socialplatform

Bi-annual meeting between the EP Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and the Social Platform

February 19, 2013

Social dimension of European Economic Governance:

Position paper

1. The Annual Growth Survey 2013 and the European and National Semester

a. General comments

Social Platform documents:

- Letter to the European Commission in view of the 2013 Annual Growth Survey
- Letter to the EPSCO Council of December 6-7, 2012
- Letter to the European Council of December 13-14, 2012
- Contribution to the Social Protection Committee Annual Report for 2012

Social Platform position:

1) What should have been in the AGS 2013:

We were happy to see how the AGS for 2012 identified "tackling unemployment and the social consequences of the crisis", including protecting the vulnerable, as one of the five priorities for the EU and member states. Unfortunately, member states did not respond as we believe they should have to this priority nor followed up on the lessons learned and the recommendations made last year.

We therefore called on the Commission for the 2013 Annual Growth Survey to:

I. Set as a main social priority *"Supporting inclusive and sustainable growth with adequate social protection systems, accessible public services, quality jobs and equality for all"*, to build on last year's priority on "tackling unemployment and the social consequences of the crisis";

II. Define clear guidelines - including on the cooperation with civil society organisations - on the governance of the next European semester and on the implementation of the Europe 2020 targets by member states through the 2013 AGS priorities, and follow up on their achievements.

How?

I. Include in the next AGS, our proposals for action by member states under the following three sub priorities to reach the main social priority above, as elaborated more in detail in the annex to this letter:
   1) Commit to social investment and reverse the negative social and economic consequences of austerity cuts in services of general interest and social infrastructures;
   2) Invest in the creation of and access to quality and sustainable employment and support quality job creation in the social sector, in particular as a response to demographic changes;
   3) Invest in equality in all policy areas to improve the results of implementing the poverty and social inclusion, employment and education target.

II. Give explicit and transparent guidance to member states in the AGS on the implementation and governance of the Europe 2020 Strategy

2) Shortcomings of the AGS 2013:

- While last year's priority on "tackling unemployment and the social consequences of the crisis" is taken up again this year, no concrete proposals or guidelines were formulated to address the on-going increase in inequality and poverty and to reach the poverty reduction target of 20 million by 2020.

- When it comes to employment, the AGS is calling for measures to "facilitate flexible working arrangements, reduce severance pay for standard contracts and simplify individual or collective dismissal procedures". We believe this is in contradiction with ensuring quality of work, decent minimum wages and job security.

- Modernisation of social protection systems is often interpreted as simply cutting these benefits or setting down more stringent requirements, while there is on the contrary a need for increasing investments. In practice, this makes it more difficult for people to have access to the different kinds of benefits.

- Contrary to last year, there was no progress report on the implementation of the Europe 2020 targets, while at the same time, the number of people living in poverty went op by 4 million since 2010 to almost 120 million and the unemployment rate increased to 10,7%.

3) The AGS should be completed with the following missing key actions:

- Develop a true and integrated poverty and social exclusion strategy at EU and national level.
- Invest in the creation of, access to and progression in quality and sustainable employment.
- Invest in services of general interest and social infrastructure, and strengthen social protection.
- Invest in equality through the adoption of the Article 19 Equal Treatment directive.
- Ensure a wide inclusive and democratic process to decide upon economic and social priorities.
- Mainstream social targets in all other policies and protect social budgets when developing policies to tackle macro-economic imbalances.

b. An integrated European Poverty Strategy and mainstreaming social targets in all other policies

Social Platform documents:

- Contribution to the Annual Convention of the European Platform Against Poverty and Social Exclusion of 2012
- Letter to the EPSCO Council of December 6-7, 2012
- Letter to the European Council of December 13-14, 2012
- Contribution to the Social Protection Committee Annual Report for 2012

Social Platform position:

1) An integrate European Poverty Strategy:

EU and its member states are not making any progress in achieving their Europe 2020 poverty target of 20 million. Member states at the moment are only willing to get 11 million people out of poverty and social exclusion by 2020 as the total of their current national poverty targets amounts to not even 11 million. At the same time Poverty has drastically increased to almost 120 million people and is deepening in many member states[1]. Current austerity policies at EU as well as national level are at least partially responsible.

[1] Eurostat December 3, 2012

We therefore call on the EU and member states to put social considerations on an equal footing with fiscal and economic priorities in all components of EU governance and of the European Semester.[2] This is the only road for Europe to efficiently and effectively combat inequalities and poverty for the well-being of all.

