

socialplatform

Jose Manuel Barroso
President of the European Commission

December 17, 2009

Dear President,

Re: Social Civil society does not buy into this Europe 2020 agenda and make four proposals for improvement

Social Platform welcomed the emphasis on 'social Europe' in your political guidelines and we also welcome that *"New policies must demonstrably contribute to social cohesion, tackling unemployment and fostering social inclusion while securing well performing labour markets"*, as stated in the Europe 2020 consultation.

However, we regret that actions outlined in the paper will not fulfill these objectives.

We actually think that the Europe 2020 agenda as it stands, represents a step back for social cohesion and social inclusion in Europe and will increase inequalities.

We are also very concerned that the growth and competitiveness paradigm is coming back on the agenda even stronger than in 2005, as if lessons from the current crisis were not drawn. Additionally, the Commission working document fails to present implementation mechanisms and targets which must be part of the strategy.

Please find below four proposals on how future actions could fulfill your declaration of intent to make sure *"social, economic and environmental objectives go hand in hand"*. Each proposal is detailed with concrete actions in annex:

- 1. Go beyond a short-term exit strategy: transform the EU economic strategy to serve people and planet**
- 2. Go beyond jobs as the only social answer: put your commitment to fight poverty in practice and propose a European strategy to reinforce social protection, guarantee access to services and minimum income for all**
- 3. Go beyond flexibility and self-employment: propose a European Employment Strategy that genuinely contributes to more quality jobs for all**
- 4. Go beyond a vision of people as mere consumers: make participation, citizenship and fundamental rights matter**

Making participation matters starts by postponing the adoption of the Europe 2020, as Social Platform requested in [a letter](#) on November 19, 2009.

We fear that not properly engaging civil society and the European Parliament in discussing the Europe they want would be a missed opportunity to generate ownership, public acceptance of EU future strategy and to start a new 'era' on a firm democratic basis, rooted in dialogue with citizens and civil society.

We look forward to hearing your response to our concerns and proposals,

Yours sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Conny Reuter, consisting of two distinct, stylized cursive marks.

Conny Reuter
President

Handwritten signature of Roshan Di Puppo, featuring the initials 'R. J. P.' followed by a long, horizontal flourish.

Roshan Di Puppo
Director

1. Go beyond a short-term exit strategy: transform the EU economic strategy to serve people and planet

Social Platform is concerned that the consultation paper mixes up between exit strategies from the crisis and a longer-term approach that should decide on EU objectives and investments.

Although debating on how to exit from the crisis is important and should be consistent with long-term objectives, the exit strategy options should not determine the long-term objectives of the EU. Rather the contrary: the long-term objectives should condition and drive exit strategy investments.

Secondly, Social Platform calls for a new economic strategy that serve people and the planet, where economy is a means to an end, rather than an end in itself. When reading the consultation paper, we are surprised to read the contrary: employment, social cohesion, education or even ecological solutions are thought through as tools to promote the competitiveness of Europe in the world.

This goes against most of the debates that were held as a result of the crisis, against what civil society proposes and does not comply with the December 2009 European Council conclusions which state that *"a new approach is needed more than ever"*.

We therefore invite you to read the [Spring Alliance Manifesto](#) and consider our recommendations as a contribution to the 2020 Agenda. It contains 17 proposals and outlines more than 100 concrete measures explaining how you can ensure that *"social, economic and environmental objectives go hand in hand"*.

What we propose

Social Platform calls for the adoption of a new economic strategy in which:

- Social cohesion and inclusion are key objectives of the Europe 2020 agenda
- Economy and growth are instruments at the service of these objectives
- All guidelines are adapted to reflect these objectives
- Alternative indicators to GDP are used to assess if progress are made on the road towards a more cohesive and inclusive society for all
- Existing social indicators as developed by the Social Protection Committee are consolidated in a "social scoreboard" to evaluate progress

2. Go beyond jobs as the only social answer: put your commitment to fight poverty in practice and propose a European strategy to reinforce social protection, guarantee access to services and minimum income for all

When reading the Europe 2020 agenda, we welcome that 'empowering people in inclusive societies' is one of the priorities. Unfortunately, we regret that inclusion is only addressed through the narrow prism of employment. From the start, this option excludes people that do not access employment (e.g. people with strong disabilities, children, retired people or family carers).

Your own services ([DG Employment, Equal opportunities and Social Inclusion](#)), the [Social Protection Committee](#), the [European Parliament](#) and [civil society actors](#) fighting on a daily basis against poverty and social exclusion are unanimous in stating that employment on its own doesn't bring more inclusive societies.

Other dimensions such as access to quality services for all, ensuring decent housing for everyone, overcoming discrimination and increasing the integration of persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities and migrants, need to be addressed as well, and are not yet part of the proposed EU 2020 agenda.

Although we recognise that 'adequate level of income support' and quality jobs are mentioned, we urge you to reshuffle this pillar, should you really want to establish inclusive societies and transform this priority into a success.

