

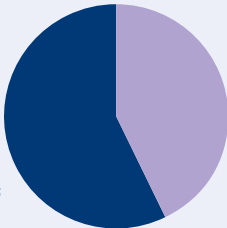
engage

THE QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF SOCIAL PLATFORM, AN ALLIANCE OF 43 NGO NETWORKS FIGHTING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE IN EUROPE

Did you know...

57% of Belgian organisations use temporary agency workers - the highest in the EU.

Source: Eurofound's European Quality of Life survey, 2010



Our top achievements

- 1 **October 2010:** European Parliament votes on the maternity leave directive, supporting most of Social Platform's recommendations on full payment, protection against dismissal for working women and 20 weeks length.
- 2 **November 2010:** Platform holds its annual conference on Care to develop a common foundation to improve the existing social, legal and financial frameworks for Care policies. 130 people from both national and European levels attend the conference, with a panel of experts drawn from 16 members as well as decision makers presenting.



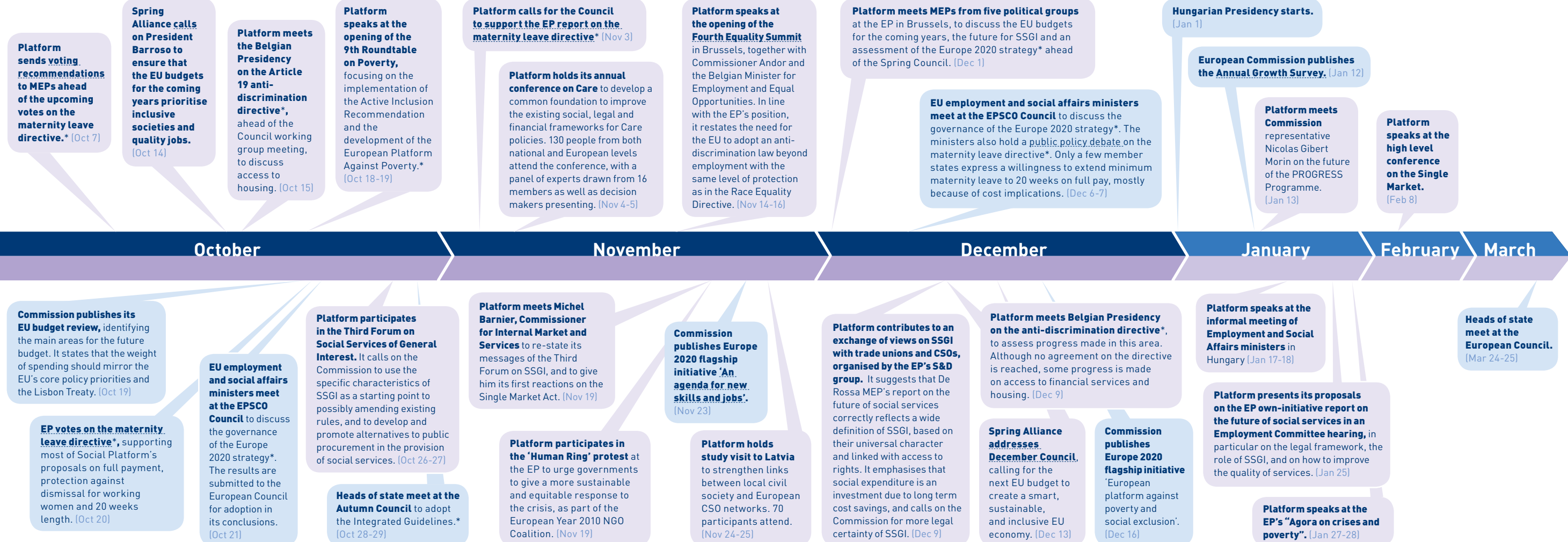
Laurence Weerts, Assistant Director of the Cabinet of the Belgian Minister of Employment, speaks at Social Platform's annual conference on Care (November 4, 2010)

Source: Mehran Khalili, Social Platform

What's next on the agenda

- 1 **January 2011:** Platform speaks at the informal meeting of employment and social affairs ministers in Hungary.
- 2 **January 2011:** Platform presents its proposals on the EP own-initiative report on the future of social services in an Employment Committee hearing, in particular on the legal framework, the role of SSGL, and on how to improve the quality of services.
- 3 **June 2011:** Commission proposes the next multi-annual financial framework, layout out how the EU's policy priorities for the coming years will be funded.

What's happened, what's coming up



* The Europe 2020 strategy

What it is. A vision for where the EU should be in 2020. It aims to deliver greener and socially inclusive growth.