The EU and its member states must develop an integrated strategy to combat poverty and social exclusion at both European and national level as a core policy in itself that is evidence-based, with a clear set of tools and with an appropriate budget[3] to ensure an immediate and sustainable reduction of poverty. It should tackle the multidimensional nature of poverty and promote prevention through universal services as well as alleviation. We cannot wait for poverty and social exclusion to be challenged as a mere result of economic and employment policies.

As part of such a poverty strategy, member states urgently need to implement all pillars of the Active Inclusion Strategy. This requires the elaboration of a common definition of "adequate minimum income" as well as concrete measures to implement this through the adoption of an EU Directive on guaranteeing adequate minimum income for all. It would ensure universal income support throughout the life cycle, enhancing protection against social risks, and should be coordinated with an EU unemployment insurance package.

Furthermore, countries should be encouraged to set sub-targets for poverty reduction amongst groups most at risk of poverty or social exclusion[4]. Of particular importance would be a requirement on governments to monitor and report on how their policy choices are contributing to reducing poverty amongst groups most at risk. Where progress is not being made there should be a mechanism to have the policy initiatives revised so as to achieve the targets set.

The European Semester and the related tools need to take up their role in this integrated poverty strategy. The engagement of national social and antipoverty NGOs will be crucial to develop and implement effective Country Specific Recommendations. The Commission should follow up on how previous Recommendations in the field of poverty and social exclusion, education and employment have been implemented and should take action towards member states in case of non-implementation.

The European Convention of the European Platform Against Poverty and Social Exclusion must be an essential instrument in the implementation of the poverty target. It should take stock of the implementation of the poverty target in all countries, and provide a forum for reflection by the EU, the member states and civil society on the actions needed to improve the situation. The Convention should provide recommendations to be taken up by the Spring Council, and included in the European Semester through the Annual Growth Survey, the National Social Reports and National Reform Programmes and the country specific recommendations. This is to ensure that actions recommended by the Europe 2020 Flagship that is the European Platform Against Poverty and Social Exclusion, are implemented.

2) Mainstream social targets in all other policies

The success of social policies depends on how they are combined with and integrated in other policies. Therefore, the social impact of main policy actions across the EU, and in particular of financial and economic policies, has to be assessed on a regular basis, in close cooperation with social ministries, social departments at the Commission and the SPC. Although the EU and many member states carry out ex-ante social impact assessments, there is little evidence that this is being used systematically to "poverty/social inclusion-proof'' policies - the current austerity and macroeconomic measures in particular. This would create the space to mainstream social targets in all policy fields and create for example the opportunity to measure how EU-driven austerity package have impacted the social sphere of life, health and well-being, even if a policy as such cannot be called 'social policy'.

Very important in this context is the need to recognise and monitor the effect of cumulative 'hits' where a range of decisions are made that impact on the same group and that have a disproportionate

[2] In particular the Country Specific Recommendations on budget consolidations and macro-economic imbalances.

[3] No progress on the poverty target can be expected, without a commitment by member states to back the EC proposal of 25% of Cohesion on ESF and 20% of ESF on poverty reduction, EU Money for Poverty reduction

[4] The groups targeted in this process might vary somewhat from country to country but are likely to include children, migrants, ethnic minorities, working poor and homeless people and people experiencing discrimination on all grounds, including the six grounds protected by Article 19 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union as well as social status and other grounds included in the Article 21of the Charter of Fundamental Rights

effect. Furthermore, particular attention should be paid to the most disadvantaged groups in each country.

Social, economic and cultural rights are closely interwoven with the economic objectives of the EU.[5] As social exclusion increases the risk of experiencing discrimination[6] it is crucial to recognise social, economic and cultural rights to enable access to fundamental rights. Protection against discrimination on the grounds of social status must be equally ensured as with other grounds of discrimination.

c. Equality as a tool to achieve the EU goals for sustainable, economic and inclusive growth

Social Platform documents:

- Letter to the EPSCO Council, June 2010
- Letter to the European Council Working Group on Social Questions, November 2010
- Letter to the EPSCO Council of December 6-7, 2012

Social Platform position:

The EMPL Committee should:

