# EUROPEAN PLATFORM AGAINST POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION STAKEHOLDER DIALOGUE

## First meeting of the EU Stakeholders Group

Wednesday 22 June 2011, 9.15 – 16.30

## Summary of key issues discussed in the plenary meeting and workshops

### 1. Morning session: information exchange and dialogue on cross-cutting issues

**Antonia Carparelli** welcomed the participants and outlined the morning session with an exchange of information on the development at EU level on social inclusion and the fight against poverty and comments on the draft mandate of the stakeholders' group. She stressed that the Platform Against Poverty and Social Exclusion (hereafter The Platform) underscores the importance of stakeholders involvement. As the Platform is cross-cutting and concern issues in many policy fields, it is important to broaden the group of stakeholders involved. The stakeholder group will therefore consist of:

- representatives from NGOs which are active at EU level in the areas of employment, social affairs and inclusion;
- representatives of the social partners at EU level;
- representatives of the regional and local authorities;
- representatives from international organizations;
- EU bodies and institutions, such as the European Parliament, EESC, CoR and some agencies (EUROFOUND, FRA etc…).
- EU think tanks and foundations with specific interest on issues relating to social inclusion will also be invited.

The draft mandate states that the group will meet at least twice a year. The draft mandate for the group should make clear the purpose of the stakeholder meetings and there will be a revised version drafted for the next meeting based on the discussion between the stakeholders and the Commission.

**Egbert Holthuis** gave a presentation of Europe 2020 covering also the Commission's commitment taken in the Platform to launch a discussion and prepare a report on how to best adapt the working methods of the Social OMC to the new Europe 2020 governance in the light of the experience of the first European semester. He stressed that the implementation of social policies remains a Member State's competence but a number of instruments are available at EU level, within the Social Open Method of Coordination, in particular in the field of policy coordination between MS based on common objectives,

indicators, regular reporting, joint assessment and mutual learning. Involving stakeholders is a crucial component in this process.

In this context stakeholders were remembered that the Social Protection Committee set up an ad hoc group to prepare its contribution on the future of the Social OMC earlier this year. The ad hoc group invited stakeholders to a meeting 12 April 2011 to receive their views on the future of the Social OMC. Among the main points raised were that the social dimension should be upgraded to counterbalance the cooperation in economic matters and restore the focus on results instead of the process, as well as integrating the social OMC with the national policy cycle.

The Commission will present its report on the future of the Social OMC later this year.

**Presentation of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the Committee of the Regions (COR) on the Platform against poverty**

**Maureen O'Neil** from the EESC gave an overview of the EESC opinion on the Platform, highlighting the need to look at synergies between the flagships and bringing together different actors. The EESC finds that the Platform is ambitious and will serve as a baseline to take action forward in the next 10 years on a wide range of issues. But, a challenge is to address the complexity of the issues, for example the gap between policy intentions and implementation at the local level. There is a need for a strong integrated approach. EESC will take an active part in the first annual Convention and will send a delegation of 15 Members.

**Marie-Claire Neill-Cowper** from the CoR outlined their work regarding the Platform stressing amongst others the need for broadening the scope of the European Social Fund (ESF). The CoR will follow up this with a view on the negotiations of the Multi annual Financial Framework (MFF). The CoR underlined that there is not a consensus among its members on the issue of whether the NAPs should be mainstreamed in the National Reform Programmes. In addition, the CoR will participate in the Annual Convention and take part in the preparation of one workshop.

**Comments from Stakeholders and discussion**

Stakeholders welcomed the meeting and also the opportunity to comment on the mandate. Specific points raised on the mandate were the need to broaden participation, including the need to involve other DGs in the work, for example DG SANCO. It was requested that this should also be reflected in the mandate. The need to include under the platform a dialogue on achieving the employment target and the labour market dimension of social policies as well as the link with other relevant flagships initiatives of Europe 2020 was also stressed. The need to ensure transparency of the work undertaken under the platform was also stressed. In this context, questions were raised on how the input from the dialogue will feed in to the NRPs and the European Semester. One idea was to create sub-groups of the stakeholder group to write report on thematic issues, which could go to the SPC as input from stakeholders.

