



Brussels, 11 September 2015

**To the College of Commissioners and Heads of Cabinet**

Dear Commissioners,

In advance of your forthcoming discussion on the future of the Europe 2020 strategy we would like to encourage the College of Commissioners to retain the strategy, reinforce the targets to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and ensure that the Europe 2020 strategy drives the European Semester.

Social Services Europe is the largest European umbrella organization representing non-profit social and health care providers. Our members are at the forefront of ensuring people at risk of or experiencing poverty and social exclusion are supported by services that are accessible, high quality and person-focused. We support many people in various life stages that require care and support such as older people, children, people with disabilities and those seeking integration into the labour market.

Retaining a strategy that emphasizes the social inclusion of people in Europe and the subsequent need to reduce poverty, as well as increase employment, is essential for the well-being of people in Europe, as well as for the credibility of the European Commission and to ensure you deliver on your commitment to achieve a Social Triple A. To discard your commitment to inclusive growth and an explicit commitment to reducing poverty will give a very negative signal to the European public as to the priorities and interests of the European Commission. Moreover, as much effort has been invested in the present architecture of this strategy, we are convinced it deserves time and stability in order to be able to deliver on its potential as fully as possible.

Whereas the Europe 2020 strategy has had its weaknesses there should be a renewed attempt to address the weakness rather than replace the strategy. Recent improvements in terms of content as well as processes should be continued. As has been confirmed by the assessment made by various stakeholders, including the Employment Committee and the Social Protection Committee, this process is now delivered in a more timely manner.

However, there must be more space for exchange and participation of the different stakeholders to ensure maximum effectiveness and ownership of the strategy.

Member States' delivery on the poverty target must be tracked in a more systematic way and be taken more seriously, as currently their achievements in this respect are still very far from satisfactory. This means that millions of people in Europe are not reaching their full potential.

We emphasize once again that keeping the momentum on the EU 2020 strategy and keeping the poverty target within that strategy are important ways of answering citizens and civil society's concerns about the European Union and its relevance to the daily lives of people. We wish to see more investment in social services as part of the implementation of that strategy and to work with you in reducing poverty and social exclusion in Europe.

We thank you in advance for your attention.

Yours sincerely,

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