



# socialplatform

Solidar EU Training Academy

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European Semester – Social  
Investment – Social innovation



# Who we are

The largest platform of European rights and value-based NGOs working in the social sector. We aim to promote social justice, equality and participatory democracy by voicing the concerns of our 49 member organisations



# Our mission and vision

- Our mission is to advocate for, and raise awareness on, policies that bring social progress to all in the European Union
- Our vision is a socially just and cohesive Europe. A society that ensures no one is excluded and where the well being, the dignity, and the enforcement of human rights of its peoples – and in particular those in vulnerable situations – is the central aim of all its policies



# Our members

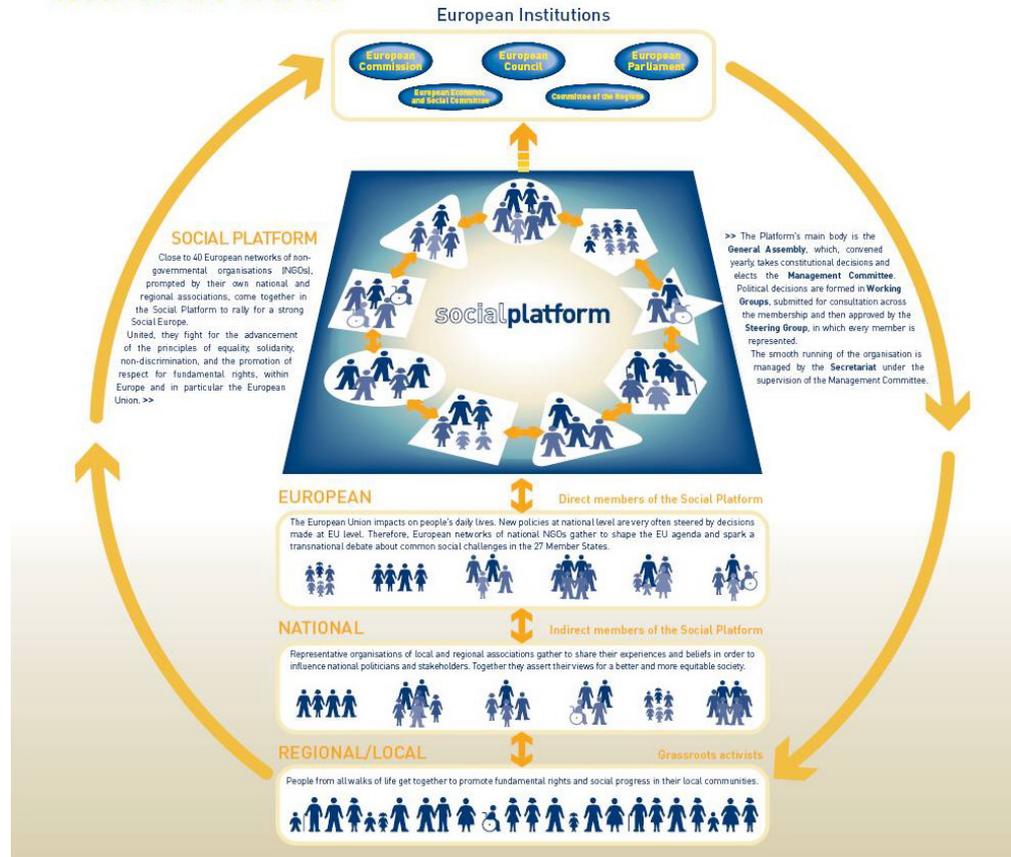


# Strategic Objectives 2014-2020



# Horizontal process

## How do we work?



# European semester

## What is it?

- The European Semester is a cycle of economic and fiscal policy coordination within the EU.
- Implementation of the EU's economic rules is organised in an annual cycle, which is divided into two parts: the European Semester and the National Semester.
- The European Semester covers three blocks of economic policy coordination:
  - structural reforms, focusing on promoting growth and employment in line with the Europe 2020 strategy;
  - fiscal policies, in order to ensure sustainability of public finances in line with the Stability and Growth Pact;
  - prevention of excessive macroeconomic imbalances.



# European semester - calendar

## Preparatory phase:

- November – December of each year
- In Nov the Commission publishes the **Annual Growth Survey** which presents its view of EU policy priorities for the next year. The member states are invited to take them into account when designing their economic policies for the coming year.
- The Commission also publishes the **Alert Mechanism Report** which reviews macroeconomic developments in individual EU countries.
- Based on the Report, **the Commission may decide to conduct in-depth review** of the situation in the countries where the risk of potential macroeconomic imbalances is deemed high.



