

socialplatform

ANNUAL REPORT



About us

Social Platform is the leading civil society alliance fighting for social justice and participatory democracy in Europe. Consisting of 47 pan-European networks of NGOs, Social Platform campaigns to ensure that EU policies are developed in partnership with the people they affect, respecting fundamental rights, promoting solidarity and improving lives.

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Introduction



Welcome to Social Platform's Annual Report 2016!

2016 was an extremely important year for Social Platform. We were confronted with three huge challenges in the shape of the continuing humanitarian crisis faced by migrants and refugees, the Brexit referendum, and the rise of populism in Europe.

Though difficult issues to grapple with, the events of 2016 gave us the momentum to act, and to show that a more social, inclusive and sustainable Europe is the best response to rising inequalities and increasingly nationalist ideologies.

Challenges need solutions, and we have at our disposal three building blocks that will help us construct a strong Social Europe in the coming years.

One such building block is the European Pillar of Social Rights, which was announced last year. Not only does the emergence of the Pillar show that our calls for a strong social dimension of the EU have been heard, it also gives us hope that the rights, needs and views of people in vulnerable situations will be listened to going forward. Find out more about the Pillar on [page 13](#).

The second building block is our broad and engaged membership. 2016 confirmed once again the enormous role that Social Platform members play in achieving our common goals. Their guidance, input and encouragement were the winning formula for us last year, and I'd like to extend my

personal thanks to all for your commitment and perseverance. Read more about our membership on [pages 6 and 24](#).

The third building block is our ability to partner with other organisations and stakeholders. 2016 really demonstrated the power that civil society has when we mobilise and use our array of expertise to achieve a common end. Our partnership with WeMove to fight sanctions against people who offer humanitarian assistance to migrants ([page 16](#)) and the civil society alliance bringing together social, development and environmental voices to prioritise people and planet in EU decision-making ([page 20](#)) are just two examples.

With these building blocks at our disposal, our focus now is using them to build a bridge that will lead us to the strong Social Europe we want. 2016 gave us new means, but our greatest work lies ahead!

Best wishes,

Jana Hainsworth
President, Social Platform

Strength in numbers



Social Platform enjoys a privileged relationship with the EU institutions because of our large representativeness of organised civil society working in the social field. To sustain this position and ensure we have a strong influence, we believe that cultivating our 47 members' expertise and outreach is essential.

To do so we build upon our members' multiple identities that compose Social Platform: from

women and LGBTIQ persons to migrants, from children, youths and elderly people to individuals with disabilities, from families and carers to people living in poverty and victims of discrimination and violence, the work of our members spreads across various focus groups. The breadth and depth of knowledge our members bring to the table allows us to identify where we can have the most impact, and creates a multiplier effect in terms of outreach.

Our strength in numbers is a testament to our shared belief that our work really can – and does – bring a positive change to the lives of people living in the EU.

The richness of membership upon which Social Platform is built does not prevent it from having a unique identity of its own. On the contrary, rather than focusing on differences, Social Platform enables civil society organisations to nurture those elements that bring us together.

Our shared belief that the EU's policies should be based on respect for human rights, and our common vision for a socially just, sustainable and cohesive EU, are principles that have seared into our genetic makeup the idea that Social Platform is more than the sum of its parts – and that out of many, we are truly one.



**Interested in becoming a member of Social Platform?
Click here to find out how!**

www.socialplatform.org/our-members/join-us/ 

Our Vision

All of our work is centred on our vision of a society that ensures no one is excluded, and where **well-being, dignity**, and the **enjoyment of human rights** are the central aims of all EU policies.

Social Platform’s work in 2016 followed our six strategic objectives:



Europe for citizens

Social Platform receives the majority of its funding support from the ‘Europe for Citizens’ programme, managed by the European Commission’s Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA).

Europe for Citizens is a unique and highly symbolic programme, acting as a listening exercise on civil society’s debates and in-depth reflections on the European project: it is distinct from other programmes in terms of its scope, objectives, activities and target groups, and enables initiatives that could not be funded elsewhere. As such, Europe for Citizens aims to strengthen a sense of European citizenship, enhance mutual tolerance, and promote a better understanding of the EU.

