socialplatform

June 13, 2014

To: President van Rompuy
Heads of State and Government

Letter to the European Council of June 26-27, 2014

Europe: for the right balance in EU future priorities

"We need to get the balance right. It is essential for the Union to be also on the protecting side". Herman van Rompuy, President of the European Council, May 29, 2014

Dear President,
Dear Prime Minister,

At the next European Council you will discuss the European Union's future priorities and strategic agenda for the years ahead.

Social Platform, the largest network of European social NGOs considers that the EU's primary goal is to protect and promote the wellbeing of people living in its territory. There must not be an economic agenda without a strong social dimension in EU policies. This includes tackling the social deficit such as high levels of poverty and social exclusion, unemployment and inequality.

During your informal meeting of May 27 you identified five key priorities for the EU for the years. Regarding three of your priorities we state that:

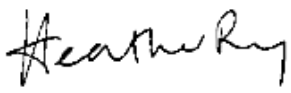
- **The *"growth, competitiveness and jobs"* must be balanced with a strong social dimension addressing rising poverty and social exclusion**. In this regard, social investment is essential for an inclusive growth as well as for a smart and sustainable one. Your Ministers of Economy and Finance also publicly recognised last April that *"persistent unemployment and social insecurity constitute a major problem for the EU"* and that it *"negatively affects member states fiscal sustainability"*. The EU and member states will invest in its people when there are concrete implementation plans to:
    - **Lay out the national targets, benchmarks and the timetable to meet the Europe 2020 poverty target as set by you in June 2010**. Economists argue that the current levels of unemployment and poverty undermine the short and long-term growth potential of Europe's economies, with negative implications for the sustainability of public debt.
    - **Ensure the creation of quality and sustainable jobs through the respect of labour standards**: the ILO reported on May 27 *"policies to foster economic growth will only work if they are accompanied by appropriate action to boost employment and quality jobs and tackle in-work poverty"*.
    - **Reduce inequalities by developing appropriate mechanisms to reduce income inequality**. A 2014 International Monetary Fund study found that lower net inequality is correlated with faster and more durable growth.
- **The *"more developed Economic and Monetary Union"* must be balanced with an enforcing mechanism that ensures the safeguard of social protection in the member states**. The EU needs to ensure that the social scoreboard adopted in October 2013 is supported by a system that triggers preventative and corrective

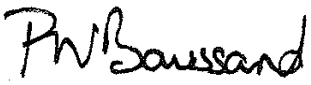
actions once the social imbalances reach a certain threshold. Without it the Social Dimension of the EMU will be an empty shell with economic and financial policies continuing to damage the social tissue of our societies and erode peoples support for the European project. Furthermore, the indicators should be reviewed on a regular basis and where identified, extended with other relevant social indicators such as called for by the European Parliament.[1]

- **The *"consolidating of the area of freedom while ensuring security"* must be balanced with a Europe that protects human rights both inside and outside its borders**. It is time to develop and adopt an internal human rights strategy with a concrete action plan as you have done for the external action services. Furthermore, the right to free movement and adequate protection of people exercising this right, must be safeguarded. This is essential for EU legitimacy.

The measures we propose are urgent for the Union to preserve its unity and to be seen as benefiting all people living in the EU.

Yours sincerely,





Heather Roy
President

Pierre Baussand
Director

[1] The Parliament called for additional indicators relating to child poverty levels, access to healthcare, homelessness, and a decent work index; EP Resolution on the EC Communication on the Social Dimension of the EMU, November 21, 2013

Social Platform is the largest civil society alliance fighting for social justice and participatory democracy in Europe. Consisting of 49 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.