# European semester - calendar

## 1° phase: policy guidance at EU level

- January – February of each year:
  - **The Council of the European Union debates the Annual Growth Survey, formulates orientations and adopts conclusions.**
  - As the Semester has implications for a range of policies, therefore the Council of the EU discusses it in its various configurations. For example, in the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council, the Economic and Financial Affairs Council, etc..
  - The **European Parliament** also discusses the Annual Growth Survey and may publish an own initiative report. It issues an **opinion on employment guidelines**.
- March: The European Council (heads of state and gov) adopt policy orientations.



# European semester - calendar

## 2° phase: country specific objectives and plans:

- April: Member states submit their policy plans:
  - **stability and convergence programmes** outlining the member states' medium-term budgetary strategy and
  - **national reform programmes** outlining member states' structural reform plans, focused on promoting growth and employment.
- May: the European Commission evaluates national policy plans and presents draft country-specific recommendations.
- June: the Council of the EU discusses the draft and agrees on final country-specific recommendations. They are then presented to the European Council for endorsement.
- July: the Council of the EU adopts the country-specific recommendations, and the member states are invited to implement them.



# National semester - calendar

## National Semester: implementation, monitoring and analysis

- From July:
  - Member states take into account the country specific recommendations into their national budgets and other reform plans during the national semester





# EUROPEAN SEMESTER: A PARTNERSHIP EU-MEMBER STATES

	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October
European Commission	Autumn Economic Forecasts Commission publishes <b>Annual Growth Survey and Alert Mechanism Report</b> (AGS, AMR) Commission opinions on draft budgetary plans (€ Area)			Winter Economic Forecasts Bilateral meeting with Member States		Commission publishes <b>In-Depth Reviews</b> of countries with potential risks (IDR)	Bilateral meeting with Member States	Spring Economic Forecasts Commission proposes <b>country-specific recommendations</b> for budgetary, economic and social policies (CSR)				Bilateral meeting with Member States
European Council / Council	Finance ministers discuss opinions on draft budgetary plans (€ Area)	National ministers <b>adopt conclusions</b> on AGS + AMR and agree main priority areas (AGS, AMR)		EU leaders <b>adopt economic priorities</b> based on AGS (AGS)			National ministers <b>discuss the CSRs</b> (CSR)	EU leaders <b>endorse final CSRs</b> (CSR)				
Member States		Member States <b>adopt budgets</b>		Member States present their <b>Stability or Convergence Programmes</b> (on budgetary policies) and <b>National Reform Programmes</b> (on economic policies)							Member States present draft <b>budgetary plans + Economic Partnership Programmes</b> (EDP countries) (€ Area)	
European Parliament			Debate / resolution on AGS (AGS)								Debate / resolution on the European Semester and the CSRs (CSR)	

# Changes introduced by EU Semester

- synchronised the calendars of economic and fiscal policy reporting and evaluation at the EU level
- changed the coordination of national economic policies from ex-post to ex-ante

Under the Semester the member states submit their budgetary and reform plans in the early stages of their national budgetary processes.

The Council issues recommendations for member states' plans before their budgets are presented to national parliaments.



# Main challenges of EU Semester

- Intergovernmental mechanism: process led by the European Commission (DG ECFIN and Sec Gen) in negotiation with the member state, outside the Community method
- It should be a governance process that underpins the Europe 2020 strategy; on the contrary there is a clear disconnection from it (very little consideration is given to the poverty target)
- Very clear concern about unemployment across the EU Member States and it is anticipated that economic growth will lead to more jobs. No reference to inclusive growth. Emphasis is entirely on ensuring that the financial economic systems are revised and calibrated to ensure growth.
- NGOs are often not involved by their governments in the process of preparation and evaluation of NRPs.
- The European Commission does not prioritise the tackling of the social situation outside from an employment perspective.



# Main challenges of EU Semester

Examples of CSRs:

- To Austria to “improve the sustainability of the pension system (...) Further improve the cost effectiveness and sustainability of health care and long-term care services.”
- To the Czech Republic to “Increase the inclusiveness of education, notably by promoting the participation of socially disadvantaged and Roma children in particular in early childhood education.”
- To Italy to “To address exposure to poverty and social exclusion, scale-up the pilot social assistance scheme, in a fiscally neutral way, guaranteeing appropriate targeting, strict conditionality and territorial uniformity, and strengthening the link with activation measures.”



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# Involvement of national members in the EU Semester

Many Social Platform members encourage their members to take part in monitoring the whole process of the European Semester.

This feedback is essential for European organisations to feedback to the European Commission, for example which of the CSRs are the most appropriate, which are the ones we believe to endanger social cohesion, and how are these CSRs implemented by Member States.



