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Annual Growth Survey pushes fight against poverty and social exclusion even further down the European agenda

Despite commitments made by European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker on a “Triple A” social rating, Social Platform has expressed disappointment that fighting poverty and social exclusion, one of the five headline targets of the Europe 2020 Strategy, seems to have become less of a priority of the Commission’s [Annual Growth Survey \(AGS\) 2015](#) than before. Contrary to previous years, tackling the social consequences of the crisis is no longer one of the priority areas.

Social Platform – Europe’s largest civil society alliance fighting for social justice and participatory democracy – reacted to the Commission’s AGS commitments by stressing the importance of establishing a strong social pillar within the growth agenda, that does not focus purely on employment. The AGS, announced at a press conference today [November 28], misses the opportunity to invest in social policies that go beyond job creation and job access; a criticism that Social Platform has also levied at the Commission’s new Jobs, Growth and Investment Package. Social investment is vital for both social and economic prosperity, and for achieving growth that is not only smart, but also inclusive. Social Platform [argues](#) that this approach is the most effective way of bringing real change to the situation of the [122.6 million people](#) in the EU at risk of poverty or social exclusion, as well as to the increase of inequalities.

Following the announcement that the Commission will focus on structural reform, and specifically the modernisation of social protection systems, Heather Roy, President of Social Platform, said: “Fighting poverty and social exclusion as well as income inequalities is about more than this, even though we agree that there are problems with both the take-up and efficiency of social protection in some member states. Rather than blindly pursuing modernisation of social protection systems, the Commission should aim to re-engineer them to ensure that they reach their target groups. Investment in ambitious and strong social policies, including social protection, should be the goal.

“Despite the commitments made by Vice-President Dombrovskis and Commissioners Moscovici and Thyssen in front of the European Parliament during their public hearings, we are disappointed that the social indicators included in the Macroeconomic Imbalance Procedure are still not put on equal footing with the economic ones. The unemployment indicator is far from being enough,” said Ms Roy: “The results of all the indicators must be taken into account, and when they reach a set level, this should automatically trigger action to address this.”

She explained: “We want to see a better ownership and democratic process of the European Semester launched today by the AGS. The role of civil society is not to ensure the implementation of an agenda it does not share. Our role is to take part in the development of these policies to ensure that they serve people in vulnerable situations in Europe. In line with the EU2020 strategy, the EU must take concrete action to reduce poverty.”

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