



Brussels, March 2009

**COMMENTS OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION ON A RESOLUTION FROM
THE CZECH SENATE**

**COM(2008)418 – COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE
COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND
SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS :
REINFORCING THE OPEN METHOD OF COORDINATION FOR SOCIAL
PROTECTION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION.**

The Commission thanks the Czech Senate for its resolution on the Communication from the Commission "A renewed commitment to social Europe: reinforcing the open method of coordination for social protection and social inclusion". The Commission take notes of the Czech Senate's opinion that the open method of co-ordination (OMC) lacks transparency and democratic control and fails to involve national Parliaments adequately.

The Commission would like to stress that it attaches particular importance to ensuring good governance of the OMC. Good governance is central to the successful implementation and to the legitimacy of the OMC in the Member States. In this context, the Commission would like to recall that the common objectives¹ of the OMC for social protection and social inclusion ("the Social OMC"), which were adopted by the March 2006 European Council and reconfirmed in 2008, underline the need to promote "*good governance, transparency and the involvement of stakeholders in the design, implementation and monitoring of policy*". Furthermore, one of the specific objectives relating to the social inclusion strand stipulates that social inclusion policies should be "*well-coordinated and involve all levels of government and relevant actors, including people experiencing poverty*". The specific objectives relating to "adequate and sustainable pensions" and "accessible, high-quality and sustainable healthcare and long-term care" expand on the overarching good governance objective.

Against this background, the Guidance Note², which has been drawn up by the Social Protection Committee to steer preparations for the second round of National Strategic Reports (NSRs) on social protection and social inclusion, lays considerable emphasis on governance aspects in preparation and follow-up.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/common_objectives_en.htm.

² Guidance note for preparing national strategy reports on social protection and social inclusion 2008-2010: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/strategy_reports_en.htm

The full set of renewed NSRs from EU-27 submitted in September-October 2008 have undergone a joint in-depth assessment, both thematic and country-specific, by the Commission and the Member States. The outcome of this assessment will be summarised in the 2009 Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion (Joint SPSI Report). The Commission proposal for the 2009 Joint SPSI Report was adopted on 13 February 2009³. Among the key messages to be addressed to the Spring European Council after endorsement by the Council of Ministers, it stresses that "increased attention should be given to the quality and continuity of stakeholder involvement". A more comprehensive assessment of governance is set out in the accompanying Commission Staff Working Paper⁴.

As regards the involvement of national parliaments, the latter states that *"In general, it seems that only a few Member States have used the preparation of the reports as an opportunity for broader awareness-raising activities in the media and society at large. Only on rare occasions has there been a real broad public debate. Parliament seems to have debated the NAP in some countries only (NL, DE and MT). The Spanish plan is to hold a debate in parliament.*

In Luxembourg some MPs attended a preparatory meeting with people experiencing poverty. The Portuguese Parliament has decided that an annual social inclusion implementation report should be presented to it."

The Commission shares the Czech Senate's view that efforts should continue to achieve closer involvement of national parliaments in work linked to the Social OMC. The Communication on reinforcing the Social OMC includes some proposals that would contribute to strengthening the democratic nature of the process.

³ COM (2009) 58 of 13.02.2009

⁴ SEC (2009) 141 of 13.02.2009