# Social investment

In 2013 the European Commission published the “Social Investment Package”.

Social investment is defined as:

- investing into people’s empowerment and support through all stages of their lives and
- policies and measures that are anticipating and preparing instead of repairing.
- investing areas are active labour markets policies, child-care education, research and rehabilitation, prevention and health promotion



# Social investment – points of action

- **Smart spending:**

adequate and sustainable budgeting as well as targeted allocation of cohesion policy resources encouraged

- **Active inclusion policies:**

pursuing activating social policies and services through a full implementation of the Active Inclusion Strategy in Member States; employers need to adapt to a more diversified labour force; close the gender pay gap, confront homelessness through prevention, housing first approaches and access to basic bank accounts; stimulate inclusive entrepreneurship

- **Investing in children and youth:**

invest in children and youth; implement the recommendations on Investing in Children in an integrated way; invest in child care facilities, adequate training for young people and a youth guarantee; support health promotion and preventive health care for child and young people



# Social investment – points of action

- **Evidence-based social policies:**

develop concrete strategies for social innovation and fully take advantage of EU Structural Funds to do so; prioritise social policy innovation in the implementation of the Country Specific Recommendations; support social businesses and social entrepreneurship.



# Social Platform assessment: positive aspects

- paradigm change that **social policies and social services are not a cost but an investment for better cohesion in our societies**
- opportunity to reorient the current policies towards a **rebalancing of social and economic policies at EU and ms level**
- **Social investment is no substitute for social protection:** adequate minimum income protection for those who require it is a precondition for an effective social investment strategy
- **Broad multidimensional integrated approach that prevents and alleviate poverty and social exclusion:** by linking active inclusion policies, access to services, financial inclusion, children well-being, LTC, health systems, housing
- Social investment is promoted with a **life-cycle approach**
- Welcome is the call on ms to foster the **involvement of stakeholders** in the modernisation of social policies.



# SIP – points of concern

- **social investment is often presented as an economic argument by ignoring fundamental rights** independently of labour market participation
- **the use of conditionality applied to support-schemes and benefits** might bring to an interpretation leading to discrimination in access to them and worsen poverty and social exclusion
- the ESF is seen as main tool for implementing social investments: **ESF and EU funds are limited and should not replace national budgets to finance structural social and health policies**
- Missing is a **specific focus on the governance of Europe 2020** and on how to streamline social policies throughout all policy areas to achieve more balance between economic and social policies

View Social Platform's [position](#) on SIP



# Social innovation – EU developments

## Growing attention to social innovation paid by the EU agenda:

- the Flagship Initiatives of the Europe 2020 strategy (European Platform Against Poverty and social Exclusion, Innovation Union and its pilot project “Social Innovation Europe”)
- the new Skills Agenda
- the Digital Agenda
- the Social Investment Package
- the Social Business Initiative
- EU Funds 2014-2020 (Horizon 2020, ESF, ERDF, EASI).

**Main challenge:** there is no clear common definition. You run the risk of limiting public financing to practices which are innovative but not meaningful or do not necessarily take a comprehensive or long-term approach to social policies and services.



# Social Platform 9 principles for soc inn

For us social innovation is meaningful when most of the following 9 criteria are met (see *Social Platform's [position](#) on social innovation*):

- **Novelty:** the novelty can refer to the new social needs that have to be addressed, to existing practices, approaches or solutions that are applied to a new context or a new social need; or to a new way of applying existing solutions (integration of services or policy approaches between different sectors, combination of existing solutions or approaches, etc.)
- **Focus on unmet/inadequately met/new needs by reinforcing the implementation of human rights:** the innovation clearly identifies a social need that needs to be met in a specific context and is backed up by an analysis showing that existing responses are lacking or insufficient and / or do not adequately include a rights-based approach
- **Assessment sharing:** the innovation contributes to gathering more evidence in an area where evidence is limited or lacking and it is shared with all relevant stakeholders



# Social Platform 9 principles for soc inn

- **Informs policy development:** the social innovation should also help decision-makers to improve existing approaches, practices, services or policies
- **Potential for up-scaling:** the social innovation could work, or be adapted, for different contexts (transferability) or on a larger scale and therefore could be mainstreamed; scaling-up does not necessarily mean transferring a social innovation from one country to another
- **Participation and involvement of users, promotion and respect of users' rights:** the innovation promotes and respects users' rights; users are associated in the identification of the social need, in the design of responses, in their implementation and evaluation
- **Participation and involvement of all relevant actors in a specific context:** the innovation involves a partnership of public authorities, civil society organisations, social economy actors and all the actors that may be relevant for the specific innovation



# 9 principles for social innovation

- **Goes beyond technological innovation for the benefit of users, is guided by criteria of public interest and promotes social progress:** an evaluation shows that the innovation makes improvements for the users (e.g. in terms of promotion of human rights, well-being, quality of life, empowerment, employability, good health, social inclusion, equality, equity regarding gender and diversity etc.)
- **Has a bottom-up approach** to innovation that starts at the local level.

