Social cohesion: poverty and social exclusion, joint report on social inclusion

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PURPOSE : to present the communication from the Commission concerning the draft Joint Report on Social Inclusion. CONTENT : it is the first time that the European Commission presents a policy document on poverty and social exclusion. By documenting and analysing the situation across all Member States and by identifying the key challenges for the future this draft joint report on Social Inclusion contributes to strengthening the European social model. It is this a significant advance towards the achievement of the EU's strategic goal of greater social cohesion in the Union between 2001-2010. This report gives a concrete reality to the open method of co-ordination on Social Inclusion. This new process is an important recognition of the key role that social policy has to play alongside economic and employment policies in reducing inequalities and promoting social cohesion, as well as the need to ensure effective links between these policies in the future. This report also marks a significant advance in the process of developing common indicators to measure poverty and social exclusion across and within all Member States. On the other hand, this report does not evaluate the effectiveness of the systems already in place in different Member States. Rather it concentrates on analysing the different approaches that have been adopted by Member States in their National Action Plans against poverty and social exclusion in response to the common objectives on poverty and social cohesion agreed by the EU at Nice in December 2000. The report documents a wide range of policies and initiatives in place or proposed in Member States. These will provide a good basis for co-operation and exchange of learning between Member States in the future. However, it has not been possible to identify examples of good practice, as at present there is a general lack of rigorous evaluation of policies and programmes in Member States. The report thus identifies that an important challenge for the next phase of the social inclusion process will be introduce more through analysis of the cost effectiveness and efficiency of policies to tackle poverty and social inclusion. In addition, the present report aims at highlighting the role of social policy and of other equally important policy areas for social cohesion (education, housing, health) in the forthcoming Synthesis Report that the Commission will prepare for the European Council in spring 2002.