



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**Brussels, 3 December 2007
(OR. fr)**

16052/07

SOC 519

NOTE

from: Commission
to: Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council

Subject: Communication on "Opportunities, access and solidarity: towards a new social vision for 21st century Europe" (Other business item)
– Information in writing from the Commission

Delegations will find attached a note from the Commission on the above subject, for the EPSCO Council meeting on 5 and 6 December 2007.

EPSCO Council meeting on 5 December 2007

Item 20(c): **Communication on "Opportunities, access and solidarity: towards a new social vision for 21st century Europe"**

Information from the Commission

Social reality stocktaking

In February 2007 the Commission initiated a broad-based public consultation on social Europe, in order to form a picture of European society, identifying trends and focusing on major problems and challenges for Europe at all levels of government. The deadline set for this was 31 December 2007.

The exercise is being carried out in parallel with the single-market review announced by the Commission in its communication of 10 May 2006 entitled "*A citizens' agenda – Delivering results for Europe*":

"The Commission will take comprehensive stock of the reality of European society, and launch an agenda for access and solidarity, a social dimension in parallel and close coordination with the single market review, next year. It will explore the possibility of developing an 'entitlement' card which would enable every European citizen to be aware of and enjoy full access to their existing rights."

As a first stage, the aim is to understand how social realities affect Europeans. As a second stage, the aim is to devise an agenda enabling the European Union to provide a suitable response, in terms of opportunities, access and solidarity, to the challenges of globalisation, on the basis of the social realities of today and tomorrow and not those of yesterday.

Communication on a social vision

On 20 November 2007 the Commission approved a communication entitled "*Opportunities, access and solidarity: towards a new social vision for 21st century Europe*", at the same time as the communication on the single market.

The issue at the heart of the communication is the well-being, quality of life and shared values of Europe's citizens and the way in which the European Union can help advance them. The communication therefore gives a succinct presentation of the new social realities observable in our societies and the trends taking shape for the years ahead, whether societal, economic or sociological in nature.

The Commission proposes developing a new approach to promoting well-being, an approach based on opportunities, access and solidarity, so as to take full advantage of Europe's human potential and establish equal opportunities for all.

For this purpose, the Commission thus proposes investing in young people and careers and in a longer and healthier life. The Commission also proposes investing in gender equality, active inclusion and non-discrimination, mobility and integration as well as in civic participation, culture and dialogue.

At European Union level, there is a need to pursue the following five lines of action:

- introducing strategic frameworks for achieving common objectives;
- upholding the European Union's values and establishing fair terms of competition;
- sharing experience and good practice;
- supporting local, regional and national action;
- raising awareness and building a sound knowledge base.

The communication extends the period for the public consultation initiated by the social reality stocktaking in February 2007 until 15 February 2008. On the basis of the contributions received, the Commission will approve a renewed social agenda in the course of 2008.

