

Taking small steps in the right direction

Annual Report 2013

socialplatform

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Editorial

We are proud to present Social Platform's Annual Report for 2013: a short reflection on our many activities throughout the year.

2013 saw the continuation of the economic and social crisis that started 6 years ago. By the end of the year Europe saw a very slight return to economic growth (in terms of GDP), however after many years of austerity measures and policies focused solely on growth and jobs there has been no lessening of the social crisis.

In fact the social crisis has continued to grow. By 2013, almost 125 million people were living in poverty and almost 11% of people were without a job. Social divergences continued to increase (not only within member states but also between them, and not just those experiencing austerity) and inequalities continued unabated. Throughout Europe we have seen a growing alienation and disconnect between leaders and society and a rise in social tensions. We have also witnessed a marginalization of civil society in the decision making process over the last number of years.

Although our EU leaders may welcome this slow return to growth we, civil society, know that the harsh effects of the social crisis will take a lot longer to recover from. It is easy to get disheartened in such a climate and to feel that this continuing uphill struggle is perhaps just too big a battle. The current environment seems inhospitable to civil society when our institutional structures, laws and policies continue to put growth and economics above the well-being of people. If our leaders continue to think only about money while



ignoring the voice of the people then it may seem that our vision of a socially just Europe will continue to be just outside of our reach.

And yet we must not overlook the small steps that we are taking in the right direction. As our report shows in 2013 the work of Social Platform (and others in civil society) managed to make meaningful advancements towards a Europe that will be able to recover not just from the economic crisis but also the social crisis.

These achievements included:

- An EU budget (for 2014-2020) that recognizes social objectives - for the first time the European Social Fund includes "promoting social inclusion and combating poverty (and any discrimination)" as one of its four thematic objectives. 20% of the fund must also be allocated to investment priorities

under this objective. These resources can help reverse unacceptably high rates of poverty and unemployment if implemented properly.

- In 2013 for the first time ever we brought two policy strands closer together - migration and poverty. We highlighted the poverty trap of migration at the European Platform Against Poverty and Social Exclusion (EPAP) convention and showed how anti-poverty strategies need to also take into account the social exclusion of migrants.
- 2013 also saw our call for household income, inequality, poverty, unemployment and young people who are not in education, employment or training to be included in the Scoreboard of Employment and Social Indicators (which has been put forward as a tool for the social dimension of the Economic and Monetary Union). This was our minimum requirement for the economic and financial dimension of the EMU to start to be rebalanced with a genuine social dimension.
- In 2013 our campaign to ensure that the specific mission of social, health and other services provided directly to the person are safeguarded in internal market rules was also successful. The new Public Procurement Directive included many of our demands which will ensure that profit making does not prevail over the public interest.

We invite you to read our report and to reflect on these and our other achievements yourself.

We must take heart from these successes and continue our good work. We must also however find new ways and methods to aid our fight. That is why in 2013 after many months of reflection, shared thinking and refinement we launched our new Strategic Orientation to guide us through the next 7 years. We set ourselves 6 key objectives which will focus our work and help us achieve our vision of a socially just and cohesive Europe based on our values. Our strategic objectives include: socio-economic justice, people centered services, equality for all, quality employment, social protection and civil dialogue. All of our work will be underpinned by a human rights based approach. These long-term objectives will require a coordinated approach and we will work closely across our 6 objectives to ensure that our efforts are aligned to have the maximum impact.

As Social Platform we know that the importance of civil society will not diminish over the coming years. It will be crucial that we continue to empower and inform our members and societies to strengthen our fight for good governance and social justice. In 2014 and over the next number of years we look forward to continuing to serve as a voice for the people and to working closely with our members to implement this new orientation. Together we must ensure that the voice of civil society, and the people we represent, is not suppressed. And together we must ensure that the space in which we express our concerns does not shrink but instead develops so that we can finally see true participatory democracy.

Heather Roy, President and **Pierre Baussand, Director**

Our strategic orientation



In 2013, after many months of shared thinking, reflection and refinement Social Platform adopted its new strategic orientation for 2014-2020. This new orientation outlined:

Our vision

A socially just and cohesive Europe based on our values.

Our mission

To advocate for and raise awareness on policies that bring social progress to all in Europe.

Our values

Our work is grounded in a rights based approach encompassing human dignity, gender equality and equality for all, respect for diversity, solidarity, freedom, social justice, sustainability, transparency and participatory democracy.

Our objectives

- **People centred services for the common good: ensure universal access to quality, affordable and accessible public and social services**
- **Participation in decision making: ensure that civil society organisations are involved in decision making processes at EU level**
- **Strong social protection and welfare systems**
- **Socio-economic justice: eliminate all forms of socio-economic inequalities**
- **Equality for all: act for the eradication of discrimination and for the realisation of equality, including equality between women and men, in all areas of life**
- **Decent work and quality employment**

Our achievements



■ Rights

During 2013 we focused on the rights of people in some of the most vulnerable situations; victims of bias violence¹ and those that choose or are forced to migrate. It is essential that the EU and member states ensure that these people are treated with dignity and that their fundamental rights are respected.

