



To: General Affairs Council  
Re: Sustainability safeguards in the next MFF

7 November 2018

Dear Minister,

SDG Watch Europe is aware that at the moment in the Council and its preparatory bodies you are negotiating the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and making important decisions about the EU's future spending. This discussion about the MFF should not only be about how much money is spent, but even more importantly how well the EU budget is used also to prevent inefficient spending.

Civil society and millions of citizens represented in the People's Budget campaign that was supported a by SDG Watch Europe, and whose voices are also echoed by other civil society organisations<sup>1</sup>, call for better **sustainability safeguards** in the next MFF. Only then will the future EU budget be fit for future challenges and bring long term benefits for the people. We therefore urge you to use the ongoing debate on the new MFF to upscale the positive impact of the future EU budget by making it sustainable, democratic and fair.

- To fulfil this aim, the future MFF should only fund coherent policy objectives that do not contradict sustainable development, in terms of both the internal and external dimensions<sup>2</sup>. Social progress, reducing the economic and social divergences between and within Member States, and the imperative to shrink our environmental impact within and outside Europe within planetary boundaries cannot be compromised. **Planned spending for existing policies needs to be checked to ensure coherence with sustainable development.** Spending that has proven to be inefficient or unsustainable has to cease and the money shifted towards more sustainable instruments.
- We urge the Council to demonstrate its political will to mainstream sustainability in the MFF by means of a **joint declaration by the Council, Parliament and the Commission**, which should be attached to the MFF regulation.
- In order to allow this political commitment to become a reality, we also urge the Council to invite the Commission **to develop a common framework and guidance on the sustainability proofing of Union funding**, building on the expertise and best practices from Member States and the previous experiences on biodiversity proofing<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> More than hundred organisations have called for sustainability proofing the EU budget based on [eight sustainability principles](#), using [different sustainability proofing instruments](#) and called for better [sustainability mainstreaming in the MFF](#).

<sup>2</sup> In line with the [final report](#) of the High-Level Expert Group on Sustainable Finance established by the Commission, which calls for embedding the "Think Sustainability First" principle in EU policies

<sup>3</sup> [Common framework and guidance documents](#) for biodiversity proofing of the EU budget

Ministers, through your decisions about the future MFF you can prove your commitment to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. If a truly sustainable future can be shaped for Europe, this will help European citizens to regain trust in and to develop a greater commitment towards the EU, of particular importance with next year's European elections approaching. We are convinced that the EU can successfully rise to this challenge under your committed leadership!

We ask you to give serious consideration to the proposals contained within this letter, and would like to assure you of our availability should you require further clarification.

Kind regards,

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*The [People's Budget](#) campaign is advanced by [SDG Watch Europe](#), an EU-wide, cross-sectoral CSO alliance of NGOs from development, environment, social, human rights and other sectors. Its goal is to hold governments to account for the implementation of the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development including the [Sustainable Development Goals](#).*