- **Use the opportunities in its work during 2013** to raise the importance of investing and promoting equality and combating discrimination, through their different upcoming reports on issues such as access to healthcare, social housing and the implementation of the equal treatment directive (2000/78/EC)
- **Call for the enforcement of the equal treatment directive** in employment and occupation but also to call for a **completion of the law by providing equal treatment for goods and services** (the proposed Article 19 directive, in line with the 2000/78/EC directive) on all grounds of discrimination
  - Tackling discrimination within the labour market cannot be achieved without tackling what hinders access to the labour market itself (access to education, public transport, housing etc.)
  - See our letter to the EPSCO (Jun 2010)
- **Actively support the EC and the Presidencies to unblock the Council negotiations** when it comes to the Maternity leave directive which would contribute to combating the gender pay gap (by giving women full pay and protection against dismissal). It belongs to the LIBE Committee - but is a core concern for the Employment Committee too
  - See our Letter to the European Council Working Group on Social Questions (Nov 2010) and see also the campaign 'Two years overdue' by our member the European Women's Lobby
- **Continue to call for the recognition of social, economic and cultural rights to enable access to fundamental rights**. (We know that the EP support social rights e.g. call for a stronger mandate on social rights for the Fundamental Rights Agency – but the Council rejected it, the EP also support the reference to the Charter of Fundamental Rights in the proposal for the Rights and Citizenship programme but the Council is against it)

2. Commission proposal for a Social Investment Package

Social Platform documents:

- Letter to the European Council of December 13-14, 2012
- Contribution to the Annual Convention of the European Platform Against Poverty and Social Exclusion of 2012

[5] Opinion of the Management Board of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights on the European Commission's proposal for a new Multi-annual Framework (2013-2017) for the Agency. See also The European Parliament's report on the European Platform against poverty and social exclusion (2011/2052(INI)

[6] see Equinet Europe's opinion: *addressing poverty and discrimination: two sides of the one coin*, 2010.

Social Platform position:

Investing in long term cohesion instead of cutting down on social budgets

Member States need to commit social investment as a political strategy that aims to achieve sustainable and inclusive growth, an adequate support system to address the social impact of the economic crisis, the redistribution of wealth and prosperity, and intergenerational solidarity. This will ensure that social and economic policies are mutually supportive at both EU and member states level. Social investment should not only comprise services and infrastructure, but it should focus more broadly on investing in people's well-being.

We need a social investment package to prevent even larger economic and social costs from arising in the future. Such initiative should not only comprise services and infrastructure, but it should focus more broadly on investing in people's well-being.

A) **In the richest economic region of the world, it is now time for a social investment strategy in order to achieve sustainable and inclusive growth**, adequate support system to address the social impact of the economic crisis, the redistribution of wealth and prosperity, and intergenerational solidarity. This will ensure that long-term social investment and short-term fiscal consolidation are mutually supportive at both EU and MS level.

B) **As Commissioner Andor stressed in his speech on the Annual Growth Survey 2013, "Europe needs social investment to prevent even larger economic and social costs from arising in the future**." Also, last year already the Commission has pointed out that in-kind benefits would have the potential to reduce the poverty gap by 80% on average.[7]

C) **Invest in people's wellbeing**: While we welcome the Social Investment Package as a Commission's initiative for 2013, we consider that such initiative should not only comprise services and infrastructure, but that it should focus more broadly on investing in people's well-being.

D) **Therefore, EU and member states should invest in:**

- **Universal coverage**: Ensuring universal coverage at adequate levels through the life cycle in social protection and universal access to inclusive public services; inclusive education and life-long learning.

- **Investing in social infrastructures and health infrastructure and support**, such as good quality, accessible and affordable housing and care facilities

- **Introducing minimum income schemes** that should be recognised as a basic right for people to be protected from material deprivation and allowing for their participation in society;

- Providing enough resources for mechanisms combating social exclusion and poverty, such as **Active Inclusion Strategies** based on sufficient income support, access to quality services and inclusive labour markets, as well as other strategies targeting poverty and social inclusion;

- Ensuring sustainable financing in the context of fiscal consolidation by **supporting increased revenue through tax justice** with higher focus on progressive income tax, and on taxes on capital and environmental risks;

- **Promoting financial inclusion**, covering access to credit, savings and insurance, as well as the growing problem of over-indebtedness which has increased as a consequence of the financial and economic crisis and is also due to unfair credit and lending practices.[8] According to the European Commission, 30 million people in Europe do not have access to basic financial services[9].

