



Time to Double Down on Social Europe: Social Platform's Response to the EU Elections

While the dust settles in Brussels after the recent European elections, it is clear we are witnessing the further growth of extreme far right parties. While Social Platform welcomes the stability that the traditional grand coalition brings, the recent election highlights its fragility. This election must serve as an urgent reminder to all policy makers that people feel left behind and that meeting their needs means prioritising social rights.

As civil society, we are deeply concerned about the growth of extremist groups in recent local, national and EU elections who make political gain at the expense of vulnerable groups. In particular, political groups and individuals who incite hatred against marginalised communities and minorities and fuel racist, homophobic, transphobic, sexist discourses.

Social Platform calls on EU policy makers not to align with extremist right-wing parties, and work as a coalition of pro-European, inclusive and progressive voices. Normalising extremist groups and political ideas, presents a significant threat to our democracy, rule of law and undermines the recognition and vindication of our human rights.

To prevent the continued growth of extremist groups policy makers must acknowledge and address the root causes of their populist success. Extremist parties thrive in times of social crisis, when welfare states are eroded, poverty, inequality and systems of oppression grow, and people feel unheard. The growth of the extreme parties is part of a wider trend, it is not happening in isolation. In the EU today, 1 in 5 are at risk of poverty or social exclusion, including more than 20 million children, 1 in 10 households live in energy poverty while housing costs, severe material deprivation and financial distress of households continues to grow. If newly elected MEPs are serious about tackling extremists, then it cannot be business as usual.

As the political groups negotiate their core asks for the next political guidelines and detail what policies they want the next President of the European Commission to pursue in exchange for their support, they must prioritise social rights, equality, equal opportunities and focus on the wellbeing of people and planet.

In addition to the commitment to revise the Action Plan for the European Pillar of Social Rights and the Union of Equality, political groups must show specific commitments to how they'll promote social inclusion and equality over the coming five years and ensure social progress for everyone.

In building a stronger Social Europe there is plenty that can be done, including: developing the social taxonomy and the Do No Significant Social Harm principle; promote social distribution impact assessments; drive forward an action plan on social services; follow through on the Parliament's previous call for a framework directive on minimum income; introduce mandatory social and green criteria in revising the public procurement directive; work and improve access, availability and affordability of essential services and revise and improve the indicators within the Semester's social scoreboard; develop an EU taskforce on housing; promote an EU anti-poverty strategy; monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Long-Term Care Strategy and the European Child Guarantee;



build on the EU Social Economy Action Plan by creating enabling environments for Social Economy to thrive; and the effective transposition of the Directive on Violence Against Women & Domestic Violence.

As the EU lays the foundations for large-scale investments in defence and energy infrastructure, we cannot ignore urgently needed social investments, which are estimated by the EU to be about EUR192 billion a year.¹ This can be achieved through a just transformation fund post 2026, to follow-up on the Recovery & Resilience Facility, with specific benchmarks to meet social and green investments and continuing to work on progressive taxation systems at national level.

In progressing climate policies, a just transition will be essential to ensure vulnerable groups are not negatively affected nor left behind, which can be facilitated through a Green & Social Deal, centring on the social dimension of climate policies, and ensuring low-income households are not disproportionately burdened in the green transition. Additionally, it must strengthen the social dimension of the circular economy through supporting reuse and repair operators in the social economy and establishing reuse targets for inclusive circular jobs.

MEPs will work on the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). A significant focus must remain on social conditionality and the social use of the funds to underpin Europe's social progress and ensure no one is left behind as Europe navigates towards 2030.

In the area of civil liberties, justice and home affairs the Union of Equality should be prioritised with a commitment to both evaluate and extend the existing strategies and frameworks, this should also include evaluating the implementation of the pact on migration and asylum, resuming negotiations for the Long Term Residents directive and fighting the criminalisation of CSOs working with migrants. The union of equality must do better to mainstream social inclusion, through breaking silos: discrimination and social exclusion are two sides of the same coin and should be tackled simultaneously.

In short, there are numerous concrete policies the European Institutions should pursue and prioritise in the months ahead, all within EU competencies. Social Platform, and our members, remain a key supporter and ally in promoting the uptake of these policies.

Social Platform calls on progressive and pro-European voices to work together to ensure that over the next 5 years the correct policies are put in place to guarantee social progress and tackle the root causes of poverty, social exclusion and inequality.

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¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020SC0098>