



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 24 November 2010

16512/10

SOC 775

NOTE

from: The Working Party on Social Questions
to: Permanent Representatives Committee (Part I) / Council (EPSCO)
Subject: The Social dimension in the context of an integrated Europe 2020 Strategy
- Draft Council Conclusions

Delegations will find in the Annex draft Council conclusions as finalised by the Working Party on Social Questions on 22 November 2010.

DK maintains a parliamentary scrutiny reservation.

All delegations maintain linguistic scrutiny reservations.

Draft

Council Conclusions

on

« The Social dimension in the context of an integrated Europe 2020 Strategy »

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

UNDERLINING

1. the full readiness to put the Council's expertise on social inclusion and social protection policies at the service of the European Council and to actively contribute to the successful implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy and the European Semester, including its key feature of enhanced economic governance;

RECALLING

2. Article 3(3) of the Treaty of the European Union, which inter alia states that the EU shall work for the sustainable development of Europe based on balanced economic growth and price stability, a highly competitive social market economy, aiming at full employment and social progress and that it shall combat social exclusion and discrimination and shall promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of the child;

3. Article 9 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union that states that “in defining and implementing its policies and activities, the Union shall take into account requirements linked to the promotion of a high level of employment, the guarantee of adequate social protection, the fight against social exclusion, and a high level of education, training and protection of human health”;
4. Article 160 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which attributes to the Social Protection Committee (hereafter SPC) the task to monitor the social situation and the development of social protection policies in the Member States and the Union;
5. the Conclusions of the European Council of 25/26 March 2010 on the Europe 2020 Strategy, underlining that efficient monitoring mechanisms are key for a successful implementation of the Strategy and stipulating that ensuring the quality, reliability and timeliness of statistical data provided by national statistical offices will be central in ensuring credible and effective monitoring;
6. the conclusions of the EPSCO Council of 7-8 June 2010 stipulating that during the process of implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy, there will be scope for strengthening the current instruments for measuring progress in the reduction of poverty and deprivation and for understanding the phenomenon of exclusion from the labour market and that the relationship between labour market exclusion and the situation of poverty at individual level will have to be better taken into account;
7. the conclusions of the European Council of 17 June 2010 on the Europe 2020 Strategy adopting the EU headline target on promoting social inclusion, in particular through the reduction of poverty, and establishing that progress towards the headline targets will be regularly reviewed;

8. the Europe 2020 Strategy Integrated Guidelines, including the Broad Guidelines for the Economic Policies (adopted by the Council on 8 June 2010) and Guidelines for the Employment Policies (adopted by the Council on 21 October 2010), in particular Guideline 10 “Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty” and recital 19 on “the role of the Employment Committee and the Social Protection Committee in monitoring progress in relation to the employment and social aspects of the employment guidelines, in line with their respective Treaty-based mandates”;
9. the Social Protection Committee's contribution on the Europe 2020 Strategy¹, as presented to the EPSCO Council on 7 June 2010, as well as its Opinion on the social dimension of Europe 2020 as endorsed by the EPSCO Council on 21 October 2010²;

WELCOMES

10. the work of the SPC on the social dimension of the Europe 2020 Strategy aiming at :
 - monitoring progress towards the EU social inclusion and poverty reduction target ;
 - monitoring implementation of the social aspects of the integrated guidelines, focussing in particular on guideline 10;
 - conducting OMC work to monitor the social situation and the development of social protection policies and
 - providing its contribution to foster positive interaction between the social OMC activities and the future flagship initiative intended to support the fight against poverty and social exclusion;

¹ Doc 9964/10.

² Doc. 14254/1/10 REV 1.

11. the ongoing work of the Employment Committee (hereafter EMCO), the SPC and the Commission establishing the foundations and structure of the Joint Assessment Framework, and encourages continuation of this collaboration;

ENCOURAGES

12. the Member States to continue their work on the definition of national targets and policy measures to reduce poverty and social exclusion with a view to submitting their National Reform Programmes in April 2011. Close dialogue with the Commission and partnership with all national, regional and local authorities, associating parliaments, as well as social partners and representatives of the civil society, is an essential aspect of this process;

TAKES INTO ACCOUNT

13. the fact that key social protection and social inclusion indicators are, for different reasons, confronted with important time lags as regards the extent to which they reflect the current situation at the moment of their use;

STRESSES

14. that the success of the Europe 2020 Strategy depends on simultaneous realisation of all headline targets and that integrated and mutually reinforcing policies are therefore required;
15. the key role of the EPSCO Council in the European Semester in reviewing progress made towards the Europe 2020 target to promote social inclusion, in particular through the reduction of poverty;

16. that an integrated strategy also requires proper cooperation between Council configurations, and relevant policy Committees, as well as an effective use by the Commission of Impact Assessment tools;
17. that the implementation of the social aspects of the Integrated Guidelines, in particular Guideline 10, is one of the prerequisites for achieving the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy and its headline targets;
18. that to enhance the efficiency of the monitoring of the social dimension of the Europe 2020 Strategy and to support evidence-based policy making, quantitative as well as qualitative indicators that better reflect the current situation of social inclusion and social protection policies could be required. This necessitates to explore how such indicators can be made more timely, building on the Portfolio of indicators for the monitoring of the European Strategy for social protection and social inclusion, and ensuring relevant and reliable indicators;

INVITES THE COMMISSION

19. to promote and reinforce the social component of the Commission's Impact Assessment system's integrated approach as a key instrument to ensure full reflection at EU level on Article 9 TFEU and the objectives of Europe 2020;
20. to foresee a review on how Article 9 TFEU is applied in EU policies and activities, in the context of the Europe 2020 Strategy, within the Open Method of Coordination;
21. to explore adequate ways to implement social mainstreaming in the context of the European Platform against Poverty, in the light of Article 9 TFEU and making use of the Commission's Impact assessment;

22. to support, in collaboration with the Member States, the timely availability of valid indicators to monitor the social dimension of the Europe 2020 Strategy;
23. to support the work of the SPC in its areas of competence of the social dimension of Europe 2020;

INVITES THE SOCIAL PROTECTION COMMITTEE

24. to ensure the monitoring of the social situation and the development of social protection policies, including an assessment of the social dimension of Europe 2020, focussing its work on:

- the progress towards the EU target on promoting social inclusion, in particular through the reduction of poverty, and its interaction with other targets;
- on the monitoring of the implementation of social aspects of the Integrated Guidelines focusing in particular on Guideline 10;
- on thematic focus under the social OMC;

to contribute, on the basis of its work on the implementation of the social aspects of the Employment Guidelines, in particular Guideline 10, to the relevant part of the Joint Employment Report assessing the Employment Guidelines;

25. to develop a regular cooperation with other relevant policy Committees to implement an integrated approach, in the context of the European Semester of the Europe 2020 Strategy, particularly on its social dimension, as well as in the context of the work conducted under the Open Method of Coordination;

26. to identify key and focussed priorities through a multi-annual work programme, taking into account of possible new priorities. This multi-annual plan would refer to the annual thematic focus in the areas of social inclusion, pensions and health/long-term care and the enhanced mutual learning process in line with the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy;
 27. to propose, in close collaboration with the Commission, methods to enhance the timeliness of key EU indicators and reflect on methods to reinforce the analytical capacity for the monitoring of the social situation and the development of social protection policies and the assessment of the social dimension of the Europe 2020 Strategy, in particular the headline target on social inclusion and poverty reduction.
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