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[7] AGS 2012 Progress Report on Europe 2020 - OECD (2011) *The impact of publicly provided services on the distribution of resources*; Report for the European Commission.
[8] European Commission, *Financial services provision and prevention of financial exclusion*, March 2008
[9] Flash Eurobarometer 282, *Consumers' Views on Switching Providers*

3. Protection of social budgets in the Multi-annual Financial Framework 2014-2020

a. Multiannual Financial Framework

Social Platform documents:

- Letter to the European Council of February 7-8, 2013
- Letter to the European Council of November 2012
- Letter to the EP in view of the vote on MFF

Social Platform position:

- **Having a strong EU budget is good for the implementation of EU common objectives at European and national level - keep the overall amount of the EU budget (1.025€ billion of commitments and 972.2€ billion of payments) as proposed by the Commission**
- **Support the 336 billion euro for the cohesion policy to respond to current and future needs**

b. Common Provinsion Regulation on structural Funds

Social Platform documents:

- Key messages to EP REGI Committee on CPR
- Letter to EP rapporteurs calling to uphold ex-ante conditinalities
- Open letter on partnership principle

Social Platform position:

- **Remove the macro-economic conditionality from all structural funds**
- **Thematic priorities of the EU structural funds: Use in a more strategic way EU money to achieve the social targets of the Europe 2020 strategy**
- **Separate the allocations to the ESF from the one to the food aid programme**
- **Include civil society organisations as full partners in the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programmes (Partnership Contract)**
- **Uphold the General Ex-Ante Conditionality in the Annex IV of the proposal on the General regulation COM (2011) 615, in particular:**
  - Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty
    - uphold the inclusion of "measures for the shift from residential to community-based care"
  - Anti-discrimination
  - Gender equality
  - Disability

c. European Social Fund

Social Platform documents:

- Letter to the European Council of February 7-8, 2013
- Letter to the European Council of November 2012

- Key messages on the ESF to the EMPL Committee and amendments (February 2012)

Social Platform position:

- **Ensure the minimum allocation of 25% of the cohesion policy funds to the European Social Fund (ESF) and earmark 20% of the ESF to social inclusion and the fight against poverty**

d. EU Program for social change and innovation

Social Platform documents:

- Key messages to EMPL Committee on EUPSCI

Social Platform position:

We are fine with the report adopted in the EMPL Committee. However, **we call on the rapporteur and the EMPL Committee during trilogue to improve the definition of social enterprise by deleting**:

- **"innovative"** in the reference to the provision of services or goods which generate a social return and in the reference to the method of production of goods and services;
- "**measurable**" from the achievement of positive social impact that has to be the primary objective of a social enterprise.

We do not consider acceptable that a pre-condition for social enterprises to receive funding from the EUPSCI Program is to prove their innovative character. It is an eccessive burden for potential beneficiaries which is not linked with the objectives of the programme, because only part of the budget is dedicated to social innovation and social policy experimentations.
Also the pre-condition that a social enterprise proves that it achieves „measurable" positive social impact is not acceptable, considering that at this stage there is no commonly accepted methodology at EU level to measure the social impact.

4. Promoting the investment in services of general interest and social entrepreneurship, and the strengthening of social protection

a. General comments

Social Platform documents:

- Contribution to the Annual Convention of the European Platform Against Poverty and Social Exclusion of 2012
- Letter to the EPSCO Council of December 6-7, 2012
- Contribution to the Social Protection Committee Annual Report for 2012
- Messages to the Informal EPSCO Council on social services under pressure, April 2012

Social Platform position:

Invest in services of general interest and strengthen social protection

In the richest economic region of the world, it is now time for a long-term social investment strategy. Last year the Commission pointed out that in-kind benefits would have the potential to

reduce the poverty gap by 80% on average.[10] Services of general interest have a wide range of long-term gains, often in the form of avoided costs. Investing in prevention, early and integrated action and social infrastructures is crucial and economically sound.[11] Empirical evidence shows that maintaining sufficient level of public spending in social, health and educational infrastructures and social protection can not only help improve the social situation but also would support growth and save costs in the long-term.[12] Cutting social and health services and care will lower their quality, not meet the current demographic challenges and threaten the economic recovery prospects for Europe as they are sectors with a high potential of job creation.

