



SPEECH by Diversity Europe Group President Séamus Boland
EESC Resolution on the European Pillar of Social Rights
EESC plenary session, April 2021

Dear Commissioner Schmit,

On behalf of the Diversity Europe Group, I would also like to thank you for your repeated availability to discuss with us here at the Committee – your presence is becoming a common feature, which is very much appreciated!

With little time at my disposal, I will restrict my comments to the **three main political messages** that our Group put forward in the draft resolution:

Firstly, the Action Plan on the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) must become an **effective tool** to allow **all actors** to work in **partnership** and build more **equal, inclusive and resilient European communities and societies**. All citizens, including disabled persons, ethnic and minority groups, the most vulnerable and marginalised, must be able to identify with and find **hope** in the vision and future implementation of the Pillar. Ultimately, the pillar is about making the EU more sustainable and we must not forget that **poverty eradication is the overriding SDG!**

Secondly, it will only be possible to accomplish the objectives of the Action Plan with **bottom-up initiatives**, which embrace **new definitions of well-being and development beyond GDP**. The EU and Member States must fully recognize that CSOs are and will continue to be **catalysts for social innovation**. Historically, they have played a crucial role in **identifying solutions** and in **tackling societal challenges**. Within this context, the Pillar should allow for **better measuring and reporting** on the **impact of civil society**, raising awareness of their positive contribution and creating an **enabling legal environment and policy mix**. Particular attention should be given to the **social economy** which has a crucial role in addressing unmet social needs.

Thirdly, in our opinion, the **medium to longer term impact** of the COVID-19 crisis on **European health systems** is insufficiently taken into account in the EPSR. The pandemic has clearly illustrated that health can have a direct impact on economic and social stability, even in the EU. In implementing the Pillar, increased and sustainable investments must be made by Member States to **upgrade public health services and infrastructure**, and to **improve coordination** on public health within and among Member States.

Thank you for your attention.