Further comments were on the inclusion of migrants, and in particular irregular migrants, in the platform as this is a group that is often disproportionally excluded. Questions were raised on how to strengthen citizen involvement as the policy work happening at the EU level will have to be followed up and implemented at the local level. Stakeholders

difficulty with getting involved and consulted in the NRP process was also raised. In this context, the lack of visibility of the poverty target in the NRPs and the difficulty to see progress towards reducing poverty in the EU was underscored. This may lead to increasing disagreements between civil society and administrations including at EU level, as many people currently believe that the Europe 2020 agenda will not support the social agenda adequately.

With regards to the Social OMC, one question was how to make governance clearer and more transparent at EU level. This includes how to link the work in the area of social inclusion with other policy areas. To cover all issues, the thematic focus would need to rotate. A clear work programme for the thematic work would be helpful for stakeholder involvement and it was suggested that in some areas additional structures may be needed within the general framework of the platform. In addition there is a need to assess existing policies and develop new initiatives on the prevention side of social inclusion. A further point was that the reporting done under Europe 2020 has not taken into account all strands of the OMC.

**Presentation of the Annual Convention of the Platform**

**Anne Degrand Guillaud** introduced the session on the Annual Convention of the Platform underlining that this was the first year and this will be the start of a new cycle. Also she stressed that before finalisation the programme still needed discussion and agreement with the respective hierarchies in Poland and the Commission. Also the ambitions of the Convention will be further developed over the years based on the experiences gained in Cracow. The key goal of the Convention is to give visibility and political weight to the European Platform against Poverty and start building around it a supportive and active constituency cutting across various policies and institutions, different levels of government and civil society actors. The Convention will build on the lessons learnt from the European Year on Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion 2010 and will bridge the objectives of the Year and the social objectives of Europe 2020. It is estimated that there will be between 350-400 people participating in the convention.

**Anna Prekurat** from the Polish presidency presented the three objectives of the Convention as stated in the Communication (1) to discuss policy implementation and progress towards the poverty target, (2) to review the actions announced in the European Platform against Poverty and Exclusion, (3) to share experiences at EU and national level, and to make suggestions for future activities within the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion flagship initiative. She presented the draft outline of the programme (see attached presentation).

**Action for stakeholders**

Five parallel sessions will facilitate an exchange of ideas that will contribute to setting policy priorities for the following years. Among the themes which will be on the policy agenda in 2012 are: child poverty and support to their families, evidence based on social innovation, youth employment, social economy for inclusion through work, ageing and intergenerational solidarity (with a link to the subject of the European Year in 2012)

Workshops should be jointly organised by at least three different organisations and/or EU institutions of which one will coordinate the group. The filled template for the workshop has to be sent to the Commission and the Polish Presidency by the 25 July (See email sent on the 23 June). A selection of 5 workshops will be made among the best

proposals covering the 2012 priorities. A reply will be sent to the coordinator by end of August. A more detailed paper will be made for the 5 selected workshops. A merge between two proposals could also be envisaged.

Generally speaking, this open way of designing jointly the workshops was welcomed by the stakeholders. The collaborative way offered (at least three bodies to co-organise a workshop) was also well perceived despite some difficulties to implement it. A number of questions were raised to clarify the process and the planning.

## 2. Afternoon session: thematic dialogue

Participants were split into three thematic working groups on the following issues: Child poverty; Extreme poverty, homelessness and housing exclusion; and Evidence-based social policy innovation.

### 2.1 Child Poverty

*Facilitators: Elodie Fazi, DG EMPL, unit D2*

After a quick tour de table among the participants, **Elodie Fazi** presented briefly the expectation and modalities of the dialogue which was followed by the feedback of the stakeholders. The participants generally welcome the setting up of such group and the organisation of a structured regular dialogue on key issues. They also welcome the possibility to know more about each others' activities and to exchange information. They highlighted the need for this group to provide real input into policies being shaped (e.g. upcoming Recommendation) and supported the implementation of the dialogue at this important moment. The stakeholders also called for an involvement and possibility of dialogue with other DGs involved in related issues (e.g. EAC, JUST, HOME).

