Brussels, 16 June 2026

To: António Costa, President of the European Council

To: Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission

To: Roberta Metsola, President of the European Parliament

To: The Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the European Union

To: The EU Heads of State and Government

Open Letter to the European Council

Protecting ESF and ERDF: building on what works for people and regions

Dear President Costa, dear Presidents, dear Prime Ministers,

We are the ones implementing the EU Budget. We are the ones bringing results locally, ensuring EU funding reaches people through employment, education and training, social inclusion, health, care, and social services programmes across Europe. We are NGOs, social services, public health and service providers, lifelong learning and social economy actors, workers, and social partners. We represent millions of organisations, enterprises, and people. We joined forces under the EUFunds4Social Coalition to ensure that social spending remains a central pillar of the next EU budget.

The European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) have proven to be impactful precisely because they embody the key features of a strong social funding architecture: targeted investment, earmarking to reach excluded groups, promotion of partnership approaches, support for social innovation and risk-taking, and clear European priorities adapted to local needs.

As such, ESF+ and ERDF are essential for quality employment, skills development, social inclusion, territorial cohesion, and the much-needed piloting of social innovation programmes and reforms. As highlighted in the joint statement *Building on what works: an EU budget that delivers for people and regions*, they are also key contributors to the overall economy and wellbeing of European society, through enhanced social cohesion, labour market participation, and fiscal sustainability.

While the objective of improving coordination and cross-sectoral reforms is understandable, the European Commission's proposal for National and Regional Partnership Plans (NRPPs) cuts social spending and compromises a proven funding architecture. It weakens dedicated budgets, binding allocations for the most vulnerable, decentralised governance, and the role of local/regional authorities and civil society. Moreover, the proposed output-based performance framework risks favouring the safest and easiest-to-deliver interventions, at the expense of more innovative, person-centred and transformative actions. It may also increase the risk that infrastructure costs reduce the share of funding reaching people and communities directly.

We call on the European Council to:

- **Increase the social spending from 14% to 25%** of the NRPPs and link it explicitly to the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR);

- **Preserve ESF and ERDF as stand-alone funds**, with separate regulations and dedicated budgets maintained at least at current real levels, ensuring stable long-term investment;
- **Maintain clear mandates**, with ESF focused on employment, skills, social inclusion and poverty reduction, and ERDF on territorial cohesion and social infrastructure;
- **Protect ESF earmarking and priorities**, including social inclusion, child poverty, homelessness, youth employment, and support for social partners and civil society as reflected in the Parliament **ESF draft report**;
- **Protect direct funding for social innovation, capacity building and transnational cooperation of civil society, social economy actors, and social partners** by ensuring a dedicated and ring-fenced allocation within the EU Facility, preserving the continuity of the current EaSI strand under ESF+. Maintain a clear budget line for these actions, alongside financial instruments and blending operations, to safeguard stable support regardless of changing political priorities.
- **Strengthen rights-based implementation**, ensuring effective enabling conditions and full alignment with the European Pillar of Social Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, with robust monitoring;
- **Reinforce governance based on partnership and subsidiarity**, with stronger roles for regional and local authorities, and full application of the partnership principle across funds;
- **Improve accessibility for smaller beneficiaries**, through simplified procedures, capacity building, lower co-funding, and stable funding conditions with differentiated EU co-financing rates, with at least 80% for social inclusion actions, and 90% for actions targeting the most deprived and people experiencing homelessness, as well as for asylum and inclusion objectives under the Union support for asylum, migration and integration.

A stronger role for the European Semester is expected in the upcoming EU budget process. At the launch of its Spring Package, the Executive Vice-President for Social Rights and Skills, Quality Jobs and Preparedness, Ms Roxana Mînzatu, stated that "a Union that invests in skills, quality jobs and living standards is a Union that can out-compete, out-innovate and withstand any challenge".

We must ensure that this statement does not remain rhetorical, but is translated into an ambitious Multiannual Financial Framework that provides the architecture for such investments.

The best way to achieve this is for the European Council to ensure that the EU's key funding instruments for social and territorial investment are protected and reinforced in the next EU budget.

