



Deutscher Verein
für öffentliche
und private Fürsorge e.V.

Contribution of the German association for public and private welfare
on the future EU 2020 strategy and the social dimension of the Post Lisbon Strategy

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Recommendations of the Deutscher Verein on the social dimension of the so-called Post Lisbon Strategy as from 2011

Preliminary note	4
1. Common guiding principles for a social Europe	4
1.1 No social affairs, no economic policy	4
1.2 The significance of the general interest and the social fundamental rights	5
1.3 The five guiding principles of a future strategy for a social Europe	6
2. Recommendations for the social, health and education policy	7
2.1 Fight against poverty and social exclusion in Europe	7
2.2 Further development of the education systems in Europe	10
2.3 Youth work and youth policy cooperation in Europe	11
2.4 Social integration through the involvement of volunteers	12
2.5 Social participation through the reduction of discrimination	13
2.6 The role of the older generation and the solidarity between the generations	14
2.6.1 Positive age images – appreciation of the potential of the older generation	14
2.6.2 Autonomy and independence in old age	15
2.6.3 Further development of long-term care	16
2.6.4 Dementia and psychological diseases in the elderly	17
2.7 Socio-political dimension of health care	17

2.8	European structural funds	18
3.	Recommendations for the European employment policy	19
3.1	Rate of social inclusion and labour market integration	19
3.2	Family-oriented working environment	20
3.3	Indispensable potential of the elderly persons	21
3.4	Taking the youth into consideration	22
4.	Recommendations on involving the civil society in a Europe that is close to the citizens	22
5.	Conclusion	23

Preliminary note

The recommendations¹ are aimed at the European Commission, the European Parliament and the European Council. They contain suggestions from the viewpoint of public and private social work institutions in Germany for a new European strategy in order to create a stronger social cohesion and more solidarity in Europe in the next five years under the management of the new Commission and the new Parliament. The recommendations are to be incorporated in the announced consultation of the so-called Post Lisbon Strategy² as well as the international network activities of the Deutscher Verein.

The recommendations encompass the social, health and education policy, the European employment policy and the involvement of a range of the civil society organisations and networks in the European policy making process.

1. Common guiding principles for a social Europe

1.1. No social affairs, no economic policy

There is no doubt, that economic and employment policy targets are part of the strategy for the coming years in the European Union (EU). At the same time, goals aimed at social policy developments have to be a part of the new overall strategy. European trends such as the demographic change, consequences of globalisation and increasing technology or altered life and work structures create new social risks. In the long run, the Union will only get the desired acceptance from the population if the citizens feel that they are taken seriously with their worries in regard to these new risks. Additionally, the employment policy targets that one strives for such as

¹ Contact person in the German Association of public and private Welfare: Cornelia Markowski. The recommendations have been discussed in the Committees „International Cooperation and European integration“, „Age and care“, „Youth and family“ and „Social policy, social security, social assistance“. They have been adopted at September 30, 2009 by the board of the German Association.

² Commission working document „Consultation on the future „EU 2020“ strategy, COM(2009)647 final, 24.11.2009

longer employment terms, low rate of joblessness etc., can be reached much better if the citizen's employability is supported to a great extent.

According to the Deutscher Verein's opinion, economic targets can therefore only be realistically pursued if at the same time social targets are pursued. European competition regulations may not lead to the undermining of the social standards set at national level. Therefore, the economic and employment policy has to be oriented accordingly. The order of coherence of the EU policies as per article 7 of the Treaty on the functioning of the European Union (TFEU)³ as well as the socio-political horizontal clause of article 9 TFEU expressly stipulates this. It is to be assumed that the financial and economic crisis has already aggravated the situation of socially disadvantaged people in Europe and this trend is set to continue. The Deutscher Verein clearly sees the need for action, to take into consideration the social reality in the planning of the so-called Post-Lisbon Strategy and to lend substance to the socio-political orientation of the strategy.

1.2 The significance of the general interest and the social fundamental rights

Services and institutions oriented of general interest make a fundamental contribution to the togetherness and social cohesion. Therefore, "general interest" as per article 14 TFEU in connection with protocol no. 26 has to be valued as something very important and it has to receive a corresponding role within the European competition law. Even if the definition of general interest is the responsibility of the EU member states, the jurisdiction of the Court of Justice of the European Union has always proven that ultimately it is measured against the standards of the European competition law.

