



Open letter to the President of the European Council and to Heads of State and Government

February 8, 2010

Dear President,
Dear Heads of State and Government,

Re: Social NGOs do not support the EU 2020 Strategy as it stands, and make four proposals for improvement

On February 11 in Brussels you will be discussing the EU 2020 Strategy, which will define the EU priorities for the coming decade. In preparation for these crucial negotiations, you will have received [an overview of responses](#) to the Commission's public consultation on the issue, which claims to summarise the proposals of civil society.

Social Platform represents 42 pan-European NGO networks active in the social sector. We find that the overview document mischaracterises the position of social NGOs, stating that we "*broadly support*" the Commission's views when we have explicitly said the opposite in our [common response to the consultation](#), as well as in the individual responses of our members. This issue has been discussed widely in Brussels and [in EU media](#), and other groups also assert that their positions have been distorted in the overview document.

We therefore want to communicate our proposals for the EU 2020 Strategy to you directly, so you can get the facts as they are and take them into account in your February 11 meeting. For a more detailed explanation of how these proposals can be implemented, and why they should, please refer to the [Spring Alliance Manifesto](#) and the [Social Platform detailed response to the EU2020 consultation](#).

Our proposals

1. Ensure that the EU economic strategy serves people and planet

Growth, competitiveness and sound public finance are not an end but a means to ensure people's well-being and environmental sustainability. Therefore:

- Make social cohesion and inclusion clear objectives of the EU 2020 Strategy
- Ensure that economy and growth are instruments at the service of these objectives
- Ensure the EU financial and economic framework prioritises the sustainability of social protection systems and universal access to services of general interest
- Assess whether social progress is made using alternative indicators to GDP

- Consolidate existing social indicators, as developed by the Social Protection Committee, into a “social scoreboard” to evaluate progress on an annual basis

2. Make social cohesion and the fight against poverty a separate pillar of EU 2020

Employment alone doesn't bring about fair and inclusive society, as confirmed by the [Commission](#), the [European Parliament](#) and the [Social Protection Committee](#). Social protection, adequate pensions, universal access to public services, actions to fight gender inequalities and discrimination are needed to reinforce the social fabric of society. These dimensions are not yet part of the proposed EU 2020 agenda. Therefore:

- Make eradicating poverty and social exclusion an explicit objective of EU 2020
- Establish a separate pillar in the strategy focusing on social cohesion and inclusion
- Adopt quantified EU and national targets on poverty eradication
- Strengthen the Social [Open Method of Coordination](#) as the instrument to deliver on these targets, with a reinforced participation of civil society and people living in poverty
- Consolidate social standards and adopt a directive to guarantee adequate minimum income
- Strengthen the legal framework for services of general interest and social services
- Update and renew the European Youth and Gender Pacts as an integral part of the EU 2020 Strategy and adopt and implement a European Disability Pact
- Reaffirm your commitment to the Barcelona targets on childcare
- Develop a strategy to fully implement the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights

3. Revise the European Employment Strategy to focus on the care sector, quality of jobs and inclusive labour market

With the current high unemployment rate, EU 2020 needs more than ever to respond to people's needs for quality jobs and support in their fight against exclusion and discrimination. Therefore:

- Develop a new [European Employment Guideline](#) on [Active Inclusion](#), followed by implementation roadmaps at both EU and national level, with clear targets
- Create more quality jobs by focusing on the care sector and social economy actors
- Set targets for quality employment, including adequate wages, equal pay for work of equal value, access to training, measures to fight discrimination and fully paid maternity leave and parental leave
- Establish and implement national strategies to develop lifelong learning and vocational training policies, taking into account volunteering and non-formal education
- Include regular dialogue with civil society organisations at European and national levels in the governance of the European Employment Strategy

4. Make the participation of citizens and civil society matter

EU citizens have never felt as detached from politics as they are today, as evidenced by [the Commission's own statistics](#) and the record low turnout in last year's European elections. Therefore:

- Organise civil society hearings prior to the Spring and June summits as provided by Article 11 of the Lisbon treaty
- Together with civil society organisations, develop specific structures and benchmarks on how to strengthen the governance of the EU 2020 Strategy and promote a more effective participation of civil society actors at European and national level

We thank you for your attention and hope that you will consider our views in these vital discussions for the EU. We are at your disposal for any clarifications or explanations that you may require.

Yours sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Conny Reuter, consisting of a stylized 'C' and 'R'.

Conny Reuter
President

Handwritten signature of Roshan Di Puppò, featuring the initials 'R. D. P.' followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Roshan Di Puppò
Director