

socialplatform

STRATEGIC ORIENTATION
2014-2020



INTRODUCTION

Since Social Platform's formation in 1995, we have grown in size and influence. Membership has grown from 20 to 47 and they in turn represent more than 11,600 national organisations in every EU member state – covering a large spectrum of the EU social civil society sector.

Every organisation involving members of different natures and cultures, and working in a complex and rapidly changing environment, needs a framework to help ensure consistency of purpose and action. Our strategic orientation therefore articulates a series of values and objectives intended to provide coherence, focus and direction to all of the activities undertaken by Social Platform. It will also help create a sense of belonging to a community that encompasses the various identities and interests of our members.

Our vision, mission, values and corresponding strategic objectives will support us in defining our priorities each year. This will help us to focus on our core activities and thus, when necessary, be more reactive to key EU initiatives.

A number of factors make this new strategic orientation necessary:

External factors:

- An overall deterioration of the EU economic situation and an increasingly harsh political climate that continues to generate mass unemployment, growing inequalities, poverty and social exclusion and we fear that this situation may continue for the years to come.
- Growing inequality due to policies implemented over more than 20 years. This has contributed to deeper social and wealth disparities and to weaker social cohesion.
- An EU policy context shaped by economic governance affecting crucial public funding instigated almost exclusively by economic actors and institutions, thus jeopardizing democracy in Europe.
- A general pessimism among the wider public about the ability of the EU to genuinely work for the well-being of its people and more specifically to work towards the social objectives of the EU 2020 strategy.

Internal factors:

- A strong belief in the concept of social Europe as a means to ensure the wellbeing of all.
- Since 1995, members have understood the necessity and benefits of addressing the highest political levels with a united voice. This requires the coordination and deepening of the content of Social Platform's positions. This joint work led to the first campaigns on civil dialogue, the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the call for the recognition of social services of general interest in the service directive. More recently, Social Platform with inputs from its members has been successful in bringing an anti-discrimination and maternity leave directive to the negotiation table of the Council after positive recognition from the European Parliament. We also have been successful on internal market policies by bringing our contribution to the package on state aid rules and the recognition of the specificities of social services of general interest in the public procurement directive.
- A challenging financial horizon: austerity measures in the EU are deeply affecting the activities of national social civil society organisations and thus affecting the human and financial resources of members of Social Platform. This changing environment requires a re-think of how we deploy resources in order to be most effective.

WHO WE ARE

“The Union’s aim is to promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples”

ARTICLE 3 PARAGRAPH 1 OF THE TREATY ON THE EUROPEAN UNION

We are

Social Platform is the largest platform of European rights and value-based NGOs working in the social sector. We aim to promote social justice, equality and participatory democracy by voicing the concerns of member organisations.

Our values

Our work is grounded in a rights based approach encompassing human dignity, gender equality and equality for all, respect for diversity, solidarity, freedom, social justice, sustainability, transparency and participatory democracy. While the actions of Social Platform focus primarily on the European Union level, we also support the promotion of these values at a global level.

Our vision

A socially just and cohesive Europe based on our values. A society that ensures no one is excluded and where the well-being, the dignity, and the enforcement of human rights of its peoples - and in particular people in vulnerable situations - is the central aim of all policies.

Our mission

To advocate for, and raise awareness on, policies that bring social progress to all in the European Union. We will achieve this by mobilizing members and providing them with a strong voice.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES





**People centred services for the common good:
ensure universal access to quality, affordable and accessible public and social services**

This strategic objective will be supported by the work of members on guaranteeing access to affordable and quality public and social services of general interest and ensuring a strong social dimension of the internal market.



**Participation in decision making:
ensure that civil society organisations are involved in decision making processes at EU level**

This strategic objective will be supported by the work of members on the issue of partnership between civil society organisations and public authorities in the different policy areas.



Strong social protection and welfare systems

This strategic objective will be supported by the work of members on promoting inclusive, effective and efficient social protection and welfare systems and their centrality to maintaining and securing the European Social Model.



Socio-Economic justice: eliminate all forms of socio-economic inequalities

This strategic objective will be supported by the work of members on inequalities in wealth redistribution, on inequalities in the provision of social and health services and services of general interest (such as housing, education, health, transportation) to close the growing gap in European societies.



Equality for all: act for the eradication of discrimination and for the realisation of equality, including equality between women and men, in all areas of life

This strategic objective will be supported by the work of members on combating discrimination on all grounds (including social, economic and residency status) and promoting equality, including gender equality, to ensure equality in practice.



Decent work and quality employment

This strategic objective will be supported by the work of members on the necessity of active inclusion strategies articulated around the need for adequate minimum income, for equality including gender equality on the employment market in relation to access, pay, pension, training and career progression, access to services and appropriate pathways for those who do not have a job, on addressing the growing concerns of working poor and access to quality jobs, and reconciliation between private family and working lives.

