

To: Ministers of Employment and Social Affairs

Letter to the EPSCO Council of October 4, 2012

A more social, democratic and participative economic governance and Europe 2020 strategy

Dear Ministers,

At the EPSCO Council meeting of October 4, and within the framework of the European Semester, you will have a political discussion on the involvement of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy and their involvement in the process of the European Semester.

Following up to the informal EPSCO Council meeting in Cyprus on July 12, Social Platform would like to reiterate our call for a more structural involvement of civil society and for a more social, democratic and participative economic governance and Europe 2020 Strategy.

The current processes around the EU economic governance and Europe 2020, are clearly suffering from a democratic deficit. The decisions are prepared and made between the European Commission and the head of states and there is neither social nor civil dialogue at EU level. Furthermore, social non-governmental organisations have been barely involved in the European Semester or in the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

Therefore we are calling on you and your governments to:

1. Ensure a wide inclusive and democratic process to decide upon economic and social priorities. Decisions with such consequences on the population cannot be taken by the Commission and heads of government alone

In order to respond to the current democratic deficit, we call for a strengthened democratic debate and involvement of the European Parliament, national parliaments, local and regional authorities, civil society and social partners.

HOW

- **Organise twice a year a summit on employment and social affairs focusing on inclusive growth** as a high level forum for a civil dialogue between EU institutions and EU civil society organisations focusing on quality employment and the reduction of poverty and social exclusion, besides the Annual Convention of the European Platform Against Poverty and Social Inclusion. This will complement the already existing Tripartite Social Summit for Growth and Jobs.
- **Set up a structured dialogue to truly involve the European Parliament and national parliaments, local and regional authorities, and of civil society and social partners** in drafting, implementing, monitoring and evaluating National Reform Programmes (NRP), National Social Reports (NSR) and Country-specific Recommendations (CSR). Furthermore there is a need for clear and transparent guidelines on the involvement of stakeholders.

- **Ensure full transparency of the processes that make up the European economic governance and the implementation of Europe 2020** from the design of NRPs and NSRs to Commission CSRs and the final Council Recommendations, and set clear rules on how these different instruments are related.

2. Open the European semester and Europe 2020 strategy processes to social NGOs ready to play their role in their areas of expertise in the economic governance and Europe 2020 strategy

As part of a meaningful regular dialogue process, we call on you to involve civil society organisations at local, regional, national and European level in the decision making process of the economic governance and the implementation of Europe 2020. This will give a voice to those who are directly impacted by budget and fiscal consolidation.

HOW

- **Involve at all governance levels and treat as equal partners organisations representing different sectors of civil society**, taking into account their specific expertise. More ownership and accountability of these processes will also trigger more input from NGOs.
- **Ensure that the partnership principle as enshrined in the Commission's proposal for the new European Social Fund is adopted and implemented.** This will guarantee that EU funds are used to support inclusive growth.
- **Organise National Stakeholder Involvement in a structured way** for developing National Reform Programmes and National Social Reports to ensure meaningful participation for example through a platform approach, with joint debates and public hearings, and regular conferences on the monitoring of EU 2020 in member states.
- **Facilitate mutual learning between civil society and national authorities.** The topics should reflect the thematic priorities of Europe 2020 and should support member states in their implementation. This will enable member states to tap into the existing knowledge of the NGOs and strengthen the structural framework for their involvement.

We trust that we can count on your support.

Yours sincerely,



Conny Reuter
President



Pierre Baussand
Director

Social Platform is the largest civil society alliance fighting for social justice and participatory democracy in Europe. Consisting of 45 pan-European networks of NGOs. We campaign to ensure that EU policies are developed in partnership with the people they affect, respecting fundamental rights, promoting solidarity and improving lives.