Therefore, the EU and member states should invest in:

- Universal coverage: Ensuring universal and targeted coverage at adequate levels through the life cycle in social protection, income support and universal access to inclusive public services; inclusive education and life-long learning.
- Quality, accessible and affordable social and health services and infrastructures, in particular in the field of education, housing, care, health and employment.
- Promoting financial inclusion, covering access to bank accounts, credit, savings and insurance, as well as the growing problem of over-indebtedness which has increased as a consequence of the financial and economic crisis and is also due to unfair credit and lending practices.[13] According to the European Commission, 30 million people in Europe do not have access to basic financial services.[14]
- Care policies that both ensure that the fundamental rights of care users are respected and that care workers enjoy quality employment and decent working conditions.[15]

b. Social Entrepreneurship

Social Platform documents:

- Social Platform position on the Communication on a Social Business Initiative

Social Platform position:

- **Facilitate access to private funding**: we support the creation of a European Social Investment Fund to help attract private investors, but think it premature to set out an EU regulatory framework for national social investment funds.

- **Facilitate access to EU funds**: The new Structural Funds and the EU Program for Social Change and Innovation in particular.

- **Increase visibility of social enterprises**: We consider it premature to develop a European label for social enterprises, considering the diversity of concepts, legal frameworks and level of development across the EU. We encourage a step by approach and welcome the proposal to create a data-base of existing labels at national level. The Commission, in cooperation with relevant stakeholders, including CSOs, could issue a guide containing non binding criteria that could be taken account by member states while defining a national label.

- **Reinforce the managerial capacities, professionalism and networking of social businesses**: Both formal and informal education should play a pivotal role in raising interest in entrepreneurship, specifically social entrepreneurship, at an early age. Encouraging creativity, self-confidence, critical thought, societal values and participation.

[10] AGS 2012 Progress Report on Europe 2020 - OECD (2011) *The impact of publicly provided services on the distribution of resources*; Report for the European Commission.
[11] See in particular the evaluation of supported housing programme in the UK (Birmingham)
[12] Many research is now conducted to measure the economic impact of investing in social infrastructures. See for instance for the social housing sector "The case for public investment in affordable housing in London"
[13] See *Social Platform recommendations on financial inclusion*, November 2012
[14] Flash Eurobarometer 282, *Consumers' Views on Switching Providers*
[15] See *Social Platform recommendations on care*

- **Improving the legal environment**: We do not support the creation of a European statute for social enterprises, but do call for a European statute for associations, foundations and mutual societies, and the revision of the European statute for cooperatives.

c. Access to healthcare

Social Platform documents:

- Recommendations on Care

Social Platform position:

I. FOR CARE PRACTICES AND POLICIES THAT RESPECT THE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS OF CARE USERS, PROMOTE SOCIAL INCLUSION AND QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ALL

- The EU should accede to the Council of Europe and UN human rights treaties and implement the Beijing Platform for Action.

- In line with articles 1, 7, 24 and 26 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, enhance member states' efforts towards the transition from institutional to community-based care for people with disabilities and children. Develop and disseminate a quality framework for community-based services building on the Voluntary European Quality Framework for Social Services of General Interest.

II. FOR INFORMAL CARE GIVERS TO HAVE AN ADEQUATE BALANCE BETWEEN CARE, WORK AND PRIVATE LIFE

- Monitor the implementation of the Barcelona targets and targets for the provision of care facilities for other dependents, in light of the renewed European Pact for Gender Equality 2011-2020.

- Develop legislation and measures to reconcile work, family and private life for women and men, such as a carer's leave directive and a coherent framework for all types of care leaves (maternity, paternity, parental, adoption, non-child related and filial leave), including the promotion of flexible working time arrangements by choice.

- Develop recommendations on legislative recognition and minimum standards of support to informal carers, including varying systems providing financial rewards, pension and recognition of skills acquired informally or non-formally, to avoid social exclusion and poverty among informal and family carers who are very much at risk of this and also to prevent discrimination by association.

III. FOR QUALITY CARE SERVICES

- In line with the Europe 2020 strategy, encourage member states to invest in the care sector, both in terms of service infrastructure and quality job creation, covering the spectrum of care throughout the life cycle, in particular in the new member states where the growth of the sector is under the EU-27 average.

- Use EU structural funds to develop high quality and individualized care services.

- Develop an adequate legal framework that respects the specific characteristics of social and care services and that esnures that the provision of these services is not driven by the profit making, but by the general interest and the principle of solidarity.

