



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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SOC 623

NOTE

from: The Presidency
to: Permanent Representatives Committee (Part I) / Council (EPSCO)
Subject: Social protection and social inclusion in the Europe 2020 Strategy and its
governance
- Presidency Paper for the policy debate in the EPSCO Council, 21 October
2010

Delegations will find attached a Presidency paper with a view to the policy debate in the EPSCO Council on 21 October 2010.

PRESIDENCY PAPER

Introduction

The European Council on 17 June 2010 finalised the new ten-year strategy for jobs and smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. It confirmed the five EU headline targets and gave its political endorsement to the Integrated Guidelines for Economic and Employment Policies.

On 9 July 2010, an informal meeting of Ministers for Social Affairs was held in Brussels to address the social dimension of the new Europe 2020 Strategy and its role in promoting inclusive growth and a cohesive society in the light of the interdependence between the economic, employment and social policies.

Fighting poverty and social exclusion is a priority of the Europe 2020 Strategy with a quantified EU target on social exclusion and poverty reduction.¹ One of the Integrated Guidelines of the new Strategy (IGL 10) specifically refers to the promotion of social inclusion and the fight against poverty by promoting full participation in society and the economy for all.

The integration of policies across priority areas is a key element in the Europe 2020 Strategy. National and EU actions will be guided by the interrelated and mutually reinforcing headline targets. Hence, a reinforced interaction between economic, employment and social policies and objectives is essential to deliver on the overall goals of Europe 2020.

¹ This target aims at lifting at least 20 million people from the risk of poverty and exclusion by 2020. 81 million people – or 17% of the population, 20% of the children and 19% of the elderly – are at risk of poverty in the EU, 8% of the population is materially deprived, thus experiencing living conditions that are severely affected by a lack of resources. People in a condition of severe material deprivation represent more than 17% of the population in some Member States, and more than 30% – almost one in three - in some cases. Altogether, including people living in jobless households, 120 million Europeans are at risk of poverty and exclusion.

Based on these developments, the Social Protection Committee adopted, on 6 October, an opinion on “*The social dimension of the Europe 2020 Strategy and the role of the SPC*”. This contribution to the EPSCO Council presents inter alia further development of the organisation of the SPC work, the report on social inclusion and social protection policies and the cooperation with other policy Committees.

Questionnaire

Ministers are invited to reply to the following questions in order to feed the forthcoming reflexion on the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy:

- For the first time, a quantitative social target was adopted at the European level. Hence, the social dimension is one of the priorities of the Europe 2020 Strategy. In this context, the Member States are elaborating their National Reform Programs and finalising their national targets, in close dialogue with the Commission.

What are the main challenges you are encountering to set your national target on social exclusion and poverty reduction, and to draft your National Reform Program? In what ways could Member States be accompanied at the European level for achieving these processes?

- During the informal meeting on 9 July 2010, EPSCO Ministers confirmed their will to play a key role in the implementation of the social dimension of the Europe 2020 Strategy. In the framework of the European Semester, the Social Protection Committee will present an annual report on social protection and social inclusion policies to the EPSCO Council preparing the Spring European Council.

Taking into account the national situations, what could be the social themes to put as priority in the agenda of the work of the SPC for its annual report? How to build on the acquis of the SPC, notably on the monitoring and the multidimensional approach (adequacy, sustainability, accessibility) of social policies developed in its report on social inclusion, pensions, health and long term care?
