

Securing social triple A rating for EU requires political engagement and proper funding

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) has used an own-initiative opinion to call for sufficient funding resources to be put in place for implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights. Adopted at its plenary session on 19 April 2018, the opinion calls for improvements in the Member States and a robust commitment in terms of budget, investment and current spending to make the Social Pillar a reality.

Following the proclamation of the [Social Pillar](#) in autumn 2017, the Committee urges Europe's leaders to now turn their declaration of intent into a serious commitment and to press ahead with the progressive implementation of the pillar. This requires not just the commitment of the Member States but also the active ownership, responsibility and participation of all EU institutions, regional and local authorities, social partners and other civil society stakeholders – and adequate funding measures to reflect this.

"The question of how to fund the implementation of the Social Pillar is a logical consequence of its proclamation," says **Anne Demelenne** (Workers' Group, BE), the rapporteur for the [EESC opinion](#) on the subject. *"In our view, the key elements for the funding will be **more flexibility in EU budgetary rules for public investment, the full use of European Structural Funds and fair taxation.**"*

The EESC is firmly convinced that **adequate social investment will be crucial** for ensuring Member States' ability to accomplish the declared objectives of achieving better and sustainable social protection and enhancing the EU's economic potential. It believes that scope for appropriate spending could be created within Member States and with the help of EU programmes by redistributing wealth in a way that respects the principles of solidarity, flexibility and responsibility.

Spending needs would be particularly large in lower-income countries and in those that had suffered drops in income in recent years. These countries would have limited potential for additional social investment, also because their spending is often restricted by the Stability and Growth Pact and its provisions regarding Member States' budget and debt levels.

With this in mind, the Committee urges that **existing European instruments be used to support public investment in the Member States**. The European Union must, the EESC believes, play an active role in implementing the Social Pillar. The European Structural and Investment Funds (EFIFs) and the European Fund for Strategic Investment (EFSI), in particular, could be sources of financial support.

As EESC rapporteur **Anne Demelenne** argues: *"The principles of the Social*

*Pillar and the need for its implementation should constitute one of the guiding lines in the upcoming negotiations on the European Union's **post-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework**. The EU budget must ensure that real added value is delivered to citizens' lives. Only in this way will it be possible to regain their trust and support for the European project."* The EESC therefore urges, in line with the European Parliament, that the current 1% ceiling for the EU's expenditure be increased.

More public investment within Member States could also be facilitated by invoking a **Golden Rule for public investment with a social objective** related to the pillar's twenty key principles. This would allow for a more flexible application of EU budget rules to ensure sustainable growth in Europe.

*"The revenue loss for Member States and the EU due to aggressive tax planning and tax fraud is significant. **Appropriate tax policies** should allow for fair taxation, a better combating of tax fraud and thereby raising additional means to contribute to the funding of the Social Pillar,"* says **Anne Demelenne**.

In addition to public national and EU funding, the EESC believes **private sector investment** could make a contribution in some areas. However, it would not be enough in itself and could not ensure against exclusion of the socially weakest, which is why public funding would be more meaningful for the Social Pillar.

[News story: Resistant gonorrhoea case demonstrates importance of safe sex](#)

Updated: Added new UK case of antibiotic-resistant *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*.

Latest update

Public Health England (PHE) has been investigating a UK case of *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* acquired in South East Asia which had high-level resistance to the 2 antibiotics, azithromycin and ceftriaxone, which are currently recommended for first-line treatment. The case has now been successfully treated with another antibiotic, ertapenem.

Dr Gwenda Hughes, Consultant Scientist and Head of Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) Section at PHE, said:

We are pleased to report that the case of multi-drug resistant gonorrhoea has been successfully treated. Investigations have also revealed there has been no further spread of this infection within

the UK. PHE continues to actively monitor and tackle the spread of antibiotic resistance in gonorrhoea and potential treatment failures.

Two similar cases have just been reported in Australia and serve as a timely reminder that we expect to see further cases of multi-drug resistant gonorrhoea in the future. These cases will be challenging for healthcare professionals to manage. We urge the public to avoid getting or passing on gonorrhoea by using condoms consistently and correctly with all new and casual partners. If you think you have been at risk, you should seek an STI screen at a sexual health clinic.

Read the full [Multi-drug resistant gonorrhoea in England: 2018 report](#).

Previous updates

28 March 2018

Dr Gwenda Hughes, Consultant Scientist and Head of Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) Section at PHE, said:

We are investigating a case who has gonorrhoea which was acquired abroad and is very resistant to the recommended first line treatment. First line treatment for gonorrhoea is a combination of 2 antibiotics (azithromycin and ceftriaxone). This is the first time a case has displayed such high-level resistance to both of these drugs and to most other commonly used antibiotics.