Germany's national sovereignty as an EU member state demands that even after a ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon – the principle of conferral is applied and the constitutional identity as a member state is observed in such a way that the member

³ The information refers to the regulations for the European Union on how they should acquire more importance when the Treaty of Lisbon comes into effect.

states have sufficient room for political organisation of the economic, cultural and social living conditions mainly for the areas which characterise the living conditions of the citizens and their social security⁴.

With the recognition of the Charter of Fundamental Rights by the Treaty of Lisbon and in respect of human dignity, rights and liberties develop such as the right to education and access to vocational training, non-discrimination, the right of the child, the elderly or people with disabilities, a dignified life with participation opportunities and integration, the right to social protection of the family, the right to access social security services, health care and services of general economic interest, particularly the equal legal effect as stipulated by the Treaty on European Union (TEU) or the TFEU. They supplement the definition of goals of the treaties and are mutually dependent for the contents of all EU policies – besides the constitutional traditions of the EU member states.

1.3 The five guiding principles of a future strategy for a social Europe

According to the Deutscher Verein, the future overall strategy should orient itself to the following social guiding principles:

- Social cohesion in Europe

This target aims at avoiding and reducing polarisation between the different social classes and generations through equal opportunity and increased distributive justice. Requirement is the appropriate provision of the individual at a local level, initiatives for promotion of togetherness and the equal opportunities for everyone.

- Combating poverty in Europe

Based on the principle of human dignity, this target covers the empowerment of people who live in poverty or those who are threatened by poverty, to lead a dignified life and above all to tap their individual potential. This applies especially to children and the youth, the elderly, disabled persons and those who are chronically

⁴ Decree of the Bundesverfassungsgericht, Rs. 2 BvE 2/08 dated June 30, 2009

ill, single parents, migrants or people with particular social difficulties. The European Year 2010 is to be understood as an opportunity for retrospect and above all for impulses for further efforts in this area.

- Equal opportunities and social participation of people with disadvantages

Equal opportunities mainly mean discrimination-free access to education, public life, appropriate accommodation and a health promoting living environment.

- Safeguarding the general interest

European regulations which have an effect on the organisation and financing of social and health services in the EU member states must pay attention to the precedence of general interest. That is the only way that the efficiency and the universal access to social offers of assistance and social and health services can be obtained or intensified permanently and comprehensively.

- Encouraging self determination of the users/those entitled to benefits

This target concerns the promotion of appropriate framework conditions to support self determination and responsibility of the affected persons to choose and use the social offers of assistance and social and health care services. The legal protection of the right to choose among the service offers and the empowerment to self-help are a part of these.

2. Recommendations for the social, health and education policy

2.1 Fight against poverty and social exclusion in Europe

Social exclusion and poverty exist in all EU member states in different magnitude and form. The Deutscher Verein emphasises that the EU member states have to determine the strategies which should meet the needs on the national, regional and local level.

The support of national strategies on combating poverty on the part of the European level can additionally set important impulses. The European reporting system on social protection and the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) on social protection has for instance in the past years raised awareness for combating poverty in the EU member states using approved procedures.

The “European year of combating poverty and social exclusion” 2010 has in view of the economic crisis affecting all European member states experienced an increase in importance for the reduction of social exclusion in the face of increasing joblessness. From the Deutscher Verein’s point of view, the promotion of a holistic approach – compared with the limitation on labour market integration – against the reduction should be taken into consideration more intensively on a national and European level⁵.

A common goal of the EU member states should be to support people with an especially high risk of poverty. The following topics should form focal points:

Combating *child* poverty is an important part of OMC in the field of “social integration”. The Deutscher Verein points out that child and family poverty is usually the consequence of missing or insufficient income of the parents. The employment of both parents is increasingly becoming a requirement for the independent securing of one’s livelihood and economic security. The promotion of employment of women in Germany is therefore an important measure for a reduction of the risk of poverty of families with children. At the same time, the fair distribution of family chores between both parents should be supported and better framework conditions for secured care structures for children should be created in order to avoid double burdens for women and to achieve the reconcilability of family and professional life. These targets should be supported continuously on a European level.