Social Platform fully adheres to the values and objectives of Europe for Citizens, with the majority of our activities in 2016 falling within the framework of the priorities of the programme, as set out below.



Priorities of the Europe for Citizens programme

1. Understanding and debating Euroscepticism
2. Solidarity in times of crisis
3. Combating stigmatisation of ‘immigrants’ and building counter-narratives to foster intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding
4. Debate on the future of Europe

Amplifying the voices of people in Europe



Heads of State and Government represent the whole population of their country, politicians the population of their constituencies, and trade unionists different types of workers. However, although people may be voters or workers, they also have demands that are not necessarily the focus of political parties or trade unions.

Civil society organisations represent the interests of people that gather around specific characteristics and focus groups: from the environment, to consumers, to workers, and those who are traditionally underrepresented in decision-making. This is why there is a strong need for a civil dialogue that can enrich our representative democracies with participatory democracy.

In 2016 we put pen to paper – or finger to key – to highlight **four principles to promote civil society participation in decision-making processes in a way that allows us to have a real impact, and to better define our overall advocacy towards EU institutions, partners and stakeholders:**

1. The right to be consulted in decision-making
2. The need for a transparent and open decision-making process
3. The need for a protective regulatory and financial framework for civil society organisations
4. The institutional recognition of the importance of civil dialogue

Speaking on the European stage

In 2016 we were delighted that the European Council continued its tradition of inviting Social Platform to speak on behalf of civil society at its informal meetings of the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs

(EPSCO) council. As the only civil society representative given the opportunity to address ministers and other stakeholders, we continued to use this privileged opportunity to convey the common positions of our members.



Informal EPSCO in the Netherlands

In April we presented our views on labour mobility and the European Pillar of Social Rights.



Informal EPSCO in Slovakia

In July we discussed the future of work, digitalisation and the labour market, and the impact of technology on the quality of jobs and future skills.

Our areas of focus in 2016...

European pillar of social rights

Investing in services for people's well-being

Fact-finding visit: Sweden

Decriminalising solidarity with undocumented migrants



European pillar of social rights

In 2016 the European Commission announced its intention to introduce a European Pillar of Social Rights. The Pillar will apply to Eurozone countries, with other Member States able to opt-in. It focuses on equal opportunities and access to the labour market, fair working conditions, and adequate and sustainable social protection (find out more in our [handy explainer](#)).



Social Platform has been involved in the drafting consultation of the Pillar from the get-go, including through meetings with Commissioner Pierre Moscovici and the teams of European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker and Commissioner Marianne

Thyssen, and participation in an informal consultation with key stakeholders. The Commission's Special Adviser on the Pillar Allan Larsson also joined our members in April to listen to their expertise and recommendations on the issue.

Through working with members we produced our position on social standards and our response to the public consultation on the Pillar. Our main demands were the following:

1. Quality employment, adequate income support and universal access to services must be at the core of the Pillar
2. Some people are unable to work for parts or all of their lives – the Pillar must go beyond employment to ensure that these people get to enjoy their social rights, too
3. The Pillar must be enforceable to encourage Member States to make real changes
4. Social rights are universal – this is why the Pillar should apply to all EU countries, not just those that have the Euro
5. As the voice and will of people in Europe, civil society should be involved in the Pillar at all stages – from design to implementation and monitoring

Building Social Europe – The potential and pitfalls of the European Pillar of Social Rights



In June 2016 our [high-level event](#) on the Pillar attracted over 100 participants. With discussions ranging from making the Pillar fit for purpose and ways to implement it, representatives from civil society, businesses, trade unions, Member States and the European institutions came together to share their expert opinions on social rights.



