SOCIAL SOLIDARITY DESPITE THE ‘GLOOM AND ZOOM’ OF THE PANDEMIC
ABOUT US

Social Platform is the largest network of civil society organisations in the European Union advocating for a social Europe. We are led by a membership of 46 European Federations and are united in our fight for social justice, equality, inclusion, sustainability and participatory democracy for all people in the EU.

EUROPE FOR CITIZENS

Social Platform receives the majority of its funding from the EU’s Europe for Citizens Programme, which is managed by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) matched with revenues coming from membership fees and other source of income such as renting of meeting spaces.

Europe for Citizens is a unique and highly symbolic programme, focused on the future of the EU, debating issues related to European rights and values, democratic engagement and civic participation – values that make up the very DNA of Social Platform. It acts as a listening exercise on civil society’s debates and in-depth reflections on the European project.
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A warm welcome to our Annual Report.

The year 2020, without doubt, was one of the most turbulent in recent times. The devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has affected every aspect of our lives, from the way we reach out to and care for one another, to the way we work, exercise, and love. The pandemic has laid bare the truth about the state of social inequality in Europe and around the world. It has shown, once again that, when we experience a crisis, it is those in the most vulnerable situations who are hit the hardest.

The biggest lesson that we must take from this crisis is that our current socio-economic, and environmental, governance system, is not fit for purpose. Thus, we must continue to step up, and more than ever, advocate for a system that is truly representative of all, where no one is left behind. A system where there is real social protection, duty of care and respect, at all levels. A Europe, where effective support measures, such as, for example, adequate minimum income, are in place, and which, if need be, can be called upon to help each and every one of us. None of us is immune to disease, poor health, isolation, and loss, as this pandemic has shown. However, our inner protection is our human compassion. It drives us, personally and professionally, within our Social Platform family, to never give up working together for the common good.

When the pandemic took hold of Europe and the world, our geographical and social networks shrunk in a matter of weeks. While we all started scrambling for Zoom or other online meeting subscriptions, Social Platform set out to engage with members to collect evidence on the impact of the pandemic on the communities they serve. We worked quickly to ensure that members’ voices and experiences were used to shape policy, through facilitating dialogue with EU leaders and decision-makers. We nurtured constructive relationships with EU institutions and, when key processes for combatting the impact of COVID-19 fell short, such as the new EU Budget and the Recovery Plan, we were able to advocate for stronger and bolder action. At the same time, we acknowledged and supported institutional commitments to the development of an Action Plan on the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights. We invested much of our own energy and resources into providing recommendations on how best to achieve the commitments of the Social Pillar and we look forward to continuing this work.
We also embarked on ensuring that we are a learning platform, where we engage with our members and partners to support one another. “Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much”. The words of Helen Keller, the American author, disability rights advocate, political activist, who campaigned for social justice, women's suffrage, rights of workers, solidarity, and peace, have, in my opinion, never rang truer that in the time we are living now.

Finally, at the end of 2020, we celebrated our 25th anniversary (via Zoom), where I had the privilege to welcome some of our former Presidents, to share the highlights of their time representing Social Platform, and to give me and all of us their helpful thoughts on the future direction of our network. I take their reflections, as well as those of our members, my colleagues and friends on the Management Committee, and above all, in the Social Platform Secretariat, to build optimism for where our network will be going in the future.

We have much to celebrate and be proud of what we have achieved over the past 25 years and now, backed by our renewed vision and mission, we will work to bring to life our long-term strategy, injecting new creativity and energy into our collective work.

Despite the many challenges of 2020, we can be proud of the work we accomplished. At the same time, as I said at the start of my term as Social Platform’s President, “complacency is not an option”, and so I really look forward to our continued journey and working with all of you for what I would love to see being Europe of real equality, social justice, resilience and, most importantly, care, love and compassion for one another.

And finally, as I welcome you to our Annual Report, I want to express my deepest gratitude to all of you, Social Platform members, Secretariat and Management Committee, for your tireless work, endless energy and profound belief in our collective vision of a Europe that is just and fair for all.

