Basic information

2005/2097(INI) INI - Own-initiative procedure	Procedure completed
Social protection and social inclusion. Report **Subject** 4.10.05 Social inclusion, poverty, minimum income 4.10.10 Social protection, social security	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
EMPL Employment and Social Affairs	BAUER Edit (PPE-DE)	31/03/2005

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
FEMM Women's Rights and Gender Equality	FLASAROVÁ Věra (GUE/NGL)	20/06/2005

Council of the European Union

Council configuration	Meetings	Date
Economic and Financial Affairs ECOFIN	2716	2006-03-14

European Commission

Commission DG	Commissioner
Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion	

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
27/01/2005	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2005)0014	Summary
09/06/2005	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
25/01/2006	Vote in committee		Summary
08/02/2006	Committee report tabled for plenary	A6-0028/2006	
14/03/2006	Debate in Council		Summary
14/03/2006	Debate in Parliament		
15/03/2006	Decision by Parliament	T6-0089/2006	Summary

15/03/2006	Results of vote in Parliament		
15/03/2006	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2005/2097(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 55
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	EMPL/6/27374

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Amendments tabled in committee		PE367.634	07/12/2005	
Committee opinion	FEMM	PE367.934	20/01/2006	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A6-0028/2006	08/02/2006	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T6-0089/2006	15/03/2006	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(2005)0014	27/01/2005	Summary
For information	SEC(2005)0069	27/01/2005	

Social protection and social inclusion. Report

2005/2097(INI) - 27/01/2005 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE : to present a draft joint report on social protection and social inclusion.

CONTEXT : the fight against poverty and social exclusion remains a major challenge for the European

Union and its Member States. The numbers affected by poverty and social exclusion across the Union are very significant, with more than 68 million or 15% of the EU population living at risk of poverty in 2002. They range from 10% or less in the Czech Republic, Sweden, Denmark, Hungary and Slovenia and 20% or more in Ireland, the Slovak Republic, Greece and Portugal. Poverty and material deprivation are often compounded by an inability to participate fully in social life, as a result of an inadequate access to employment, education and training, housing, transport or healthcare.

CONTENT : social inclusion and the national strategies to fight poverty and social exclusion feature

prominently in the present report, drawing on two rounds of the open method of coordination (OMC) on social inclusion at the level of EU15, plus its successful extension to the 10 new Member States in 2004. Pensions are also addressed, although to a lesser extent. The basic input is the 2003 Joint

report on adequate and sustainable pensions. More recent work by the Social Protection Committee (SPC) provides additional material, together with the results of bilateral exchanges between the European Commission and the new Member States held prior to their accession. This Joint Report is intended to complement the Joint Employment Report and the Implementation report of the BEPG so as to present a balanced and integrated view of the main challenges Member States have to tackle if they want to reach the ambitious Lisbon goals. It echoes the recommendations of the Report of the High-Level Group of Independent Experts (Kok Group) on the need for a stronger focus on implementation of the Lisbon goals and stronger political commitment at all levels.

A positive result of the social inclusion process has been the emergence of greater clarity as to the key policy priorities for tackling poverty and social exclusion, as reflected in the policy approaches being adopted by Member States. Seven key policy priorities stand out across the Union:

1) increasing labour market participation: seen as the most important priority by most Member States, this translates into expanding active labour market policies and ensuring a better linkage between social protection, lifelong learning and labour market reforms so that they are mutually reinforcing;

2) modernising social protection systems: this means ensuring that sustainable social protection schemes are adequate and accessible to all and that benefits aimed at those who are able to work provide effective work incentives as well as enough security to allow people to adapt to change;

3) tackling disadvantages in education and training: emphasis is being laid on preventing early departure from formal education and training; facilitating the transition from school to work, in particular of school leavers with low qualifications; increasing access to education and training for disadvantaged groups and integrating them into mainstream provision; promoting lifelong learning, including e-learning, for all. Many recognise the need to invest more, and more efficiently, in human capital at all ages;

4) eliminating child poverty: particular focus is given to early intervention and early education in support of disadvantaged children; and enhancing income support and assistance to families and single parents. Several countries also put increasing emphasis on promoting the rights of the child as a basis for policy development;

5) ensuring decent accommodation: improving housing standards and addressing the lack of social housing for vulnerable groups;

6) improving access to quality services: improving access to health and long term care services, social services and transport, improving local environments, as well as investing in adequate infrastructure and harnessing the potential of new, accessible ICT for all;

7) overcoming discrimination and increasing the integration of ethnic minorities and immigrants: Member States need to develop integrated and co-ordinated strategies at local and regional levels and especially in those urban and rural communities facing multiple disadvantages. Such strategies should adapt policies to the local situation and involve all relevant actors. It will also be essential to ensure that gender is mainstreamed throughout these priorities with a view to promoting gender equality.