Yours sincerely,

The EUFunds4Social Coalition

Drafted by the EUFunds4Social Coordinating Committee:

European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD)

European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU)

Lifelong Learning Platform

Social Economy Europe

Social Platform

Social Services Europe (SSE)

Caritas Europa

European Network of Work Integration Social Enterprises (ENSIE)

Eurodiaconia

Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM)

Co-signed by the following European and international networks:

AIM Association Internationale de la Mutualité

Association de Recherche et de Formation sur l'Insertion en Europe - ARFIE

Autism-Europe

CEC - Acting for social inclusion

CECOP - European Confederation of Industrial and Service Cooperatives

COFACE Families Europe

Confederation of European Firms, Employment Initiatives and Cooperatives (CEFEC)

ECOLISE - EU network of Community Led Initiatives

EfVET - European Forum of Technical and Vocational Training

Eurocarers

Eurochild

EuroHealthNet

European Ageing Network (EAN)

European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN)

European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA)

European Blind Union

European Council of associations of general interest (CEDAG)

European Council on Refugees and Exiles

European Disability Forum

European Federation of Ethical and Alternative Banks (FEBEA)

European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA)

European Food Banks Federation (FEBA)

European Microfinance Network (EMN)

European Network of Cities and Regions for the Social Economy (REVES aisbl)

European Network of Reuse, Repair, and Recycling Social Enterprises (RREUSE)

European Network on Independent Living - ENIL

European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR)

European Roma Grassroots Organizations Network

European Women's Lobby

European Youth Forum

FEDEC - International Network for Professional Circus Education

Hope and Homes for Children

ILGA-Europe

Inclusion Europe

Make Mothers Matter

Mental Health Europe (MHE)

Microfinance Centre (MFC)

Philea

Red Cross EU Office

Save the Children

SOLIDAR

SOS Children's Villages International

Union of the Baltic Cities

YES Forum

Co-signed by the following national and local organisations:

Down Syndrome Albania Foundation, Albania

Nisma për Ndryshim Shoqëror ARSIS, Albania

Arbeit plus - Soziale Unternehmen Österreich, Austria

Dachverband berufliche Inklusion - Austria (dabei-austria), Austria

ConcertES asbl - Concertation des organisations représentatives de l’économie sociale, Belgium

FAIRWORK Belgium, Belgium

UNIPSO, Belgium

APEPA Autism, Belgium

Réseaux de femmes et filles de Latinoamérique et du Caraïbes (Siempre vzw/asbl), Belgium

Autism Today Association, Bulgaria

Ms. Vladislava Tsolova, the Creator and Founder of the Autism Today Association, Bulgaria

Association for the care of autistic persons, Croatia

Croatian union of associations for autism, Croatia

Autism Support Famagusta, Cyprus

Kooperationen, Denmark

Estonian Autism Alliance, Estonia

Association locale d’insertion par l’économique, France

Entreprises pour l'Environnement (EPE), France

Chambre Française de l'Economie Sociale et Solidaire - ESS France, France

Autisme France, France

Amaro Drom, Germany

Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Inklusionsfirmen e.V., Germany

Caritasverband für das Erzbistum Berlin e.V., Germany

Federal Association of Sheltered Workshops for Persons with Disabilities Germany (BAG WfbM), Germany

Caritas Hellas, Greece

Ergastiri Eidikis Agogis MARGARITA, Greece

SYZOI - Association of Parents Guardians and Friends of Visually Impaired Persons with Additional Disabilities, Greece

Cerebral Palsy Greece - Open Door, Greece

‘AMIMONI’ Panhellenic Association of Parents Guardians & Friends of Multiply Disabled Visually Impaired People, Greece

SolidarityNow, Greece

Greek Council for Refugees (GCR), Greece

Greek Society Protecting Autistic People (GSPAP), Greece

Parents' Association for Supported Living of the Mentally Impaired - Petagma, Greece

"Society of Social Psychiatry P. Sakellaropoulos, Greece

ETA - National Association of Social Organisations and Foundations in the Service of Mentally Handicapped, Hungary

