



The European Council

Via email

Brussels, 12 December 2017

Dear Heads of State and Government,

RE: Recommendations ahead of the European Council of 14 and 15 December 2017

On 17 November we gathered in Gothenburg to discuss the social dimension of the future of the European Union. With the interinstitutional proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, the EU delivered a strong and united message to put people first.

At this week's European Council you will set the direction for the years ahead. Given the urgent need to address social divergences between and within Member States and to ensure that the economic recovery benefits people equally, we expect the Conclusions of the European Council and the Euro Summit to give a clear priority to social issues.

In line with this undertaking, we urge you to take concrete steps to:

1. Tackle inequality to safeguard our democracy

Europe today is more unequal and divided than a generation ago. Despite the economic recovery and positive employment trends, in-work poverty and job insecurity remain worryingly high and many groups continue to face unacceptably high unemployment and poverty rates due to stigma, discrimination and lack of support. Almost a decade of austerity policies have squeezed social, education and health spending, meaning people are not being helped to move out of poverty and disadvantage. Data shows that our social protection systems are less and less effective at lifting people out of poverty. The EU should promote a mix of re-distributional measures, such as progressive taxation, adequate social protection and quality services, and pre-distributional solutions, such as higher minimum wages.

2. Deliver a strong social agenda that goes beyond employment, and ensure adequate and sustainable funding of welfare systems

Employment is important, but the EU urgently needs a broad social agenda. It is essential to recognise spending on social protection and services – including care, social, health, housing, education and life-long learning services - not as a cost, but as an investment that brings long-term economic and social returns. This includes taking steps in the framework of the completion of the economic and monetary union to give Eurozone countries the necessary fiscal space for public social investment, starting with the four areas of public social expenditure for which evidence already exists of their beneficial and positive effects: early childhood education and care, primary and secondary education, training and active labour market policies, and affordable and social housing. The European Pillar of Social Rights has the potential to move this agenda forward, but it needs real commitment including policies and legislative measures and resources for implementation.

Social Platform is the largest civil society alliance fighting for social justice and participatory democracy in Europe. Consisting of 48 pan-European networks of NGOs, we campaign to ensure that EU policies are developed in partnership with the people they affect, respecting fundamental rights, promoting solidarity and improving lives. 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).

3. Involve organised civil society in developing, implementing and monitoring policy

Members of Social Platform represent tens of thousands of local and national NGOs working directly with people on the margins of society. By partnering with us, governments can ensure that policies respond effectively to the reality on the ground, and can strengthen democratic processes by involving those directly impacted by policy. Social Platform strongly recommends a structured dialogue, including organising regular Social Summits to take stock of progress.

Thank you for considering these recommendations during the upcoming European Council meeting. We remain open and committed to working with Member State governments and the EU institutions to build an inclusive and sustainable future for Europe.

Yours sincerely,



Jana Hainsworth
President

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