IV. FOR DECENT WORKING CONDITIONS AND QUALITY EMPLOYMENT IN CARE

- Establish a common reference for qualifications and training in the care sector, to define clear career paths and to raise the professional status of professional carers.

- Facilitate the anticipation, due to demographic and societal changes, of future needs in terms of employment and training of the care workforce, including monitoring and forecasting possible labour force and skills shortages, also by the means of the European Social Fund and other Community programmes, in close cooperation with member states and relevant civil society stakeholders.

- Promote a Charter on professional care givers' rights, reinforcing their right to decent employment, work-life balance, and access to specific services such as counselling and training, and recognition of qualifications, including those acquired informally or non-formally.

- Ensure decent working conditions by guaranteeing migrant care workers equal treatment comparable to the rights of EU citizens including pay, working hours, leave, social security, access to education and training and rights at work, in addition to collective bargaining and unionisation. Ascertain the portability of their rights and benefits when moving to another country or to the country of origin.

d. Social housing

Social Platform documents:

- Contribution to the Social Protection Committee Annual Report for 2012

Social Platform position:

Inequalities in access to housing and increasing homelessness:

Housing affordability is worsening in many contexts, and austerity measures are impacting upon housing support and homeless services in a range of countries. 5.2 % of the EU population live in severe housing deprivation. 11 % live in a household where the total housing costs represent more than 40% of the total disposable household income - rising to 26% in the market-rate rental sector. [16]

Increasingly unsolvable housing demand (due to cuts in social and housing allowances, rise of long term unemployment) and supply constraint (due to cuts in public spending for affordable house building and higher taxes on social housing organisations) combined with rising energy prices at the global and local level, make it increasingly difficult for a significant part of the population to find decent and affordable accommodation.

The number of Europeans facing rental or mortgage arrears is increasing in many member states. 10.9% were unable to make a scheduled rental or mortgage payment in the past year[17]. In Spain, 350,000 families have already been evicted from their homes since 2008 because they cannot repay their mortgage. Those evicted must still pay the remaining debt as well as judicial fees. Measures were introduced to protect certain households but the target group is very limited, leaving many in a very vulnerable position.[18] In England there has been a 33% rise in court orders to evict private tenants in England over the past two years[19]. High unemployment, underemployment, cuts to housing benefit and rising rents (as demand for rental property increases) are contributing to this situation.

Homelessness remains an unacceptable reality in all EU member states. There is evidence of increasing levels of homelessness over the past 5 years in at least 15 member states[20]. In Portugal, Spain and Greece service providers estimate an increase of 25-30% since the onset of the financial crisis. In parts of the UK, the progress in reducing the levels that has been made in recent decades is being reversed. At the same time, some governments, such as those of Finland, Scotland and the Netherlands have been successful in reducing homelessness by implementing effective strategies. It is

[16] EU SILC/Eurostat AND Eurofound, 3nd European Quality of Life Survey - Overburden means that housholds dedicate at least 40% of their disposable income to housing related expenditures: rent, mortgages, utilities, maintenance.
[17] Eurofound, 3nd European Quality of Life Survey- Quality of life in Europe: Impacts of the crisis
[18] http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-20299384
[19] Crisis (2012) See http://www.crisis.org.uk/news.php/495/private-tenants-see-eviction-orders-soar
[20] FEANTSA Report 2012, On the way home?

important that all member states invest in such strategies to tackle homelessness, and avert the human, societal and economic costs that it entails.

5. Investment in the creation of, access to and progression in quality and sustainable employment

a. General comments

Social Platform documents:

- Contribution to the informal EPSCO in Ireland, February 7-8, 2013

Social Platform position:

I. Access to the labour market - Improve access to jobs for those furthest away from the labour market

We call on member states to build inclusive labour markets to ensure access to employment for all, to facilitate progressive reintegration into society and the labour market of those furthest away, and to enhance their employability.