Piotr Sadowski
President of Social Platform
RESPONDING TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

SOCIAL PLATFORM COVID-19 INFORMATION HUB

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted each and every one of us, but none more so than those in vulnerable situations. In response to this crisis, we created a COVID-19 information hub in April 2020, which brought together responses and reactions from Social Platform’s members. Other interesting articles created by our members who have first-hand knowledge of the experiences, needs and impact of COVID-19 on the people and communities they serve.

We shared these resources with decision-makers and stakeholders through three COVID-specific editions of the Social Compass newsletter and we continue to update this information hub which can be accessed on our website.

SOCIAL PROTECTION AND EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEES

In May, Social Platform collaborated with members to deliver our combined views and recommendations on the social and employment impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. We spoke at a virtual meeting of the Social Protection Committee (SPC) and the Employment Committee (EMCO), two advisory policy committees to the Ministers in the Employment and Social Affairs Council (EPSCO).
In 2020, Social Platform met with several Commissioners to advocate for the inclusion of a stronger social dimension in the European Commission’s (EC) priorities.

**JANUARY**

We had a productive meeting with **Nicolas Schmit**, European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, and discussed the Action Plan for the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights (Social Pillar), the public consultation on the Action Plan and secured his commitment for a keynote speech at the event we organised at the European Parliament.

We met with **Vera Jourová**, the European Commission’s Vice-President for Values and Transparency. We discussed different ways of bringing Europe closer to its people and how to achieve a more democratic and inclusive Europe based on civil society engagement.

**FEBRUARY**

We met with **Ylva Johansson**, European Commissioner for Home Affairs, to discuss legal channels of migration.

We met with a member of cabinet of European Commission’s Executive Vice-President, **Frans Timmermans**, where we called for a long-term social and sustainable strategy that integrates the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the European Green Deal and the Social Pillar. We also asked the Executive Vice-President’s cabinet to work with civil society organisations, like us, on a Green Deal that leaves no one behind.
We had fruitful discussions with Helena Dalli, European Commissioner for Equality. During our meeting, we highlighted the need to place equal treatment and anti-discrimination at the heart of all policies in order to achieve a more inclusive Europe – particularly for those in marginalised communities. We asked the Commissioner to work together with civil society organisations to achieve these objectives.
We welcomed Vice-President of the European Commission on Democracy and Demography, Duvravka Šuica, to our virtual General Assembly. Vice-President Šuica addressed the enormous impact of the COVID-19 crisis on health, social issues and the economy. She reassured participants that the European Commission is working with social sector organisations to support services providers and service users.

We met with Valdis Dombrovskis, Executive Vice-President of the European Commission for an Economy that Works for People. We discussed how to promote an EU economy with the wellbeing of all people at its core. We also asked the Executive Vice-President to work with organised civil society and encourage regular civil dialogue around the European Semester process.

in the context of our work with the Alliance SDG Watch Europe, we engaged with the cabinet of the European Commissioner for Economy, Paolo Gentiloni. During the meeting to foster civil dialogue we established the agreement to hold regular meetings with his cabinet to provide support and input in their work to reach the Sustainable Development Goals, the reform of the European Semester Process and the economic governance reform also providing comments to the staff working document on “Delivering on the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals” published by the European Commission in October.
PARTNERSHIP WITH THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

In 2020, we developed successful partnerships with the European Parliament and coordinated three high-profile events in collaboration with Members of the European Parliament (MEP).

JANUARY

ITS TIME TO INVEST IN PEOPLE - EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT/SOCIAL PLATFORM CONFERENCE

Together with Brando Benifei MEP, Social Platform hosted a conference at the European Parliament. This event was the first of a series of events focusing on the European Pillar of Social Rights and explored the link between the Social Pillar and the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+).