⁵ See the Stellungnahme des Deutschen Vereins zu den Schlussfolgerungen des Rates der EU über gemeinsame Grundsätze für die aktive Eingliederung zugunsten einer wirksamen Armutsbekämpfung/Deutscher Verein’s position-paper on the conclusions of the EU Council on common principles of active inclusion to combat poverty more effectively (available in German only), NDV 2009, 304 et seqq.

In Germany, *migrants* face a higher risk of poverty for than the entire population⁶. This has complex reasons but it is not to be attributed to a specific ethnic or cultural origin. The Deutscher Verein emphatically warns against culturalisation of social problems⁷. In fact, structural deficits, for instance in the education system or when accessing social services, must be approached. The situation of migrants or people from ethnic minority groups can be considered more intensively within the framework of the existing OMC on social protection and on general and vocational training.

A European migration and integration policy should counteract exclusion by fighting any form of discrimination determinedly and contributing to better usage of the potentials of migrants. In the process, individual groups of migrants should not be left out. This policy should not have a contrary effect on the external borders of the EU. In case the border controls are brought forward outside the EU, it has to be ensured that the ban on refoulement of article 33 of the Geneva Refugee Convention⁸ even at sea is to be adhered to. The asylum and refugees' policy as well as the EU's border regime should give priority to the protection of refugees.

Even *persons with disabilities* still experience social exclusion all over Europe. The Deutscher Verein is therefore glad that the European Community signed the UN Convention on Disability Rights on March 30, 2007. The ratification of the convention or rather the articles which lie in the EC's area of competence, the Deutscher Verein considers it necessary so that the implementation in the EU member states can be agreed upon and executed jointly. The Deutscher Verein suggests that the EC ratifies the convention as soon as possible and that it takes into account the rights of

⁶ According to the Federal Government's 3rd poverty and wealth report, the risk for this group in 2005 was twice as high as that of the entire population.

⁷ Stellungnahme des Deutschen Vereins zum Grünbuch der Europäischen Kommission "Migration und Mobilität: Chancen und Herausforderungen für die EU-Bildungssysteme"/Deutscher Vereins's position-paper on the EU's Green Paper "Migration and Mobility: Opportunities and Challenges of the EU Education System" (available in German only), NDV 2009, 543 et seqq.

⁸ Article 33 of the GRC prohibits the deportation or refoulement in an area in which the life or freedom of the deported person would be threatened due to his ethnic background, his religion, his nationality, his membership to certain social group or his political views.

people with disabilities (combined with inclusion, participation and non-discrimination) within the framework of its strategies, programmes and measures.

2.2 Further development of the education systems in Europe

Formal, non-formal and informal acquisition of skills and knowledge form an important key for individual development, for participation opportunities and securing the economic efficiency of a society. The aim of a future oriented policy has to be the qualitative further development of the education system on the basis of an integral educational understanding. Integral means that the stated different forms of education are recognised and supported. Furthermore, the general, open and discrimination-free access to the education systems has to be guaranteed and the usage of the education system even for people from uneducated backgrounds has to be supported.

The role of the EU can only be that of the initiator in view of the contractually determined responsibilities and federal structures in Germany. Its task is to promote and coordinate cross-state cooperation as well as supporting comparative research which could give important impulses on the further development of the national systems⁹.

The European Union wants to make the European Economic Area the most modern and most competitive economy with the Lisbon strategy 2000-10. The life-long (modularised) learning is a requirement in order to achieve this goal. The EU has advanced with this approach. In the past years, the EU has adopted the “European Qualification Framework for Lifelong Learning” (EQF) and introduced the European Credit Transfer System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) as well as the corresponding quality assurance strategy.

⁹ Stellungnahme des Deutschen Vereins zum Grünbuch der Europäischen Kommission “Migration und Mobilität: Chancen und Herausforderungen für die EU-Bildungssysteme”/Deutscher Verein’s statement on the EC’s Green Paper “Migration and Mobility: Opportunities and Challenges of the EU Education systems“, NDV 2009, 543 et seqq.

