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Putting sustainability into the heart of the future EU cohesion policy

Today, the EU's European affairs ministers in the General Affairs Council have discussed the future cohesion policy post 2020 also within the context of the future EU budget. Civil society representatives are disappointed by the results.

Regrettably ministers seem to miss the opportunity to pave the way for an ambitious Cohesion Policy, which could put the people in the centre and set Europe on a path towards sustainability.

More than 70 civil society organisations involved in the cross-sectoral European [People's Budget](#) campaign have been repeatedly calling on EU policymakers to ensure that no Europeans are left behind, and particularly not those in the EU's least developed regions. They call for a [sustainability reform](#) of the EU budget, which can ensure that not narrow minded economic decisions and short term interests will continue to guide future funding decisions, and the European economy is not locked in unsustainable infrastructures, which prevents Europe to meet its long term commitments like the Sustainable Development Goals.

European civil society organisations have called for integrating social indicators into the allocation criteria of cohesion policy ensuring that EU public money helps to tackle local challenges like unemployment. The General Affairs Council (GAC) regrettably insists that GNI keeps its central role in allocation decisions, and it is questionable, how other methods that the European Commission is today asked to develop can meaningfully complement this.

The GAC has also not addressed the importance of public participation in the future cohesion policy. To respond to the challenges of current implementation, which shows varying results throughout the EU, civil society organisations call for enforcing the partnership principle in practice within a strengthened ex ante conditionality scheme. They also call for introducing a new financial instrument in the cohesion policy to create a Trans-European Network of Green Infrastructure (TEN-G), which can help to make use of the full potential offered by green infrastructure and nature based solutions to deliver services like waste water treatment or flood protection in a cost efficient way.

“We hope that the EU will come up to the expectations that the people hold towards a strengthened European project. Future cohesion policy can prove to the people that the European project can make positive changes in their own lives and in neighbourhood, but that requires to reform many of the current approaches and practices.” says Klara Hajdu from CEEweb for Biodiversity, a co-leader of the People's Budget campaign.

Notes to editors

The European People's Budget campaign brings together dozens of European and national civil society organisations calling for a sustainability reform of the future EU budget. The campaign is advanced by SDG Watch Europe, a cross-sectoral alliance of CSOs in Europe, which aims to take governments to account in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

www.peoplesbudget.eu

www.sdgwatcheurope.org

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