



## EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities DG

Social Protection and Integration

**Inclusion, Social Policy Aspects of Migration, Streamlining of Social Policies**

Brussels, 16 October 2007

### **2010 - European Year for combating poverty and social exclusion**

#### **BACKGROUND**

- ✚ The Commission announced in the Social agenda 2005-2010 a proposal for designating 2010 as the European Year for combating poverty and social exclusion.
- ✚ Its intention was to reaffirm and strengthen the political commitment at the start of the Lisbon strategy to make "a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty".

#### **WHY A EUROPEAN YEAR?**

- ✚ The fight against poverty and social exclusion is a central objective of the EU and its Member States. The OMC for Social Inclusion – initiated by the same Lisbon Council – has been from the outset an important tool for supporting this political commitment and strengthening EU capacity to support Member States in their drive for greater social cohesion in Europe. While the OMC is starting to bear fruit, the process shows scope for improvement and further efforts at EU and national levels are required.
- ✚ **A European Year can be an essential additional tool to ensure a stronger EU value added to these efforts.**
- ✚ European Years have proven to be an efficient EU tool to create a momentum around key topics and EU priorities in helping bringing forward the EU agenda. They allow a wide range of stakeholders to express their views, make their actions known, reinforce their complementarities and debate and exchange concrete proposals.

#### **THE STAKEHOLDERS' CONSULTATION**

- ✚ In order to draft its proposal, the Commission has taken account of evaluation results and lessons drawn on the basis of the implementation of the previous European Years.
- ✚ The Commission services also sought the views of key stakeholders – EU-level NGOs, social partners, associations representing regional and local authorities, service providers and Member States – regarding the objectives and implementation of the European Year.

- ✚ A consultation (April – June 2007), centred on a questionnaire, invited comments on issues like: objectives; involvement of stakeholders; overall design, framework and types of actions; follow-up needed to ensure a lasting impact of the European Year.
- ✚ 58 responses were received. Results provided valuable elements for the preparation work and have been integrated in the impact assessment report attached to the Commission's proposal for a European Parliament and Council Decision.
- ✚ On the other hand, a consultative process is never a "one-off" exercise, and effective preparation calls for consultation over several stages. The run-up to the European Year will bring further opportunities (e.g. today in the context of this Round Table) to contribute to its design and preparation.
- ✚ DG EMPL will publish a summary analysis of contributions received on its Europa website. We can anticipate here some aspects.
- ✚ Contributions show the strong consensus met by this European Year and the extent of the expectations that it causes. The results indicate that the proposal is welcomed by all relevant stakeholders.
- ✚ The Year is generally seen as an opportunity for improving understanding among the general public of the complex structural realities that cause poverty in the EU, and the tools available to combat poverty and social exclusion, including the OMC. The importance of the achievements of the European social model(s) was also generally acknowledged.
- ✚ Most of the respondents want the European Year to promote a holistic, coherent policy approach, in particular by moving beyond the labour market dimension to promoting inclusion and taking into account rights, equality and anti-discrimination.
- ✚ Providing better information and evidence on factors that can prevent and reduce poverty is also recognised as a powerful factor in ensuring a stronger political commitment.
- ✚ The answers highlight the potential of such a Year in terms of communication and mobilisation and provide useful suggestions for the purpose and design of the initiative.

#### **OVERALL OBJECTIVES:**

- ✚ The consultation provided extremely valuable indications for the definition of the European Year's objectives. These must – first of all – be clear, visible, and easily understandable.
- ✚ The Year's overall objective will be to increase public *mobilisation* on the questions of poverty and contribute to demonstrate the benefit of *participation*, including of the excluded persons, when it comes to addressing effectively the roots of poverty.
- ✚ The Year will also contribute to demonstrate that poverty and social exclusion are *threats for economic and social development* and by reaffirming the responsibility of all the actors in social cohesion.
- ✚ The EU will also restate its *global responsibility to fight poverty worldwide*. Awareness raising and actions during the Year will then also focus on global

interdependence and the need for sustainable development and solidarity between and within generations.

- ✚ Over a longer-term perspective, the Year will *help the OMC* to have more impact on the ground and promote a stronger attachment to the EU's social values.

#### **SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**

- ✚ The concrete objectives can be summed up in four key words: **recognition, ownership, cohesion** and **commitment**.
- ✚ **Recognition** means recognising the right of people in a situation of poverty and social exclusion to live in dignity and to play a full part in society. **Ownership** implies increasing public ownership of social inclusion policies, emphasising *everyone's* responsibility in tackling poverty and marginalisation. **Cohesion** spells out our vision for Europe: a more cohesive society is one where no one doubts that everyone will benefit from the eradication of poverty and the fact that no one is condemned to live in the margins. And finally we need **commitment** because this can only be a long-term effort that involves all levels of governance, building upon the achievements and possible shortcomings of the OMC.