Autisták Országos Szövetsége, Hungary

Social Justice Ireland, Ireland

Associazione Romni APS, Italy

Associazione Rowni – Roma Women Network Italy APS, Italy

Fondazione Time2, Italy

Consorzio Nazionale Idee In Rete, Italy

Associazione di pazienti Collagene VI Italia Aps, Italy

AIAS Bologna, Italy

Lega Nazionale delle Cooperative e Mutue, Italy

Confcooperative- Confederazione Cooperative Italiane, Italy

Alleanza delle Cooperative Italiane, Italy

Fondazione Il Domani dell'Autismo, Italy

Fondazione Oltre il Labirinto ETS, Italy

Gruppo Asperger APS, Italy

Associazione per la ricerca sull'autismo Cimadori ETS OdV, Italy

Diversamente ODV, Italy

UILDM - Unione Italiana Lotta alla Distrofia Muscolare, Italy

Latvijas Autisma Apvienība, Latvia

Atbalsts, nodibinājums, Latvia

Sienos Grupė VšĮ, Lithuania

ASTI asbl, Luxembourg

Aditus foundation, Malta

National Auditing Union of Cooperatives (NAUWC), Poland

Ocalenie Foundation, Poland

Activation Foundation, Poland

Porozumienie AUTYZM-POLSKA, Poland

Stowarzyszenie "Dla Autyzmu", Poland

Fundacja Alegría, Poland

Fundacja Po Mojemu w Krakowie, Poland

Krajowe Towarzystwo Autyzmu, Poland

Fundacja “515 kilometrów”, Poland

Fundacja Centrum Neuroplastycznych Mózgów, Poland

Fundacja Neurowioska, Poland

Fundacja SYNAPSIS, Poland

Fundacja Dom Autysty, Poland

Stowarzyszenie Wspólny Świat, Poland

Sidra Fundacja Rozwoju, Poland

Fundacja Przystanek Autyzm, Poland

Stowarzyszenie Pomocy Osobom z Autyzmem, Poland

Krajowe Towarzystwo Autyzmu Oddział Szczecin, Poland

Fundacja Przystanek Autyzm, Poland

Keystone Moldova, Republic of Moldova

Partnerships for Every Child/ Parteneriate pentru Fiecare Copil, Republic of Moldova

Soros Foundation Moldova, Republic of Moldova

AO SOS Autism, Republic of Moldova

Alliance for Social Economy in Slovakia (ASES), Slovakia

Slovenian Red Cross, Slovenia

Dincat, Spain

Asociación MUNDUS - Un mundo a tus pies, Spain

IN-RED: Asociación Empresarial Gallega de Entidades No-Lucrativas de la Discapacidad, Spain

Asociación Autismo Sevilla, Spain

Som - Fundació de Suport a persones amb discapacitat, Spain

Red Acoge, Spain

AEMED, Asociación Empresarial de Entidades Madrileñas en Defensa de Colectivos con Especiales Dificultades, Spain

Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG), Spain

Fundación ONCE, Spain

CERMI, Spain

Aldeas Infantiles SOS España, Spain

A Mariña-COGAMI – Asociación de Persoas con Discapacidade da Mariña Lucense, Spain

A Xanela - Asociación de discapacitados Activos de As Pontes, Spain

ACADAR-Asociación de Mulleres con discapacidade de Galicia, Spain

ACEM Coruña – Asociación Coruñesa de Esclerosis Múltiple, Spain

ACEM Santiago – Asociación Compostelana de Esclerose Múltiple, Spain

ADISBISMUR- Asociación de Personas con Discapacidade da Bisbarra de Muros, Spain

AGL_Asociación Galega de Linfedema, Lipedema, Insuficiencia Venosa Crónica e outras Patoloxías Vasculares Periféricas, Spain

ÁGORA – Asociación de Persoas con Diversidade Funcional de Monforte de Lemos, Spain

AIXIÑA Asociación de discapacitados Físicos, Parálise Cerebral e Terceira Idade Dependente, Spain

ALCER Coruña – Asociación para a Loita Contra as Enfermidades do Ril da Coruña, Spain

ALCER- Lugo. Asociación para a Loita contra as Enfermedades Renais de Lugo, Spain

ALUCEM-ASociación Lucense de esclerosis múltiple, Spain

AMARAI-Asociación de Persoas con Discapacidade de Arzúa e Terra de Melide, Spain

APROM – Asociación Prominusválidos de Cariño, Spain

ASEM_Galicia_Asociación Gallega contra las Enfermedades Neuromusculares, Spain

Asociación de colaboración y promoción del sordo- ACROPOS, Spain

Asociación de Crohn e Colite Ulcerosa de Ourense, Spain

Asociación de Enfermos de Artrite de Pontevedra, Spain

Asociación de Enfermos de Crohn e Colite Ulcerosa da provincia de A Coruña, Spain

Asociación de Fibromialxia e Fatiga Crónica de Ourense, Spain

Asociación de Pais e Nais de Nenos con Minusvalía de Narón, Spain

Asociación de Persoas con Discapacidade da Comarca de A Limia, Spain

Asociación de Persoas con Discapacidade da Comarca de Pontevedra, Spain

Asociación de Persoas con Discapacidade da comarca de Valdeorras, Spain

Asociación de Persoas con Discapacidade das Comarcas do Condado e Paradanta, Spain

Asociación de Persoas con Discapacidade Física e Orgánica Do Carballiño e Comarca,bSpain