**Overview of key EU developments**[1]

Elodie Fazi presented an overview of key developments at EU level regarding child poverty (see presentation). The main issues covered were: the June Council conclusions on "Tackling child poverty and promoting child well being"; the presence of the topic on Europe 2020 and within the current and the reformed OMC and the 2012 Recommendation on child poverty. Other relevant developments regarding demographic change and family policy were also pointed out as well as activities beyond DG EMPL.

A remark was raised after the presentation concerning the existence of a formal consultation to prepare the recommendation and it was clarified that there will be no formal written consultation, once that there is already a strong consensus.

**Discussion: child poverty and the future OMC**

After a brief presentation on the thematic work on child poverty under the social OMC and the challenges for strengthening this work, the floor was given to the participants to suggest from their perspectives how to make social OMC do better in the topic in the future.

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[1] Link to background documents:
'Child well-being in the European Union - Better monitoring instruments for better policies' (June 2011)
Council conclusions on tackling child poverty and promoting child well-being

Participants note that future work under the social OMC will need to keep a balance between three important pillars: access to resources, services and social participation. It was also pointed out that it will be important to keep a focus on the situation of the most vulnerable children, including those with a disability and from migrants' families. Some stakeholders remarked that the potential of the OMC has not been used fully and it should become a real resource for policy makers. Besides, it is essential to better link the Social OMC and work happening within Europe 2020. Participants highlighted the need for a specific reporting on child poverty from Member States, if not every year at least every three or five years.

**Exchange on stakeholder's activities**

The participants were invited to share their key activities on child poverty in 2011 and how the other actors could be involved. Below you can find a short description of stakeholder activities.

**FRA**

On the basis of the 2006 Commission Communication 'Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child' and at the Commission's request, the FRA develops indicators for the protection, respect and promotion of the rights of the child in the EU. The indicator areas covered so far are: family environment and alternative care, protection from exploitation and violence, adequate standard of living, and education, culture, active citizenship, and participation in activities related to school and sport. This work has led to the identification of two situations of particular vulnerability leading to large data collection projects by the FRA so far: trafficked children and separated, asylum-seeking children.

**COFACE**

COFACE stands for comprehensive anti-poverty strategies underpinned by a child well-being approach, which should implement the rights and principles enshrined in the UNCRC and recognise the fundamental roles that families play to this regard. This would also require a more coordinated approach between family policies and the child-rights agenda at EU level. Recently COFACE published a position on The role of family-friendly policies for the prevention of child poverty and the realisation of child wellbeing (May 2011) and a Position on The Family Dimension of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (February 2011).

**ESN**

Since ESN understand that ECEC should be an important part of any serious plan to fight child poverty and promoting child well-being, the organisation focuses on ECEC services. ESN will look at what research says in regards to ECEC and link it to policy practice. ESN will analyse benefits for children and society as a whole of investing in ECEC and how the body of research promotes the case for public investment. The organisation will look at best practices at a systemic level, how to assess well-being according to ECEC, ECEC quality and the social outcomes of ECEC, for instance in crime reduction and health improvement. The work on this field will be presented in a seminar that will take place in the autumn.

**Eurochild**

Eurochild is a network of organisations and individuals working in and across Europe to improve the quality of life of children and young people. As it was mentioned by many at the meeting, the Belgian Presidency conference in September 2010 can serve as the cornerstone for a future Recommendation on child poverty and well-being. See the

Background paper to the Recommendation drafted together by UNICEF, the European Commission and experts on child poverty; the Conference report which includes the Declaration of the EU Trio Presidency on child poverty & well-being; as well as a short summary of Eurochild's contribution to this conference.

In January 2011 Eurochild also published a report on how the economic and financial crisis is affecting children and young people in Europe. As a member of the NGO coalition for the European Year 2010, Eurochild launched a campaign last year to end child poverty and was actively engaged in the framework of EY 2010. See the key messages of the campaign. The theme of this year's Eurochild Annual Conference is '*Tackling child poverty through supporting and strengthening families*' which will take place in Wales from 30/11 to 02/12 – read more about the conference here.

As regards the future of cooperation on social issues, please see our Policy Position on a Renewed Social OMC in which we argue for a stronger process that can overcome the weaknesses of the existing OMC but that also builds on and follows up its achievements.