*View Social Platform's [position](#) on social innovation*



# Funding opportunities for social services

## European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020

### Key features:

- Contributing to Europe 2020 strategy and objectives for smart sustainable and inclusive growth
- Concentration
- Integrated approach
- Ex-ante conditionality for effectiveness
- Result orientation
- Alignment with Country Specific recommendations



# Funding opportunities for social services

**Europe 2020: jobs & growth**

smart

sustainable

inclusive

## ESIF – Thematic objectives 2014-2020

1. Research, technological development and innovation
2. ICT access, use and quality
3. Competitiveness of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
4. Shift towards a low-carbon economy
5. Climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management
6. Environmental protection and resource efficiency
7. Sustainable transport and key network infrastructure
8. Sustainable and Quality Employment and labour mobility
9. Social inclusion, combating poverty and discrimination
10. Education, training for skills and lifelong learning
11. Institutional capacity and efficiency of public administration

# ESIF – relevant ex-ante conditionalities

## General ex-ante conditionality

### •Anti-discrimination

- Administrative capacity for the implementation and application of EU antidiscrimination law and policy in the field of ESI Funds

### •Thematic conditionality for Social inclusion, combating poverty and discrimination

#### •National strategic policy framework for poverty reduction

- ... depending on the identified needs, includes measures for the shift from institutional to community based care.
- Thematic: investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning
- Early school leaving

- Requirements to ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities  
(horizontal principle and direct investments)



# ERDF

## ERDF member states' expenditure in current programming period 2007-2013:

- *Social infrastructures: education-, health-, childcare-, housing infrastructure (17,9 billion EUR)*
- *Education infrastructure: childcare, preschool, primary, secondary, tertiary education (8,4 billion EUR)*
- **Alignment with the most important trends and needs:**
  - Demographic change
  - Territorial inequalities
- *Shift to the community-based care*



# ESF

**ESF minimum share** for the first time in the history of cohesion policy:

- **23.1% ESF minimum share**

**Rationale: ensure MS have sufficient resources to achieve the employment, social and education targets and objectives of Europe 2020**

- **Earmarking for social inclusion: 20% at national level**



# ESF – Thematic priorities

## **Thematic objective “Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination”:**

- promoting active inclusion, equal opportunities and improving the employability
- supporting socio-economic integration of marginalised communities including Roma
- fighting discrimination
- improving access to affordable, sustainable and high quality services, including health and social services
- Promoting social entrepreneurship and vocational integration in social enterprises and the social and solidarity economy in order to facilitate access to employment



# ESF – Thematic priorities

**Thematic objective “investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and life-long learning”:**

- Reducing and **preventing early school-leaving** and promoting equal access to good quality early-childhood, primary and secondary education
- Improving the **quality and efficiency of, and access to, tertiary and equivalent education**, especially for disadvantaged groups
- Enhancing **equal access to lifelong learning** for all age groups in formal, non-formal and informal settings, upgrading the knowledge, skills and competences of the workforce
- Improving the **labour market relevance of education and training systems**, facilitating the transition from education to work, and strengthening vocational education and training systems and their quality



# ESF – Thematic priorities

## **Thematic objective “Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration”:**

- Investment in institutional capacity and in the efficiency of public administrations and public services at the national, regional and local levels with a view to reforms, better regulation and good governance
- Capacity building for all stakeholders delivering education, lifelong learning, training and employment and social policies, including through sectoral and territorial pacts to mobilise for reform at the national, regional and local levels.



# Employment and social innovation programme

The [Employment and Social Innovation \(EaSI\) programme](#) is a financing instrument at EU level to promote a high level of quality and sustainable employment, guaranteeing adequate and decent social protection, combating social exclusion and poverty and improving working conditions.



# EASI – Progress axis

## 3 thematic sections:

- [employment](#), in particular to fight youth unemployment;
- [social protection, social inclusion](#) and the reduction and prevention of [poverty](#);
- [working conditions](#).

## Objectives:

- Develop and disseminate high-quality comparative analytical knowledge.
- Facilitate effective and inclusive information-sharing, mutual learning and dialogue.
- Provide financial support to test [social and labour market policy innovations](#).
- Provide organisations with financial support to increase their capacity to develop, promote and support the implementation of EU instruments and policies.



## Our contact information

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