

Ursula von der Leyen

President of the European Commission

Ahead of the 2025 State of the Union address

Brussels, 28 May 2025

Dear President von der Leyen,

As the European Union prepares for your upcoming State of the Union address in September, [Social Platform](#) – the largest network of civil society organisations in the EU advocating for social justice, equality and participatory democracy – urges you to place social priorities at the core of the Union’s agenda.

Your Political Guidelines commit to promote social inclusion and equality as a priority for building a Union that is “**more supportive of people**”. Such support is needed more than ever, as people are faced with growing inequality, housing precarity, and social exclusion.

As underlined in Mr Draghi’s report on competitiveness, Europe’s real strength lies in its social model. To uphold the EU’s founding values of solidarity, social cohesion, and fundamental rights, we urge you to ensure the push for economic growth and productivity does not undermine Europe’s social fabric. We call on you to ensure that the current political and legislative cycle delivers tangible progress for all people in the EU, especially the most vulnerable.

1. A Long-Term EU Budget with a Strong Social Dimension

The EU must allocate adequate resources to programmes that promote social inclusion, poverty reduction, gender equality, access to essential services, and the social impact of the green transition. A budget that strategically invests in inclusion and equality is not only a matter of fairness, it is a prerequisite for a resilient, sustainable Union. Allocations to social inclusion objectives must be guaranteed under cohesion policy and other programmes. In particular, the European Social Fund Plus must be retained as a standalone fund, and entail earmarking for social inclusion beyond the current 25% for all Member States.

2. An Ambitious Action Plan for the European Pillar of Social Rights

We welcome the Commission’s commitment to strengthening the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) in its upcoming second Action Plan. Social Platform proposes a number of new legislative and non-legislative initiatives to make further progress towards the 2030 headlines targets and ensure the principles lead to enforceable rights. The upcoming Action Plan is an opportunity to show ambition that the EU is serious about its social commitments, strengthen the social dimension of the Semester governance framework and the EU budget, and ensure that no one is left behind. The EU should take this opportunity to set an additional, quality jobs EU target and tackle in-work poverty.

3. A Comprehensive EU Anti-Poverty Strategy

With nearly one in five people in the EU at risk of poverty or social exclusion, an EU Anti-Poverty Strategy, backed by sufficient EU financial resources is urgently needed. We believe this strategy must adopt a comprehensive and integrated approach, simultaneously addressing income security, access to quality services, and the empowerment and participation of people affected, with specific attention to marginalised and disadvantaged communities. The aim must be prevention – breaking the vicious cycle of poverty - and eradicating poverty in all its forms. Furthermore, the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy must recommend Member States to set poverty targets and design their strategies in line with their funding frameworks under cohesion policy.

4. An Inclusive European Affordable Housing Plan that helps those in need

Access to decent, affordable, and sustainable housing is a human right. Housing exclusion is a systemic social emergency requiring urgent and coordinated EU action. The upcoming European Affordable Housing Plan must promote investments in social housing and support integrated housing solutions for people in vulnerable situations with the aim to prevent and tackle homelessness.

5. Assessing and Addressing the Social Impact of EU Policies – Especially in the Just Transition

Fairness must be embedded in climate and industrial policies through participatory mechanisms, robust social impact assessments and safeguards. The EU needs a Just Transition Directive to deliver concrete protections and opportunities for workers, as part of a Just Transition Framework going beyond employment and encompassing social protection, strong public services, civil society participation, adequate financing, support for the social economy, and inclusive policies. The EU must ensure that the costs and benefits of the green industrial transition are fairly distributed across society, protecting not just workers going through reskilling, but also low-income and marginalised groups.

6. Social Conditionality in State Aid and Public Procurement

The EU must leverage its economic tools to drive social outcomes. We urge the Commission to revise the Public Procurement Directive and the EU State Aid framework to introduce and enforce meaningful social conditionality. Public money should support decent work, fair wages, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability, and create new exceptions regarding social economy enterprises - including those providing health, care, social, and other essential services.

7. Strengthening Civil Dialogue

Civil society organisations are essential partners in the democratic life of the EU. Yet, civic space is shrinking in many Member States. We look forward to the EU Strategy to support, protect and empower civil society, which must create an open, safe, accessible and enabling regulatory and political environment for civil society, and ensure adequate funding for CSOs. We call on the EU to furthermore conclude an interinstitutional civil dialogue agreement, recognising civil dialogue as an essential element of European participatory democracy, and harmonise standards for civil dialogue.

President von der Leyen, as multiple challenges loom over Europe's future, we urge you to put people at the centre of your State of the Union address, and to lead with vision, courage, and commitment toward a fairer and more inclusive Europe.¹

Yours sincerely,

Réka Tunyogi

Acting Secretary General of Social Platform

¹ List of further Social Platform material:

- [A post-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework for Social Europe](#)
- [Social Platform contribution to the call for evidence on the next European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan](#)
- [Social Platform Policy Position on the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy](#)

Social Platform is the largest, leading network of European civil society organisations working for a more social Europe. We represent the interests of social civil society organisations and people in all their diversity, including those in the most vulnerable situations. We also represent social economy actors and not-for-profit social service providers who support millions of people in their day-to-day lives. Social Platform acknowledges the financial support of the European Commission's Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV) programme.