

European Platform against poverty and social exclusion

2011/2052(INI) - 16/12/2010 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE: to propose a European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion: A European framework for social and territorial cohesion.

BACKGROUND: in 2008, more than 80 million people across the Union lived below the poverty line. Women account for well over half of them and 20 million are children. With the economic crisis, the situation has of course worsened.

The European Commission has placed the fight against poverty at the heart of its economic, employment and social agenda – [the Europe 2020 strategy](#). Heads of State and Governments have agreed a major breakthrough: a common target that the European Union should lift at least 20 million people out of poverty and social exclusion in the next decade.

The Commission proposes to establish a **European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion**, as one of its seven flagship initiatives for action to serve that goal. The Platform aims at creating a joint commitment among the Member States, EU Institutions and the key stakeholders to fight poverty and social exclusion.

As most of the upcoming decade is likely to be marked by reduced public budgets, actions will have to increase efficiency and trust by finding new participative ways to address poverty while continuing to develop prevention policies and target needs where they arise.

The Platform will therefore set a **dynamic framework for action** to ensure social and territorial cohesion such that the benefits of growth and jobs are widely shared across the European Union and people experiencing poverty and social exclusion are enabled to live in dignity and take an active part in society.

CONTENT: this Communication presents how different policies will contribute to this ambitious goal of reducing poverty and increasing inclusion, identifies a number of associated actions to help achieving the poverty target and explains the design and the content of the Platform.

The Commission has identified the following areas for action:

(1) Delivering action to fight poverty and exclusion across the policy spectrum:

- **Access to employment:** conscious of the fact that getting a job is the safest route out of poverty for those who can work, the Commission promotes an Agenda for New Skills and Jobs which sets out the routes for bringing more people into employment. Furthermore, in 2012 it will present a Communication providing an in-depth assessment of the implementation of active inclusion strategies at national level, including the effectiveness of minimum income schemes and of the way EU programmes can be used to support active inclusion;
- **Social protection and access to essential services:** it is also essential that policies address two key challenges: prevention which is the most effective and sustainable way of tackling poverty and social exclusion and early intervention to avoid that people that fall into poverty remain trapped in ever more difficult and problematic socio-economic situations. **Pension reforms** need to take into account the overall design of social protection. Vulnerable groups and people with short or discontinuous work careers are likely to become increasingly dependent on minimum pensions and

minimum income provisions for older people. Widening **health inequalities** within Member States underline close interactions between health inequalities and poverty. In this context, the Commission will: (i) present in 2011 a White Paper on Pensions to jointly address sustainability and adequacy of pensions in the post-crisis context; (ii) launch a European Innovation Partnership (EIP) on active and healthy ageing in 2011; (iii) develop the Voluntary European Quality Framework on social services at sectoral level, including in the field of long-term care and homelessness; (iv) undertake an assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of health expenditure, (v) present in 2011 a legislative initiative to ensure access to certain basic banking services.

- **Education and youth policies:** education and training systems should be instrumental in supporting upward social mobility and help break, rather than reinforce, the cycle of disadvantage and inequality. In this respect, the Commission will: (i) present in 2011 a Communication and a proposal for a Council Recommendation on policies to combat early school leaving and launch a wide-ranging initiative to promote more effective interventions at all levels of education against the cycle of disadvantage; (ii) propose in 2012 a Recommendation on child poverty outlining common principles and effective monitoring tools to combat and prevent poverty in early age.
- **Migration and integration of migrants:** while migration can be an important part of the solutions to Europe's economic, demographic and competitiveness issues, setting a comprehensive and effective policy framework for integration is a major challenge. The Commission will present in 2011 a "New European Agenda on Integration" to better support the efforts of Member States in promoting third-country nationals of diverse cultural, religious, linguistic and ethnic backgrounds to participate actively in European economies and societies.
- **Social inclusion and antidiscrimination:** the Commission will: (i) present an EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies in 2011; (ii) step up efforts to promote the economic independence of women, which is the first of the five priorities of its Strategy on equality between women and men for 2010-2015; (iii) ensure appropriate follow up to the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020, targeting in particular circumstances and barriers that prevent people with disabilities from enjoying their rights fully; (iv) identify methods and means to best continue the work it has started on homelessness and housing exclusion.
- **Sectoral policies:** EU policies and financial instruments need to take into greater consideration the essential role that network services, such as transport, energy, IT and others can play in reducing local and regional disparities and promoting social inclusion.
- **External dimension:** in the framework of the EU enlargement process and within the European Neighbourhood Policy, the Commission will also ensure that the objectives of this Platform are taken up in the relevant countries.

