Piecing together a strong Europe for its people!
About us

Social Platform is the leading civil society alliance fighting for social justice and participatory democracy in Europe. Consisting of 48 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 2017!

Is the future of Europe inclusive and people-centric? 2017 gave us reason to be optimistic. We secured important puzzle pieces which could shape a European Union based on more solid social grounds.

The first is the European Pillar of Social Rights. The proposals put forward by the European Commission in April already incorporated many recommendations of Social Platform and its members. In November Social Platform members participated together with Heads of State and Government at the first Social Summit in 20 years. At the event the European Council, Commission and Parliament proclaimed the Pillar, under the slogan ‘People First’. We are now advocating for its implementation, and for similar Social Summits to be organised at least every 3 years.

The second puzzle piece is the growing recognition of civil society as a key stakeholder in discussions on EU social, economic and employment policies. In addition to participating in discussions at the Social Summit, we are also regular invitees at the informal meeting of Employment and Social Affairs Ministers. In 2017 we gave special attention to profiling the work of our members and show casing what works on the ground. For example we organised an exhibition of inspiring social inclusion practices on the margins of the Social Summit in Gothenburg (see page 6).

But to achieve Social Platform’s goals our influence needs to go beyond social policies. We have six goals: social protection, people-centred services, equality for all, quality employment, socio-economic justice, and civil dialogue.

They impact, and are impacted by, a whole range of other policies, not least the EU’s macro-economic and fiscal governance and coordination. It’s critical that the voice of civil society fighting for social justice is heard in these debates. It was important, for example, that we could contribute to the European Commission’s flagship annual economic event, the Brussels Economic Forum (see page 11).

These are just three parts of our 2017 puzzle. Many more are featured throughout this Annual Report.

As a member-led network of organisations working for human rights, social justice and participatory democracy, we will continue to piece together our collective vision of a Europe which is social, sustainable and inclusive!

Best wishes,

Jana Hainsworth, President
Kélig Puyet, Director
A message on our family

Social Platform is the largest civil society alliance fighting for social justice and participatory democracy in Europe.

Our membership comprises 48 European networks that together represent tens of thousands of local and national NGOs working directly with people in vulnerable situations whose voices are rarely heard in EU-level decision-making. Through our membership we seek to empower people and ensure respect for human rights. We both translate relevant EU policy and legislation to our members and their constituencies, and transmit their views and experiences to the EU level.

The richness of our membership’s expertise – covering areas including social inclusion, access to services, education and employment – gives real substance to our advocacy work for a social, sustainable and inclusive Europe.

Join us!

By becoming a member of Social Platform you will be at the heart of civil society’s efforts to revive democracy and social progress across Europe! By joining forces we have the potential to make a real difference to issues of social justice, human rights and participatory democracy. We are recognised by EU institutions and by EU Member States as being a leading voice of civil society organisations active in the social field.

Being a member of Social Platform is therefore a unique opportunity to help shape the future of Europe by strengthening civil society participation and acting at its core.

Are you interested in joining our family?

Find out more at www.socialplatform.org/our-members-join-us

Europe for Citizens


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, promote participatory democracy, and improve civic participation at EU level – values that make up the very DNA of Social Platform.
Under the spotlight

Building Europe for all its people: the European Pillar of Social Rights

2017 was a pivotal year for social rights in the EU from beginning to end.

Building on our network’s 20+ years of experience and our advocacy work to promote adequate EU social standards, 2017 saw us recognised as one of the leading organisations on the European Pillar of Social Rights. The Pillar aims to promote equal opportunities and access to the labour market, fair working conditions, and adequate and sustainable social protection.

The year culminated in the EU Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth, which took place on 17 November in Gothenburg, Sweden: www.government.se/government-policy/social-summit-for-fair-jobs-and-growth. The Summit marked the first time in 20 years that social affairs had been discussed exclusively by Heads of State and Government, leaders of the European institutions, and other key actors. Social Platform was one of only two civil society organisations to be invited to send a formal delegation of eleven members to the Summit. We were given official speaking slots in its three workshops alongside European Presidents and Prime Ministers to deliver our key messages making the case for Social Europe: www.socialplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/summit_key_messages_final_161117.pdf. Read our press release here: www.socialplatform.org/news/eu-social-summit-dont-wait-20-more-years-to-address-inequality.