Uniting People - Uniting Policies

In 2013 we succeeded in not only bringing different people together but also in bringing different policy areas together. For the first time ever we brought together heads of the three EU agencies (Fundamental Rights Agency FRA, European Institute of Gender Equality EIGE, and Eurofound) bringing their work on inclusion, employment, rights and gender closer to each other and to the work of Social Platform. We highlighted the poverty trap of migration at the EPAP Convention showing how anti-poverty strategies need to also take into account the social exclusion of migrants. And for the first time ever DG Home invited us to co-organise a hearing on the future of Migration and Asylum in Europe as an official part of the post-Stockholm consultation ahead of the Commission's Communication. At this event we brought together key European NGOs working in the field of migration and asylum to enable their voices to be heard.

1 **Bias violence** is a prejudice motivated act that occurs when a perpetrator targets a victim because of his or her perceived membership in a certain social group.



Ms Virginija Langbakk (Director for EIGE), Mr Morten Kjaerum (Director of the FRA) and Ms Erika Mezger (Deputy Director of Eurofound)

Recognition of hate crime and bias violence

Our call to broaden current EU hate crime to cover more grounds of bias violence other than just racism and xenophobia, which is based on our position 'towards EU actions against all forms of bias violence' (2012), was taken on board by the Fundamental Rights Agency in their Hate Crime Conference conclusions.

■ Civil Dialogue

Civil society represents the interests of people who are generally less heard in society: young and older people, women, children, people living in poverty, people with disabilities, gays and lesbians, migrants etc. In 2013 we worked towards ensuring that these different groups were given the opportunity to address not only EU leaders but also to their national level leaders.

Connecting people

Ahead of the Greek EU Presidency we organised a [Networking Visit and Conference in Athens in December 2013](#). We involved our members' national members in preparing key messages to the Greek Minister of Labour, Social Security and Welfare. The conference was one of the first times civil society had come together to meet with the Minister. The key messages from the conference provided recommendations relevant to the Greek EU presidency priorities and for helping improve the situation in Greece and other member states.

Involving people in EU decisions

June 2013 saw a unique gathering of European citizens and NGO representatives from all major civil society sectors discussing how to create a fairer, more socially-focused and sustainable future for Europe.



Heather Roy (President Social Platform) and Yiannis Vrotsis (Greek Minister of Labour, Social Security and Welfare)

Organised by the Civil Society Contact Group, of which we are a member, the assembly brought together the ultimate stakeholders of decision making, the citizens, just days before the European Council of Heads of State and Government met in Brussels. For the first time in the 60 years since the creation of the EU, the citizens' summit managed to channel Europeans' voices and concerns into concrete [urgent demands directed at EU leaders](#): minimum income; political and economic transparency; adequate public care; reduced inequalities and enhanced integration; real and lasting gender equality; higher levels of environmental protection; and fair and human-faced global trade.

Inclusion

In 2013 we focused on ensuring that social inclusion and combating poverty were at the top of the EU political agenda. With the continuous increase of people living in poverty, affecting almost 125 million people in Europe, it is clear that we are further than ever from reaching the EU's target of lifting 20 million people out of poverty by 2020. We also pushed the EU to reprioritise social policies, in particular in the context of European Economic Governance and the Social Dimension of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU).

Five indicators to identify social imbalances

The Scoreboard of Employment and Social Indicators, put forward as a tool for the social dimension of the EMU, included, as we called for, indicators on household income, inequality, poverty, unemployment and young people who are not in education, employment or training



Irish EU Presidency informal EPSCO Council

(NEETs). This was a [minimum requirement](#) to begin to rebalance the economic and financial dimension of the EMU with a genuine social dimension. The aim of the Scoreboard is to serve as an analytical tool for identifying major employment and social problems. Our call for developing social standards for upwards social convergence was also explicitly reflected in the [position of the European Parliament](#) on the Social Dimension of the EMU.

Rebalancing economic and social policies

In July 2013 we participated in an informal EPSCO council meeting organised by the Lithuanian EU Presidency, as the only representative of European social NGOs, next to the representatives of the social partners. Discussing the Commission's recommendation on investing in children, [we called](#)

[for](#) the coordination of all policies affecting children's lives and to ensure sufficient financial support for their effectiveness. We also presented our [position on the social dimension of the EMU](#) calling for a rebalancing of the financial and economic dimension of the European Union with a stronger social dimension. As an [outcome](#) of the informal EPSCO, member states agreed to the need for more coordination of economic and social policies, in order for these policies not to contradict but to strengthen each other.

