



Eurodiaconia 

To: Mr. José Manuel Barroso
President of the European Commission
1049 Brussels, Belgium

15th May 2012, Brussels

Europe 2020 and the Country Specific Recommendations 2012

Dear President Barroso,

Church and Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches and Eurodiaconia welcomed and supported the Europe 2020 strategy. We were convinced that its five targets gave a fruitful and dynamic orientation to European policy for the coming years. We particularly appreciated and welcomed the commitment to address and tackle poverty and social exclusion in Europe. Our engagement to this strategy included regular briefings and meetings with our members across Europe to support them in their contribution to their National Reform Programs and National Social Reports.

We are therefore very concerned, that in the drafting of last year's National Reform Programs and the subsequent Country Specific Recommendations little or no priority was given to the headline target of reducing the number of people in or at risk of poverty by 20 million by 2020. Poverty in Europe is rising. Churches and diaconia experience this at the grassroot level. If Member States do not take actions to reduce poverty, and carry out short and long term impact assessments of budget cuts and other austerity measures, there will be dramatic direct consequences for families, single parents, children, the most vulnerable, and therefore for Europe itself.

With this in mind, we ask the European Commission to steer discussions and recommendations at EU level to **ensure the implementation of all Europe 2020 targets and priorities by national governments**. It is thus essential that the European Union pursue with strength and transparency its objective of poverty reduction and social inclusion, and the Commission can contribute to this aim through **strong Country Specific Recommendations that address the poverty target**.

President Barroso, in this time of crisis the involvement of civil society and social actors is of particular importance. Reaching the poverty target and ensuring social cohesion will only be possible

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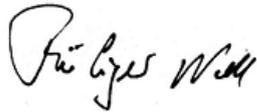
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if a genuine effort is made by national governments to cooperate and engage with stakeholders and take into account their expertise. This involvement was foreseen by the introduction of the European Semester. However, the present experience proves that this process of engagement remains weak at national level. We therefore ask you kindly to highlight this in the 2012 Country Specific Recommendations.

Yours sincerely



Heather Roy
Secretary General
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Rev Rüdiger Noll
General Secretary
Church and Society Commission of CEC