



Building a Social Europe for all with social civil society organisations

Brussels, 7 May 2019

Dear Head of State/Head of Government,

On 9 May, you are meeting fellow EU leaders in Sibiu to discuss the future of Europe. This is a pivotal moment for our Union and our continent where you and your colleagues can regain the trust of the people across Europe. Therefore, as the largest platform of social civil society organisations in Europe weⁱ call on you to prioritise and characterise the future as being one that creates a socially and environmentally sustainable Europe. The Future of Europe must be a social future where the European Union is focused on the wellbeing of its peoples and takes decisions with this at its heart.

A Social Europe to regain people's trust: from Gothenburg to Sibiu

In recent months, we have witnessed many people of different ages, genders and economic backgrounds taking to the streets of Europe to protest inequalities and democratic deficits. Their messages, despite differences, must be listened to. They reflect a common core message: it is time for you and other political leaders to put people and planet first. It is time for policies that leave no one behind. It is time for EU policies to be truly developed for and with the people that they affect.

The forthcoming European Parliament elections will be a barometer of how people across Europe see the European Union as listening to them. If you and fellow leaders do not convince people in the coming weeks of your commitment to a future of Europe that is socially and environmentally sustainable there is a greater likelihood of greater protests. This will include voting for parties that do not support the European project or simply abstaining from voting, having lost their trust in the EU to represent their interests. This is not the future of Europe that any of us want.

Both the Agenda 2030 for sustainable development and the European Pillar of Social Rights provide a compass for the future of Europe. With their potential to ensure solutions for people's daily lives, they can bring hope and become the force for rebuilding trust between the EU and its peoples. Commitments to their implementation have to be strong, including the clear ambition to end poverty, to tackle inequalities and discrimination and to promote social protection systems that leave no one behind. We strongly encourage you to ensure that they are at the heart of your vision of the Europe of the future.

Dealing with social agenda: from a social affairs silo approach to a high level priority setting

In Sibiu and beyond, strong, dynamic and connected political leadership will need to emerge to continue building a sustainable future that will positively impact the lives of people across Europe in the next five years. Dialogue is needed to ensure that the right measures are being taken at the right time. Such dialogue and action can no longer be done in silos and needs to have the force of your political leadership to drive it forward. To this end, we call for the organisation of an Annual Social Summit of Heads of State or Government. This summit should complement the existing high level

social dialogue and ensure that the compass of the future of Europe is continuing to point towards social and environmental sustainability.

European social model: social dialogue complemented by civil dialogue

As civil society organisations active in the social sector, we are in a unique position to know and understand people's needs. Drawing on the local, regional and national knowledge and expertise of our members, we bring to the table examples of what actually works, within and beyond the employment sphere. As representatives of millions of people across the European Union, civil society organisations must be part of all dialogues on the future of Europe. In the social sector, Social Platform has already been recognised as leading network and shall be part of the proposed Annual Social Summit of Heads of State or Government. There can be no success in building a socially and environmentally sustainable Europe without the participation of civil society as key stakeholders. Such participation is essential to rebuild trust and combat the damaging effects of populism on our democracy and our society.

We thank you for your consideration of our proposals and our requests and look forward to building a strong and inclusive Europe with your government and with the European Council in the coming five years.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Piotr Sadowski". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Piotr Sadowski, Social Platform President

ⁱ *Social Platform is the largest civil society alliance fighting for social justice and participatory democracy in Europe. Consisting of 49 pan-European networks of NGOs, Social Platform campaigns to ensure that EU policies are developed in partnership with the people they affect, respecting fundamental rights, promoting solidarity and improving lives.*