What we propose

Reducing inequalities and eradicating poverty requires a multi-faceted approach with five key points to act upon:

- Establish as a new strategic priority for the EU2020 Strategy, the objective to reduce social exclusion and inequality
- Establish the Social Open Method of Coordination as a key pillar of the EU 2020 Strategy with ambitious quantified EU and national targets on poverty eradication and better governance and participation
- Mainstream the needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups throughout the EU 2020 Strategy
- Move forward on guaranteeing Social Standards and adopt a framework directive to guarantee an adequate minimum income for all
- Strengthen the EU financial and economic framework to support the development of public services, guided by the following principles: universal access, quality, affordability and sustainability. This should translate into the different sectorial directives that should be modified accordingly.
- Update and renew the European Youth and Gender Pacts as an integral part of the EU2020 Strategy and adopt and implement a European Disability Pact.

3. Go beyond flexibility and self-employment: propose a European Employment Strategy that genuinely contributes to more quality jobs for all

Social Platform welcomes the repeated emphasis on quality jobs. We look forward to working with you on concrete actions as to how this could be translated.

However, Social Platform is strongly concerned about the over-emphasis on self-employment *“as a real option for people who have recently lost their jobs”*. Although self-employment can be a solution in specific circumstances, we think the EU 2020 should not put further responsibility on people themselves to cope with the crisis and unemployment rates. As recent experience from Member States show self-employment cannot be a panacea for the groups hit most severely by the crisis.

We would also like to underline that self-employed people will also need an adequate minimum income, access to quality services, access to life-long learning, and good social protection systems, if they want their enterprise to work out in the long-run and contribute to the EU economic development.

Secondly, even if the EU 2020 emphasis is on fighting unemployment only, Social Platform would like to stress the importance of implementing the [2008 Commission’s recommendation on active inclusion](#). It states clearly what people furthest away from the labour market need to (re)-enter the labour market: access to quality services, minimum income, activation strategies and quality jobs. In other words, active inclusion strategies should be at the cornerstone of your upcoming European Employment Strategy, while it is barely mentioned in the consultation paper.

Thirdly, a sector of economic actors is missing from the EU 2020 agenda: Social economy enterprises are economic and social players set up to respond to people’s needs and characterized by a different way of doing business: They associate economic performance with democratic governance and social responsibility. Economically successful, they create jobs and meet today’s challenges by combining often highly labour intensive production with new technologies and social integration of the most vulnerable.

Given how this type of economic actors fulfills your wish that *“social, economic and environmental objectives go hand in hand”*, we hope that they will have a specific mention (with actions) in the EU 2020 agenda.

Fourthly, the employment challenges the EU faces will only be addressed properly if all actors are on board, including groups facing specific difficulties in entering the labour market: this means that dialogue with trade unions but also civil society organisations should be one of the cornerstones of the EU 2020 governance.

What we propose

- Develop a new European Employment Guideline on Active Inclusion, to be followed and supported by implementation roadmaps at both EU and national level, with clear priority targets.
- Set targets for quality employment, including adequate wages, equal pay for equal work, good social protection systems and the fight against discrimination.
- Establish and implement national strategies to develop lifelong learning and vocational training policies, taking into account volunteering and non-formal education. Recognise and

validate the skills acquired by people through these systems, and implement outreach programmes to ensure that all have access to high-quality education and training opportunities

- o Include regular dialogue with civil society organisations at European and national levels in the governance of the European Employment Strategy

4. Go beyond a vision of people as mere consumers: make participation, citizenship and fundamental rights matter

We are deeply concerned about the way 'citizens' are portrayed in the consultation paper: *"citizens must be empowered to play a full part in the single market. This requires strengthening their ability and confidence to buy goods and services cross-border"*.

We are also concerned by the purely utilitarian vision of migration: migrant people being only mentioned for their economic value and not recognised for their cultural and societal contribution. This utilitarian vision is unlikely to contribute to building more cohesive societies.

In our view, people living in Europe (and not only those holding a European citizenship) are not only mere consumers or workers. Historically, citizenship is the relation between an individual and a nation (in that case the EU), not between an individual and economic interests.

This vision doesn't hold up to the ambitions spelled out in the Lisbon Treaty¹ which introduces participatory democracy as a fundamental democratic principle of the EU.

With people increasingly feeling they are not heard by EU institutions², we trust you will seek to make people's participation, civil dialogue and citizenship, one of the cornerstone of the Lisbon Strategy governance.

Finally, making fundamental rights matter goes beyond civil rights and the right to security. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, together with the articles two and three of the Treaty of Lisbon, calls for the implementation of social rights (e.g. access to healthcare, social protection, right to education) as part of EU policies. We trust you will make sure that a holistic fundamental right perspective underpins the EU 2020 Strategy.

What we propose

- o Together with civil society organisations, develop specific principles, guidelines and benchmarks on how to strengthen the governance of EU 2020 Strategy and promote a more effective participation of social partners and representative of civil society actors at national level
- o Ensure a regular, open, transparent and structured dialogue with European civil society organisations on the implementation and revision of the EU 2020 Strategy
- o Propose an Inter Institutional Agreement for the implementation of the civil dialogue provisions as formulated in the Lisbon Treaty
- o Develop a strategy for a full and effective implementation of the EU Charter on fundamental rights.

¹ Article 11 of the Lisbon Treaty

² [Eurobarometer 71](#), European Commission, September 2009