#### **A LIMITED NUMBER OF PRIORITIES TO FOCUS ON**

- ✚ While taking account of the multidimensional nature of poverty and social exclusion, the Year's activities aim at producing a clear value added and accompanying in an effective way the OMC, and particularly the National Strategies' process. These activities should therefore focus on a limited number of priority areas. In accordance with the priorities identified in the social inclusion process, the Commission proposes to focus the Year around the following themes:
  - ✓ child poverty and the intergenerational transmission of poverty;
  - ✓ an inclusive labour market;
  - ✓ disadvantages in education and training, including digital literacy training;
  - ✓ poverty and the gender dimension;
  - ✓ access to basic services, including decent accommodation;
  - ✓ overcoming discrimination and promoting the integration of immigrants and the social and labour market inclusion of ethnic minorities;
  - ✓ addressing the needs of disabled people and other vulnerable groups.

#### **A MAJOR POLITICAL AMBITION**

- ✚ These objectives and priorities clearly show the political ambition of the Commission proposal for the European Year 2010. A European Year constitutes a unique opportunity to reach a "new" public and facilitate public debate on some key-issues.
  - i. poverty and social exclusion are not only contrary to European values but constitute a damage for the very whole society;

- ii. progress in the prevention of and the fight against exclusion is possible, and depends on concrete measures;
  - iii. the voice of excluded persons is to be heard;
  - iv. social inclusion is a transversal objective of all public policies and to which everyone can contribute;
  - v. collective well-being depends on the complementarity between economic and social policies.
- ✚ The European Year will intervene at the moment in which the end of the Lisbon cycle will call a very open assessment of what has been done so far by the EU and its Member States to achieve the Lisbon objective of eradicating poverty by 2010. The Year should show qualitative and quantitative results demonstrating the added value of EU cooperation in fighting poverty and boosting EU ambition and commitment.
  - ✚ The **communication** dimension will prove essential to support this ambition, if one wants to create public mobilisation, and not only associate the usual actors of the social inclusion policies.

#### COORDINATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE ACTIVITIES

- ✚ The Commission proposes an approach based on a **shared implementation** between EU and national and sub-national level activities, as the most appropriate to achieve the objectives of the Year in a proportionate and efficient manner. This will make it possible to combine the allocation of important means in the participating states with real intervention capacities at the EC level. The experience of the previous European Years shows that the success of such events lays both in decentralisation of the means, allowing the emergence of local projects and ground action and the European level capacity of supporting innovatory transnational dimension.
- ✚ At *EU level*, a **Committee** made up of Member State representatives will be appointed in order to assist the Commission in the implementation of the European Year's activities. The Committee will monitor the implementation of the activities on the basis of common guidelines developed by the Commission (**Strategic Framework Document - SFD**) to ensure consistency with the Joint Report on Social Inclusion.
- ✚ The Commission will also establish links with the SPC, to ensure that it is regularly and appropriately informed of the implementation of the European Year's activities.
- ✚ Mechanisms need to be put in place to ensure the active participation of other actors. That is why the Commission will seek to engage with a very wide range of stakeholders, inviting them to join an ongoing dialogue about the European Year's priorities and delivery mechanisms. The SFD should also define minimum standards for participation of relevant in national bodies.
- ✚ Within the Commission, DG EMPL intends to draw on the expertise of the existing Inter-services Group on Social Inclusion to discuss synergies and cooperation and ensure consistency among EC initiatives.
- ✚ While the Union can provide a framework for coordination at various levels, tangible progress will be achieved only through the significant involvement of Member States

at national level. Activities defined at EU level to ensure consistency in approach will then be adapted to the specificities of each Member State.

- ✚ At National level, each Member State will be responsible for co-ordinating and implementing activities at national, regional and local levels. However, national implementation will have to accord with the policy objectives set out for the Year, in line with the SFD. Each Member State will submit to the Commission a **National Programme for implementing the European Year**, devised, adopted and implemented in strict cooperation with and under the supervision of the **National Implementing Bodies (NIBs)** designated by the countries participating in the Year. The NIBs will be responsible for selecting national, regional and local initiatives in line with the strategic policy objectives as defined by the Commission. They will also provide an effective channel of information on the European Year's activities.

## **BUDGET**

- ✚ The budget, which should be at least EUR 17 million at the EC level, will be the most important ever devoted to a European Year in the social field (+/- 50% of the appropriations will co finance actions at the national level).

## **TIMETABLE:**

- ✚ The adoption of the Commission Decision proposal was scheduled for 10<sup>th</sup> October 2007. However, the procedure is still to be completed.
- ✚ The notice of the Commission proposal to the EP and to the Council (*co decision procedure*) is scheduled for December 2007, and Commission aims at a timely adoption under the Slovenian Presidency of the EU – by June 2008.
- ✚ On the basis of the lessons drawn on the previous European Years, a timely preparation is crucial for an effective implementation of the activities under the Year. The Commission services will therefore as from early 2008 be very active on this. In particular – in parallel with the negotiation of the proposal – it will be working in drafting the Strategic Framework Document, in contact with all the relevant EU level stakeholders.