HOW WE WORK

Social Platform seeks to bring added value to the work of our members. Through our democratic structure, we aim at the full participation of members in a transparent manner that respects their diversity.

Social Platform's work requires multiple ways of engaging with members. When implementing the strategic objectives our work will be organised around four main activities:

- **Building co-operation among members through the exchange of expertise and capacity building**
- **Supporting members in developing joint campaigns on specific issues**
- **Supporting members' campaigns on cross cutting issues**
- **Ensuring access to decision makers for members on common policy issues**
- **Leading the advocacy on strategic common issues through influencing EU policies and legislation**

There is no hierarchy between these activities. However, because of the changing environment mentioned above, the secretariat will focus its resources on those activities that have the greatest impact for the greatest number of members.

- **Building co-operation among members through the exchange of expertise and capacity building**

Social platform will create opportunities for members to exchange on their areas of work and priorities in order to build understanding and support for their key demands. Social Platform will adopt working methods that build on, and promote, the particular expertise of individual members.

Capacity building: Social Platform will create opportunities for members to work together on specific issues of shared interest outside of Social Platform's areas of work by providing space for discussion and to work together.

Social Platform will provide members with capacity building instruments, such as toolkits and briefings, which can support members in their own campaign activities. These instruments will be based on lessons learnt and on how to access decision makers.

Mutual learning: Social Platform's information network is one of our strengths and the ability to disseminate members' information through the Platform is part of a two-way flow. Social Platform is responsible for informing all members of the main issues and challenges in relation to the strategic objectives with appropriate information tools (such as briefings, process trackers, newsletters, training seminars and meetings). These tools should support the creation and mutual understanding of the relevance of each strategic objective to the work of each member.

- **Supporting members in developing joint campaigns on specific issues**

Social Platform will support the creation of coalitions or alliances among members on specific policies or actions. It will provide the space for members to discuss and exchange on their campaigns in order to build up alliances/coalitions, strengthening support and reach.

- **Supporting members' campaigns on cross cutting issues**

Social Platform will support the politically important campaigns of its member organisations on cross-cutting issues, which are of concern to all.

- **Ensuring access to EU decision makers for members on common policy issues**

Social Platform seeks to advance the interests of members through advocacy of common positions, and by providing opportunities for members to advance their own work at EU level by engaging with European policy-makers.

The objective will be to provide and explain to decision makers and external stakeholders the wide range of members' expertise on common policy issues. Social Platform will work together with members in order to identify the links between the six strategic objectives and highlight their interconnection as well as their relevance to the work of each member.

The work and activities of Social Platform will be based upon its values and previously agreed positions.

Beyond this common ground, Social Platform will have a facilitating role in highlighting the differences and nuances of opinion amongst the membership rather than trying to broker a consensus position that runs the risk of the lowest common denominator

- **Leading the advocacy on strategic common issues through influencing policies and legislation**

This way of engaging occurs when a clear and important focus is shared by a majority of members and a feeling of common opportunity or threat is experienced. The objective is to reach a united voice and effectively influence EU policy and legislation in a coordinated manner to achieve real impact for people at the grass roots level. This work will be based upon Social platform values and previously agreed positions.

The criteria to determine common actions/campaigns are:

- High-level political priority (decided by members of Social Platform).
- Instruments that can deliver concrete and positive outcomes for people (such as directives, regulations, strategies or political commitments).
- Over-arching policies which have an added value for most members of Social Platform while taking into account our six strategic objectives.

Social Platform and members work together to ensure that common campaigns and common policies are disseminated to decision makers and external stakeholders.

WITH WHO

Despite the increased institutional visibility of Social Platform and our ability to have direct access to many EU decision makers, the changing and challenging policy environment requires cooperation with many partners in order to implement our vision through achieving our strategic objectives.

At the EU level:

Building up strategic alliances / partnerships to gain support for positions adopted by members. We will mobilise existing alliances (such as the Spring Alliance and the Civil Society Contact Group) and create new partnerships (in particular for the “Economic Justice” strategic objective) with Social Movements and research institutes that can either channel our messages through their constituencies and to EU leaders, or can contribute to the reflection and work of members on specific issues.

At the national level:

The functioning of the EU (which gives strong power to the member states through the Council of Ministers and the European Council) makes it necessary to engage with national NGOs and platforms in order to effectively influence EU policy-making. Social Platform will work through members to reach the national level and will identify with them appropriate ways to strengthen our reach at the national level.

The strategic orientation was adopted by the Social Platform Steering Group on June 13, 2013

Our members



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