How?

a. **Promote at the EU level and implement on national, regional and local level integrated active inclusion measures, as called for by the Commission in its Recommendation of 2008.**[21] This requires combining the equally important strands of adequate minimum income schemes, inclusive labour markets (including placement services) and access to high-quality social services.

b. **Provide quality flanking services** (a.o. child care and transport) **and other services** (a.o. housing support, debt counselling and health services) which are not just labour market oriented.

c. **Urgently adopt the Article 19 Equal Treatment directive** which would complete the equal treatment legislation by providing protection for goods and services (in line with the Racial Equality directive) on all grounds of discrimination.

d. **Invest in personalised approaches through employment and recruitment services**, including personalised job counselling. Such approaches start from the needs and circumstances of the person, recognising individual barriers particularly for different target groups (a.o. long-term unemployed people, single parents, migrants, people with disabilities and homeless people).

e. **Ensure decent income levels for job seekers and those who cannot access employment**, through unemployment benefits or other forms of social protection. This will keep people socially included, which is a precondition for their inclusion in employment.

f. **Invest in quality education and training, and request from employment services to recognise and validate skills, competences and knowledge acquired through informal and non-formal learning**, to achieve equal opportunities, social inclusion and full participation. Ensure that education and training are accessible to all, without harassment, discrimination or bullying and promote diversity.

g. **Improve the transition of young people from school and training systems to the labour market** through the adoption of a Youth Guarantee and through cooperation between educational establishments, governments, educational and social service providers and social partners.

[21] EC Recommendation of October 3, 2008 on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market

II. Creation of jobs - Support job creation, in particular in the social sector and through the social economy

We call on member states to invest in the creation of quality and sustainable jobs, particularly in the social and health care services sector and in the social economy, including jobs that are appropriate for people with lower skills and accessible to people furthest from the labour market.

How?

SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES

a. **Invest in increasing the availability of affordable and quality social and health services and facilities**, ensuring stable funding and investment in public infrastructures and providing qualified staff.

b. **Provide adequate information on employment opportunities, improve salaries and working conditions and provide necessary training and lifelong learning opportunities** to create and promote jobs in the social and health sector.

c. **Invest in the potential of non-profit organisations in delivering quality social and health services**.

SOCIAL ECONOMY

d. **Ensure a greater presence of financial support for social economy initiatives** for developing employment in quality, accessible and affordable care services in the 2014-2020 Operational Programmes to be financed by the Structural Funds.

e. **Support social economy initiatives, particularly Work Integration Social Enterprises** (WISEs), who offer training and employment to those having the hardest time accessing the labour market.

EMPLOYMENT IN GENERAL

f. **Provide financial support to test social and labour market policy innovations**, in order to better anticipate and develop the job creation potential.

g. **Promote access to, and increase the availability of, micro-financing for business start-ups**, especially with regard to unemployed, socially excluded and other vulnerable people, as well as existing micro-enterprises and social enterprises.

III. Working poor - Tackle the growing problem of working poor and value the role of quality employment and social policies in improving the situation

We call on member states to invest in quality and sustainable employment to counter the increase of in-work poverty, precariousness, indecent working conditions and labour market segmentation.

How?

a. **Establish decent minimum wages in all member states** to protect people against in-work poverty and raise the level of these wages where insufficient.

b. **Provide on-going (financial) support for people with a vulnerable background and help them bridging transitions into work**, to ensure that adequate income and access to services are maintained and to help them to keep their job.

c. **Address labour market segmentation by improving employment protection and working conditions**, in particular in case of temporary and part-time jobs and in low-wage sectors. Ensure that no one has to take up a part-time job involuntarily.

d. **Ensure access to affordable, quality services such as childcare, healthcare and social housing**, which are essential in supporting those who are experiencing in-work poverty. These services should therefore be protected from austerity measures.

e. **Ensure policy measures, including in the financial and economic field, to be "poverty-proof" by assessing their social impact on a regular basis.** Avoid cumulative 'hits' where a range of decisions are made that impact on the same group and that have a disproportionate effect. Particular attention should be paid to the most disadvantaged groups in each country.

IV. Progression in employment - Use the full potential of workers by removing barriers to their progression in employment

We call on member states to provide adequate support for people, in particular to those who are most vulnerable, to progress in employment and to ensure that discriminatory practices in the field of employment are fully and effectively prohibited.

