

## **European Social Network, Recorded Message, 22nd June 2017**

**It is my pleasure to address this message to all the participants of the 25th European Social Services Conference, which is being held in association with Malta's Presidency of the Council of the European Union.**

**Let me begin by congratulating the European Social Network, for bringing together so many representatives from national governments, the private sector, and other stakeholders, including service users themselves, from across our European Union and beyond.**

**The collaborations that this conference continues to create, among citizens, EU authorities, and international agencies, is evidence of the importance you place in working together, to engage in innovative strategies for cooperation and learning.**

**At times of global uncertainty, we must seize these opportunities to come together, to make a strong statement about our shared commitment, to ensure the social wellbeing of all our communities and societies.**

**I augur that this conference will create new opportunities for the future, by showcasing the great progress that Malta and other member states have made, while strengthening cooperation across our family of European nations.**

**I believe that, at the heart of all our legislation and policies, we must always focus on the prosperity and the social wellbeing of the diverse individuals and communities who call Europe their home.**

**While it is essential that we work to improve the societies of our nations and regions, we must also maintain an international vision, rooted in a global social solidarity approach.**

**For this reason, we are fortunate to have the United Nations' Agenda 2030, and its Sustainable Development Goals. All of our governments are signatories to this groundbreaking mandate, which pledges to achieve the positive and timely transformation of our world.**

**Agenda 2030 and its seventeen Sustainable Development Goals, together with the 169 associated targets, give us a compelling roadmap, to end poverty in all its forms; to promote equitable prosperity; to protect the planet; and ultimately, to develop our world in more sustainable and inclusive ways.**

**The SDGs address the root causes of the complex social, economic, political, and environmental concerns which humanity is facing, by transforming such challenges into opportunities for growth.**

**I believe, and I am sure that you all share my conviction, that Agenda 2030 provides the most effective framework to guide the future of our European Union, and to secure the holistic social wellbeing of all our nations.**

**I hope that this conference will create a space for you to explore the SDGs, and their targets, more deeply, and to give them an appropriate European identity.**

**In this way, the SDGs shall offer an ideal platform, from which to tackle the issues of greatest concern within our nations, including poverty and exclusion; support for vulnerable individuals; the phenomenon of migration; child and youth empowerment; and building bottom-up strategies and partnerships, which provide equitable, community-based prosperity.**

Let me quote a communication from the European Commission, released last year, which states;

*“European societies today face many sustainability challenges, from youth unemployment to ageing populations, climate change, pollution, sustainable energy and migration... To preserve the European social model and social cohesion, it is essential to invest in our young people, to foster inclusive and sustainable growth, to tackle inequalities and to manage migration... To preserve our natural capital, it is crucial to accelerate the transition to a low-carbon, climate resilient, resource efficient and circular economy. For these challenges to become opportunities for new businesses and new jobs, a strong engagement in research and innovation is needed.”* End quote.

I believe that, through the active involvement of your groups, organisations, and businesses, you can provide the impetus for such innovations.

By working together, you can maintain a European-level momentum, to achieve sustainable development within our nations, and to secure greater investment in processes of positive change, for the social and economic benefit of all our peoples.

As the experts in your sectors, now is the time for you to show leadership and engagement.

On the other hand, I am certain that each and every citizen has a role to play, to create a Union which is stronger, safer, and more capable of meeting the needs of our families and communities.

We must work in synergy, to pursue a common vision, rooted in the principles of solidarity.

**Our sense of untied purpose will give us the strength we need, to turn our aspirations into reality, for the benefit of all the individuals, families, and communities within our European Union, and across our world.**

**Thank you for your attention, and I look forward to exploring the outcomes of this conference.**