Maria João Rodrigues
@MJRodriguesEU

If we are serious on [#BuildingSocialEU](#) we must stop economic downward spiral in [#EMU](#) but we need to discuss welfare state sustainability too

4:34 AM - 15 Jun 2016

Investing in services for people's well-being

Everyone in Europe is a service user at some point in their life – a fact experienced daily by our members who all work on access to services in one way or another. As access to essential services of general interest is a human right, in 2016 we worked to show that investing in high quality health, housing, employment and education services and social infrastructures for all is an investment in people and for the future, and not simply a cost.

As well as producing [policy recommendations](#) to the European institutions, we released a [myth buster](#) to correct some common misconceptions about investing in services.

Our members helped compile a collection of [case studies](#) to shine a light on the great activities their national members are carrying out, and to illustrate the positive impact that investment



in health, housing, employment and education services can have

on both the economic and social situation of EU Member States.



NoRo Centre (Romania)
Member of **EURORDIS** www.eurordis.org

Provides integrated social and care services to people affected by rare diseases and their families through improving access to care, information, research, and education.



Humanitarian Health Consultation Centre (Germany)
Member of **PICUM** www.picum.org/en

Offers a support service to undocumented pregnant women, enabling them to have healthy babies without fear of being reported, and providing post-natal care to them and their newborns.

Fact-finding visit: Sweden

In December 2016, a delegation of Social Platform members made their way to south Sweden to learn more about successful ways of including migrants and refugees in economic and social life.

Over the course of two days we met three organisations that help low- and medium-skilled migrants to find work – including through training, mentoring and job placements – so that they can begin to integrate into society and enjoy access to various rights, including the right to live a life in dignity. Read the report [here](#).

“For me, it’s not about money – Yalla Trappan feels like a family! I meet my colleagues here every day and we have contact with Swedish clients. At Yalla Trappan we work together as a team, as equals.”

Zeina Doulani, employee of Yalla Trappan



Yalla Trappan



Ester Foundation



Merit



Hotel Trainee project

Decriminalising solidarity with undocumented migrants

The Facilitation Directive aims to stop undocumented migrants from unlawfully entering, moving within, and living in EU Member States. It helps to fight organised smuggling rings and people who want to exploit undocumented migrants. However, the Directive also gives Member States the option to punish those who offer humanitarian assistance to these people. This could include emergency shelter, food, or medical attention.



Manuel's story...

Manuel Blanco is a Spanish fire fighter. He is part of the organisation PROEM-AID and had been volunteering on the Greek island of Lesbos since 2015. Together with the Greek authorities, he has saved the lives of countless migrants and refugees in danger at sea.

But in January 2016 Manuel was arrested. Because he had been pulling drowning men, women and children to safety, he was accused of people smuggling.

Because of the Facilitation Directive, Manuel now faces up to ten years in jail.

In 2016 we continued our campaign on 'Decriminalising Solidarity' with the adoption of our [position](#) on revising the Facilitation Directive. Our key demands:

1. **Revise the 'humanitarian clause' of the Directive. The EU must protect those offering humanitarian assistance to undocumented migrants from punishment.**
2. **Doctors, shelters, and volunteers should not have to report undocumented migrants they encounter – all this will do is put them off seeking the help they need, and will put lives at risk.**

To bring more visibility to our campaign, in March we partnered up with WeMove to launch an [online petition](#) calling for the European Commission to revise the Directive. By October the petition had gathered 132,386 signatures and was handed over to European Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos by Spanish citizen Manuel Blanco.



Round table on the EU Facilitation Directive: Protecting the right to provide humanitarian assistance to migrants & refugees

In November 2016 we organised a [round table meeting](#) in the European Parliament. This event was particularly timely as the Commission was in the process of deciding whether to revise the Facilitation Directive. The meeting focused on the state-of-play of the Directive and its impact on ordinary people, and recommendations to the EU on the way forward.

“Solidarity must always be our priority. We need to distinguish criminals from those who genuinely want to help.”

Mauro Striano, Policy Officer at FEANTSA www.feantsa.org/en

Engaging with the grassroots

2016 will go down in history as the year the EU faced what was possibly its biggest challenge yet – the United Kingdom’s vote to leave it.