JULY

“GOOD GOVERNANCE IN THE TIMES OF COVID-19: LAUNCHING THE EU’S SOCIAL RECOVERY THROUGH THE EUROPEAN SEMESTER PROCESS”

We co-hosted our second European Parliament event in a virtual setting together with Klára Dobrev MEP, rapporteur on the draft report on the employment and social policies of the Euro Area 2020. Together with panelists and participants, we debated the role of the European Semester process in supporting the EU’s social recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. We also discussed necessary reforms of the Semester process to ensure that it reaches its full potential.
Together with Katrin Langensiepen MEP, coordinator of the EMPL Committee for the Green/EFA group, we co-hosted our third European Parliament event which took place virtually – attracting over 115 participants from civil society organisations, EU institutions and other stakeholders. We discussed how the Social Pillar Action Plan must be designed to fulfil its potential to contribute to Europe’s social recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. We also welcomed Nicolas Schmit, European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, who delivered the keynote speech.
In July, we published an open letter to EU institutions and EU leaders to advocate for an increased social dimension to their proposal for the Next Generation EU recovery instrument. Although Social Platform broadly welcomed the proposal, we were concerned that it did not include sufficient measures and funding to tackle the current social crisis and build inclusive societies. In our letter, we provided a detailed analysis of the proposal alongside recommendations on how to safeguard our communities from the social consequences of the COVID-19 crisis and prevent those already in vulnerable situations from being further marginalised.
We continued to advocate for strengthening the social dimension of the European Semester process. Alongside striking a balance between social, economic and environmental priorities, we also pushed for a commitment to increased engagement with those in vulnerable situations and the strengthening of social investment.

Social Platform provided contributions to the Social Protection Committee and Employment Committee. In January, we presented our key messages on the 2020 Autumn Package and in May, we shared our first reaction to the newly published country-specific recommendations for 2020, in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In November, we published and disseminated our report, “Socialising the European Semester: Analysis of the 2020 and 2021 cycles and recommendations for the future”. This report presents our views on the 2020 Semester cycle, alongside those on the 2021 cycle and our recommendations for the future of the process.

In December, we published an open letter to EU Member States’ ministries responsible for the 2021 European Semester Process and called on them to increase civil dialogue, with particular emphasis on involving civil society organisations in the development of their National Recovery and Resilience Plans.
ADEQUATE MINIMUM INCOME: ENABLING PEOPLE TO THRIVE AND NOT JUST TO SURVIVE

Adequate, accessible and enabling minimum income schemes: The time for action is now!

In September, we co-hosted a workshop as part of the ‘Our Social Europe – Strong Together’ conference led by the German Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Together with the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN), Eurodiaconia and Caritas Europa, our workshop discussed adequate, accessible and enabling minimum income schemes across Europe.

We were able to deliver a number of recommendations to the Presidency and highlight various good practices currently taking place across many different countries.
Position paper on adequate minimum income

In September, we also published our position paper on an EU Framework Directive on Adequate Minimum Income. At Social Platform, we believe that a legally binding directive would lay the foundations to enable everyone to live a life of dignity, and contribute to reducing poverty and social exclusion.

Adequate minimum income plays a crucial role in reducing the scale of poverty and persisting inequalities that exist across the EU. An adequate minimum income lays the foundations for comprehensive, high-quality and universal social protection systems which truly promote inclusion and full participation in society.

Opinion article in the thematic reader of the German Council Presidency

We also put the spotlight on the importance of adequate minimum income schemes in an opinion article in the thematic reader of the German Presidency, by highlighting that it is no longer viable to develop national social policies without full inclusion of the European perspective.
In December, we had the opportunity to organise a virtual roundtable for our members with Olivier de Schutter, UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights. The Rapporteur was undertaking an official mission to EU institutions to examine the impact of the European Union’s policies on the eradication of poverty. During the meeting, Social Platform and its members informed the Special Rapporteur De Schutter on our work and our views on the challenges and opportunities for addressing poverty, inequality and social exclusion.
DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTING THE EUROPEAN PILLAR OF SOCIAL RIGHTS

2020 was an incredibly important year for the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights as the European Commission began work on its Social Pillar Action Plan.