The Summit concluded with the Social Pillar being proclaimed by the European Commission, European Parliament, and Council of the European Union, cementing social rights’ position high on the EU agenda.
We kicked off discussions on the eve of the Summit at our side event, “Our Europe: Civil society and the future of the EU”.


The Summit was the finale of a year’s intensive work on the Social Pillar.
In April, the Commission released its first proposals on the Social Pillar. We welcomed the proposals as a promising first step towards more social, sustainable and inclusive societies. The proposals took on board many of our recommendations, and our comprehensive response (www.socialplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Social-Platform-response-to-the-public-consultation-on-the-European-Pillar-of-Social-Rights-November-2016.pdf) to the Commission’s public consultation was highly appreciated – indeed, our suggestions were extensively quoted in the Commission’s summary: www.eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52017SC0206&from=EN

Upon the release of the proposals we outlined three ways that the Social Pillar can be further strengthened:

1. More attention should be paid to promoting social policies and investment that addresses those who are furthest from the labour market or are not of working age.

2. More details should be given on how the EU will secure implementation of the Social Pillar across Member States.

3. As advocates for the rights of people living in vulnerable situations, social civil society organisations should be meaningfully involved in the design, implementation and monitoring of the Social Pillar.

In January, MEPs had their say in an important vote on the report on the Social Pillar by Maria João Rodrigues MEP following a joint advocacy campaign by Social Platform and European Movement International. MEPs signalled their strong support for the report, and for an ambitious Social Pillar that improves the lives of people across the EU.

The following week we participated in the Commission’s conference “European Pillar of Social Rights – Going forward together”, using the opportunity to call for a shift from rhetoric to concrete actions on social rights, and for greater engagement with civil society.


www.ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=88&eventId=1187&furtherEvents=yes
In the run-up to the Summit we launched a month-long joint social media campaign with our member European Youth Forum to raise awareness of civil society’s position on the Social Pillar, and to promote civil dialogue. All infographics and tweets were designed in-house with the input of members. The campaign was a great success, garnering tens of thousands of impressions and ensuring that the Summit’s official hashtag – #SocialSummit17 – was closely associated with civil society in the build-up to the Summit. Read more about the results of the campaign here: www.socialplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Social-right-campaign-social-media-report.pdf
Our areas of focus in 2017

Leaving no one behind: promoting the inclusion of migrants

With the arrival of hundreds of thousands of men, women and children seeking refuge within our borders, it is of paramount importance to promote the cultural, social and economic inclusion of migrants, irrespective of their status. In 2017 we partnered up with the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME) to explore the topic of legal migration, with a view to carrying out a “fitness check” of EU legal migration legislation and giving input to the Commission’s related public consultations.

In June we co-organised a meeting between DG HOME and our members to launch an exchange, with participants sharing their concerns about incorrect implementation of EU legal migration legislation in a number of Member States. Read more here: www.socialplatform.org/blog/an-opportunity-to-influence-the-eu-to-ensure-safe-and-legal-ways-to-europe/

This was followed by a hearing in November, focusing on how the fitness check was progressing and an initial discussion of the results of the consultations.

Our extensive advocacy work on the inclusion of migrants throughout 2017 resulted in two main achievements for the coming years.

Firstly, we became a partner of the European Citizens Initiative (ECI) “We are a Welcoming Europe”: www.weareawelcomingeurope.eu.

As a partner of this ECI, our primary focus is furthering our campaign to decriminalise solidarity with migrants and refugees, which calls for service-providers to be able to provide humanitarian assistance to undocumented migrants without the risk of sanctions: www.socialplatform.org/what-we-do/decriminalising-solidarity.

The ECI was submitted in December and has been approved by the EU. Its support from other Social Platform members and national coalitions gives us great momentum to continue the call for the inclusion of migrants in 2018.

