

Stockholm, December 8, 2016,

EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Directorate-General Employment, Social
Affairs and Inclusion
Rue Joseph II, 27 - 00/120
B-1049 BRUXELLES

**COMMENTS ON THE OUTLINE OF THE EUROPEAN PILLAR OF SOCIAL RIGHTS
BY THE SWEDISH NETWORK FOR VULNERABLE EU CITIZENS**

In the Communication of the European Commission of March 8, 2016, to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee on the Regions on a European Pillar of Social Rights an invitation was issued to participate in a consultation process on the Report and its annexed proposals.

Please find below the comments of the Swedish Network for Vulnerable EU Citizens, an NGO assembly composed of a large number of organizations and groups.

Among the questions for which the European Commission seeks views, three are of particular concern for the Swedish Network:

8. Do you agree with the scope of the Pillar, domains and principles proposed here? Are there aspects that are not adequately expressed or covered so far?
9. What domains and principles would be most important as part of a renewed convergence for the euro area?
10. How should these be expressed and made operational? In particular, do you see the scope and added value of minimum standards or reference benchmarks in certain areas and if so, which ones?

Our concerns can be summed up as follows:

The Report itself and the specific proposals contained in the Annex seems to be so *heavily focused on macroeconomic aspects* - *i.e.* the functioning and interaction of the economies and the labour markets - that *some very important social rights risk appearing to be reduced to auxiliary phenomena in the larger economic picture.*

More or less all the constructive proposals of the report entail rights that should be enjoyed by *all* EU citizens.

Still, *citizens who are considered "economically inactive" are left outside the system.*

This means that, e.g. *the greater part of the Roma minority of more than eight million human beings in the EU will pass under the radar, since they are so poor that they e.g. do not qualify for membership in the social security systems of their home countries.*

If EU citizens of Roma origin cannot enjoy normal rights concerning education, housing, health- and medical service and access to the labour market - what will then remain for them except begging?

In the light of this it seems *absolutely necessary to demonstrate the intention of the Commission to secure that also the Roma population in Europe* - the group of EU citizens that is most vulnerable one - *will enjoy all the rights referred to in the Report* in order for them to be able to support themselves and their families.

The minimum measure in this respect would be to make *a distinct reference to Roma inclusion* in the preambular part of the decision which will be adopted as a result of the Report.

In order to follow up this declared intention the Swedish Network for Vulnerable EU Citizens would consider it *desirable to design a pivotal point within the Commission to coordinate all policies which are relevant to improvement of Roma living conditions and Roma inclusion* - taking into consideration that such policies inevitably concern more than one commissioner's responsibility.

The European Commission has undoubtedly *succeeded in making the Member States produce concrete and useful action plans for Roma inclusion*. The weak point of this process is, unfortunately, the *lack of efficient measures of supervision, follow-up and sanctions* against Member States which are not living up to their commitments.

The Swedish Network for Vulnerable EU Citizens would like to express its *hope that the European Commission avails itself of the opportunity*, which the development of the Social Pillar offers, *to remedy the shortcomings of the European social policies with regard to Roma living conditions, access to education, decent housing, health- and medical services as well as to the labour market*.

Improvements in this regard would certainly benefit not only the Roma minority but also, in a long-term perspective, the economy and social situation of the entire European Union.

Mats Åberg
Ambassador (ret.)

Hans Caldaras
Artist, activist

Thomas Hammarberg
Former Commissioner for Human
Rights of the Council of Europe

All three are founders of the Swedish Network for Vulnerable EU Citizens