Ahead of the referendum that saw 52% of voters opt to leave the union, we travelled to London to meet UK civil society – including national members of our own organisations – to give them the space to discuss the implications of leaving – or staying in – the EU.

Our [event](#), ‘Social boom or bust? The EU referendum and the fate of social rights’, was moderated by Oonagh Aitken (President of Volonteuropa - www.volonteuropa.eu/) and included a panel representing both sides of the argument:



Remain

Jean Lambert
Member of the European Parliament (Greens, London)

Roger Casale
Founder & CEO of New Europeans

Nick Crook
Head of International Relations at UNISON



Leave

Nic Conner
Representative of the Vote Leave campaign

Kane Blackwell
Representative of Kent Youth County Council & Leave.eu



The ‘remain’ camp and participants raised concerns about what would happen to social rights if the UK voted to leave the EU; the government had revealed that it would use Brexit as an opportunity to cut certain regulations that protect workers but are seen as burdensome for businesses. However, the ‘leave’ camp argued that the EU is not strong on social issues as the election of increasingly ‘right’ national governments and austerity measures pushed forward by the EU have had a detrimental impact on social rights.

One thing that participants agreed on was that civil society needs to step up to the plate and be vocal about social rights – given the outcome of the referendum, this is truer than ever.



Laura de Bonfils
@LauriFrost
.@rogercasale Europe is not just a market but is also protection of social rights
#SocialBoomOrBust

7:13 AM - 2 Jun 2016



Michele Rigby
@MicheleRigby
It's refreshing to actually hear debate on **#EUreferendum**, but **#brexit** argument still seems thin **#socialboomorbust**

7:20 AM - 2 Jun 2016 from Islington, London



Annica Ryngbeck
@aryngbeck
#Brexit stay: we got workers right, anti-discrim fr EU. leave: rather a bad elected MP, than a good unelected Eurocrat
#SocialBoomOrBust

7:04 AM - 2 Jun 2016



Valentina Caimi
@valecaimi
Nic Conner **#SocialBoomOrBust** EU is made of non elected bureaucrats. **#TTIP** & **#SDS** used as arguments to leave EU **#Brexit**
@EU_TTIP_team

7:06 AM - 2 Jun 2016



Poverty Alliance
@PovertyAlliance
Nick Crook from **@UNISON_global** highlights the critical role of EU in delivering paid annual leave in the UK **#SocialBoomOrBust**

7:02 AM - 2 Jun 2016



Volonteuropa
@Volonteuropa
Shane Blackwell **@KYCC** expresses young people's concern over EU's democratic deficit **#SocialBoomOrBust** **#Euref**

7:02 AM - 2 Jun 2016

Alliance building for a strong social europe



Follow-up to Brexit and joint civil society actions

As a follow-up to the result of the UK referendum, civil society organisations from the social, development and environmental fields came together in June to discuss how we can limit the damage that Brexit will do not just to the United Kingdom but to the other 27 EU Member States, too. This coalition agreed that we need to do more to share the positive impact the EU has among our constituencies. We also have to

listen to the people we represent who are disheartened about the current state-of-play, and we must continue advocating for a strong, more inclusive, sustainable Europe.

In September, Heads of State and Government and leaders of the EU institutions met for the Bratislava Summit. The end result was a declaration and roadmap, including the objective to “create a promising economic

future for all, safeguard our way of life and provide better opportunities for youth.”

In response our coalition joined forces with trade unions to release our own statement on [‘A new Europe for people, planet and prosperity for all’](#), outlining how we can build the Europe that we want and need. The statement calls for 6 key commitments:

1 Reject populist solutions

2 Tackle challenges together

3 Fight for a sustainable, social Europe for people and for our planet

4 Work for a better Europe, not less Europe

5 Listen and engage

6 Make the case for Europe

Alliance building

The wide-ranging expertise of our members means that we work on and contribute to many different areas of social justice, at local, national and European level alike. Beyond our own membership, we take great pleasure in collaborating with many different partners and alliances. It’s by approaching common interests from different perspectives that we can inspire one another and reach our shared end goal – a strong Social Europe!

