Ministers for Economic and Financial Affairs

Via email

Brussels, 12 June 2015

Dear Minister,

RE: Ensuring the positive social impact of the broad economic policy guidelines

Social Platform - the largest civil society alliance fighting for social justice and participatory democracy in Europe - welcomed the call for "quality, affordable and sustainable services and benefits", and for taking into account the social impact of legislation in the Commission's proposal for new broad economic policy guidelines (BEPGs).

However, we believe that the proposal can and should be improved to ensure the BEPGs can fully accommodate the achievement of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth throughout the EU, in line with the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy.

We therefore call on you to:

1. **Support investment in ambitious integrated employment and social policies.** This includes maintaining and improving investments in adequate social protection systems, investing in social, care, health and education services beyond infrastructure, as well as safeguarding and upgrading budgets for measures pursuing social investment. Social investment constitutes a long-term strategy that not only brings social progress, but also reduces pressure on public finances and enhances growth, as demonstrated in the 2013 Social Investment Package.
2. **Perform ex-ante social and gender impact assessments of all structural reforms, particularly of the labour market and social systems.** Such reforms should improve the inclusiveness of labour markets and the adequacy and performance of social systems. This will help to create the right setting to promote growth and employment. Ill-conceived structural reforms undermine the EU's recovery in both economic and social terms. During the crisis it became clear that structural reforms in the form of badly targeted fiscal consolidation in the social sector caused more harmful economic and social imbalances, and undermined economic and social cohesion.
3. **Involve all relevant stakeholders, including social NGOs, in a meaningful and structured way in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies that may have a social impact.** Such involvement must take place at all policy levels including the European, national, regional and local levels. It will enable policy-makers to tap into the existing, on-the-ground knowledge of social NGOs and will give a voice to those who are directly impacted by fiscal, economic and social policy reforms. The importance of involving stakeholders in policy-making has only grown since 2010. Civil dialogue supports democratic legitimacy and ownership of policies, and reinforces the adequacy of measures proposed.

We hope these concerns will be reflected in the final text of the guidelines that you will adopt on 19 June.

Yours sincerely,

Jana Hainsworth
President

Pierre Baussand
Director

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