Jean-Claude Juncker
President of the European Commission
Via email

Brussels, 13 December 2016

Dear President Jean-Claude Juncker,

RE: 'The European Pillar of Social Rights: going forward together' risk alienating European civil society

The conference 'The European Pillar of Social Rights – going forward together', taking place on 23 January, is a key moment to secure buy-in from relevant stakeholders.

Therefore Social Platform and its members sincerely regret that the proposed programme provides no plenary opportunity to bring the perspective of European civil society. The concluding session 'the way forward' features representatives for employers and trade unions, but fails to look beyond the 'social partners'. The European Economic and Social Committee represents various interest groups including social partners and is an important ally of our, but it does not speak on behalf of civil society networks. Excluding civil society specialised in social rights from this final panel would be a missed opportunity, and runs counter to its aim of 'going forward together'.

Social Platform and its members have been working on the Pillar since it was first proposed, and have maintained close contact with Allan Larsson and relevant cabinets. Our input and the input of our members has been appreciated on an informal level, and so it was with surprise that we learnt that we would not be afforded the same recognition by the European Commission on a formal, public stage. We have been contacted frequently by different stakeholders to speak on the Pillar alongside social partners, and we have gained a reputation as one of the forefront civil society organisation working on this topic.

Social Platform is the largest civil society alliance fighting for social justice, covering a range of policy areas including services, employment, poverty, health, anti-discrimination, rights, education and homelessness. Our ability to bring together the collective views of these groups – whose voices are commonly unheard – puts us in a unique position to provide expertise to proposals like the Pillar. Our ability to bring together these different views is the very reason why Social Platform was established and funded by the Commission in 1995. Our added-value is recognised by the European Council, which since 2014 has invited us to meetings of the EPSCO Council on equal footing with social partners. It is therefore extremely disappointing that the Commission excludes Social Platform from the final panel, and gives primacy to social partners.

In your State of the Union speech on 14 September you said: "The Commission which I have the honour to lead seeks to be a political Commission […] this means that, first and foremost, it must be a Commission which listens to the people." In this spirit, we appeal to you to

intervene in the planning of this important event and ensure that the voice of civil society is heard at an equal level to employer and trade union representatives.

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.

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