Asociación de Persoas con Discapacidade Vontade, Spain

Asociación Galega de Fibrose Quística, Spain

Asociación Galega de Hemofilia - AGADHEMO, Spain

Asociación Galega de Lupus, Spain

Asociación Íntegro – Persoas con Diversidade Funcional da Costa da Morte, Spain

Asociación Ourensá de Esclerose Múltiple, Párkinson e Enfermidades Raras,Spain

Asociación para a Loita Contra as Enfermidades do Ril, Spain

Asociación para a loita contra as enfermidades renais de Ourense, Spain

Asociación Párkinson Galicia-Coruña,Spain

Asociación Viguesa de Esclerose Múltiple de Pontevedra, Spain

Asociación Viguesa de Espondilíticos de Pontevedra, Spain

ASOTRAME_ Asociación Gallega de Personas Transplantadas de Médula Ósea y Enfermedades Oncohematológicas, Spain

ASPAMITE – Asociación de Pais de Persoas con Diversidade Funcional de Teo, Spain

AVANTE – Asociación de Persoas con Discapacidade do Val do Dubra, Spain

CEGASAL _Asociación empresarial galega de centros especiais de emprego sen ánimo de lucro, Spain

CERMI Galicia Comité Español de Representantes de Personas con Discapacidad- Galicia, Spain

ConArtritis Santiago – Delegación en Santiago da Coordinadora Nacional de Artritis, Spain

Confederación Española de Personas con Discapacidad Física y Orgánica - COCEMFE, Spain

Confederación Galega de Persoas con Discapacidade-COGAMI, Spain

Dano Cerebral-Galicia, Spain

Dow Galicia, Spain

FADEMGA - Plena Inclusión Galicia, Spain

FAGAL - Federación Alzhéimer Galicia, Spain

FEAFES - Saúde Mental Feafes Galicia, Spain

Federación Autismo Galicia, Spain

Federación de Asociacións de Persoas con Discapacidade da Provincia de A Coruña, Spain

Federación de Asociacións de Persoas con Discapacidade da provincia de Pontevedra, Spain

Federación de Asociacións de Persoas con Discapacidade de Lugo, Spain

Federación de Asociacións de Persoas con Discapacidade de Ourense, Spain

Federación de Asociacións de Persoas Xordas de Galicia, Spain

GRUMICO – Grupo de Persoas con Discapacidade da Coruña, Spain

LIREGA - Liga Reumatológica Gallega, Spain

MISELA – Asociación de Persoas con Discapacidade das Comarcas de Noia e Muros, Spain

UGADE-Unión Galega de Epilepsia, Spain

Bogan Group of Social Cooperatives, Spain

Asociación Autismo Burgos, Spain

Gautena Asociación Guipuzcoana de Autismo, Spain

Federación Autismo Andalucía, Spain

Sareen Sarea-Red del Tercer Sector Social de Euskadi, Spain

Apnabi Autismo Bizkaia, Spain

EAPN Galicia. Rede Europea contra a pobreza e a exclusión social, Spain

Asociatia Help Autism,Romania

Federatia R.O. TSA, Romania

Asociația Impact Autism, Romania

Asociația Iubim sa Daruim (Centrul ABC), Romania

Asociația Prompt for life - Prompt pentru viata ,Romania

Asociatia Spune da Vietii, Romania

Asociatia Visul Micuteti Elis, Romania

Asociatia Aripi Albastre, Romania

Asociatia Center Hope for a Normal Childhood (Centrul Hope), Romania

Asociatia Activity, Romania

Asociatia EduCare, Romania

Asociatia Psihohub, Romania

Asociatia Biomind, Romania

Asociatia Impreuna cu Zambet, Romania

Asociatia Puzzle Romania, Romania

Asociatia Down Plus Bucuresti, Romania

Asociatia Zambeste si Daruieste, Romania

Asociatia Actiune pentru Sanatate, Romania

Asociația Special Kids Ploiești, Romania

Asociatia pentru copiii cu TSA “La Casuta”, Romania

Asociatia pentru Interventie Cognitiva si Comportamentala Visuri si Sperante, Romania

Asociația Anastasia Ioana, Romania

Asociatia Not Different, Romania

Asociația "Copiii de Cristal", Brașov – FEDRA,Romania

Asociatia Raza de Speranta in Intervenția și Terapia Tulburărilor din Spectrul Autist, Romania

Fundatia Un Copil O Speranta,Romania

Asociatia EIBI, Romania

Asociatia Autism Campia Turzii, Romania

Pyramid Learning Center, Romania

Asociatia Autism Helping Hands, Romania

Asociatia Maini Intinse, Romania

Asociatia Autism Cezar Nicolae - S.U.I.T.A., Romania

Asociatia Surasul Albastru, Romania

Fundatia de Abilitare Speranta, Romania

Fundatia Transilvana Alpha , Romania

Tukena Foundation, Finland