

ROADMAP

Title of the initiative	Communication on the Platform against Poverty
Type of initiative	CWP
Lead DG/contact person/details	EMPL/to be decided (for now contact Katarina Lindahl)
Expected date of adoption of the initiative	October 2010
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Version No	1

Initial IA screening & planning of further work

A. Context and problem definition

(i) What is the political context of the initiative? (ii) How does this initiative relate to past and possible future initiatives, and to other EU policies?

The Platform is one of two Flagship Initiatives designed to support delivery on the Inclusive Growth priority of the Europe2020 Strategy and in particular progress on the EU headline target on social inclusion and poverty reduction.

The initiative can build on the decade-long cooperation on social protection and social inclusion within the Social OMC which has supported mutual learning, wider stakeholder involvement, increased awareness, and the development of shared approaches to common challenges, such as tackling poverty and reforming social protection. Several avenues for improvement suggested in the July 2008 Communication on reinforcing the OMC can be developed, whereas Europe2020 provides for expanding the scope and introducing a more cross-cutting approach to shared social challenges.

What are the main problems identified?

High levels of poverty in EU-27 that persisted also over the favourable cycle which ended 2008; considerable gaps in safety nets across the EU; need to proceed on reforming systems for pensions, healthcare and long-term care for future adequacy and sustainability.

The economic and social impact of the crisis, and the precarious state of public finances in several Member States, makes tackling these problems both more compelling and more challenging. Further, there has been an overly weak link between policy areas – labour market, social policies, antidiscrimination. Also governance has shown serious shortcomings: lack of active involvement of stakeholders, structural funds insufficiently integrated, focus too narrow. Cooperation with and between Member States shows certain weaknesses, pointing to a need for reinforced ownership and communication.

Who is affected?

These are issues that directly affect all European citizens, as well as coming generations.

(i) Is EU action justified on grounds of subsidiarity? (ii) Why can the objectives of the proposed action not be achieved sufficiently by Member States (necessity test)? (iii) As a result of this, can objectives be better achieved by action by the Community (test of EU Value Added)?

These are issues that squarely fall within the competence of EU Member States, and this prerogative is not put in question. Member States have chosen to cooperate on these fundamental and largely shared challenges using the OMC.

B. Objectives of EU initiative

What are the main policy objectives?

For the Union to strengthen social inclusion and achieve a decisive reduction in poverty by 2020 and to make progress towards ensuring adequate and sustainable social protection by providing more effective and more relevant support to Member States' reform efforts in these fields. Attention should be given in particular to promoting social innovation for the most vulnerable, to develop a new agenda for migrants' integration and to fight discrimination.

The initiative will also help clarify how Member States will develop their cooperation in assessing progress towards adequate and sustainable social protection, notably pensions, healthcare and long-term care, but also e.g. last resort schemes for social assistance.

Proceeding towards the objectives will entail strengthening and developing effective tools for the EU to support efforts of Member States as well as civil society. Reaching out to stakeholders and drawing fully on the support opportunities of structural funds will be major elements in order to broaden participation.

Do the objectives imply developing EU policy in new areas or in areas of strategic importance?

EU cooperation in the areas of social protection reform and the fight against poverty and social exclusion has gradually deepened since 2000. The Europe2020 Strategy, as endorsed by the European Council, has as one headline target to promote social inclusion, in particular through the reduction of poverty. This initiative aims to support this target in particular by extending the scope and introduce a cross-cutting approach in this policy area.

C. Options

(i) What are the policy options? (ii) What legislative or 'soft law' instruments could be considered? (iii) Would any legislative initiatives go beyond routine up-date of existing legislation?

Various options for designing the Platform can be envisaged depending on the degree of ambition and investment, from a minimum adaptation of the established cooperation under the Social OMC and in the framework of the Social Protection Committee (established in 2001 pursuant to Treaty article 160) to a reshuffling of current working practices enabling regular and structured cooperation across policies and with the full range of stakeholders. The policy could be revitalised and re-scoped, in particular by widening involvement both across related policy areas and across the full spectrum of stakeholders concerned. The platform should intensify the support to mutual learning (peer reviews, exchange of good practices), by fully drawing on available EU funding for targeted action, and by building on the *acquis* developed under ten years of OMC (relating to issues such as child poverty, active inclusion, health inequalities, etc.) It could increase the EU capacity to provide efficient support in terms of addressing issues such as migrants' integration and the exclusion of other vulnerable groups taking full account of the gender dimension. The EU level would lend its own contribution by designing and implementing programmes to support social innovation for the most vulnerable, taking strengthened measures to fight discrimination, and developing a new agenda for migrants' integration. Further, an assessment of the adequacy and sustainability of social protection systems would be carried out, and ways to ensure better access to healthcare systems be identified.

