Cohesion policy and marginalised communities

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The Committee on Regional Development adopted an own-initiative report by Terry REINTKE (Greens /EFA, DE) on cohesion policy and marginalised communities.

The report underlined the **important role of cohesion policy in supporting the economic, social and territorial inclusion of marginalised communities**.

Members recalled that marginalised communities were introduced as a focus of cohesion policy measures because of the growing concern about, and commitment to combat, social exclusion, including concern about the situation of Roma and the longstanding demand to improve their living conditions.

The Commission is called upon to:

- **issue guidance on the definition of marginalised communities**, specifying a set of attributes and characteristics of marginalised groups, taking into account the specific situation, challenges and needs of each potential target group with the aim of promoting their socio-economic inclusion, and involving representatives of those communities;
- **provide detailed information** about the take-up of funding opportunities for marginalised communities.

The implementation of the cohesion policy must tackle the **crucial challenge of poverty and exclusion of young people and children, adults and people with disabilities**.

Furthermore, stressing the importance of access to public service, the report called on the Member States:

- to improve the provision of tailored **health**-information material and the development of disease-prevention strategies and community-health initiatives in marginalised communities;
- to create **specialised structures**, such as clearing points advising on issues related to access to healthcare, labour market and education;
- to put in place measures to effect a shift in public administrations from a demand-driven approach to a **welcoming service approach**.

Preparation of programmes: Members regretted that the Commission has accepted partnership agreements that do not include marginalised communities to a sufficient degree. It asked the Commission to take measures to **facilitate the inclusion of marginalised communities** in the preparation, implementation and assessment of projects, as a tool for empowering the concerned communities. They suggested that recommendations be presented in the context of the European Semester as a suitable way of promoting action to be taken by Member States.

The report stressed the importance of implementing the **code of conduct on partnership** in ensuring equal participation and representation of partners, whereby specific attention should be paid to including marginalised communities so that their specific situation, and any potential challenges that they face in contributing substantially to the partnership, may be taken into account.

Implementation of programmes: Members are of the opinion that funds should be used in a **more integrated way**, including by means of multi-fund programmes, Community-Led Local Development, Integrated Territorial Investment and cross-financing, and that synergies should be achieved with other EU and national funding instruments.

The report emphasised the importance of a genuine implementation of urban renewal and regeneration programmes for **deprived neighbourhoods**. They drew attention to the specific needs that marginalised communities living in **rural, mountainous and isolated areas** face, as well as those living in **cross-border areas**.

The Commission is called upon to offer the technical support needed to **improve the administrative capacity** of bodies involved in the administration of the Structural Funds and to set up an **ad hoc expert group** for advice, and promote appropriate training for administrative staff, in order to provide specific knowledge of the difficulties facing marginalised communities. Members considered it essential to include **equality bodies, women's organisations and women from marginalised communities** in the decision-making process on the allocation, use, implementation and monitoring of the funds, at all levels.

Monitoring and recommendations: EU-funded projects must have a long-term perspective in order to be effective. Members called on the Commission to **put in place proactive and participatory mechanisms for monitoring and observing** Members States' actions in the planning and evaluation processes for funds used for marginalised communities.

The report stressed the importance of **integrated housing, educational and employment interventions, in favour of marginalised communities**. More specifically, it called on the need:

- to make special efforts as regards existing EU programmes, such as the Youth Employment Initiative, Erasmus+ and Creative Europe, with a view of reaching out to members of marginalised communities;
- for the funds to be used to improve living conditions and to facilitate access for women in marginalised communities to high-quality, stable education, housing, health care, employment, childcare, social services;
- to rigorously enforce and monitor **EU legislation on discrimination** and to carry out a thorough analysis of the causes of discrimination and marginalisation, and to raise awareness of the fact that xenophobia and racism and all types of marginalisation leading to systemic exclusion, must be eliminated;
- to implement programmes, projects and support activities for marginalised communities in order to provide for preschool education, to underpin the need for formal education;
- to propose accessible and affordable training and services for all in the field of new technologies and sectors, with special regard to opportunities in the digital sector and the green economy, especially for the most disadvantaged groups.

The Commission is called upon to **provide coherent, consistent and clear guidance** on the development, implementation and management of the EU-funded projects related to marginalised communities, including in-depth analyses, best practise examples and policy recommendations, to ensure that marginalised communities are included in EU funds also in view of the forthcoming programming period.