How?

a. **Adopt the Parliament's proposal for a revised Maternity Leave directive**; ensuring women keep their full salary throughout their leave, strengthen their legal protection against dismissal and working time arrangement on return to work.[22]

b. **Provide accessible, affordable and good quality public care facilities and services for children** to allow people with care responsibility to reconcile progression in employment and family life in line with the 2002 Barcelona targets.

c. **Ensure equal access and opportunities to training and up skilling as a part of a life-long learning approach**, especially for the low-skilled and other vulnerable groups, to achieve equal opportunities for all. This needs to be combined with the promotion of mechanisms that systematically document the skills, competences and knowledge acquired outside the formal education system and promote the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

d. **Enforce the Framework Directive[23] for equal treatment in employment and occupation** which prohibits direct and indirect discrimination, harassment, instructions to discriminate and victimisation on the grounds of religion or belief, age or sexual orientation.

e. **Promote the investment in diversity training for employers** that can result in equal opportunities and increased profit.[24]

V. Good governance of employment policies – Ensure the involvement of civil society organisations in their areas of expertise

We call on member states to involve civil society organisations in policies and programmes concerning: access to employment for those furthest away from the labour market; the issue of in-work poverty that involves not only contractual relationships but other policies than employment; discrimination in the work place and promotion of equality and non-discrimination to tackle unemployment; under-employment; and pay gaps.

Non-governmental organisations have an expertise in dealing with specific issues of the labour market that can complement the valuable work of the Social Partners.

How?

a. **Establish appropriate cooperative and participative structures at all government levels that involve different organisations:**
   - organisations representing people in poverty and organisations working with them;
   - organisations that represent service providers, end users and organisations working on the issue of health promotion and social protection;

[22] See Social Platform letter to the Council, November 2010 AND the joint EWL/ETUC letter sent to Heads of States and governments, November 2012
[23] The Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000
[24] Read more on the Commission's website on Diversity Charters

- organisations promoting equality and non-discrimination and organisations working on the issue of discrimination in the workplace and women's organisations;
- organisations aiming at ensuring access to all to education and training, and in particular, those who tackle discrimination as this has a very negative impact on under-achievement, early-school leaving, unemployment and mental health issues.

b. **Foster cooperation between Public Employment Services and civil society organisations** representing those furthest from the labour market or active in the social sector or social economy.

c. **Acknowledge the involvement of civil society in the processes by providing appropriate funding and structural support,** including through the next Multi-annual Financial Framework and the European Social Fund in particular.

b. Information and consultation of workers, anticipation and management of restructuring processes

Social Platform documents:

- Contribution to the informal EPSCO in Ireland, February 7-8, 2013

Social Platform position:

Social Platform positions in line with the recommendations of the EP report on information and consultation of workers, anticipation and management of restructuring processes:

- ***EP Recommendation 2 on the objective***
  - Social Platform calls for good governance of employment policies – Ensure the involvement of civil society organisations in their areas of expertise

- ***EP Recommendation 4 on long-term strategic planning, adaptability and employability***
  - Social Platform calls for inclusive labour markets to ensure access to employment for all, to facilitate progressive reintegration into society and the labour market of those furthest away, and to enhance their employability.

  - Social Platform calls for the provision of adequate support for people, in particular to those who are most vulnerable, to progress in employment and to ensure that discriminatory practices in the field of employment are fully and effectively prohibited.

- ***EP Recommendation 5 on anticipation of employment and skills needs***
  - Social Platform calls for investment in quality and sustainable employment to counter the increase of in-work poverty, precariousness, indecent working conditions and labour market segmentation.

  - Social Platform calls for the provision of adequate support for people, in particular to those who are most vulnerable, to progress in employment and to ensure that discriminatory practices in the field of employment are fully and effectively prohibited.

- ***EP Recommendation 8 on minimising internal social costs through a social plan***
  - Social Platform calls for inclusive labour markets to ensure access to employment for all, to facilitate progressive reintegration into society and the labour market of those furthest away, and to enhance their employability.

  - Social Platform calls for investment in quality and sustainable employment to counter the increase of in-work poverty, precariousness, indecent working conditions and labour market segmentation.

- ***EP Recommendation 10 on minimising external economic and social and environmental impacts***

- Social Platform calls for good governance of employment policies – Ensure the involvement of civil society organisations in their areas of expertise

- ***Recommendation 11 on public support***
  - Social Platform calls for investment in the creation of quality and sustainable jobs, particularly in the social and health care services sector and in the social economy, including jobs that are appropriate for people with lower skills and accessible to people furthest from the labour market

  - Social Platform calls for investment in quality and sustainable employment to counter the increase of in-work poverty, precariousness, indecent working conditions and labour market segmentation.

  - Social Platform calls for the provision of adequate support for people, in particular to those who are most vulnerable, to progress in employment and to ensure that discriminatory practices in the field of employment are fully and effectively prohibited.