The EQF has a results-oriented approach and it defines competences for academic and vocational training, college education, learning in the family and informal learning mainly independent of learning location and learning system. From the point of view of the Deutscher Verein, competence-based learning is necessary even for integration in the job market. Since the understanding of lifelong learning within the Lisbon Process is closely connected to the achievement of employability, one has to pay special attention to ensure that even non-formal qualifications can be incorporated. In view of quickly occurring changes in the professional world and increasingly uncertain job market conditions, one has to consciously ensure that the respective qualification in this regard does not develop exclusion character.

Additionally, it has to be ensured that the qualification framework for college education taking place parallel to the European Bologna Process as well as the competence orientation opens so that the different systems (particularly ECTS and ECVET) are compatible and “double learning” as well as “education cul-de-sacs” are avoided.

2.3 Youth work and youth policy cooperation in Europe

By supporting trans-European mobility of young people in the field of education and youth work, international understanding and the understanding for a united Europe are exercised. The interest and understanding of young people in Europe is an important cornerstone for the future of the Union.

The Deutscher Verein comes out in favour of coordinated European youth policy cooperation. It accounts for the globalised framework conditions. However, the contractually regulated responsibilities and the federal structure in Germany have to be respected. The Deutscher Verein assumes that even in the future the exchange and mobility programme for youth and their social workers is supported. It supports the efforts of opening these even more intensively for disadvantaged youth.

New topics for youth policy agenda, a cross-sectoral political approach and the so-called peer learning are suggested with the EC's message titled "An EU strategy for the youth – investments and empowerments". The Deutscher Verein supports the establishment of a cross-sectoral policy. Youth policy has to be at par with the other policy areas such as education, employment and health or integration policy and consistently incorporate its own principles (participation, volunteering, and empowerment). Moreover, all levels and players are to be recognised and involved with their specific competencies¹⁰.

According to the holistic view, the Deutscher Verein additionally emphasises that "youth" as a phase of life of training and education serves the preparations for future employment as well as personality development. Youth-related measures are supposed to account for the different aspects and needs of this phase of life.

2.4 Social integration through the involvement of volunteers

Involvement of volunteers is gaining an increasingly important social role under the conditions of demographic change and globalisation: it contributes to social services of general interest in the "welfare mix", strengthens social integration and social cohesion, promotes social participation and enriches the political culture¹¹. This importance should also bear a new strategy for Europe.

The Deutscher Verein embraces the already existing involvement promoting measures of the European Commission such as in the field of promoting mobility of volunteers. Even for the promotion of volunteering it has to be viewed as a horizontal task and be based on a cross-departmental and cross-sectoral agenda. Primarily, this includes the creation of framework conditions which facilitate and activate

¹⁰ Stellungnahme des Deutschen Vereins zur Mitteilung der Europäischen Kommission zur neuen EU-Strategie für die Jugend vom 27. Mai 2009/Deutscher Verein's position-paper on communication of the EC on the new EU strategy for the youth, dated May 27, 2009 (available in German only), released on www.deutscher-verein.de

¹¹ Cf. Eckpunktepapier des Deutschen Vereins zum sozialen bürgerschaftlichen Engagement vom 1. Oktober 2008/Deutscher Verein's Key-issue-paper on social volunteering, dated October 1, 2008 (available in German only), NDV 2009, 533 et seqq.

volunteering considering the “obstinacy” of involvement in not-profit organisations, i.e. the consideration of principles of voluntariness and participation – whoever participates also wants to make decisions. A discussion on benefits that is predominantly restricted to employability or a social function doesn’t do this “obstinacy” justice.

Significant component of the activating framework conditions is the creation of a European appreciation culture for voluntary involvement. Object of this culture is a systemic recognition of voluntary work and the skills and competencies acquired thereby. An important step in the presentation of development and progress presupposes the improvement of empirical data basis as well as methodical evaluation.

The Deutscher Verein particularly embraces the suggestion of the European Commission to declare 2011 the “European year of voluntary work”¹². This offers additional opportunity of the European exchange on measures promoting national involvement strategies and the development of a coherent European involvement agenda.

