



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 15 February 2011

6491/11

SOC 124

COVER NOTE

from: The Social Protection Committee
to: Permanent Representatives Committee (Part I) / Council (EPSCO)
Subject: Contribution to the European Council (24-25 March 2011):
- The European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion
Flagship Initiative of the Europe 2020 Strategy
= Opinion of the Social Protection Committee

Delegations will find attached the above-mentioned opinion of the Social Protection Committee with a view to the session of the Council (EPSCO) on 7 March 2011.



The Social Protection Committee

THE EUROPEAN PLATFORM AGAINST POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Flagship Initiative of the Europe 2020 Strategy

SPC Opinion

Main views

The SPC underlines the importance of the integrated approach of Europe 2020 in preventing poverty and fighting the multiple aspects of social exclusion. It therefore welcomes the underlying principles of the "*European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion: A European Framework for social and territorial cohesion*" (hereinafter: *Platform*), which provides a wide ranging and coherent programme for actions in the next decade in line with the new Strategy.

The SPC is convinced that coherent and concrete implementation of this integrated approach can only be achieved with the support and joint commitment of all relevant levels of government, the social partners and civil society, according to their respective roles and competences.

The SPC subscribes to the importance of mainstreaming social policy objectives and delivering anti-poverty measures across the policy spectrum and at national and EU level, with due regard for the principle of subsidiarity. The implementation of the ambitious set of actions and future proposals announced in the Platform should take advantage of the experience gained in 10 years of policy coordination under the "Social OMC", and of the political momentum that has been generated by the European Year 2010 against poverty and social exclusion.

In line with its Treaty-based mandate, the SPC intends to take an active role in the implementation of the Platform. It will monitor progress towards the achievement of the EU-level and national targets for the reduction of poverty and social exclusion, including by improving the measurement of poverty, and the implementation of the social aspects of the integrated guidelines. Moreover, the SPC will actively contribute to the future *Annual Convention of the European Platform*. This annual event should become a key stage in the review of the implementation of the social goals of Europe 2020.

Strengthened policy coordination

In this respect, the Europe 2020 Strategy gives new impetus and relevance to the important work developed over the last decade in the context of the Open Method of Coordination for Social Protection and Social Inclusion (Social OMC).

The new context of Europe 2020 highlights the need to continue with the important coordination that Member States have established under the Social OMC, while streamlining the working methods. The experience of the Social OMC will also provide a strong basis for the implementation of several actions announced by the Platform.

The SPC will prepare an opinion for the EPSCO Council meeting of next June on how to ensure coherence between *the objectives and the working-methods of the Social OMC and the new context of the Europe 2020 Strategy* and its governance, with a view to avoiding unnecessary burdens, in line with the SPC opinion of October 2010¹.

SPC contribution to the implementation of the Platform

In fulfilling its mandate to promote cooperation on social protection policies among Member States and with the European Commission, the SPC will contribute through its work programme to the long-term plan of actions announced in the Platform. In this respect the SPC work programme underlines notably that:

¹ SPC opinion approved by EPSCO on 21/10/2010 (Council doc. 14254/1/10)

- Implementation of integrated *active inclusion* strategies shall be a central element of EU and national social policy agendas.
- Ensuring *pension* adequacy and long-term financial sustainability of pensions systems is important to preventing and tackling elderly poverty;
- Efficient and effective healthcare systems ensuring access for all to quality *healthcare* is important to preventing and combating poverty and social exclusion and inequality;
- Accessible, affordable high quality *social services* are a key tool of policies aiming at preventing and reducing poverty.
- Combating *child poverty* and fighting the inter-generational transmission of poverty should be prioritized in all relevant areas;
- Social inclusion of groups at risk shall be a key element of social policies;
- The SPC will continue work on homelessness and housing exclusion, also taking into account the outcome of the European Consensus conference on homelessness;
- Ensuring equal opportunities, in particular through *gender mainstreaming*, is also essential to prevent and reduce poverty and social exclusion;
- Capacity to *assess the social impacts* of major policy and spending decisions should be effectively strengthened as part of overall impact assessments in line with the Treaty provisions;
- Social *innovation* and *social experimentation* initiatives can contribute to more effective and efficient social interventions;
- Linking *EU funds*, in particular structural funds, to the priorities of Europe 2020 will enhance their effectiveness.

Interaction with other Committees and groups

The SPC emphasises the importance of delivering action to fight poverty and exclusion across the policy spectrum and beyond the traditional remit of social inclusion policies. It will continue to strengthen its cooperation with relevant Committees and groups, in accordance with the agreed work-programme.

In particular, the Committee will consider, together with the Employment Committee, synergies between the actions foreseen in the Platform and other relevant flagship initiatives, notably the "*New Skills and Jobs*" and "*Youth on the Move*", as reaching the Europe 2020 employment and education targets will contribute to poverty reduction and prevention.

The Committee is also committed to reinforce the ongoing cooperation with the Economic Policy Committee on issues related to pensions and health systems in light of the current fiscal consolidation, and consistent with the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy.