■ Employment

By the end of 2013 over 12% of the EU working age population was unemployed. Fixed term contracts, zero-hours contracts, involuntary part-time and flexible working patterns, attempts to replace real jobs with traineeships, as well as low and inadequate wages have become characteristic of the labour-market. Furthermore, a job no longer guarantees a decent income: the number of people employed but living in poverty kept on increasing. Against this background, we concentrated our work on the investment in the creation of, access to, and progression in quality and sustainable employment.

Making the labour market more inclusive

In February 2013 we participated in the informal EPSCO Council organised by the Irish EU Presidency and presented our [position on social exclusion and the labour market](#), explaining how employment alone

cannot solve poverty but has to be part of a broader active inclusion approach. It was therefore positive to see how the social and employment Ministers emphasised the importance of active inclusion strategies, combining income support, activation and services, in providing an integrated response to the multi-faceted needs of jobless households. In line with what we said, the [Irish Presidency](#) also stated how *“income support, effective pathways to work and efficient health and social services are all crucial elements of the active inclusion strategies needed to bring about a Europe with a fair, inclusive and sustainable economy”*.

■ Services

Being able to access quality and affordable services can help people enjoy their fundamental rights, balance work and family life, find and maintain a job, and prevent or alleviate poverty and social exclusion. In 2013 we worked with our members on a range of services related issues and in particular we continued our work on the new Public Procurement Directive and the Directive on access to basic bank accounts as a way to bring more social requirements into the internal market. We also developed our work on social innovation adopting our [position paper](#) in December 2013.

Promoting social objectives in Public Procurement

Social, health and other services provided directly to the person have objectives, types of users and characteristics different to other services. Since 2010

we have been advocating for the specific mission of these services to be safeguarded in internal market rules and to ensure that profit making does not prevail over the public interest. In March 2014 the new Public Procurement Directive was adopted and in the final text most of our demands were included such: the recognition of alternatives to public procurement for social and health services, simpler and more tailored rules for social and health services, the promotion of the “most economically advantageous tender” (a set of criteria which includes the price or cost and may include qualitative, environmental and / or social considerations) as the main criterion to award contracts, and the possibility of having reserved contracts for operators whose main aim is the social and professional integration of people with disabilities and disadvantaged people. These simpler rules are the first big achievement for this sector.

Fighting financial exclusion and discrimination

2013 marked the first positive steps in the fight against financial exclusion and discrimination. We know that discrimination on the grounds of age, disability and sex are still widespread when people try to access financial services (such as bank accounts and insurance). Based on our [position paper](#) on financial inclusion we advocated to extend the scope of the Commission’s proposal on basic payment accounts to give the right to open a bank account not only to people who are legally resident in one country of the EU, but also to people residing in the EU who are financially excluded. Not having access to a bank account impacts directly

on how included a person is in society. It can affect access to employment, buying a house, receiving social protection benefits and even make bill payments more costly. The text agreed by the negotiating team of the Parliament and the Council for the new Directive has been endorsed by the Parliament in plenary in April 2014 and is in line with our demands.

■ EU Budget

2013 saw the member states vote on the budget for the EU from 2014 to 2020. The EU budget is composed of a wide range of programmes and funds which support hundreds of thousands of beneficiaries that contribute to the implementation of EU policies. We focused our [advocacy activities](#) on the so-called Multi-annual Financial Framework² the structural funds - in particular the European Social Fund (ESF) - the EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EASI) and the Rights and Citizenship Programme.

Recognition of Social Objectives in the European Social Fund

A first key achievement of the new ESF is its broad focus on social objectives. From now on “*promoting social inclusion and combating poverty (and any*

discrimination)” is one of the four thematic objectives, implying an extension of the scope of the ESF to all persons, and not only those with labour market relevance. Furthermore, it was agreed that at least 71 billion of EU resources should be dedicated to the ESF and that at least 20% of this has to be allocated to investment priorities under the social inclusion objective. These resources can help to reverse the worrying trend of unacceptably high rates of poverty and unemployment, including youth unemployment, if implemented properly.

Civil society recognised as essential for the implementation of the structural funds

The so-called “partnership principle” makes it mandatory for member states to organise partnerships with relevant actors, including civil society organisations, that shall be involved in the preparation of partnership agreements and progress reports throughout the preparation and implementation of programmes, including participation in monitoring committees. This allows making an added value of CSO’s sound knowledge of: the reality on the ground; the needs of different target groups; how to successfully run integrated projects; and the key role played by Structural Funds in delivering on the poverty reduction target.

