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REFLECTIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE COMMISSION WORKING DOCUMENT COM(2009) 647/3 CONSULTATION ON THE FUTURE "EU 2020" STRATEGY

ABOUT THE VISION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION: A SOCIETY WHERE SOCIAL COHESION MUST BE A PRIORITY

The document defines the EU as a "*sustainable social market economy*", where citizens are seen only as workforce and "consumers". The words "empowerment" and "inclusive societies" are used in this document in the above mentioned sense, perverting so the original definitions of these terms, set up by the Social Sciences and the European Commission itself, that are linked with the human development.

It is an economic model, as we see when the social challenges are expressed "*while securing well performing labour markets*". To tackle the social challenges only the employment is mentioned.

When the document speaks about the Social Protection it is also only to express the link with the labour market and, of course it has to be "*affordable*"; we are afraid that this term is used as synonymous to "cheap".

There is no mention in the whole document about the income guarantee, as one of the three strands of the **SOCIAL INCLUSION**, the great absent in this document. While the document avoids the **ACTIVE INCLUSION** (COM/2006/44 and following documents), it fosters the flexicurity (that must be deployed to the full); BUT, without the first (the Active Inclusion), it only pushes a higher flexibility without security. And this protest is not out of place, because the document itself recognizes that "*There is a risk that the recovery will be slow, and will not generate sufficient employment growth to bring down high unemployment levels.*" It is serious, that after this affirmation, no policy proposal follows, that after this affirmation the document designs a European Model, where this situation won't be tackled, as if it were inevitable and we all have to accept and support it.

If it was recognized that behind the financial, economic and social crisis is a crisis of values, the EU2020 Strategy has to speak about **VALUES**: about a people centred and green economy, about solidarity and just distribution of goods, about the relations with the development of the impoverished and globalised world.

If the EU wants to put "people first", the economy can not be the self-definition axis. Economic growth must be based on the human and social development of the EU and not the other way round.

As Caritas, **we see it indispensable to define the European Union properly and clearly as a "SOCIETY"**, where citizens -all of them- can develop their potential as human beings, where the Human Rights and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union are the frame and will be strengthened through the fully development of social rights: education, employment, housing, health, social and civil services, etc.

THE EU CAN CONTRIBUTE TO CREATE TRULY INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES

The EU 2020 Strategy must show a clear focus and priority to empower those who are discriminated and excluded and to create a societal frame that is more inclusive. In a complex and fast changing social environment, in which the EU is facing tremendous social and demographic changes, where migration is needed, but treated with fear, where ageing is losing its positive value, where life stories are no longer linear, where the European Institutions are still too far away from its citizens, **SOCIAL COHESION must be specifically tackled as a priority** and with its own measures, like it was done with the Revised **Strategy for Social Cohesion** approved by the Council of Europe on 31 March 2004.

If Europe wants to face the future, it must work on the short and mid term with the social issues, understanding "social" not only as related to the employment, but on the wider sense related to the integral development and fruitful cohabitation of people and societies. If the EU doesn't face the social cohesion now, the seed of a grave social fracture is sowed.

The economic priorities defined in the Consultation document, must be revised, in order to define a new economic model, the clearly avoids the elements that brought our societies to almost a catastrophe.

At the same time **there must be a clear priority and commitment with the Social Cohesion, Social Protection, Social Inclusion and Active Inclusion,**

- strengthening the Open Method of Coordination for Social Protection and Social Inclusion,
- setting and monitoring clear targets in reducing poverty and social exclusion,
- enhancing, with adequate tools, the ACTIVE INCLUSION approach creating the compulsory link from the Employment policies to this approach and its three strands:
 - sufficient income support,
 - inclusive labour markets,
 - access to quality services;
- fighting against discrimination, racism and xenophobia,
- developing policies to support families and encourage family solidarity,
- proposing a long term migration policies, that offer inclusive hosting societies for migrants and allow the second and third generations a non discriminated citizenship and a full development of their capacities.

The EU2020 Strategy has also to promote the **signing and adoption of international conventions** and recommendations from the UN, ILO, OECD a.o., that improve the situation of the people, such as the "International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families".

The Right Migration Approach

The EU needs a switch from a migration model that is too closely connected with the labour market and the economic needs -as if it was a natural law-, to a model where migration is understood and linked with the human rights. Migration policies have to overcome the exclusive security, police and economic focus to **a more inclusive approach**. A new European migration model must be designed, where people can



move freely and an enriching plural togetherness of people from different origins and cultures is achieved.

The new EU2020 strategy has to foster the participation of migrants in the hosting societies, mainly in the policies that affect them.

A holistic view of the migration will also take into account the relation with the home countries of migrants in the sense of a Europe that is open to the world.

If the EU2020 strategy wants to put people first, it has also to propose a **human-rights-based-approach** to make visible, offer basic rights and minimum living conditions to the (around 8 million) migrants who are in an irregular administrative situation in the EU.

To Combat Poverty is more than Having a Job, Flexicurity and Skilling

As we expressed above, having a job, flexicurity and skilling is not enough to combat poverty. Following an ACTIVE INCLUSION approach, social protection and a basic income must be guaranteed to everybody, independently if someone can find a job or not, can work or not,... The welfare system must be guaranteed without linking this right neither to the crisis nor to the effective access to the labour market.

Initial vocational training, skilling young people for intermediate technical positions is not mentioned in the document, but it is one of the main lacks in many European countries, principally in those who suffer actually more the consequences of the economic crisis. Those European countries who better tackle with the crisis are those with good developed vocational training systems.

Also in the sense of Active Inclusion, we propose specific measures to ensure decent jobs for the most disadvantaged: guaranteeing equal access to vocational training, life-long learning and other pathways to employment; and offering social employment for those who need special protection.