In November, Social Platform responded to the European Commission’s public consultation “Have your say on reinforcing Social Europe” by submitting and launching our publication, “Building a Social Europe for all with all. Social Platform’s views on the future of the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan”.

This report advocates for the creation of a comprehensive implementation plan for an effective Social Pillar that realises its 20 principles through ambitious, concrete and measurable action.

**An Ambitious & Comprehensive Action Plan on the European Pillar of Social Rights should:**

- Establish minimum social standards across the EU through legislation whenever possible to set minimum level-playing fields for the implementation of the Social Pillar at national level;

- Mainstream the principles of the Social Pillar in the European Semester process, rebalancing social, economic and environmental priorities;

- Invest in people, both at EU and national level;

- Include in the Social Pillar and its Action Plan an overarching post-2020 strategic framework;

- Meaningfully engage with civil society on the implementation of the Social Pillar.
WE LEARN

Our Social Learning Platform and its peer-to-peer learning sessions provided insightful exchange, allowing members to share experiences and challenges in adjusting their work to the COVID-19 pandemic.

SOCIAL LEARNING PLATFORM

Cuts in income during the COVID-19 pandemic – Are we heading towards more poverty and exclusion?

During this session our members shared of on-the-ground experiences, knowledge and ideas. We heard about their national members operating at emergency level - responding to the basic needs of their communities. We felt a collective threat and responsibility to shine a light on the impact that the pandemic was having on groups and communities already in vulnerable situations and at risk of further poverty and social exclusion.

Returning to the office in times of COVID-19 – Implications on office & staff

For this session we invited our members' Directors, Secretary-Generals and Human Resource Managers to discuss ideas on how to manage the operational logistics of working remotely during COVID-19.

Storytelling in the new normal – How to translate experiences on the ground to EU level

We discussed how to amplify the voices of the communities we work with at the EU level – with a particular emphasis on the impact of COVID-19. We shared good practices for communicating stories from the ground-up and shared ideas on how to strike a balance between sharing stories from people in vulnerable situations without being patronising or belittling.
In October and November, Social Platform organised Plain English trainings for Policy and Communication colleagues. In Brussels, we tend to use technical language with sometimes unnecessary jargon often failing to change the register when we address different target audiences.

During our training sessions, we learned how to use concise, clear and plain language in order to make our communications more effective for all people – not just EU institutions and EU leaders.
WE REACH OUT

With financial support from the EU’s Europe for Citizens’ programme, Social Platform aims to reach out beyond Brussels, promoting Europe’s shared values and creating a sense of ownership.

SOCIAL PILLAR VIDEO

In 2020, the European institutions worked towards an Action Plan on the implementation of the Social Pillar. In order to amplify the voices and experiences of our European networks and their members, we produced a video encouraging European and national decision makers to ambitiously implement the Social Pillar’s 20 principles.

- Parental leave is only available for 34% women & 23% men

- 14% of households reported that their needs for childcare services were not met
In 2020 and in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, our Made in Social Europe exhibition went virtual. We exhibited 19 new projects from 20 countries across Europe, showcasing the inspiring social projects led by our members’ national networks.

All of the projects in our exhibition give life to the principles of the Social Pillar. They aim to prevent those who are already in the most vulnerable situations from falling further into crisis.
We published our exhibition online on our website and produced 90-second audio clips from each of our participating projects. The Made in Social Europe exhibition was disseminated to the members of the Social Protection Committee during their meeting in September and has been widely shared across our platforms and circulated throughout our networks.
STUDY VISITS

In September, we organised two study visits to learn about work being done on a local level and to enhance dialogue between civil society organisations and decision-makers. Our visits took place ahead of and following the meeting of the Social Protection Committee and the Employment Committee and brought together representatives from civil society organisations, national ministries of social affairs and representatives from the European Commission.