In 2016 we worked with many alliances, coalitions and expert groups including:

- Human Rights and Democracy Network
- EU Agency for Fundamental Rights Advisory Panel
- European Commission Expert Group on Social Entrepreneurship
- European Semester Alliance
- SDG Watch Europe
- Civil Society Europe
- European NGO Platform Asylum and Migration
- WeMove

We’d like to extend a huge **thank you** to all alliances, organisations, partners and individuals we worked with in 2016!

General Assembly 2016



On 21 April we held our annual General Assembly meeting in Brussels.

The General Assembly is Social Platform's highest governing body. While the meeting lets us deal with internal governance issues, we always aim to organise an exchange with a high-level speaker. In 2016, the highlight of our General Assembly was Question Time with European Commissioner Pierre Moscovici, responsible for Economic and Financial Affairs, Taxation and Customs. Members were able to put their questions to the Commissioner on a range of social and economic areas. Here are just two:

“We need a social movement. We need Social Platform!”

European Commissioner Pierre Moscovici

Agata D'Addato, Eurochild www.eurochild.org



Q: How will the Commission encourage Member States outside the Eurozone to opt in to the European Pillar of Social Rights, and do you think there is a valid concern that the Pillar may develop a two-tiered EU?

Commissioner: The EU can only be successful if the social dimension of Europe is respected. There are political battles within and outside the Eurozone. The appetite for social fairness is not equally shared within the EU institutions. We should back the work of Commissioner Thyssen for a social triple A rating.

Michaël Privot, ENAR www.enar-eu.org



Q: How do you see your role in ensuring that economic arguments are not used as an excuse by Member States not to invest in equality, and that the EU's economic initiatives do not undermine or disregard equality and anti-discrimination?

Commissioner: The Charter of Social Rights is fundamental and has to be implemented by all of us. Poverty and social exclusion are on our radar, and the Commission is well aware that inequalities are detrimental to growth. We need to examine how [our work] can be better and more widely implemented.

Facts & figures



3
new
members



3,858
Facebook
friends



20
Task Force
meetings



6 Management
Committee
meetings



3,150
Twitter followers



6 Steering
Group
meetings



4 European
Commissioners
met



88
newsletters
sent to **102,282** people

Top 3 most read editorials:

1. [My nightmare next-door neighbours](#)
2. [Brexit – a misdiagnosis?](#)
3. [Will the pillar of social rights survive the storm?](#)

Top 3 most read blogs:

1. [Building Social Europe: The potential and pitfalls of the European pillar of social rights](#)
2. [Experts call on the European Commission President to develop an action plan for social economy and social enterprises](#)
3. [Rebuilding the European social model](#)

A look under the hood

Social Platform is a network, and we'd be nowhere without the expertise and commitment of our members!

Welcome to our 3 new members that joined us in 2016!



European Roma Grassroots Organisations (ERGO) Network
www.ergonetwork.org/ergo-network

ERGO Network brings together 28 members from across Europe and supports organisations with a common perspective on Roma grassroots empowerment and equal citizenship, to challenge stereotypes and combat stigmatisation. ERGO mobilises and connects organisations and individuals that share and express its values – active citizenship, shared responsibility, and passion – to strengthen and empower Roma civil society involvement in decision-making at local, national and EU level.



Salvation Army EU Affairs Office
www.salvationarmy.eu

The Salvation Army is present in 23 of the EU's 28 Member States, providing social services, poverty relief, civic involvement in social inclusion activities, refugee/migration support, anti-human trafficking services and support for Roma populations. The goal of the EU Affairs Office is to provide an EU level platform for the Salvation Army to relate to the EU and European issues, to understand more about the workings of the EU, and to enable the Army to engage in advocacy, representing the organisation as well as the people it serves.



