romanian Network of Social Economy

Serbia

Udruzenje Romnji Srbija

Slovakia

Civic association Odysseus

Občianske združenie svätého Jozefa

SocioForum

TENENET

Slovenia

Center ponovne uporabe

EKO

EKO-TCE

Okoljsko raziskovalni zavod

Povod Institute

Zadruga Bela murva

Z-ENIAC

Spain

ACADAR - Asociación de mulleres con discapacidade de Galicia

ACOPROS- Asociación de colaboración y promoción del sordo

ACCU CORUÑA - Asociación de Enfermos de Crohn y Colitis Ulcerosa de la provincia de A Coruña

Agadhemo - Asociación Gallega de hemofilia

AGFQ - Asociación Galega de fibrosis Quística

AGAL - Asociación Gallega de Lupus de Ourense

AGAPA - Asociación de Personas Amputadas de Galicia

AGL - Asociación Gallega de Linfedema, Lipedema, Insuficiencia Venosa Crónica y otras Patologías

AGORA - Asociación de Personas con Discapacidad de Monforte de Lemos

ALCER CORUÑA - Asociación para la lucha contra las Enfermedades del Riñón de la Coruña

ALCER LUGO Asociación para la lucha contra las Enfermedades del Riñón

ALCER PONTEVEDRA - Asociación para la Lucha contra las Enfermedades del Riñón

ALGARIA - Asociación de Personas con Discapacidad de la Comarca de A Limia

ALUCEM - - Asociación Lucense de Esclerosis Múltiple

AMARAI - Asociación de Personas con Discapacidad de Arzúa y Tierra de Melide

Amadip Esment Fundación, Esment, Balearic Island

Amica Association

AMICO - Asociación de Personas con Discapacidad d Compostela y Comarca

AMIZADE - Asociación de Personas con Discapacidad de la Comarca de Pontevedra

AODEMPER - Asociación Ourenzana de Esclerosis Múltiple, Parkinson y Enfermedades Raras

APROM - Asociación Prominusválidos Cariño

ASDIFICA - Asociación de discapacitados físicos de Carballiño y Comarca

ASEARPO - Asociación de Enfermos de Artritis Pontevedra

ASEM Galicia - Asociación Gallega contra las Enfermedades Neuromusculares

ASPAMITE - Asociación de Padres de Personas con Diversidad Funcional de Teo

ASPANEMI - Asociación de Padres de Niños con Minusvalía de Narón

Associació Alba

Asociación Amicos

Asociación Síndrome de la Persona Rígida de España

Asociación Española de Servicios Personales y Domésticos

Asociación para la comprensión fácil de entornos y edificios ACREE

Asociación Artistas Diversos

ASOTRAME - Asociación Gallega de Personas Transplantadas de Médula Ósea y Enfermedades Oncohematológicas

AVANTE - Asociación de Personas con Discapacidad del Val del Dubra

AVEMPO - Asociación Viguesa de Esclerose Múltiple de Pontevedra
AVIDEPO - Asociación Viguesa de Espondilíticos de Pontevedra
AIXIÑA - Asociación de Personas con Discapacidad Física, Daño Cerebral y Tercera Edad
CERMI Galicia - Comité Español de Representantes de Personas con Discapacidad, Galicia
CEGASAL - Asociación Empresarial Galega de Centros Especiais de Emprego sen Ánimo de Lucro
COGAMI-LUGO - Federación de asociaciones de personas con discapacidad de la provincia de Lugo
Comité Español de Representantes de Personas con Discapacidad (CERMI)
CONARTRITIS SANTIAGO - Delegación de la Coordinadora Nacional de Artritis
Confederación Galega de Personas con Discapacidade (COGAMI)
Confederación Española Personas con Discapacidad Física y Orgánica
DISVALIA - Asociación de Personas con Discapacidad de la Comarca de Valdeorras
DISCAFIS-COGAMI - Federación Discafis-COGAMI
Daño Cerebral, Galicia
DOWN Galicia - Federación Síndrome de Down
EAPN Galicia - Rede Europea contra a Pobreza
FADEMGA - Plena Inclusion Galicia
FAGAL - Federación Alzheimer Galicia
FAXPEGA -Federación de Asociaciones de personas sordas de Galicia
Federación COGAMI, CORUÑA
Federación COGAMI de Pontevedra
Federació d'Associacions Gitanes de Catalunya
Federación de Enseñanza de Uso (FEUSO)
Fundació AMPANS
Fundacion A LA PAR
Fundación Descúbreme
Fundació Support-Girona
Fundación privada Ramon Noguera
Fundación Social District (Músicos por la Salud)
GRUMICO - Grupo de Personas con Discapacidad de la Coruña
IMPULSA IGUALDAD - Confederación Nacional Impulsa Igualdad
IMPULSA IGUALDAD - Federación Impulsa Igualdad Galicia
INTEGRO - Asociación de Personas con Diversidad Funcional de la Costa da Morte
MISELA - Asociación de Personas con Discapacidad de la Comarca de Noya y Muros

LIREGA - Liga Reumatológica Gallega

PARKINSON GALICIA CORUÑA - Asociación Párkinson Galicia-Coruña

Plena Inclusion España

PUZZLE - Asociación Puzzle para la lucha contra la Exclusión Social y Laboral de Personas con Discapacidad

PUZZLE OURENSE Asociación para la lucha contra las Enfermedades del Riñón

Saúde Mental FEAFES Galicia

Sociedad Profesional Pro I+D+i en la Atención Sociosanitaria (SPRODE)

Som – Fundació

Spanish Council for Defence of Disability and Dependency (CDDD)

UGADE - Unión Gallega de Epilepsia

Unión Sindical Obrera (JUPEN-USO)

VONTADE - Asociación de Personas con Discapacidad de la comarca del Baixo Miño

Portugal

APPACDM de Porto (Associação Portuguesa de Pais e Amigos do Cidadão Deficiente Mental)

Humanitas

Íris Inclusiva

The Netherlands

Soft Tulip

Stichting Kenniscentrum Pro Work

United Kingdom

The Money Carer Foundation

Ukraine

The Dream Workshop NGO