“Housing First for Women: Chance. Choice. Commitment.“

Sozialdienst katholischer Frauen e.V, co-hosted our first study visit in Berlin, Germany. We learned about the work of their pilot project, “Housing First for Women” where 31 homeless women have been given their own rental contract and live independently in their own apartments.

“Creating perspectives for disadvantaged communities. Empowerment for Roma through self-organisation and participation“.

We also hosted a study visit with Amaro Drom e.V, and Amaro Foro e.V. in Berlin where we learned about the situation of Roma communities in Germany and the issues they face, such as discrimination, stigmatisation and exclusion. Our co-hosts advocate for the Roma community by delivering workshops on antigypsyism, working with Roma on youth empowerment and support for new immigrants from Romania, Bulgaria and other EU Member States.
SOCIAL PILLAR SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

In November, to mark the 3rd anniversary of the Social Pillar, Social Platform launched an online campaign to engage and inform our network and wider audiences on the Social Pillar and its 20 Principles.

We produced 20 audio-visuals and factsheets on our key recommendations to EU leaders for an ambitious and comprehensive Action Plan.
In 2020, Social Platform celebrated its 25th anniversary. During a panel debate with four former Social Platform presidents, we reflected on our achievements and key milestones over the past 25 years. We also took time to look ahead as we mapped out our ambitions for a social Europe and the hurdles we will need to overcome.
This year, we developed and adopted a new organisational strategy.

Over the past two years, we engaged our members throughout the process and listened to their expertise as we worked towards adopting a new vision and mission in May. Our members officially adopted Social Platform’s new strategy at the Extraordinary General Assembly on 10 November.
PROJECTS & PARTNERSHIPS

Social Platform works to engage in shared learning with civil society and stakeholders across the EU. Whether through participating in EU-wide projects, establishing partnerships to realise long-term objectives or working with our members to promote common values, our collective agenda is to achieve social justice and equality for all people in Europe.

ReSOMA Project

2020 saw the end of the ReSOMA project. The three year project created an interactive Research Social Platform on Migration and Asylum project (ReSOMA), allowing policy-makers, academics and other stakeholders to interact on topics in the area of migration. While the project ended, the platform of more than 1000 practitioners will continue to live and be run by the International Migration, Integration and Social Cohesion (IMISCOE) network of migration scholars.

EUROSHIP Project

In Collaboration with OsloMet, we established a new project, “EUROSHIP – Closing gaps in European Social Citizenship,” to provide an insight into how the EU can support Member States in working towards an ambitious implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights while reflecting on ways in which to strengthen social citizenship in Europe and develop new knowledge and expertise on how to address poverty reduction and social exclusion.
EUROSHIP is a three-year research project funded by the EU’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation program. EUROSHIP will provide new knowledge about the effectiveness of social protection policies targeted at reducing poverty and social exclusion in Europe. The project involves researchers in Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

In February, 50 representatives of European research institutes, universities, social partners and civil society organisations from across Europe met in Oslo for the launch of the project and discussed how social sciences can contribute to delivering a social Europe.

During 2020, we supported the project by developing the dissemination and communication strategy to better reach involved stakeholders and actors. We also co-organised two meetings of the European Stakeholder Committee, the group created to discuss and inform the funding of the project including representatives from EU civil society organisations such as the European Youth Forum, EAPN, COFACE, AGE Platform Europe, social partners and by representatives from several units of the EU Commission (DG Employment, DG Research & Innovation, REA).
Stronger together

Thank you to all organisations with whom we collaborated in 2020, including:

- Civil Society Europe
- Council of Europe Conference of INGOs
- Employment Committee
- EU Agency for Fundamental Rights
- European Economic and Social Committee Liaison Group
- European Parliament Green New Deal Intergroup
- European Institute for Gender Equality
- European NGO Platform on Asylum and Migration
- Europe We Want
- Human Rights and Democracy Network
- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
- Research Social Platform Migration and Asylum (ReSOMA)
- SDG Watch Europe
- Social Protection Committee
- Stand Up for the Social Pillar Alliance
TEAM SOCIAL PLATFORM