**Church and Society Commission**

In 2010 and in relation to the European Year 2010 CSC has published the document "Do not deny justice to your poor people – proposals for combating poverty and social exclusion in the EU" together with other organizations. Several reflections and recommendations on the situation of children and families can be found there (http://csc.ceceurope.org/issues/social-and-economic-issues). In the last year CSC even finalised a paper on family policy which is now discussed in the member churches and which analyses manifold aspects of child poverty. The CSC highlights the importance of the quality of work of the family in promoting the children welfare.

**Eurohealth net**

Gradient is a research project which has received funding from the EU's Seventh Framework Programme. It addresses health inequalities among families and children with the aim to influence policy-makers in taking necessary steps to reduce the health gradient. The key outcomes from this project are the development of Gradient Evaluation Framework (GEF). The GEF is a European framework for designing and evaluating policies and actions to level-up the gradient in health inequalities among children, young people and their families. The GEF will be finalized and tested in different countries during the following months. The development of an online version of the tool is under consideration. The GEF will be ready in the last quarter of 2011.

The project will also publish a book to provide recommendations for experts and policy makers who are working to reduce health inequalities in children and families. The book is expected to be launched in the beginning of 2012.

**EASPD**

EASPD, the European Association of Service providers for People with Disabilities, represents close to 9,000 social service providing organizations across Europe and across disability. EASPD works on topics such as social inclusion, equal opportunities and anti-discrimination. The core focus is the provision of social services to people with disabilities and as such and the policy activities (for example work on de-institutionalization and on the consequences of the crisis on social service provision) are relevant to the topic of child poverty. Last year it focused in particular on the link

between poverty and disability, subject of the annual policy seminar and of the winter newsletter[2]. Within the project" Pathways to Inclusion", EASPD is committed to develop the field of inclusive education, seen as a means to reach a society where equal opportunities are guaranteed for all. http://pathwaystoinclusion.eu/

**UNICEF**

UNICEF has been developing work in the analysis of data collected from different perspectives in order to know the profile of the children in EU that will be launched in next September.

**VLEVA**

The working group "Eradicating Child Poverty" organised its conference on 18 October 2010 ("*What can the EU learn from its regions? Local and regional initiatives tackling child poverty*!"). The objective was to present local and regional best practices and explore possibilities to mainstream them at the European level. The outcome of the conference were the following recommendations: start education as early as possible; make sure that local and regional services cooperate and coordinate their work; make people come to you, don't use any force but look more often at the environment children grow up in, instead of focusing on financial indicators.

### 2.2 Extreme poverty, homelessness and housing exclusion

*Facilitators: Diane Angermüller, DG EMPL, unit D4 and Isabelle Engsted-Maquet, DG EMPL, unit A2***.** *The group was joined by Walter Wolf, DG EMPL, unit D2 who gave an orientation of the strategy on Roma*

**Isabelle Engsted-Maquet** underlined the importance of the measurement of poverty in the framework of the Europe 2020 Strategy and its Flagship initiative, the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion. Before 2010, the main measure of monetary poverty included in the EU list of indicators is a relative one (net income less than 60% national median), known as the "at-risk-of-poverty" rate. In practice, thanks to the work of the Social Protection Committee's (SPC) Indicator Sub Group (ISG), the EU has gone beyond a purely relative income poverty measure and the commonly agreed indicators now also include:

- At-risk-of-poverty rates at different thresholds (40%, 50%, 60% and 70% of the national median equivalised household income),
- An at-risk-of-poverty gap (for the 60% threshold),
- An at-risk-of-poverty rate "anchored" at a point in time (for the 60% threshold),
- A persistent at-risk-of-poverty rate,
- A material deprivation indicator – lacking at least three out of nine deprivation items.

At the European Council on 17 June 2010, ministers agreed to an EU target that at least 20 million people should be lifted out of poverty by 2020, with a review of the target in 2015. The EU leaders called for further work to be undertaken on appropriate indicators of this target. A number of variants of the target were suggested by the ISG and the EPSCO Council on 7 June accepted an SPC suggestion for a target based on a combination of three indicators. These were:

- The at-risk-poverty threshold or

[2] http://www.easpd.eu/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=2F4539743543696E632B593D&tabid=3535&language=en-US&stats=false
http://www.easpd.eu/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=594B4B42685842416575343D&tabid=5297&language=en-US&stats=false

- Material deprivation (lacking 4+ deprivation items) or
- People living in jobless households.

