

Mr. László Andor
European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

Brussels, 24th February 2020

Re: Statement on the EU 2020 Strategy

Dear Commissioner Andor,

EASPD is the European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities and promotes the equalisation of opportunities for people with disabilities through effective and high quality service systems in Europe. EASPD represents over 8,000 service provider organisations across Europe and across disability.

EASPD is a member of the Social Platform, the representative organisation of European Social NGOs, **and fully supports** the Social Platform's **requests to prioritise** the following areas in the EU 2020 Strategy that is currently being defined: 1. **Ensure that the EU economic strategy serves people and planet**; 2. **Make social cohesion and the fight against poverty a key pillar of the EU 2020 strategy**; 3. **Revise the European Employment strategy to focus on the care sector, quality jobs and inclusive labour markets**; 4. **Make the participation of citizens and civil society matter**.

EASPD agrees with the EU 2020 Consultation Paper stating that **new policies must contribute towards social cohesion, tackling unemployment, fostering social inclusion and securing well performing labour markets**.

EASPD specifically asks the European Commission to focus on the following areas in the new strategy:

1. The development of an employment strategy that delivers **quality jobs for all** (including those people that are often excluded from the labour market, i.e. people with disabilities or migrants), with a clear focus on tackling the issue of the **working poor**: there are increasing numbers of people in the EU who live in poverty despite being employed. This is true for many people, especially front line care staff that are employed in the **care sector**, where **working conditions have deteriorated**: the workforce is mostly female; jobs are often at risk, underpaid, and increasingly offered on a part-time basis. For providers of social services in Europe, two elements are essential to help redress this situation: the **participation of employers of the nonprofit sector in the social dialogue**, and **improving the attractiveness of careers in social services**, so as to ensure the improvement of working conditions for staff.
2. **Ensuring that social services can continue to provide adequate and universal assistance to European citizens**. We are at a time in which new sources of economic growth and job creation must be identified. EASPD knows that this new source of growth can be found in the **social and health care sectors**. The social field is a vital economic sector capable of providing many jobs and **boosting economic growth**. Work in social services should be valued for what it is truly worth, and training and employment in this sector should be encouraged. Currently, the EU average of employment in the social, educational and health care sectors is of 11%, but the potential is to employ 15% of the working population **to**

satisfy current needs. These **needs are bound to increase** given that the population of the Union is ageing and there will consequently be also increasing numbers of citizens with a disability who will need social care, for example. Thus, **investing in social services would positively contribute to the fight against poverty by creating job opportunities and delivering essential care to EU citizens.**

3. Finally, EASPD believes that the new strategy should also incorporate a **clear plan to fully implement the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights**: it will be essential to ensure that we build a fair and inclusive society for all.

EASPD calls for the EU 2020 strategy to focus not only on economic aspects, but to also **promote and facilitate the creation of inclusive and cohesive societies**, by focusing on the eradication of poverty, the creation of quality jobs for all, investment in social services and ensuring the protection of all citizens' fundamental rights.

We thank you for your attention and hope that you will consider these views in the preparation of this vital strategy for the future of the EU. We are at your disposal for any clarification or explanation that you may require.

Yours sincerely,

Franz Wolfmayr
EASPD President

Luk Zelderloo
EASPD Secretary General