

# socialplatform

Michel Barnier  
Commissioner for Internal Market

November 19, 2010

**Re: Social Platform's study mapping European Commission processes guaranteeing universal access to basic services**

Dear M. Barnier,

In early 2009 Social Platform commissioned a study entitled "**Ensuring access to services of general interest - A mapping of existing European Commission' processes which guarantee universal access to basic services with a particular focus on access of groups facing exclusion and/or discrimination**". We are delighted that DG MARKT helped input to this document and are grateful for your DG's cooperation.

Since then we have discussed this document with our members and have drawn a number of conclusions, key among them are the following:

- Within the European Commission, there is a lack of common terminology relating to services of general interest, different Directorates Generals use different terms when referring to ensuring that people have access to basic services, for example sometimes those accessing services are referred to as "consumers", sometimes as "citizens" There is also no common understanding of terms like "basic services", "vulnerable users"
- There is a lack of centralized responsibility in terms of which service ensures that all legislation relating to services of general interest has clauses ensuring universal access with attention to those in vulnerable situations. There is no consistent approach on the part of the various Directorate Generals and the various pieces of legislation to ensure these basic principles. For example recent energy legislation is aware of the need to specifically refer to ensuring access to those in more precarious situations but other pieces of legislation make no such reference. There appears to be a need for some obligatory mainstreaming of social clauses.
- There is an apparent lack of understanding of the evolutionary character of SGI that is to say what it an essential service to ensuring one's dignity today, may not have been yesterday; for example the necessity of a basic bank account to gain employment, to rent or buy a property, to pay bills. There needs to be greater understanding that social development means development of what constitutes a basic SGI
- There is a lack of evaluation of the impact of internal market practices/laws on access to basic services for those in the EU and more particularly those in vulnerable situations.

Based on these conclusions, Social Platform believes that there is a real need for coordination of Services of General Interest within the Commission.  
We would therefore very much welcome the opportunity to discuss this document and its findings in person with you during the meeting of today.

Attached please find the "mapping document" complete with its conclusions.

Yours sincerely,



Conny Reuter  
President



Pierre Baussand  
Acting Director