(2) Making EU funding deliver on the social inclusion and social cohesion objectives: several initiatives have been envisaged to better mobilise the available Funds:

- in line with the Budget Review, the **European Social Fund** should be used to sustain Member States' efforts to achieve the Europe 2020 objectives, including the poverty reduction target. This implies that the necessary resources would be devoted to social inclusion while making the access of the relevant stakeholders to those resources easier;
- the Commission will aim at facilitating access to global grants for small organisations and an improved access to funding for groups with multiple disadvantages and at high risk of poverty;
- the Commission will put forward proposals in 2011 for the **new Cohesion Policy regulatory framework for the period post-2013** which will simplify access to the structural funds for local groups and ensure greater complementarity and synergies between EU funds to promote community-based approaches, including for urban regeneration;
- the Commission will propose for the new Cohesion Policy post-2013 a **Common Strategic Framework (CSF)** that will ensure coherence and complementarity between the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Fisheries Fund. The CSF would identify EU priorities to address the European poverty target and the actions set out in this flagship initiative.

(3) Developing an evidence-based approach to social innovations and reforms: the Commission will launch in 2011 an initiative to pool a range of European funds to promote evidence-based **social innovation**, possibly initially concentrating on social assistance schemes. Comprised within the initiative will be:

- a European research excellence network to promote capacity building for the design and evaluation of social innovation programmes;
- a European research project in the area of social innovation aimed at devising workable methods and concrete impact measurements;
- the definition of common principles on the design, implementation and evaluation of small scale projects designed to test policy innovations (or reforms) before adopting them more widely (social experiments);
- Communication and awareness raising about ongoing social innovation;
- a "high-level steering committee" which will provide advice and guidance on developing actions.

(4) Promoting a partnership approach and the social economy: the Commission will support through the PROGRESS programme regular exchanges and partnerships between a wider set of stakeholders in specific priority areas, such as active inclusion, child poverty, Roma inclusion, homelessness and financial inclusion. The Commission will elaborate voluntary guidelines on stakeholders' involvement in the definition and the implementation of policy actions and programmes to address poverty and exclusion, and will promote their implementation at national, regional and local level.

The Commission will support the development of the social economy as a tool for active inclusion by proposing **measures to improve the quality of the legal structures relating to foundations, mutual societies and cooperatives** operating in a European context, proposing a "Social Business Initiative" in 2011, as well as facilitating access to relevant EU financial programmes.

(5) Stepping up policy coordination between the Member States: based on the experience of the first European Semester of Europe 2020, the Commission will discuss with Member States and other institutional and non-institutional actors, how to best adapt the working methods of the Social Open Method of Coordination to the new governance of Europe 2020. The Commission will present a report before the end of 2011 summarising the orientations emerged and the follow up it will give to it. The Commission's Annual Growth Survey (AGS), presented each January, will inter alia review overall progress achieved on the headline targets, the flagship initiatives, and identify priorities for action aimed at achieving the objectives and the targets of the strategy.

Follow-up: in addition to the regular reporting within the governance mechanisms of the Europe 2020 strategy, and in particular in the Annual Growth Survey, the Commission will review the implementation of the Platform in 2014, also with a view to adapt it to the new Multiannual Financial Framework.