Make Mothers Matter – European Delegation
www.mmmeurope.org/en

Make Mothers Matter is an international NGO created in 1947 to raise the awareness of policy-makers and public opinion on the contribution of mothers to social, cultural and economic development. They bring together and represent a network of 40 organisations from 28 countries around the world. MMM European Delegation works to influence policies at EU level with the aim to achieve a positive change in mothers' lives. They believe this will have a positive impact on children, families and the whole of society.

Management Committee

President
Jana Hainsworth
Eurochild
www.eurochild.org

Vice-President
Maciej Kucharczyk
AGE Platform Europe
www.age-platform.eu

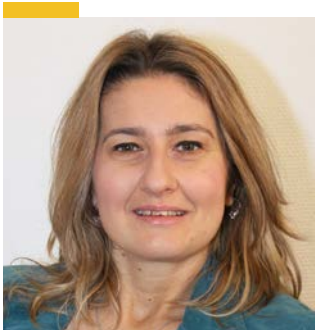
Vice-President
Eszter Salamon
European Parents' Association
www.euparents.eu
(Replacing Barbara Helfferich (European Anti-Poverty Network - www.eapn.eu))

Ordinary Member
Michele LeVoy
Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants
www.picum.org/en

Ordinary Member
John Dolan
European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities
www.easpd.eu

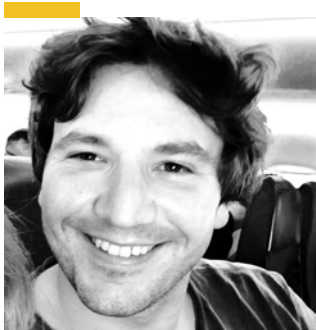
Ordinary Member
Borbála Juhász
European Women's Lobby
www.womenlobby.org

Meet the Secretariat!



Valentina Caimi
Policy & Advocacy
Adviser

Favourite pizza topping:
Veggies



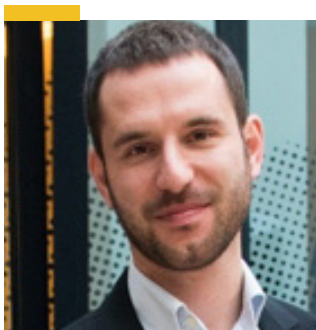
Ilias Papageorgiou
Administrative &
Financial Officer

Favourite pizza topping:
Mushrooms



Maxime Gehrenbeck
Project Officer

Favourite pizza topping:
Four cheese



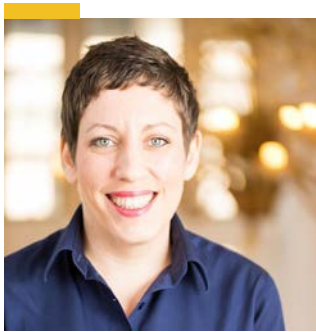
Gilberto Pelosi
Policy & Advocacy
Officer

Favourite pizza topping:
Mozzarella di Bufala



Helen Joseph
Communications &
Media Officer

Favourite pizza topping:
Jalapeños



Annica Ryngebeck
Policy & Advocacy
Adviser

Favourite pizza topping:
Rocket



Farewell Pierre!

At the end of 2016 we said a fond farewell to our Director, Pierre Baussand.