2.5 Social participation through the reduction of discrimination

The Deutscher Verein considers the non-discrimination directive as an important step towards achieving social participation for all population groups also beyond the workplace and “... this participation is to be promoted socially as well as protected legally”¹³. On this basis, the member states could take more comprehensive political

¹² Proposal for a decision of the EU council on the European Year of Volunteering 2011 – {SEC(2009)725}

¹³ Stellungnahme des Deutschen Vereins zum Kommissionsvorschlag für eine Gleichbehandlungsrichtlinie KOM(2008) 426 vom 2. Juli 2008/Deutscher Verein’s position-paper on the Commission’s draft directive on non-discrimination, KOM (2008) 426 dated July 2, 2008, NDV 2008, 498 et seqq.

measures against the different forms of discrimination¹⁴, as is demanded by the UN Convention on Disability Rights for people with disabilities.

Non-discrimination directive however doesn't mean equal treatment in practice. The EU should therefore execute promotion measures for equal treatment which support the member states in their activities. The European year 2012 "Active Aging and intergenerational solidarity" should be used on the European side to initiate successful activities, programmes and initiatives in the EU member states on fighting discrimination due to age and promote the exchange on good practice transnationally.

2.6 The role of the older generation and the solidarity between the generations

The solidarity of the generations that has been rightly emphasised on by the European Commission is a key to coping with the demographic change. Pitting the generations against each other is bad for social cohesion and solidarity in Europe.

2.6.1 Positive age images – appreciation of the potential of the older generation

Elderly people contribute to cooperation between generations to a great extent. This concerns their material and immaterial support in the families, their voluntary involvement in all areas of the society and their economic potential in the professional life. They can and want to incorporate themselves as competent and active citizens. This readiness must be regarded and demanded.

Age as an economic factor is underestimated. Even elderly people are consumers. They need adapted and attractive products for their needs, therefore the range is wide and it covers goods needed on a daily basis to health-related offers, offers for planning leisure activities as well as supportive services. At the same time, a one-

¹⁴ Stellungnahme des Deutschen Vereins zum Umsetzung der EU-Gleichbehandlungsrichtlinie vom 8. März 2006/Deutscher Verein's position-paper on the implementation of the EU directive on non-discrimination dated March 8, 2006, NDV 2006, 153 et seqq.

sided economic consideration of age as “Silver Market” is too close. Many cultures appreciate age due to the ability to love, show empathy and experience acquired in the course of life. This is also a part of a positive age image in the consideration of the productivity of age.

The Deutscher Verein sees the role of the EU in the reversion to a European culture which values and appreciates the potential of elderly people. Avoiding discrimination of old and young people should not just be an indirect result of political action. Additionally, new job market and socio-political concepts are to be created which enable a fair and balanced distribution of encumbrances and resources between the older and the coming generations¹⁵ and implement the principles of sustainability and equal opportunity. For instance, the transfer of professional expertise in the post-professional phase of life to the next generations is of great importance. It certainly remains the task of the individual EU member states to take appropriate measures. In this regard, there are different experiences and also different ways – the EU should support its member states through the transfer of knowledge and exchange of good practices.

In addition to that, the planned European year 2012 is supposed to have a clarifying effect and it is supposed to see to it that the EC organises it according to its motto: elderly people are active and efficient citizens and not “boarders of society”. In the future, the EU can bring about additional value in the establishment of a realistic image of age on the topic of aging.

2.6.2 Autonomy and self independence in old age

Age is not automatically connected to illness and care dependency even if with age the risk of being dependent on aid and assistance rises considerably. The increasing

¹⁵ Stellungnahme des Deutschen Vereins zur Mitteilung der Kommission “Die demografische Zukunft Europas - von der Herausforderung zur Chance”, KOM(2006) 571/Deutscher Verein’s position-paper on the Commission’s communication “The demographic future of Europe – from challenge to opportunity”, KOM (2006) 571, NDV 2007, 173 et seqq.

number of – for instance – those above the age of eighty, ninety and one hundred shows the dynamic of social development in the past decades very clearly. How an elderly person can live independently is also dependent on the furnishing and condition of his apartment, his living environment, the ability to provide himself with the goods and services needed daily as well as easy access to health care and nursing care services and consultation infrastructure. Gaining autonomy and independence in old age should be a primary target of a EU policy that is demographically sensible. A forward-looking policy should set framework conditions which enable a life that is as independent as possible even in old age. The barrier-free public as well as private environment benefits not only the elderly but also parents with small children or people with disabilities.

