Cohesion policy and marginalised communities

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The European Parliament adopted by 574 votes to 84, with 36 abstentions, a resolution on cohesion policy and marginalised communities.

Members recalled that cohesion policy is aimed at enhancing economic, social and territorial cohesion, reducing social disparities, including the reduction and eradication of poverty and exclusion, which calls for the prevention of segregation and for the promotion of equal access and opportunities for all citizens, including the most marginalised communities as well as groups and individuals of all ages facing poverty and social exclusion and lacking access to education, employment, housing and healthcare systems.

General principles: Members recalled the **urgent need** to tackle the issue of marginalised communities as well as underlined the important role of cohesion policy in supporting their economic, social and territorial inclusion. They highlighted that 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**.

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.

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

- 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**.

Members also called for: (i) local authorities to encourage the use of ESF funding to support informal learning and lifelong learning projects; (ii) better coordination and stronger links between national strategies for marginalised communities, including National Roma Inclusion Strategies; (iii) children to be made a priority when implementing the EU Framework for National Roma Strategies.

Preparation of programmes: Parliament 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. It suggested that recommendations be presented in the context of the **European Semester** and called on the Member States to act on, and on the Commission to follow up closely, the country-specific recommendations issued on the social inclusion of marginalised communities.

The resolution 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, in order to achieve synergies with other EU and national funding instruments.

Parliament emphasised the importance of a genuine implementation of urban renewal and regeneration programmes for **deprived neighbourhoods**. It 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.

Parliament emphasised the importance of **integrated housing, educational and employment interventions**. 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;
- to create a **network platform at EU level** facilitating the exchange of best practices and joint problem solving;
- 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.

Lastly, Parliament invited the Member States to offer an **award for exemplary dedication** to the integration and inclusion of marginalised groups in implementing EU funds.