

December 9, 2013

To: Ministers for Employment and Social Affairs

Letter to the EPSCO Council of December 9-10, 2013

Restore the balance between social and economic governance

Dear Minister,

Social Platform, the largest coalition of European social NGOs, regrets that the 2014 Annual Growth Survey (AGS) has once again failed to give credibility to Europe 2020 and the European Semester process. The AGS, while offering little new, remains focussed on austerity, emphasising competitiveness, growth and jobs without taking proper account of the social implications of current macroeconomic policies and offering few solutions. Instead of making adequate use of the tools that Europe 2020 offers to integrate social concerns into the overall policy, the AGS repeats its previous approach which clearly failed to deliver on the social targets.

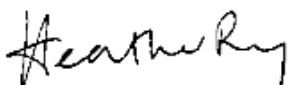
We call for a revision of the EU's macro-economic approach. Such new approach should foster social investment in the context of a coherent social strategy that ensures adequate social protection and promotes quality employment. Such policies also require stakeholder involvement and Social Platform is poised to play its part in current and future stakeholder consultations.

It is clear that the current governance approach has not delivered on the Europe 2020 poverty and employment targets: Poverty continues to increase and unemployment is historically high. We need to set the right priorities and a much stronger commitment is required from the EU and member states. We would urge the EPSCO Council to consider the following:

- 1) Prioritise the achievement of the Europe 2020 poverty and employment targets**, in particular through your 2014 National Reform Programmes, and assess policy reforms in advance to ensure macro-economic objectives do not prevent the realisation of social priorities but enable them. This will also support the European Council's commitment expressed during its meeting in October, to further enhance the coordination of economic, employment and social policies.
- 2) Meet the request of the European Parliament to identify concrete benchmarks for the indicators in the Social Scoreboard**, setting EU employment and social standards, in view of organising and promoting upward social convergence and social progress.¹ Once the benchmarks are reached, action should be triggered to address the problem in a structural and effective way.
- 3) Continue to urge that EPSCO and ECOFIN Council are placed on equal footing in all European governance processes** and in particular for the work on the European Semester and the deepening of the EMU, to ensure the EU and its member states deliver on their social priorities.

We are convinced that well designed and coherent social policies are at the centre of sustainable growth, and are key to re-establish the confidence of people in the European project. We therefore call on you to consider our proposals during your discussions at the EPSCO Council.

Yours sincerely,



Heather Roy
President



Pierre Baussand
Director

Social Platform is the largest civil society alliance fighting for social justice and participatory democracy in Europe. Consisting of 47 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.

¹ Requested by the EP in its Resolution on the EC Communication on the Social Dimension of the EMU, November 21, 2013.