2.6.3 Further development of long-term care

Coping with the need for care remains a challenge for aging societies. Avoiding the need for care should be a central goal. Prevention and rehabilitation contribute extensively to this. However, the risk of needing care increases with age.

Besides medical care, nursing care encompasses social care and psychological support as well as participation in social life in the society. Social security systems and professional services alone cannot cope with this need. Most care services are provided by family members still. This will no longer be possible in the current scope in the future with smaller families, a higher employment ratio of women, more mobility of the younger generation and more people living alone. In order to maintain the relatives' readiness to provide care, there is need for flexible and at the same time reliable forms of support. The offers of assistance should be diversified and varied. The announced message of the European Commission on long-term care 2009/2010 should respond to this situation in the care sector.

Within the framework of OMC on health and long-term care, it is sensible to promote learning from one another in view of the different historically developed health and

long-term care systems. The already existing experiences in the EU member states should be considered and good practices should be publicised.

2.6.4 Dementia and psychological illnesses in elderly people

The risk of dementia rises as one gets older. This is a heavy burden for those affected and for caring relatives. The Deutscher Verein appreciates the fact that the Commission wants to tackle the problems of Alzheimer's and dementia with increased research efforts. However, it notably needs good offers of care and support for the affected person carers and their families. The European policy can initiate the exchange of good practices and enable easy access to the experiences of individual EU member states among each other through corresponding measures (internet, knowledge bourse etc.).

Isolation presents a serious problem especially in old age and it increases the risk of depression and other psychological as well as psychic illnesses. These detriments lead to intense restrictions in coping with day to day life and demand the need for care. To improve the status of research in this regard and to sensitise people to this problem could happen on European level and should be the objective of a new strategy.

2.7 Socio-political dimension of health care

Health care services as well as care and similar social services differ from all other services through their frequently existential importance for the users as well as their embedding in a lasting, continuous provision process. The Commission already acknowledges in its White paper on services of general interest the holistic role of health care, care and other social services for the people in Europe and refers to their role in the realisation of fundamental rights, social cohesion and a high social protection level. Consequently, changes for the service sector always have a socio-political dimension provided that they concern health services.

Access to medical care should be guaranteed in the future even for people with low income and minimal education. Prevention and provisions for aging in health and well-being are of great importance. The effect of the European framework regulations should not discriminate against mobility impaired persons when it involves health care.

The Deutscher Verein requests the European lawmaker to observe the displayed socio-political dimension in future measures which for instance aim at the accessibility to health care and (long-term) care, improvement of cooperation in the field of rare diseases or dealing with financial coverage provided for cross border health care. On this note, the already existing sustainable coordination social regulation on security schemes has to be expanded and modernised in which the EU member states organise their social security system and intensify the cross-frontier cooperation.

2.8 European structural funds

The European cohesion policy and the structural funds are supposed to contribute to more intense social cohesion in Europe. In the process, the European Social Fund (ESF) gains importance. The Deutscher Verein appreciates that through the ESF, ethnic groups that are threatened by exclusion are capable of participating in the ever changing labour market.

The financial and economic crisis will most probably lead to a worrying employment crisis and increased joblessness. Against this background, the ESF needs to check its priorities prior to the new funding period. In the future, focus will lie more intensively on the fight against poverty and social exclusion and investments in local, social infrastructure and will go beyond the labour market policy. Reliable financial perspectives have to be guaranteed even beyond the current funding period. The EU and its member states should use the commencement of the new funding period

to provide simple procedures for ESF projects so that all efforts of the involved parties can be aimed at the improvement of social inclusion and social cohesion.

3. Recommendations for the European employment policy

3.1 Rate of social inclusion and labour market integration

From Deutscher Verein's point of view, the equal participation in professional life includes not only the integration in the common labour market. On the contrary, all offers and forms of social integration through work should gain equal recognition. The strategy of "active inclusion" is consequently to be understood as part of a strategy for combating poverty and social exclusion¹⁶.

