March 6, 2014

To: Ministers for Employment and Social Affairs

Letter to the EPSCO Council of March 10, 2014

An inclusive European 2020 strategy requires the prioritisation of well-designed policies to confront social challenges

Dear Minister,

At your next meeting you will provide political guidance on employment and social policies in the context of the current European Semester. You will also take stock of the Europe 2020 strategy while looking at the social situation in Europe.

While it has been said that the EU is gradually recovering from the economic crisis, the social crisis is still far from being over and even deepening further.

It is clear that we are no-where near to reaching the goals concerning poverty and this will not change if the focus stays on economic growth without ensuring it is sustainable as well as inclusive. The EU and member states cannot go on with pursuing financial and economic priorities and austerity, without taking proper account of the social implications of current macroeconomic policies and the impact on the wellbeing of people. Moreover fiscal adjustment is too often conducted at the detriment of social investment, thus **leading to a dismantling of social models in the EU and pushing people further away from the European project.**

The Commission report on *Employment and Social Developments in Europe 2013* already concluded that "a return to the path towards the Europe 2020 targets will require well-designed policies to confront the employment and social challenges".

This is why we call on you to start to change the situation in the current European Semester:

1) **Provide guidance to the member states on their 2014 National Reform Programmes** (NRPs), requiring them to prioritise ambitious national targets for reducing poverty and social exclusion as well as for increasing quality employment. This should be accompanied by putting in place and reporting on concrete actions to achieve this, through the Programmes. To ensure the success of such social policies, member states should ensure that these are enabled, and not undermined, by economic and financial policies, in particular by the ex-ante coordination of different policy reforms. Social investment is essential for an inclusive growth as well as for a smart and sustainable one.
2) **Provide guidance on the mid-term review of the Europe 2020 strategy**, in view of revising the EU's macro-economic approach and of repositioning the strategy as a driving force for achieving a social Europe. The EU should serve the wellbeing of all people, in particular by reducing poverty and social exclusion as well as by increasing quality employment.
3) **Provide guidance on true civil and social dialogue**, in particular in the context of the NRPs and the mid-term review. Such dialogue has to be about working together in the development, implementation and evaluation of policies and has to take place at all levels and in all stages of the processes, to ensure their effectiveness as well as their legitimacy.

We call on you to consider our proposals during your discussions in view of advocating for the reprioritising of the Europe 2020 strategy social objectives and to send recommendations in that sense to the Spring Council.

Yours sincerely,

Heather Roy
President

Pierre Baussand
Director

Social Platform is the largest civil society alliance fighting for social justice and participatory democracy in Europe. Consisting of 47 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.