Secondly, our application to be a partner in a new Horizon2020 project, “ReSOMA – the Research Social Platform on Migration and Asylum” was approved. The project, which will run for two years, will focus on establishing and enhancing collaboration between researchers, practitioners and other stakeholders, making policy dialogue more evidence-based, and raising new priorities for the EU policy agenda. www.resoma.eu.
Social and economic policies are so intertwined that it is hard to make decisions on one without impacting the other. The impact of economic policies on the social rights of people in Europe is something that our network has long been raising awareness of, and in 2017 this message reached beyond the usual ‘social’ stakeholders at the Brussels Economic Forum (BEF): www.ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/bef2017/index-en.htm. As the European Commission’s flagship annual economic event, the BEF brings together decision-makers and thought-leaders to analyse economic developments and debate the key trends affecting the EU. We were one of only two civil society organisations invited to speak at BEF 2017, with our Director Kélig Puyet representing Social Platform on a panel discussing “Fighting inequality in a context of modest growth: Squaring the circle?” www.ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?ref=I139141&videolang=INT&devurl=http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player/config.cfm. During her interventions Kélig argued that social policy should be seen as an investment rather than just a positive outcome of a functioning economy, and called for a greater focus on social issues in the European Semester.

To provoke debate in the run-up to BEF 2017, Social Platform engaged in a Twitter Take-Over of the Commission’s Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs (DG ECFIN). Over the course of three hours we published 20 tweets, racking up over 85,000 impressions and hundreds of retweets. The tweets ranged in topic from discrimination in access to services, to tax justice, to in-work poverty.

**Widening the scope beyond ‘social’: redressing the socio-economic imbalance**

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Bridging the gap: realities, solutions and EU policies

In a context of increasing inequalities, populism and Euroscepticism, we believe it is more important than ever to ensure an ongoing exchange with people on the ground in order to better comprehend how EU policies impact people’s lives and feed their experiences into EU policy work.

In May a delegation of Social Platform members participated in a fact-finding visit to Madrid, Spain to learn more about the activities of social economy enterprises. The social economy is proof that it is possible to conduct business in a way that puts people and the environment before profit. There are more than 2 million social economy enterprises and organisations in Europe, making up 10% of Europe’s total business and employing 14.5 million people. The organisations that we visited in Madrid aim to promote the social inclusion of people in vulnerable situations, including people with intellectual disabilities, the long-term unemployed, and children experiencing poverty. Read more about our fact-finding visit here: [www.socialplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/ES_studyvisit_report_final.pdf](http://www.socialplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/ES_studyvisit_report_final.pdf) and here: [www.socialplatform.org/blog/visiting-madrid-the-capital-of-the-social-economy-in-europe](http://www.socialplatform.org/blog/visiting-madrid-the-capital-of-the-social-economy-in-europe), or watch this short video:

Visit our YouTube Channel: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vS7YNoBIM40](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vS7YNoBIM40)

There are more than 2 million social economy enterprises and organisations in Europe, making up 10% of Europe’s total business and employing 14.5 million people.
On 16 November, on the fringe of the EU Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth we revealed an exhibition of inspiring practices that promote social inclusion in EU Member States. Ranging from the inclusion of migrants, to quality employment, to the social economy, national members and partners of Social Platform’s European members engaged in a number of initiatives to demonstrate that a socially responsible Europe that puts people at the heart of its policies is possible. As well as being displayed at our Social Summit side event (www.socialplatform.org/events/our-europe-civil-society-the-future-of-the-eu), the exhibition was featured in the official joint side event (www.socialplatform.org/events/dg-grow-social-summit-side-event-what-role-for-social-economy-in-the-future-of-work) of the European Commission’s Directorate-General for the Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW) and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC). Read more about the inspiring practices here: www.socialplatform.org/what-we-do/inspiring-practices.
European civil society networks bring together local, regional and national members working with, and representing the interests of, people who are traditionally underrepresented in decision-making. Importantly, civil society organisations help people take back control of their lives and involve them in decision-making. We recognise people with support needs as rights holders and agents of change, not as passive dependants.

As the largest civil society alliance of EU social rights advocates, Social Platform was once again invited as an official participant to the informal meetings of the European Council’s Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs (EPSCO) council. In April Social Platform Vice-President Maciej Kucharczyk joined the EPSCO meeting in Valletta, Malta on the theme of “Making Work Pay – An EU Roadmap”: www.eu2017.mt/en/Events/Pages/Informal-Meeting-of-Social-Policy-Ministers.aspx. During his interventions Maciej focused on promoting adequate social protection, encompassing both financial support and access to basic goods and services to live a life in dignity.

