



Trade union response to the EC Communication on “A Decent Life for All: from vision to collective action” [COM \(2014\) 335 final](#)

The Trade Union Development Cooperation Network (TUDCN), an initiative of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), bringing together affiliated trade union organisations, solidarity support organisations, regional ITUC organisations, the Global Union Federations (GUFs), the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD (TUAC) took note of the above mentioned Communication and offers the following response:

Chapter 2: “Vision and Principles”

1. We welcome the overall approach of the Commission confirming the universal and transformative character of the agenda , which should be applied taking into account national contexts in full respect of the national ownership;
2. We broadly welcome the reference to a rights-based approach related to the post 2015 framework. RBA should be the compass to determine goals and targets in the new agenda, and it should be more reflected in the priority areas proposed by the EC (see below);
3. We strongly support the requirements envisaged in the text on accountability, transparency and effective review of progress. These are fundamental pillars to grant a new global governance framework, which should be based on binding commitments for all stakeholders;

Chapter 3: “Priority Areas and Targets for the eradication of Poverty and the achievement of sustainable development”

Poverty

4. We support the reference to average national poverty lines below which maximum efforts should be prioritized, considering that the indication of “less than \$2 a day” is not relevant as not universally pertinent;
5. We regret the absence of decent wages as a target in this area. Increasing wages, addressing the issue of the “working poor”, constitute one of the most important priorities



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to eradicate poverty. Moreover, as highlighted by the International Labour Organisation (ILO)¹, tackling working poor leads also to higher economic growth;

6. We suggest to also include the following reference to social protection under this area: implement nationally designed social protection measures, in particular social protection floors for all in need, including focus on the most marginalized

Inequality

7. Ensure decent living wages should appear as a target under this area as well. Wages should be consistently connected to productivity growth rates and economic growth to contrast inequalities within and amongst countries;
8. We strongly support the inclusion of social dialogue and collective bargaining coverage when referring to “empowerment and inclusion”. Social dialogue and collective bargaining can affect both level of wages and wage distribution, while also tackling informality. The erosion of workers’ bargaining rights over the last decades explains to a large extent the current divergence between productivity growth and wage increase for a majority of workers. The divergence between pay and productivity is indeed at the heart of inequalities;
9. We highlight the importance of supporting labour inspection as a means to grant monitoring and control of the implementation of all the standards, conventions and laws in all production sectors, being an essential tool to fight inequalities;
10. Increase the coverage of Social Protection Floors should be also mentioned here, and should be a cross cutting target when addressing health, gender equality, employment, inclusive growth and peaceful societies;

Full and Productive Employment and Decent Work for All

11. We warmly welcome the inclusion of this priority areas, which, is fundamental to support rights based and sustainable progress and we underscore the importance of *each* of the pillars of the decent work agenda;

¹ http://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/world-of-work/2014/WCMS_243962/lang--en/index.htm



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12. However we are concerned on the reference to “quality of formal and informal employment”. Informal employment cannot be “qualitative”, i.e., as it is not rights-based. Social dialogue and collective bargaining should be prioritized for tackling informality. Trade Unions support the ILO process on “transition from the informal to the formal economy”;
13. Here as well, we highlight labour inspection as a way to contrast informality;
14. We very positively note the reference to ILO norms and standards. However, these should apply for **all** workers, including migrants and displaced persons;

Inclusive and sustainable growth

15. Whilst employment and decent work are targets, growth is not a development target per se. Growth is just a means for development. Therefore, we strongly encourage a rethinking on framing “growth” within the post 2015 framework in terms of means for supporting development processes;
16. Business compliance to binding social and environmental standards must be absolutely included in among these targets. This is true if we want to achieve sustainable development. Compliance with ILO labour standards and environmental commitments, social dialogue, corporate accountability/transparency, country ownership, and development effectiveness principles (including the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights) must be the key compulsory criteria for any participation of private-sector actors in poverty eradication efforts and transition to sustainable production;
17. Ensure that assessments are conducted so as to foresee and address the economic and social impact of trade agreements. Trade agreements must promote enforceable environmental and labour standards, universal access to public services, affordable access to medicines, financial stability, adequate policy space, including in government procurement, without endangering national sovereignty or granting investors excessive rights;

Human Rights, the rule of law, good governance and effective institutions

18. We warmly welcome the inclusion of social dialogue granting participation, transparency, accountability and finally contributing to democratization processes;



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Clustering of priority areas

19. While we recognise the need of cross-referencing targets in a coherent manner, as well as, clustering priority areas to progress towards a more limited set of goals, we strongly oppose the potential ‘merger’ between the current areas relating to inclusive growth and employment. Although naturally linked, the contents of the two areas are very specific and their consolidation would result in a regression;
20. Moreover, as highlighted above, whilst employment and decent work are targets, growth is not a development target per se;

New Global Partnership

21. We note the reference to Policy Coherence for Development (PCD). This has significantly improved since the last EC communication in 2013. However, international financial architecture should be seriously addressed. Trade policies play a vital role in development. The EU should stop blackmailing African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries to sign and ratify Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) by October 1, 2014, or be removed from the EU list of beneficiaries of the duty-free quota preferential market. Members of the WTO should intensify efforts to reach an agreement on the basis of the implementation agenda of the developmental mandate of the Doha Round. This includes Duty Free Quota Free access to all LDC products, extension of waivers on intellectual property rights, a balanced agreement on agriculture, and a vast reform of accession rules that does not put acceding countries under excessive pressure;
22. Concerning mobilising financial resources we are concerned about the uncritical stance on “blending” of public and private moneys, where the risk is that public finance becomes a new instrument for tied aid and public subsidy to European businesses operating in developing countries. The unwavering and blind support to Public-Private Partnerships in developing countries – as opposed to traditional public procurement and public services – is irresponsible in our view. In practice, PPPs have proven to be a flawed model that leads to over-priced public services, and there is much evidence to corroborate this. In contrast to traditional public procurement, experience within Europe shows that PPPs have many hidden costs and are excessively complex contracts to handle;



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23. PCD is linked to the need of establishing a new global framework based on binding commitments, as opposed to the current voluntary approach, and based on multi-stakeholders participation. This framework (which could be supported by an international Convention) will need to be complemented by monitoring and supervisory mechanisms which can grant two fundamental rights based principles: mutual accountability and inclusive partnerships.

Brussels 17-06-14