

ROMANO PRODI

Thank you for your warm welcome and constructive exchanges during our lunch on 23 January. As you said, we can really conclude we are thinking in the same direction. The press event after our lunch was also very well attended and the interest for Social Europe, reflecting the expectation from the populations.

Your Commission has indeed provided valuable contributions and it is great to see how EFSI and the follow up with EU Invest is going in the right direction. It is my pleasure to also know that our report on social infrastructure investment has inspired the creation of the new social window in EU Invest and recognizes that the investments in social infrastructure through EFSI is still too low at 4 per cent of the total.

As I said during our exchanges, I believe an additional initiative could still be launched by you before the elections. A great initiative that, as we pointed in our warm conversation, is politically welcome and affordable in the financial aspects.

The stakeholders that are best prepared to boost the commitments in social infrastructure are the networks involved in affordable, accessible and energy efficient housing. In fact, Housing Europe, created by our common predecessor Jacques Delors, is trying to help the many organizations, across Europe, requesting support to not only develop investment platforms in the regions with the highest need, but also develop guidelines and share existing case studies already developed with the EIB, the CEB and some of the public banks.

They and local authorities need additional help and capacities to work at larger scale and help make the projects bankable, adapt them to the stability pact and the state aid rules. Lieve Franssen and Edoardo Reviglio, the two coauthors of the report have also been overwhelmed with requests for help in this area and maybe the colleagues in the representations could be briefed and help out with local authorities, who are the main anchors for such an initiative of course.

I therefore think that this is an area where quick wins can still be made visible before the elections and organizations such as Housing Europe that regroups 46 000 organizations dealing with affordable housing would be very helpful and stand ready to communicate widely on such initiative from the Commission and the EIB/CEB.

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Bruxelles