Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission
Via email

Brussels, 13 May 2020

Subject: Call for a revised EU budget that leaves no one behind

Dear President Ursula von der Leyen,

The European Union and its citizens are facing unprecedented global health, social and economic crises, triggered by the spread of COVID-19. In addition to the worrying numbers of deaths, three months from the start of the global pandemic, we can see already high numbers of people losing their jobs and essential support services, companies and commercial activities closing down, and more and more people turning to food banks and social services. In the years to come, unemployment, poverty and inequalities are expected to increase even more.

Some Member States have so far been hit more than others. However, in the long-term all Member States will be affected. It is of paramount importance that the European Commission shows leadership and succeeds in persuading Member States that it is vital to show solidarity towards its people, including the most vulnerable and among Member States. If the EU fails in this, Euroscepticism, nationalism, and authoritarianism will likely increase, putting in jeopardy the credibility of European integration.

Crises always bring opportunities, too. The EU has the opportunity to reshape global leadership towards more sustainable and inclusive economic and social models, based on solidarity with those most in need, to reduce inequalities and strengthen welfare states.

With this letter, Social Platform would like to put forward its main recommendations in view of the Commission's proposal on the revision of the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF).

Ensure continuity of funding between the two programming periods:

- Propose a contingency plan, as asked by the European Parliament, or extend for at least two years the regulations in force, to ensure that funding from programmes such as ESF, FEAD, EaSI, AMIF, Europe For Citizens, and Rights, Equality and Citizenship programme, is continued after 2020, without a gap between the two programming periods.

- Maintain adequate support to civil society organisations, both at European and national levels, who are working on the front line, responding to the pressing needs of those in the most precarious situations. Ensure that funding is not interrupted in the period between the end of the current programming period and the start of the new one.

Ensure adequate investment in social inclusion measures in the revised post 2020 MFF:

- Adopt a two-stage strategic approach. Firstly, make use of all the possible means to adopt exceptional emergency measures to respond to the immediate challenges posed by COVID-19. Make sure that funding from current programmes, originally devoted to fighting poverty and social inclusion and to support investment in social, health and care services and in social economy, is maintained in an adequate and sufficient manner, and not fully diverted to health priorities. On the other hand and at the same time, maintain the overall strategic approach of regular cohesion policy spending and its contribution to longer-term EU

priorities, as enshrined in the European Pillar of Social Rights, the EU Green Deal and Agenda 2030/the Sustainable Development Goals. It is crucial that the EU and all its Member States are well equipped to tackle global challenges such as climate change, digitalisation, demographic change, poverty and social exclusion.

- While revising the next MFF, alongside measures and funds to protect the workforce, employees, unemployed and self-employed, businesses as well as social economy enterprises, do not lower levels of investments in social inclusion initiatives and policies or in not-for-profit civil society organisations, social and care service providers and social economy organisations. In particular:

    - Invest in health, social, and community-based care services and infrastructures, as it is now even more urgent to ensure an immediate response to the people in need, including the most vulnerable.
    - Ensure health and safety at work for all, with particular focus on the members of the healthcare, care and social workforce, and the workers of the activities considered "essential".
    - Continue supporting preventative measures in healthcare, social care and social inclusion policies.
    - Increase income support not only for people who are losing jobs, but also for other people living in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion. Ensure protection to workers who are in a vulnerable situation, including migrants and undocumented migrants, who, due to short term or atypical contracts, are not eligible to unemployment benefits.
    - Enhance active inclusion and active labour market measures, housing support, support to victims of domestic violence and abuse, and to people working in the shadow economy, including migrants.

The already worrying levels of poverty, including child and family poverty, social exclusion, homelessness, over indebtedness, material deprivation, long-term unemployment, unemployment of persons with disabilities, youth unemployment, people being placed in segregated institutional care, among others, will inevitably increase. This may lead to further divisions in society, an increasing gap between rich and poor, and disharmonious Union.

As largest network of civil society organisations in the European Union advocating for a social Europe, we strive for a society based on social justice, where dignity, wellbeing, respect for every person and their human rights are at the centre of all decisions and actions. We count on your support to make sure that the revised EU budget will enable the European Union to build such inclusive societies.

Yours sincerely,



Piotr Sadowski
President of Social Platform

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. Social Platform acknowledges the financial support of the European Commission's 'Europe for Citizens' programme, managed by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA).

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