



European Social Platform (ESP)

Name of the Representative: John Brennan

The ESP is the largest network of European rights- and value-based civil society organisations working in the social sector. It is a membership-based organisation, that aims to enable civil society organisations nurture those elements that bring all together.

The ESP mission is to advocate for policies that bring social progress to all in the European Union. ESP applies a human-rights approach to all of its work in fighting for a socially just and cohesive Europe that promotes equality, diversity, solidarity, democracy and human dignity.

The ESP divides its work into six categories:- Socio-economic justice; Equality for all; quality employment; social protection; civil dialogue and people centred services.

ACTIVITIES / EVENTS

Flagship Conference ‘Building Social Europe’ Lisbon, 28-30 November 2018

This two-day event was an inaugural conference held with the support of the Portuguese government in the beautiful city of Lisbon. I attended on behalf of IFSW-Europe.

The plan is to hold this event every year. The venue will be in the country that holds the EU presidency at the time of the event.

General Assembly and Steering Group Meeting, Brussels, 13 December 2018

I attended these two meetings on behalf of IFSW-Europe and agreed to hold a proxy vote for Eurordis-Rare Diseases Europe.

The meeting began with a ‘breakfast exchange’ with Minna Kivimaki, Deputy Permanent Representative of Finland to the EU and two of her colleagues.

ESP Discussion Paper: The ESP is currently preparing a discussion paper – *Towards a new social contract for Europe that puts partnership with civil society at its core.*

ACHIEVEMENTS FOR IFSW EUROPE

Flagship Conference ‘Building Social Europe’ Lisbon, 28-30 November 2018

The key aim of the conference was to mark the first anniversary of the signing of the *European Pillar of Social Rights* and to discuss ways to help translate this Pillar into meaningful action on the part of the EU and national governments.

Three key messages were sent to the EU and member states this week. These are:-

1) Economy should be at the service of society; 2) Civil society engagement is crucial and 3) Putting the EPSR into action.

After the meeting, ESP sent an ‘Urgent Call to Action’ to all EU institutions, Heads of Governments and relevant Ministers of EU Member States.



General Assembly and Steering Group Meeting, Brussels, 13 December 2018

The General Assembly passed its work programme and the budget for 2019. The EPSR is at the core of the platform's endeavours for the coming year.

SP's involvement in the two-year ReSOMA project (*Research Social Platform on Migration and Asylum*) has given the SP some extra funding as well as involving it in a critical issue for Europe and those seeking a better life or fleeing for their lives.

Prior to the informal EU Council meeting of heads of government in Sibiu, Romania in March this year, the ESP joined with Concord and the European Environmental Bureau to prepare an *Open Letter calling on EU Heads of State and Government to make sustainable development the overarching priority of the Strategic Agenda 2019-2024* at the 20-21 June European Council meeting.

European Elections 2019:

Social Platform produced a short campaign video to remind people that every vote counts and carries influence, particularly if we want to see people's dignity and well-being at the top of the EU's priority list.

After the elections, ESP believes that three things are clear: a) European citizens are engaged – over 50% voted; b) pro-Europe forces still have majority in the EU Parliament and c) social and green Europe are on the agenda.

CHALLENGES

There is a good deal of concern about the direction that the next EU Commission and Commission President may take after the elections, etc, this year. It is possible that some or all of the impetus towards a greater balance between the economic and the social within the EU systems will be lost or set back by the new Commission. The European Parliament could be a crucial buffer.

For IFSW, it is to have a greater presence in Brussels to better engage with the ESP agenda.

OTHERS

Forthcoming: ESP's Flagship Conference, Helsinki, Finland, 17-18 September 2019

The preparations for this event are well underway. We are awaiting the final programme.