Minimum Wages and Minimum Income

The Minimum Wages set clear frames for decent work, that makes it worth to work. The Minimum Income for all sets the poverty threshold that a society wants to avoid, offering a minimum life standard for everybody.

EU 2020 should propose the aim to achieve these European income standards.

Social Services play an important Role in the new EU 2020 Strategy

Social Services are a very important instrument to reduce poverty and social exclusion. They offer social and financial assistance in emergencies, assure the accompanying measures to go out of poverty and social exclusion, help to find affordable housing, create frames for social participation, work family and community oriented, coordinate different services for people in risk of exclusion and rises awareness in society about social problems.

The EU2020 Strategy should, in the frame of Active Inclusion, promote the development of the Social Services.



Volunteers, bearer of Solidarity Values

The EU recognises the role of the volunteers in the society, giving and learning. In Caritas we know that volunteers live the value and logic of gift. This logic creates confidence, reciprocity and in the end social capital, that makes or societies a good place to live. The logic of gift (where people meet each other) counterbalances the logic of exchange and markets (where goods and services are exchanged in logic of utility). The creation of social capital / social networks is absolutely necessary for the social cohesion.

2011 will be the European Year of Volunteering. EU2020 should foster this attitude in our societies for the next decade.

Family Policies

The consultation document recognises the demographic changes in our societies, but no consequences follow to this facts. The family is one of the three sources of social security in our society. Assuring policies that protect and strengthen the families, give security to young people to have more children and reduce also the risk of poverty.

EU2020 has to push forward, in the frame of the Social OMC, the best practices of family policies in the EU.

Integral Education to Build a Cohesive Society

We agree with the EC, when it expresses in this document that "Strengthening education is one of the most effective ways of fighting inequality and poverty". We welcome the passage, where the EC sets the aim to prevent early school leaving, recognizing that this lack of education is in the origin of social exclusion and emphasising that no one, explicitly the vulnerable groups, is excluded from knowledge.

The education approach expressed by the EC's consultation paper focuses on skills acquisition for the labour market and on life long learning to "ensure transitions between jobs and occupations".

This approach narrows perilously the definition of EDUCATION promoted by the UNESCO, where education is a right "that it empowers the individual to exercise other civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, attaining a life of dignity, while ensuring a brighter future for all, free from want and from fear".

Education is the ideal instrument to build inclusive societies, plural, equal and where everybody have access to the rights. Education should promote values, as solidarity, justice, equality, and not only competitiveness, efficiency and benefit. Educational systems have to contribute to create abilities to build a more cohesive society. Prosperity builds not only on economic growth, but on other social indicators that can be strengthened with education.

The EU2020 Strategy should take into account that Education, in the right integral sense, not only gives the basis for better employment, innovation and economic growth, but also contributes to social cohesion. The access to basic education and life long learning has to be assured and has to be free and/or affordable for all in all levels.



Financial Means

There are enough public-finance-models in the EU -in practice and theory- that demonstrate that a sustainable social system is possible. The Social OMC can promote the debate of this issue. All stakeholders, also Social NGOs as well as Universities, can contribute significantly to design a sustainable welfare system.

The ESF and the ERDF, as well as other EU funds, shall support the Social Cohesion / Social Inclusion Priority of the new EU 2020 Strategy.

IMPROVE THE PROCEDURE DESIGNING THE EU 2020 STRATEGY

Caritas Spain is concerned about the genesis and methodology proposed in this Consultation.

1. Is there a diagnosis?

The consultation starts with the "exit from the crisis" to progress to a "new economy" that is supposed to be sustainable. But there is no analysis about the causes of the crisis and about why the economy developed unsustainable. More than that, it assumes that thanks to the EU and the Lisbon Strategy we didn't went worse.

But it claims for a strong political response to achieve the exit of the crisis. It proposes to the people and the institutions a confidence in a political frame and action, that haven't been evaluated. And if the people and institutions don't accept to be confident, it threatened with "a period of low growth which can only make it harder for Europe to tackle the major challenges we face today." We feel coerced, because it seems that outside of this proposal is no solution.

The challenges mentioned are all related with the exit of the crisis and the economic growth. It is true that the document mentions social challenges, but as consequence of the crisis. But where is the diagnosis of the facts that before the crisis the EU had 15% people under the poverty threshold, 10% of working poor, child poverty, discrimination, etc? The consultation paper only speaks about the effects of the crisis.

2. Governance

Governance has to do with structuring a society. But the document focuses the governance only to achieve three economic elements: the support to demand, the public finances and the macroeconomic stability.

No mention in the document to the governance of the Social Inclusion Strategy, the social OMC. If the Social OMC is not referred, it won't exist, because without priority and objective, no strategy or instrument is required. What has been build up during the last ten years can disappear with one kick.



3. Governing the Consultation

The Consultation has been presented to the European society with a very short time to make contributions. It is not clear how the contributions will be treated and who and with what criteria the contributions will enrich or not the first document; a document that in a short term will be presented for its approval to European Spring Council.

We are very concerned that there won't be a public debate, giving a clear role not only to the civil society or to European Institutions like the European Economic and Social Committee, but also denying a specific role to the European Parliament in defining the new EU2020 Strategy.

The new Treaty gives the Parliament, which is legitimated by the people, an important role in the new institutional frame. The consultation doesn't take this into account, whether in the preliminary debate, nor in the implementation and monitoring of the Strategy.

4. Driving to the next deep crisis of legitimacy?

The EU has suffered during the past a continuous loss of legitimacy. The present consultation, in its method and content, avoiding an open debate involving the main stakeholders and ignoring the priority of social cohesion and social inclusion, is very far away from the people and their needs. If these initial mistakes won't be reoriented, we are very afraid that EU2020 will deepen the EU-legitimacy-crisis.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

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