In July the EPSCO meeting was held in Tallinn, Estonia, and was attended by our President Jana Hainsworth: www.eu2017.ee/political-meetings/informal-meeting-ministers-employment-social-affairs-family-and-gender-equality. The meeting centred on the question “Who Needs Work-Life Balance?” – a topic of particular importance given ongoing discussions in the framework of the European Pillar of Social Rights. Jana called for policies and practices that enable people – men and women, the young and old – to care for others without restricting access to the labour market or burdening their own health or financial independence.

We are lucky that we and our members are given the forum to engage in a dialogue with decision-makers on issues that matter to our constituencies. Other civil society organisations across the EU do not have or are losing this opportunity, which is an issue that we explored in more detail as part of the European Economic and Social Committee’s (EESC) Civil Society Days 2017. In a workshop we organised on “Empowering civil society to act and grow in Europe” participants came to a consensus that civic space in EU Member States is shrinking, with barriers to accessing funding and even smear campaigns against civil society in some countries. A brainstorming session resulted in creative solutions to such problems, including growing and building momentum in our own local communities for the rights we defend through alliances and partnerships with different stakeholders, and learning from actions the EU has taken outside its own borders in support of civic space. Read more about our workshop here: www.socialplatform.org/blog/the-eu-must-lead-by-example-in-protecting-civil-society
Workshop at Civil Society Days 2017
General Assembly 2017

Our General Assembly is the opportunity for our whole membership to come together to discuss internal governance issues, participate in statutory votes, and network with one another. It’s also the forum for debate with key EU policy-makers.

In 2017 members elected their new Management Committee 2017-19:

**President**
Jana Hainsworth (Eurochild)

**Vice-Presidents**
Maciej Kucharczyk (AGE Platform Europe)
Catherine Naughton (European Disability Forum)

**Treasurer**
Jorge Nuño Mayer (Caritas Europa)

**Ordinary Members**
Michele LeVoy (Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants)
Piotr Sadowski (Volonteurope)
Patricia Scherer (European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities)

**Congratulations to all!**
In the afternoon we were joined by Ann Mettler, Head of the European Political Strategy Centre, for an exchange on a range of issues including the social and economic inclusion of migrants and refugees; investment in people-centred services; EU economic governance and poverty reduction; and sustainable development. The exchange allowed our members to share best practices from their national member organisations to illustrate where the EU could and should be lending its support. Ms Mettler strongly voiced her respect for the unique role that civil society plays in the policy-making process and urged us to find new ways to get our messages across.

Members also took part in a series of workshops. The workshop topics were selected by members and covered topics of both external importance – such as the European Pillar of Social Rights, migration, poverty, and the role of civil society in the future of Europe – and internal relevance, including internal governance, members’ ownership, professionalisation of our network, and strengthening and engaging national members.
A word on our alliances

Social Platform’s members have a comprehensive understanding of social realities on the ground; they may be service providers, social economy enterprises, self-advocates, or human rights defenders, and they have direct experience of building inclusive societies in practice and can demonstrate what is possible. Together, we work with many other organisations covering important topics, ranging from human rights, to taxation, to development.

There are many areas where our work overlaps, and it is therefore important that we work in partnership to achieve the best results for our constituencies.

Thank you to all of the alliances we worked with in 2017! We look forward to continuing our cooperation in the future.

Civil Society Europe
EU Agency for Fundamental Rights Advisory Panel
European Coalition to End Violence against Women and Girls
European Commission Expert Group on Social Entrepreneurship
European Economic and Social Committee Liaison Group
European Migration Forum
European Minimum Income Network
European NGO Platform Asylum and Migration
European Semester Alliance
Europe We Want
Human Rights and Democracy Network
SDG Watch Europe
Tax Justice Europe
WeMove
A look under the hood

Members

Thank you to all of our members for your support, participation and enthusiasm in 2017!
Welcome to our newest family member!