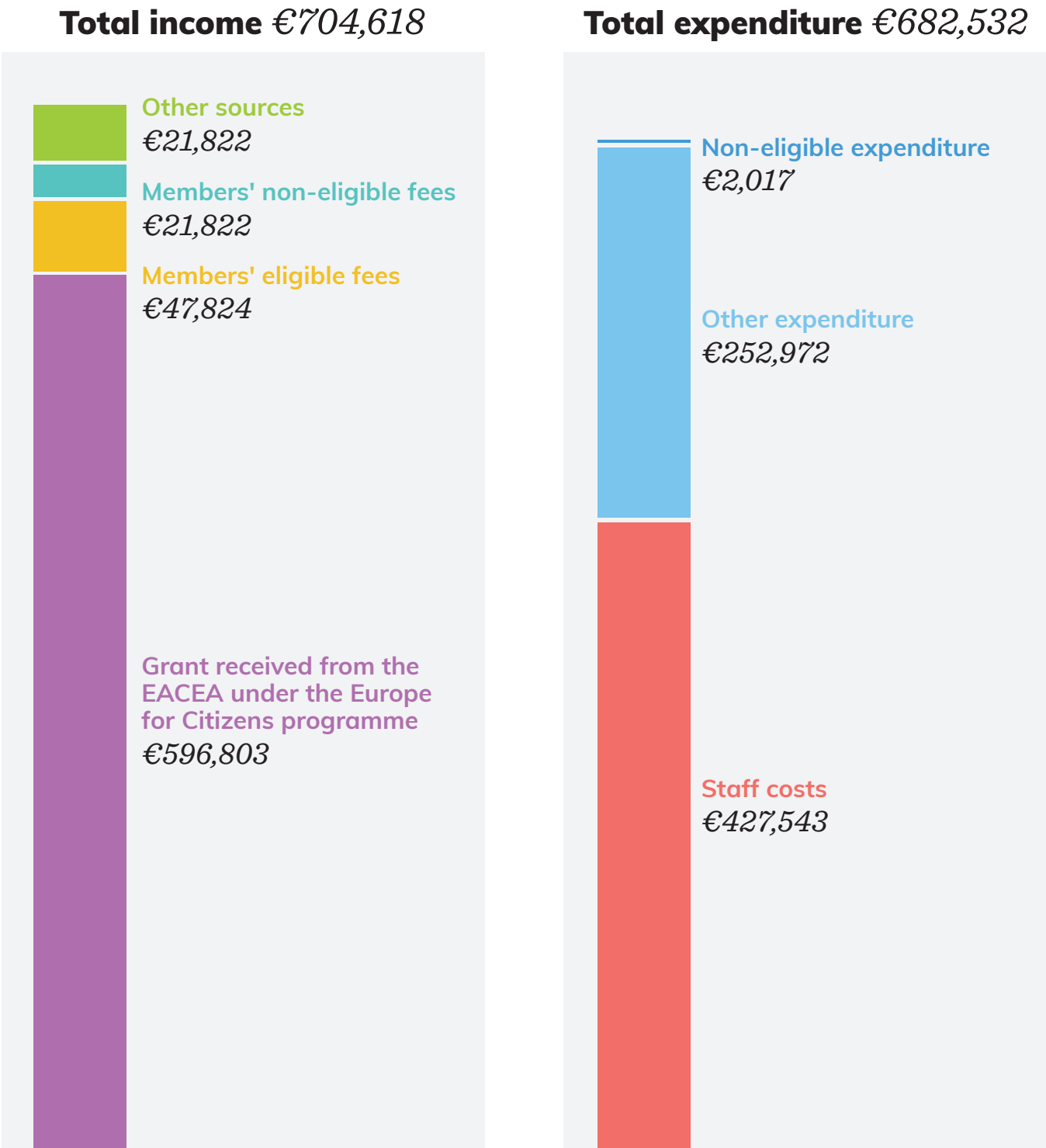
Pierre joined Social Platform as a Policy Officer in 2006 and became Director in 2010. 51 Steering Groups, 17 General Assemblies and 10 years later he left for new adventures.

Social Platform wishes Pierre all the best for the future!

(Pierre's favourite pizza topping is ham and pineapple. We promise this isn't the reason he left.)

Show me the money!

Our 2016 accounts were audited, approved by the General Assembly and subsequently published at the Banque nationale de Belgique (www.nbb.be/fr), where they are available to the public. Below is a summary of our income and expenditure in 2016.





socialplatform

www.socialplatform.org



Social Platform acknowledges the financial support of the European Commission's 'Europe for Citizens' programme, managed by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). This publication reflects the author's views. Neither the European Commission nor the EACEA is liable for any use that may be made of the information contained in this publication.

Published in August 2017

Designed by Emily Sadler: www.emilysadler.com

Say hello!