Given the subject matter, legislation can from the outset not be considered a viable option.

Does the action proposed in the options cut across several policy areas or impact on action taken/planned by other Commission departments?

Yes, a major aim with the envisaged transformation of the Social OMC into a Platform against Poverty is to achieve more effective treatment of cross-cutting issues, such as inclusion of migrants, minorities, youth, disabled and other vulnerable groups (implying cooperation in particular with DGs EAC, JLS, SANCO).

Explain how the options respect the proportionality principle

It is part of the nature of this cooperation, that the degree of ambition would be determined jointly with Member States, and in consultation with other stakeholders.

D. Initial assessment of impacts

What are the significant impacts likely to result from each policy option (cf. list of impacts in the Impact Assessment Guidelines pages 32-37), even if these impacts would materialise only after subsequent Commission initiatives?

The ultimate impacts intended are an improvement in the material situation and the inclusion of the most exposed citizens of the EU, by ensuring adequate and sustainable safety nets and enabling participation in the labour market. In terms of interim impact, the Platform will provide more effective support to policy development and implementation at national and sub-national level, in particular by fostering full commitment by all actors concerned and enabling their enhanced implication, by ensuring that key issues are treated in a comprehensive and cross-sectoral manner ensuring consistency and synergies between action taken within related policy areas (e.g. inclusion of migrants) and by ensuring full use of already existing EU financial tools to support delivery.

Could the options have impacts on the EU-Budget (above 5 Mio €) and/or should the IA also serve as the ex-ante evaluation, required by the Financial Regulation?

No, it would not have additional budget implications, but the initiative would seek to use available funding better to support the Inclusive Growth objective and the social inclusion/poverty reduction target, notably through targeted support from structural funds/ESF and by drawing on programme funding to promote social innovation.

Could the options have significant impacts on (i) simplification, (ii) administrative burden or on (iii) relations with third countries?

No option would have detrimental effects on any of these variables (avoiding increased reporting burdens, for example, will be ensured in each option), but the initiative can be expected to entail some improvement in terms of simplification and improved policy coordination.

E. Planning of further impact assessment work

When will the impact assessment work start?

No impact assessment would be needed given the broad nature of the initiative (for any option envisaged), given that the Communication does commit the Commission to any specific actions of a legislative nature or those having significant direct impacts. The main purpose of the Communication will be to create synergies between already existing initiatives and projects with a view to improve their efficiency and effectiveness. It will set out to do this not through direct action, but by mobilising the full commitment of Member States and other stakeholders. If the Commission later decides to put forward more concrete, specific proposals, these may, where relevant, be subject to separate impact assessments.

(i) What information and data are already available? (ii) Will this impact assessment build on already existing impact assessment work or evaluations carried out? (iii) What further information needs to be gathered? (iv) How will this be done (e.g. internally or by an external contractor) and by when? (v) What type and level of analysis will be carried out (cf. principle of proportionate analysis)?

No IA, given that any follow up will be non-legislative and without budgetary impact. but the proposal can draw on extensive analytical and other material that have been accumulated over the OMC's ten year of existence, and as summarised in subsequent editions of the Joint SPSI Report and its accompanying technical annexes. In addition, two studies that are particularly relevant will be sufficiently advanced or finalised in time for elements to be taken on board: interim results from an external evaluation of the OMC and a study on stakeholder involvement. Further, the 2008 IA on the Reinforcing the OMC Communication and the Recommendation on active inclusion can still be drawn on.

Which stakeholders & experts have been/will be consulted, how and at what stage?

No IA. The Social Protection Committee will give its opinion on the general idea, as outlined in the EUROPE2020 communication, of a Platform against Poverty, and in the autumn on the more concrete and elaborate proposal which will constitute the October 2010 initiative.

In addition to already established regular exchanges with civil society and social partners the Communication on the Platform will be subject to a specific consultation on the proposed approach. This would be carried out in October / November 2010.