In conclusion, the Commission presents 7 key policy messages:

• Improving social protection adequacy by extending working lives and raising employment levels should remain key drivers of the modernisation of social protection;

• planned extension to health care and the streamlining of all social protection and social inclusion processes in 2006 should be used to put stronger focus on implementation and synergies across the area as a whole;

• in the area of social inclusion, perseverance will be needed, because tackling the roots of poverty and exclusion will require concerted effort beyond 2010;

• while policies for social inclusion must adapt to the diversity of challenges in the Member States, the key requirement for multi-faceted approaches remains a priority;

• the forthcoming evaluation process, to take place in 2005, should focus on delivery in order to prepare for a new cycle of the OMC after 2006. The Member States and the Commission should particularly assess how national strategies can be made more effective by the use of targets, benchmarks and indicators, better links with economic and employment policies, effective monitoring and evaluation provisions and the use of the structural funds and the European Social Fund;

• bringing back people to work, maintaining workers in employment, increasing employability and labour market participation;

• in the area of pensions, maintaining older workers in employment stands as a key challenge across the European Union.

Social protection and social inclusion. Report

2005/2097(INI) - 14/03/2006

Social protection and social inclusion. Report

2005/2097(INI) - 15/03/2006 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drawn up by Edit **BAUER** (EPP-ED, SK) on social protection and social inclusion. (Please see the document dated 25/01/2006.) Parliament reaffirmed that social protection based on universality, equity and solidarity is an essential component of the European social model.

General points: Parliament welcomed the Commission's report which indicates that the income-based figures relating to poverty and social exclusion across the Union are very significant, with more than 68 million, or 15% of the EU population living at risk of poverty in 2002. Despite significant structural improvements in the EU labour markets over the last decade, EU employment and participation levels remain insufficient and unemployment remains high in a number of Member States, especially amongst certain categories of people, such as the young, older workers, women, and people with specific disadvantages.

Social inclusion : those people most at risk of poverty and exclusion, are those in casual employment, the unemployed, single parent households (usually headed by women), older people living alone, women, families with several dependants, disadvantaged children, as well as ethnic minorities, sick or disabled people, the homeless, victims of trafficking and victims of drug and alcohol dependency. Parliament called on the Member States to support the integration of people at a disadvantage in order to prevent and combat social exclusion, as well as to promote education, encourage job creation, professional training and career development, the reconciliation of professional and family life and the right to equal access to health care and decent accommodation and ensure the sustainability of social protection systems. Member States were urged to carry through a series of measures, including :

- exchanging best practice to prevent early departure from education, raising the level of education, especially in languages and new technologies, and increasing access to education and training for disadvantaged groups;

- developing access to lifelong learning;

- making greater use of not-for-profit public service work;

- fighting child poverty. Parliament stressed that in fourteen out of the seventeen Member States for which data are available, child poverty rose during the 1990s. Persistent child poverty mainly concentrates on single-parent families, large families with three or more dependent children, immigrants and people from ethnic minorities, and families with unemployed or under-employed parents. Parliament asked the Commission to put forward a Green Paper on child poverty, setting out clear targets and appropriate measures to eliminate child poverty as steps towards the social inclusion of poor children;

- introducing a "Children's Charter" that seeks to achieve progress in upholding the rights of the child as part of the EU's internal and external policies;

- addressing youth unemployment specifically, as a priority in its own right, through specific policy measures and training, inter alia, to encourage the taking of initiative and the development of entrepreneurial spirit;

- increasing the participation of women in employment by eliminating obstacles that prevent women from entering it, and particularly by encouraging older women to remain longer in the labour market;

- fighting against the high levels of exclusion faced by ethnic minorities and immigrants ;

- eradicating discrimination against people with disabilities, by promoting equal opportunities and the full participation of such people in work, society and politics ;

- improve housing conditions, especially accessibility, for those less-favoured groups which are particularly affected by poverty ;

Parliament reasserted the need for an improvement in harmonised data collection and the development of common indicators that take account of age and sex differences, as indicators of this kind play a major role in the monitoring and evaluation of policies on poverty and social exclusion.

Social protection: Parliament stated that the rapid changes arising from globalisation and the wide use of information and communication technologies increase vulnerability to social risk and generate a need for more efficient social protection measures with a view to ensuring the right of all to social protection. The current demographic trends - an ageing workforce and the decline of the working-age population - constitute a challenge in the medium and longer term for the financial sustainability of social protection systems. There needs to be developed comprehensive ageing strategies aimed at empowering workers to stay active longer and encouraging employers to hire and retain older workers.

Parliament welcomed the Council's decision regarding the application of the open method of coordination in the field of health and long-term care. It pointed out that the organisation and delivery of services and medical care is and should remain an area of Member State competence. Particular attention should be paid to persons requiring long-term or expensive care, and to those facing particular difficulties in accessing care. Health systems must be based not only on the insurance principle but also on the solidarity principle. Parliament advocated, furthermore, the increase of all those social services necessary with regard to the care of dependent persons, i.e. those unable to perform basic everyday actions by themselves. With regard to pensions, although public pension schemes should remain an important source of pensioners' income, private provision through occupational or personal schemes can play a complementary role in obtaining additional pension entitlements.

Parliament called on the European Council, in the interest of streamlining and simplifying the open method of coordination, to adopt at its summit in Spring 2006 an integrated framework in the fields of social protection and integration and to agree on a uniform list of common objectives in the field of social integration, pensions, health and long-term care. The Member States and the Commission were urged, when applying the open method of coordination to social protection and integration, to pay greater attention in the future to the issues of reconciling work and family life, with particular access on childcare, family income situations and the employment rate of mothers.