We are following up this case to ensure that the infection was effectively treated with other options and the risk of any onward transmission is minimised. PHE actively monitors, and acts on, the spread of antibiotic resistance in gonorrhoea and potential treatment failures, and has introduced enhanced surveillance to identify and manage resistant strains of infection promptly to help reduce further spread.

It is better to avoid getting or passing on gonorrhoea in the first place and everyone can significantly reduce their risk by using condoms consistently and correctly with all new and casual partners. Anyone who thinks they may have been at risk should seek an STI screen at a sexual health clinic.

[David Mundell must come clean over Scotland Office social media ads](#)

The Scotland Office, the branch office of the UK Tory government, seems to be using Twitter and Facebook for political purposes. Ministers are using expensive promotions to target specific groups of people and they're paying for it with public money – our money.

[Go to Source](#)

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[Speech: Why Britain is helping poor girls get better education: article by Boris Johnson](#)

Movements such as #Time'sUp and #MeToo have rightfully moved sexism and discrimination out of the shadows and into the spotlight.

The problems we have in our own country are considerable and we must tackle them – robustly. But issues with gender equality in the UK should not stop or blind us to the flagrant sexism masquerading as 'tradition' that is not only holding millions of the world's poorest girls back but snatching away their futures.

It is sexism that says a girl's value is based on how many children she has, or the marital match she makes. And it's sexism that makes some parents invest more in their sons than in their daughters. The fact is patriarchal attitudes are shutting 130 million girls out of the classroom.

There are myriad reasons why in too many countries girls are not allowed to learn. Sometimes it's because of the chauvinistic attitudes and behaviour that have led to the economic oppression of women. Sometimes it's because governments lack the mettle to challenge traditions that leave women and girls stuck.

That's why Britain will lead by example. We will provide 1 million vulnerable girls across the Commonwealth with 12 years of quality education by 2030 and we're committing £212 million to make this a reality. Educating girls is manifestly in the global interest. It will boost economic growth, curb infant

mortality rates, improve child nutrition and release the pressure valve of growing population numbers.

I will use the diplomatic muscle of the Foreign Office to get the world's poorest girls 12 years of quality education. Why 12 years, you ask? I've been inspired by Nobel Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai's calls for all girls to have free, safe and quality education. Twelve years is the level of education needed to move a girl from just surviving to truly thriving. And it's a public commitment that we can't row back from.

We've already made major progress: In 2000, 2 out of every 10 girls of primary school age were out of school. Now it's below 1 in 10. Simple, practical steps will help girls learn, such as providing solar lamps so that girls can do homework when it's dark. Or free sanitary products so that girls won't miss school because they can't afford them. Even just bringing schools closer to where girls live will make a difference.

I want all 53 Commonwealth countries to commit to this vision because Britain cannot do this alone. It's not just a question of resources, the Commonwealth is home to some of the world's fastest growing economies but also half of the world's out-of-school girls. This is about priorities and countries challenging the sexism that is holding women and girls back. Imagine the impact if we pulled together.

See also Special Envoy for Gender Equality [Joanna Roper's blog on the importance of girls' education](#).

Speech: PM opening words at the CHOGM Retreat on 20 April 2018

Good morning and welcome to Windsor Castle; as we've seen, a magnificent setting for us to meet, in the best Commonwealth tradition, in the intimacy and privacy of our Retreat.

First let me thank Her Majesty The Queen for her generous invitation into her home, the first time a Heads of Government meeting has been held here in a remarkable history.

I am also struck by the number of Heads of Government we have assembled here today – a powerful demonstration of our commitment to revitalise the Commonwealth, and to tap into its vast potential.

And that vast potential has been clear at the forums this week. Our Commonwealth family has spent the last four days sharing perspectives, and finding ways to make a real difference to people's lives. I think I speak for

everyone around the room when I say that we have all been inspired by what we've seen and heard, particularly from our young people.

Yesterday we spoke about our shared challenges as we strive to build a more sustainable, more prosperous, more secure and fairer Commonwealth. Today is a chance to build on that, and for the Commonwealth Heads of Government to talk frankly and openly within the tradition of the Retreat.

Of course a conversation about these challenges cannot ignore the fact that at the very moment international co-operation is so important, some nations are choosing instead to shun the rules-based system that underpins global security and prosperity.

So I look forward to discussing how the Commonwealth can play its part to support this rules-based order, and the very concept of international co-operation.

Today, we also have a number of specific decisions to take, together with a broader conversation about the common future for the Commonwealth that we all want to see.

So I am sure today will be a memorable occasion for all of us, by the end of which I am sure we will all leave even closer friends, and with a unique understanding of each other in ways which cannot be matched by other summits.