



Brussels, 9 June 2023

To: Employment and Social Affairs Ministers of EU Member States

Subject: Open letter calling for your support of the Social Convergence Framework

Dear Minister,

We have been facing several social crises in recent years: the COVID-19 pandemic increased social and health inequalities and Russia's invasion of Ukraine has been worsening the cost-of-living crisis. The social impact of these crises on people, especially on those in vulnerable situations, is insufficiently monitored in the EU. We therefore welcome the proposal for a Social Convergence Framework (SCF) by Spain and Belgium, further developed by the European Commission as well as the Social Protection and Employment Committees.

We are convinced that the SCF is necessary to better balance the economic and social dimensions of the EU socio-economic governance, to strengthen upward social convergence in the context of the revision of the EU fiscal rules, and to commit to the full implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights - ensuring that everyone in the EU has equal opportunities and access to social rights.

Ahead of the presentation of the key messages on the SCF during the EPSCO meeting on 12 June 2023, we call on you to support a Social Convergence Framework that strengthens the existing social monitoring to help detect and address risks to social convergence in the EU. We call on you to engage to ensure that the SCF will be fully operational at the start of the next European Semester cycle (2024).

While we fully support the adoption of the framework, we still see some scope for improvement. Our analysis of the proposal, detailing its strong points and possible improvements, as well as our key recommendations can be found in the annex to this letter.

Ahead of the European Parliament elections, now is the time for the EU and Member States to act, demonstrating that they are committed to building a more resilient, socially just, and inclusive Europe that ensures a decent life for all.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Laura de Bonfils".

Laura de Bonfils, Social Platform Secretary-General

Social Platform is the largest, leading network of European civil society organisations working for a more social Europe. We represent the interests of social civil society organisations and people in all their diversity, including those in the most vulnerable situations. We also represent social economy actors and not-for-profit social service providers who support millions of people in their day-to-day lives.

Social Platform acknowledges the financial support of the European Commission's ['Europe for Citizens'](#) programme, managed by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA).

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Annex: Social Platform analysis of the proposal for a Social Convergence framework and key recommendations

Strong points of the proposal

- We welcome the additional, more focused monitoring the social convergence framework proposal would bring to the European Semester process. The new country-specific sections in the Joint Employment Report (JER), the Social Convergence reports, the country-specific social convergence reviews in SPC and EMCO and especially the proposal to add annual Council conclusions on social convergence are useful additions to the Semester.

Scope for improvements

- We regret that the first stage assessment would only be done based on existing tools, mainly the JER traffic light methodology applied to the Social Scoreboard headline indicators, which do not cover all 20 Pillar principles and are not sufficiently disaggregated. If all available indicators are only used for the second stage analysis, we see a risk of overlooking social convergence risks, especially for specific groups in vulnerable situations who often experience deep, multiple, and intersecting disadvantages.
- We see room for improvement of the JER traffic light methodology that would be used in the first-stage assessment. The approach to categorise Member States only in comparative terms in the first-stage assessment is lacking. If many Member States face significant issues in a specific policy area, this approach will not allow us to identify all risks to upward social convergence.
- Some of the scenarios for the first-stage assessment that were not picked would be more ambitious in covering social convergence risks, such as scenario 4 that would include stagnating and worsening situations from the previous year with the same weighting.

Our key recommendations

- Finish the revision of the Social Scoreboard by adding additional headline and secondary indicators that extensively cover all 20 Social Pillar principles. It must also better disaggregate data by various factors, such as gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, aiming at measuring the impact of policies on various groups, particularly those in vulnerable situations. Our full recommendations are available [here](#).
- Improve the Social Pillar implementation assessment in the JER to avoid overlooking social convergence risks by evaluating in comparative terms only.
- Continue developing quality comparable indicators and data collection mechanisms to improve the assessment of the social and employment situation in the EU.
- Adopt annual Council conclusions on social convergence in the EU to increase the visibility of the social dimension in the European Semester process.
- Fully employ the information gathered through the framework to steer social and employment reforms & investments through country-specific recommendations.

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