

Brussels 25 September 2024

Dear President Von der Leyen,

The presentation of the next College of Commissioners 2024-29 has raised serious concerns from Social Platform and our members. Our concerns as well as requests for clarifications are outlined below.

On Jobs & Social Rights

Social Platform calls for reinstating the priority of quality Jobs and Social Rights in the title of an EVP equipped with a strong competence over the relevant DGs and other related Commissioners.

The creation of the portfolio ‘People, Skills and Prosperity’ under the responsibility of an Executive Vice President is a significant step towards prioritising wellbeing and social progress in the upcoming mandate. However, we are concerned that the lack of reference to quality jobs and social rights in the new EVP’s title is indicative of an increasingly narrow focus on competitiveness and productivity fueled by skills. To send a clear signal to people in Europe that the fight against poverty and inequality is being taken seriously, we demand that the EVP job title explicitly reflects this vital mission.

We cannot accept any attempt that seeks to give less visibility or importance to social rights and the fight against poverty, or that risks overloading a Commissioner with too many varied responsibilities, effectively reducing their capacity to build Social Europe.

It is also concerning that the EVP mandate now includes the entire skills and education portfolio. While there is an emphasis on ‘skills’, education not directly related to access to the labour market (life-long learning, adult education) is not mentioned in the portfolio titles. The risk is that fewer units and staff are assigned to these two areas that are crucial for the future of Social Europe.

The recent Letta and Draghi reports, which all Commissioners are requested to deliver on in their mission letters, have significant implications for Social Europe. In particular, while the Draghi report highlights the connection between increased productivity and worsening inequalities, it provides no concrete proposals on how to strengthen Social Europe. Worse still, of the over 200 organisations which Draghi met with, not a single one was a social NGO, and only one was a trade union. In turn, the Report of the High-Level Expert Group on the Future of Social Protection and the Welfare State, drafted under the chairing of former Commissioner Diamantopoulou has not found the same reference in the mission letters, despite its high relevance.

With two out of three headline Porto targets on track to fail, it is imperative that social rights and the wellbeing of all people is a Commission priority. The upcoming EU Budget



must bring much needed social investment and a Commissioner with a strong mandate for Jobs and Social Rights is necessary to ensure these needs are met.

Furthermore, Social Platform has serious concerns about how important files previously under the social rights portfolio will be managed in the new College of Commissioners.

Social Platform is seeking the following clarifications:

1. Who will balance industrial and trade policies, and policies related to the green transition, with the Sustainable Development Goals, Porto Commitment on Social Rights and the European Pillar of Social Rights more generally?
2. Who will be responsible for the implementation of the European Care strategy, which was not mentioned in any of the mission letters?
3. Who will be responsible for the social economy portfolio? Who will be responsible for coordinating policies that impact social economy?

On the Equality Portfolio

Social Platform calls for reinstating the stand-alone European Commissioner for Equality, supported by the work of a specific DG and with transversal competencies that allow the coordination of all policy areas that are related with equality.

A Commissioner with joint responsibility for Crisis Preparedness and Equality risks undermining the important work that must be achieved in both portfolios. We live in an era of rolling crisis from a global pandemic to war, and with rising geopolitical challenges and ever-increasing climate emergencies, there will always be an urgent crisis which the Commissioner will be expected to prioritise. Such developments will inevitably lead to the de-prioritisation of the important work which the EU must continue to advance the Union of Equality and tackling discrimination in all its forms.

Given the European Commissioner for Preparedness, Crisis Management and Equality will be linked to the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, we are concerned that Equality is being watered down, and the European Commissioner will not have sufficient time or resources to further their Equality portfolio, which is currently anchored in both DG Justice and Home Affairs and DG Employment and Social Affairs (for the Disability aspects).

Additionally, there are serious concerns Social Platform shares related to the Equality portfolio.

Social Platform is seeking urgent clarifications on:

1. What measures will be put in place to ensure equal time and resources are dedicated to both portfolios?

2. The mission letters refer to DG JUST under the work of the European Commissioner responsible for Rule of Law and Consumer Rights. Without shared competences of DG JUST how will the units working on equality cooperate with the Commissioner responsible for Equality? Furthermore, Disability is now handled in DG Employment.
3. Why does the Mission Letter for the Equality portfolio contain no references to migration, islamophobia or antisemitism and the discrimination experienced by migrants? Social Platform is deeply concerned by the rising trend of treating migration as a security concern, which undermines the human rights and dignity of people on the move.
4. How will the equality taskforce be organised to ensure that the Commissioner can fully deliver on their agenda? What will be the mission and who will be part of the task force?
5. Why is age discrimination or age equality not mentioned in the work of the equality Task Force?

Yours sincerely,

Laura de Bonfils



Secretary General of Social Platform

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 Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV) programme.