In view of the "Flexicurity"-strategy, the Deutscher Verein points out that activation only functions where there are jobs or where jobs can be created. Joblessness can not be eliminated only through an integrated "Flexicurity" approach that is conceived as per European requirements¹⁷. The Deutscher Verein has therefore emphasised several times that other strategies for the ensuring social inclusion and the integration in the civil society must be applied and developed and the approach of "Flexicurity" must include comprehensive social protection. For the Deutscher Verein, aspects of implementation of income that can secure existence in full time employment, the comprehensive support of disadvantaged groups of people in improving the chances of integration as well as ensuring the sanctity of human dignity by guaranteeing a socio-cultural mere subsistence in case of joblessness are

¹⁶ Stellungnahme des Deutschen Vereins zu den Schlussfolgerungen des Rates der EU über gemeinsame Grundsätze für die aktive Eingliederung zugunsten einer wirksamen Armutsbekämpfung/Deutscher Verein's position-paper on the conclusions of the EU Council on common principles of active inclusion to combat poverty more effectively (available in German only), NDV 2009, 304 et seqq.

¹⁷ Stellungnahme des Deutschen Vereins zur Mitteilung der Kommission: Gemeinsame Grundsätze für den Flexicurity-Ansatz herausarbeiten: Mehr und bessere Arbeitsplätze durch Flexibilität und Sicherheit, KOM(2007) 359/Deutscher Verein's position-paper on the communication of the Commission: Towards common principles of Flexicurity: More and better jobs through Flexibility and security", KOM (2007) 359 final (available in German only), NDV 2007, 485, 486.

in the foreground. Individual needs and the needs of disadvantaged groups must be addressed and taken into consideration in the state support services or benefits.

The aim of the European employment strategy should be to create high quality jobs with good working conditions. The employment policy guidelines should consider these aspects more intensively in the future.

3.2 Family oriented working environment

The approach of a European labour market with very mobile employees may be justifiable from an economic and corporate perspective but it is problematic for families. In order to enable women as well as men who are taking care of children and relatives who need support gain access to professional life, there is need for family-friendly framework conditions in the job market¹⁸. The employment policy guidelines should also consider this aspect better.

The Deutscher Verein underlines the meaning of adhering to the so-called Barcelona targets with which through the expansion of child day care obstacles which stand in the way of women and men who have the obligation to provide care in the involvement in professional life are to be eliminated. Besides the purely quantitative increase of day care places, the Deutscher Verein sees the challenge mainly in the organisation of high quality, achievable, affordable offers for care corresponding to the need situation of the parents and children.

The Deutscher Verein appreciates that Germany is ambitiously pursuing the targets on increasing the ratio of female employees that are found within the framework of the Lisbon Strategy. However, it points out that for the same kind of work, the same

¹⁸ Stellungnahme des Deutschen Vereins zur Mitteilung der Kommission "Die demografische Zukunft Europas - von der Herausforderung zur Chance", KOM(2006) 571/ Deutscher Verein's position-paper on the Commission's communication "The demographic future of Europe – from challenge to opportunity", KOM (2006) 571, NDV 2007, 173 et seqq.

salary has to be paid to men and women in order to avoid having women working in uncertain employment relationships.

3.3 Indispensible potential of the elderly persons

The demographic changes in Europe will immensely reduce the working population in the next decades. Right now, the employment of people over 55 years lags behind the targets agreed upon in Lisbon. In order to obtain our wealth and social security, the utilisation of every potential is necessary. Older employees will become indispensable with their skills and acquired competencies. This doesn't apply only to the so-called highly qualified elderly employees.

The potentials of this group of persons are mainly seen in the expansion of the active life working period. This involves giving people who performed physically and psychologically encumbering tasks in their professional lives the opportunity to qualify for other jobs through specific training. They then get the opportunity to stay active in their professional lives for longer.

The member states should intensify their efforts to understand elderly employees as a target group of an effective employment policy, e. g. through good work organisation, intensive further training and qualification connected with sustainable old-age security¹⁹. Here, the exchange and the mutual information about approved practices can be promoted more intensively by the EU. The member state employment policy has to be flanked by a Europe-wide campaign which will remove the common image of inefficient elderly employees.