2 A political and budgetary framework that sets out in which areas the EU should spend its budget in the next period



Our year in brief

Policy Papers

- [Threats to social cohesion in Europe](#) - Contribution to the annual SPC report for 2012
- [Social exclusion and the labour market: policies to improve the current situation](#) - Contribution to the informal EPSCO Council in Ireland
- [Recommendations for the trilogues on public procurement by the Network on Sustainable Development in public procurement](#)
- [Position Paper on the Social Investment Package](#)
- [Position Paper on Migration - An opportunity for the EU](#)
- [Children's well-being requires action beyond child policy](#) - Contribution to the Informal EPSCO Lithuania
- [Proposals for amendments](#) to the draft EP EMPL *Report on the European semester for economic policy coordination: Employment and Social Aspects in the AGS 2014*
- [Proposal for amendments](#) on the draft EP report on access to healthcare
- [Proposal for amendments](#) on the directive on basic payment accounts to the EP rapporteur and 4 shadow rapporteurs
- [Position paper on social innovation](#)
- [Policy Brief on EU trade agreements](#), in particular TISA and TTIP
- [Spring Alliance's position paper](#) on "2030 framework for climate change and energy policies"

2013 in numbers



Who we met

- President of the Council, Herman van Rompuy
- 2 Informal EPSCO Councils (Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs)
- Lithuanian Minister of Social Security and Labour, Algimanta Pabedinskienė
- Lithuanian Vice-Minister of Economy, Marius Busilas
- Greek Minister of Labour, Social Security and Welfare, Yiannis Vrotsis
- 2 meetings with Secretary General of the Commission, Catherine Day
- Commissioner Laszlo Andor (Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion)
- Commissioner Cecilia Malmström (Home Affairs)
- EESC President, Henri Malosse
- Director of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Morten Kjaerum
- 2 meetings with Director of the European Institute for Gender Equality, Virginija Langbakk
- Deputy Director of Eurofound, Erika Mezgre
- Cabinet of Commissioner Lewandowski (financial programming and budget)
- Head of Unit in the EC Secretariat-General, Pascal Leardini
- 4 meetings with EC DG Employment
- 2 meetings with DG Justice
- DG Internal Market and Services
- DG Home Affairs
- 3 MEP rapporteurs and shadow rapporteurs
- 2 meetings with the EP EMPL committee (Employment and Social Affairs)
- 3 meetings with the Lithuanian Permanent Representation
- The Greek Permanent Representation
- Irish Permanent Representation
- The EMCO Chair (Commission Employment Committee)
- The Social Protection Committee Chair
- EU Regional Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
- 4 meetings with the Civil Society Contact Group
- 8 meetings with the Spring Alliance



About Us

Social Platform is governed by a General Assembly: it takes constitutional decisions and elects the Management Committee. Political decisions are approved by the Steering Group in which every full member organisation is represented. The smooth running of Social Platform is ensured by the secretariat which is based in Brussels.

Our management committee



President

Heather Roy

Vice Presidents

Claire Roumet, Rodolfo Cattani

Treasurer

Michel Mercadié

Ordinary Members

Brigitte Triems, Barbara Helfferich,
Jana Hainsworth

Our team



Director

Pierre Baussand

Finance and Administration Officer

Ruw Jayasuriya

Policy Advisor

Valentina Caimi

Policy Officer

Annica Ryngebeck

Policy Officer

Herlinde Vanhooydonck

Communications Officer

Alison Coleman

Development Officer

Ariella de Gennaro (who left in 2013)

Our members

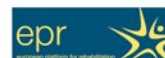
2013 saw 2 new members joining Social Platform bringing our numbers to 47.

Volonteurope is an international network promoting the values and principles of volunteering, active citizenship and social justice at local, regional, national and European level, both in the member states of the European Union and the Council of Europe. They seek to implement innovative approaches to encouraging Active European Citizenship. They facilitate the exchange of information, good practices, cooperation and capacity building, through seminars, conferences, Active Citizens of Europe (ACE) Awards and research as well as development of effective partnerships amongst our members, associates, as well as other partners in Europe.

Eurocarers (European Association working for Carers) brings together organisations representing carers and those involved in research and development. The purpose of Eurocarers is: to raise awareness of the significant contribution made by carers to health and social care systems and the economy as a whole, and of the need to safeguard this contribution; to ensure that EU and national policies take account of carers, i.e. promote social inclusion of carers, the development of support services for carers, enable them to remain active in paid employment and maintain a social life.

Global budget (in Euro)

Income		Expenditure	
EC Core Budget	698,917.75	Staff costs	471,936.33
Membership eligible fees	49,834.00	Other expenditures	325,331.48
Membership non-eligible fees	20,968.00	Social Provision	12,689.36
Co-Finance expert fees	15,510.41	Non eligible expenditures	10,669.03
Other sources	35,396.04		
TOTAL	820,626.20	TOTAL	820,626.20



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Social Platform acknowledges the financial support of the European Commission. This publication reflects the author's views. The Commission is not liable for any use that may be made of the information contained in this publication. Published in May 2014