SOS Children’s Villages International

SOS Children’s Villages International is the umbrella organisation of over 130 affiliated national SOS Children’s Villages associations worldwide. SOS Children’s Villages is a non-governmental and non-denominational child-focused organisation that provides direct services in the areas of care, education and health for children at risk of losing parental care, and those who have lost their parental care. The organisation also builds the capacity of children’s caregivers, their families and communities to provide adequate care.

SOS Children’s Villages advocates for the rights of children without parental care and those at risk of losing parental care. Founded in 1949, its operations are guided by the spirit of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children.

Meet the secretariat!

Kélig Puyet
Director

Helen Joseph
Communications & Media Officer

Gilberto Pelosi
Policy & Advocacy Officer

Silvana Roebstorf
Policy & Project Officer

Annica Ryngbeck
Policy & Advocacy Adviser

In 2017 we bid farewell to the following Secretariat members:

Valentina Caimi
Policy & Advocacy Adviser

Maxime Gehrenbeck
Project Officer

Ilias Papageorgiou
Administrative & Financial Officer
Introducing our new director!

In May 2017 Kélig Puyet took over the helm at Social Platform as Director. Previously she was Head of Global Advocacy at SOS Children’s Villages International where she worked for ten years following a career that started in Brussels in the policy team of European Youth Forum in 2003. Her experience in the last twenty years in the field of human rights, both in the EU and worldwide, helped her to acquire extensive experience of the civil society sector and learn about the impact that EU and national policies have on people in vulnerable situations.

What inspired you to join Social Platform as Director?
I am convinced that Social Platform, representing European rights- and value-based civil society organisations working in the social sector, has the potential to become a powerful source for change in Europe. Since school age, my choices (education, volunteering and career) have always been based on values, willingness to lead, and conviction that actions need to take a participatory approach. Throughout my experiences I have learned that, when motivated to act for change, individuals representing their organisations, their institutions or their constituencies can instill, develop, and start implementing what is needed for social progress. Collectively, Social Platform can effectively contribute to making this change happen. I’m proud and motivated to lead this work.

Describe yourself in a few words.
A post-modern human rights activist!

What is your number one goal as Director of Social Platform?
That Social Platform becomes a greater driving force for a more social Europe.

A recurring theme of EU-level debates in 2017 was the future of Europe. What do you think are the biggest opportunities for Social Europe?
The biggest threats that we face are growing inequalities and the increasing feeling of fear that drives people’s decisions and actions. In this context, Social Platform and other actors have the opportunity to show that more social policies can reverse those trends and bring back cohesion, trust, and hope in European societies.

The European Pillar of Social Rights was a key focus of Social Platform in 2017. Do you think it has the potential to bring real positive change to the lives of people in Europe?
As the Social Pillar is based on twenty principles that are at the core of people’s concerns, its effective implementation can indeed bring real positive change to the lives of people in Europe. This will require collective efforts and the assurance that European leaders recognise that social policies and the investment needed for their implementation are to be considered at the highest level of EU policy-making, included in EU governance mechanisms, and prioritised in the EU budget.
Facts and Figures

4,283 Facebook friends
32 Task Force meetings
4,108 Twitter followers
1 new member
4,283 Facebook friends
6 Steering Group meetings
6 Management Committee meetings
2 new Secretariat members
71 newsletters to 92,049 people

Top 3 most read editorials:
State of the Union sneak-peek!

The European Pillar of Social Rights – the ultimate test for Europe…and civil society

Mind the gap – when rhetoric meets reality

Top 3 most read blogs:
Social Pillar – back to reality (with a bump)
www.socialplatform.org/blog/social-pillar-back-to-reality-with-a-bump

The role of civil society in pushing forward gender equality
www.socialplatform.org/blog/the-role-of-civil-society-in-pushing-forward-gender-equality

“Can anybody hear me?!?” Dos and don’ts for reaching the media
www.socialplatform.org/blog/can-anybody-hear-me-dos-and-donts-for-reaching-the-media
Show me the money!

Here is a summary of our income and expenditure in 2017. At the time of publishing our 2017 accounts were awaiting approval by the General Assembly. Once approved the finalised accounts will be published at the Banque Nationale de Belgique (www.nbb.be/fr), where they will be available to the public.
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