¹⁹ Stellungnahme des Deutschen Vereins zur Mitteilung der Kommission "Die demografische Zukunft Europas - von der Herausforderung zur Chance", KOM(2006) 571/ Deutscher Verein's position-paper on the Commission's communication "The demographic future of Europe – from challenge to opportunity", KOM (2006) 571, NDV 2007, 173 et seqq.

3.4 Taking the youth into consideration

The transition from training to employment has become longer and more difficult for young people. The rate of unemployment among the youth lies above the overall rate of unemployment in many countries – a trend that will stabilise in view of the current economic crisis²⁰.

Employment policy or employment policy guidelines have to address the youth as a qualified target group and support their professional and social integration with the help of specific measures. The Deutscher Verein militates for a renewed “European Pact for the Youth” which combines employment, training and youth policy activities with one another.

4. Recommendations on involving the civil society in a Europe that is close to the citizens

As described at the beginning, the citizens will only have a long-term interest in the EU and its measures if they see that their concerns are considered. In order to plan the European agenda and to create a Europe that is close to the citizens according to article 10 paragraph 3 TEU, it is necessary more than ever before to incorporate the civil society more intensively in the lawmaking and decision making processes.

The initiatives of the past years for communication in Europe – from the action plan to the White Paper and the so-called Plan D – have yielded initial suggestions for the improvement of the situation for the individual citizen as well as for the civil society associations which represent interests. Practice alone shows that access to current political information and documentation of the EU institutions is organised in a very complex manner, quite differently from how article 42 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights intends it to be for all citizens of the Union and inhabitants of an EU member

²⁰ Cf. Press release Eurostat: „Five million jobless youth in the EU 27 in the first quarter of 2009” Stat-09-109 dated July 23, 2009.

state. Even article 15 paragraph 3 TFEU contains a distinct obligation whose implementation the Deutscher Verein is demanding for the future.

The same applies to the consideration of civil society positions in hearings to which the principle of openness holds as per article 15 paragraph 1 TFEU. National parliaments and the Union's legislator are integrated. The practical experiences which can be transferred and be used on site by professional associations, networks, initiatives etc. on the situation and the circumstances are often not taken into consideration. Here, it involves information about the social reality on site which should be of great importance for decision making on behalf of the citizen.

The Deutscher Verein calls for the expansion of participation opportunities within the framework of the European Treaties and making individual interest of the European institutions in the estimation of different civil society players – even local, regional and national organisations – recognisable.

5. Conclusion

The consideration of the several policy areas have shown that the Lisbon Agenda has set numerous impulses for political development e. g. in combating poverty, education, tapping the potentials of the youth and the aged as well as labour market integration. Action programmes were passed, council resolutions prepared or the foundation for different procedures of the OMC was laid.

In relation to the efforts for more economic growth and the increase of employment rate, these efforts seemed very tentative. This may be due to the fact that the responsibility for concrete measures in the socio-political area for the EU is restricted. It also lies to a great extent on the fact that the European decision maker attaches less importance to the creation of a social Europe despite the socio-political agenda, despite the failed national referendum on the draft of an EU constitution, despite the continuously sinking involvement in the election of the European

Parliament etc. Due to this reservation, it is not clear which role the EU will play in the future contrary to its own statements for the further development and strengthening of social cohesion and solidarity in Europe.

The Deutscher Verein demands that the EU organises its policies coherent with its socio-political targets, is understood as an initiator (e. g. over the so-called European years) in the observed areas and promotes the exchange and the mutual information about approved practices beyond state frontiers. Integral approaches are future oriented e. g. social integration through more than labour market integration, promotion of developments of personality instead of just employability or a broad understanding of education. It is shown in view of the demographic change to take new paths as fast as possible in order to recognise the needs of the aging society and to use the potential of the elderly more intensively. Only then will social cohesion and solidarity be maintained sustainably in the future and wealth, social peace and Europe's competitiveness in the global competition can be guaranteed.

The German Association is a central forum for local authorities and welfare organisations including their facilities and institutions, the Federal states and scientific representatives regarding all fields of social work in Germany. It monitors and comments developments mainly of child and youth welfare, family policy, social assistance systems, systems of basic allowance for job seekers, care and rehabilitation relaying on its expertise and experiences.