What we want. We're pushing EU leaders to adopt a target in the Europe 2020 strategy to reduce poverty by 25% in the next ten years. We also want social cohesion and the fight against poverty to be explicit objectives in the strategy, among other proposals

Integrated Guidelines

What it is. A core element of the Europe 2020 strategy, they consist of six guidelines on economic policy and four on employment policy, and lay out how member states can implement the Europe 2020 goals.

What we want. We believe a further two guidelines should be added: on social inclusion and on governance. We also want a 'transversal' social guideline, to ensure that all other guidelines contribute to the goal of social inclusion.

European Platform Against Poverty

What it is. A tool to ensure that the poverty targets in the Europe 2020 strategy are effectively implemented in all member states.

What we want. We want member states to implement the objectives of the European Platform Against Poverty at national level. We're calling on them to work closely with people experiencing poverty and anti-poverty groups so the platform delivers concrete results, and to ensure that EU and state money are allocated to support the implementation of the poverty target.

Anti-discrimination directive

What it is. Every day, people in Europe are unfairly treated because of their disability, age, religion, belief or sexual orientation. Although this kind of discrimination is already prohibited in the workplace, the Commission proposed expanding the law to include all areas of life such as schools, shops and hospitals. We've developed a comprehensive proposal for the directive, which is largely supported by the EP and trade unions. If our proposal is approved by member states, this new law will improve the protection of the victims of unfair treatment, no matter where the discrimination takes place.

What we want. We're calling for member states to adopt a strong horizontal anti-discrimination law, consistent with the Race Equality Directive, that grants protection for people beyond employment, including access to goods and services.

Maternity leave directive

What it is. Today, women in the EU who work are legally entitled after giving birth to a minimum of 14 weeks off to care for their child. They also have the right to be paid throughout this period, at least an amount equal to what they would receive in cases of sick leave. The European Parliament and member states are currently negotiating to revise this law to allow for more time off and higher pay.

What we want. We're making the case that women giving birth should receive 20 weeks' leave with full salary, and solid legal protection against dismissal.

The five-minute interview

Noura Jaballah, President, European Forum of Muslim Women



Who are you?

I'm President of the [European Forum of Muslim Women](#) (EFOMW) and founder of the [French League of Muslim Women](#). I'm also a consultant to [Religions for Peace](#), and a professor of Islamic studies.

How and why did you get involved in the NGO movement?

In the early 1980s, I'd come to France to study. I had enrolled my young son in kindergarten, and on his first day I went to speak to the headmistress to ask her about how the system worked. To my surprise, instead of answering me she walked out into the hall and called the other teachers, shouting "Come see, an Arab woman who speaks French!" - as if it were some kind of miracle! I learned that many parents in France of North African origin were excluded from participating in their children's educations, such as at parent-teacher meet-

ings, largely because of their lack of language skills. I therefore joined a social cultural association to help these women integrate and become more involved in this role, through language lessons and other means of support. This was how my NGO work began.

What's your biggest achievement?

The European Forum for Muslim Women is only five years old. But in 2008, for the [European Year of Intercultural Dialogue](#), we held 16 separate cultural events which brought together five thousand participants to show decision makers that we were united for issues of gender equality and against islamophobia. This was a significant victory for us from an awareness-raising point of view.

What's your next battle?

We've set up a team that's developing an EU-wide survey, so we can better understand the problems of discrimination and social exclusion that Muslim women face. We also need to build alliances in the NGO world to fight for social inclusion and equal opportunities for women.

Name one thing we could all do today to improve European society.

Forge your own opinion for yourself. People need to forget as much as possible their prejudices and search for first hand information. The next time you see a Muslim in the street, ask them about their views. The best way to kill fear and prejudice is dialogue. *Everything* starts with dialogue.



As the Hungarian EU presidency begins, Rebecca Harms MEP (Greens) leads a protest action against Hungary's media law in the EP plenary (January 19, 2011)

Source: European Parliament, Audiovisual Unit

Did you know...

In Romania, more than 10% of doctors have emigrated since 2007.

Source: *Lancet*, 2010



95% of Czech establishments pay their employees on an individual performance basis.

Source: *Eurofound's European Quality of Life survey*, 2010

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Social Platform is the largest civil society alliance fighting for social justice and participatory democracy in Europe. Consisting of 43 pan-European networks of NGOs, Social Platform campaigns to ensure that EU policies are developed in partnership with the people they affect, respecting fundamental rights, promoting solidarity and improving lives.

Social Platform acknowledges the financial support of the European Commission. This publication reflects the author's views. The Commission is not liable for any use that may be made of the information contained in this publication. Published in January 2011