Participants agreed on the fact that even if we are not enough equipped to measure exactly the number of people to be considered as poor across the EU, it is still important to have a political objective of poverty reduction. But already existing indicators, in particular those related to the 40% and 50% thresholds, should be maintained.

The 2011 *Study on the Measurement of Extreme Poverty in the EU*[3], commissioned by the European Commission, explores a number of possible methods for measuring extreme poverty. The EU is committed to reviewing the 2020 targets in 2015. In this context, DG EMPL is currently involved in a Eurostat Task-Force to work on the criteria of material deprivation. It also envisages, in partnership with Eurostat and the World Bank, to develop a territorial approach of poverty, with the definition of particular poverty areas. This could be interesting for a better targeting of ESF funding, but also to gain better knowledge on the Roma communities, as ethnic statistics are difficult to obtain at EU level. Poverty measurement conferences will be organised in 2012. The coming initiative on Child Poverty will also have measurement aspects.

If there is a clear progress on homelessness and housing exclusion indicators, Eurostat doesn't know yet how many Member States use the question on being homelessness in the past. In the view of Freek Spinnewijn from FEANTSA there are quite a lot. He also pointed out that the OECD would be very interested in working with the EU on indicators on the situation of having been homeless in the past. As the EU-SILC is currently being reviewed, it could also be added there. EUROFOUND could also insert such indicator in its own surveys.

Isabelle Engsted-Maquet drew the attention of the participants to the fact that an increasing number of Member States use register-based data, which are less expensive than other methods but do not cover the most vulnerable parts of the population. Freek Spinnewijn underlined that these data can still be comprehensive, if different aspects of homelessness are covered (including being in institutions, shelters,…).

The concept of "extreme poverty" was also discussed by the group. For some participants, it is a term in contrast with relative poverty. It is a useful concept as it gives indications on differences between rich and less rich countries, in particular among the new Member States. It also allows a focus on the most dramatic situations, whereas the target adopted by the European Council could lead to a particular attention on those who are the closest to escaping poverty. For others, it is dangerous to use the concept of "extreme poverty" as it could lead to distinguish different groups of poor people and oppose them.

**Homelessness and housing exclusion**

The policy recommendations of the European Consensus Conference on Homelessness[4], which was organised in December 2010 by the BE Presidency of the EU, in partnership with the European Commission and FEANTSA, were presented by **Freek Spinnewijn and Diane Angermüller**. The European Commission considers that the Consensus

[3] http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=nl&catId=89&newsId=982&furtherNews=yes

[4] http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=637&langId=en&eventsId=315&furtherEvents=yes

Conference has been a success both as an innovative methodology and as regards its policy contribution. It will follow-up the policy recommendations in the framework of the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion, in particular by launching a call for tender on a study on mobility, migration and destitution and by supporting a transnational programme on housing led strategies, in the framework of PROGRESS. A conference on *Social Innovation to Tackle Homelessness: Re-enforcing the role of the European Structural Funds* is organised on the 28th of June by the European Commission, the Committee of the Regions, the European Economic and Social Committee and FEANTSA[5].

### 2.3 Evidence-based social policy innovation

*Facilitators: Antoine Saint-Denis and Catherine Trigg, DG EMPL, unit D4*

The participants discussed about 'evidence-based social policy innovation' as one of the transversal dimensions of the Platform. After that the EC introduced the state of play as regards social innovation and social experimentation. The discussion was structured on three aspects:

- the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats of these new approaches to grassroots initiatives, policy-making and evaluation ;
- the tools needed for raising awareness, building capacity and deliver financial support ;
- the initiatives envisaged by the networks.

The attached mindmaps describe the key elements of the exchange.

During the workshop, it was mentioned that J-Pal Europe held a conference 'Social Experimentation in Action'. At this event hosted by the European Economic and Social Committee on 18 May, a number of social experiments were presented and discussed both by academics and practitioners. Please see: http://www.povertyactionlab.org/europe/social-experimentation-in-action.

**Follow-up:** A working meeting for the preparation of the Annual Convention of the Platform will be held the 14th of September. The next plenary meeting will be arranged towards the end of 2011/beginning of 2012.

[5] http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=88&eventsId=348&furtherEvents=yes