Management Committee

Piotr Sadowski  
President  
(Volonteurope)

Michele LeVoy  
Ordinary Member  
(Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants)

Catherine Naughton  
Vice-President  
(European Disability Forum)

Mikael Leyi*  
Ordinary Member  
(SOLIDAR)

Shannon Pfohman  
Vice-President  
(Caritas Europa)

Mila Shamku*  
Ordinary Member  
(European confederation of industrial and service cooperatives)

Heather Roy  
Treasurer  
(Eurodiaconia)

*Elected at the Extraordinary General Assembly on 10 November 2020

Thanks to those members of the Management Committee whose term ended and who stepped down in 2020:

Maciej Kucharczyk  
Vice-President (AGE Platform Europe)

Leo Williams  
Ordinary Member (European Anti-Poverty Network)
Thanks also to colleagues who left or joined our team on a temporary basis in 2020:

**Kélig Puyet**, Director
**Marie Ranty**, Policy & Advocacy Coordinator
**Nathalie Franck**, Finance & Administration Officer
**Anne-Sophie Wislocki**, Policy Officer
At our May General Assembly meeting, members voted to welcome RREUSE as an associate member. RREUSE is an international non-profit network representing social enterprises active in the field of re-use, repair and recycling. With 31 members across the EU and the USA, RREUSE’s mission is to ensure that policies, innovative partnerships and the sharing of best practices promote and develop the role of social enterprises active in the circular economy. At the heart of RREUSE’s vision for Europe is circular activities that foster social value, create locally inclusive jobs whilst supporting vulnerable individuals at risk of socio-economic exclusion.

Thank you to all our members for your expertise and dedication in 2020!

Join the Family!

By becoming a member of Social Platform, you will add your voice to the largest alliance of civil society organisations fighting for social justice and participatory democracy in Europe. We are recognised as a key interlocutor by EU institutions and by EU Member States, and through our advocacy and communications channels can bring visibility at the highest level to the issues that matter most to your constituencies.

Are you interested in joining our family? Find out more here.
2020 IN NUMBERS

- 2 General Assemblies
- 3 Steering Group Meetings
- 8 Management Committee Meetings
- 23 Task Force Meetings and Working Groups Meetings
  - Working Group on the Social Pillar
  - Working Group on Membership Development
  - Task Force on EU Funding
  - Task Force on the Economic Governance Review
  - Task Force on Income and Wages
  - Task Force on Social Services
- 11 Social Learning Platform Meetings
- 2 National Study Visits
- 1 New Member
- 6,295 Facebook Page Followers
- 6,198 Twitter Followers
- 51 Newsletters
- 44,000 Website Visits Were Shared Across 33,569 Users
2020 IN NUMBERS

SOCIAL PILLAR CAMPAIGN:
VIDEOS RECEIVED A TOTAL OF 46,900 VISUALIZATIONS.
THE TWITTER-BASED ACTION EARNED 56,792 IMPRESSIONS AND 1,072 TOTAL ENGAGEMENTS.

168 VISUAL PRODUCTS WERE PRODUCED TO SUPPORT OUR ADVOCACY ACTION.
SHOW ME THE MONEY!

Below is a summary of our income and expenditure in 2020. At the time of publishing, our 2020 accounts were awaiting approval by the General Assembly. Once approved the finalised accounts will be published at the Banque Nationale de Belgique, where they will be available to the public.

- Grant received from the EACEA under the Europe for Citizens Programme: €531,722
- Members' eligible fees: €53,414
- ReSOMA Project: €9,233
- Other sources: €7,782
- Euroship Project: €12,287
- Members' non-eligible fees: €7,736
- Total income: €622,174

- Staff costs: €470,309
- Other expenditure: €164,515
- Total expenditure: €634,824