



**Committee of the Regions**

**DOSSIER-IV-021**

**75th plenary session**

**18-19 June 2008**

**OPINION**  
**of the**  
**Committee of the Regions**  
**on**  
**THE EUROPEAN YEAR FOR COMBATING POVERTY AND SOCIAL**  
**EXCLUSION (2010)**

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGION

- **stresses** that in order to be effective, this campaign to address the issue of poverty and social exclusion should be seen as a long-term effort, and therefore emphasises the need for action taken during or before 2010 to have a permanent impact;
- **calls** for structured measures to be taken to bring about a decisive change in the campaign against poverty and all forms of social exclusion which both inhibit the freedom of individuals and harm society itself; and **considers** that it would be useful to make involvement in the European Year open not only to the Member States, but also to local and regional authorities or groupings of these as entities in their own right;
- **draws attention** to the need to focus in particular on the situation of children, because children who grow up in a situation of poverty and exclusion are drawn into a "cycle" that is passed from one generation to the next, with serious long-term consequences, depriving them of the right to develop their full potential and threatening their personal development, education and general well-being;
- **urges** the Community institutions to pay close attention to the complex and multidimensional forms of poverty and social exclusion, so as to formulate coherent preventive measures and strategies focusing on social empowerment processes.

Rapporteur

Linetta Serri (IT/PES), Member of Armungia Municipal Council (CA)

Reference document

Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion (2010)

COM(2007) 797

## I. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS,

*General comments on the Commission Communication*

1. **is very interested** in the initiative launched to declare the year 2010 the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion;
2. **shares** the concerns that motivated the decision to declare 2010 the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion, since the conditions of poverty and exclusion in which 78 million European citizens live have to be dealt with above all by local and regional authorities;
3. **stresses** that in order to be effective, this campaign to address the issue of poverty and social exclusion should be seen as a long-term effort, and therefore emphasises the need for action taken during or before 2010 to have a permanent impact;
4. **notes** that local and regional authorities have a particular role to play in recognising and promoting effective access to social, economic and cultural services for people living in poverty or social exclusion. Local, regional and national authorities have basic responsibility for framing, funding and carrying out policies designed to guarantee the integration of people who are excluded;
5. **shares** the view that when implementing social policy, local, regional and national authorities have the basic responsibility for framing, funding and carrying out policies designed to guarantee integration of the people who are most excluded from the labour market. Service providers – private, public or public-private – play an essential role in implementing these policies at local level;
6. **stresses** that the Year for Combating Poverty must strengthen the integration of people who are poor and socially excluded, and of the organisations to which they belong. The year must affirm the principle of an inclusive society by creating a space in the public sphere where excluded people can be reached, based on developing the crucial contribution made by the organisations to which they belong;
7. **believes it is necessary to strengthen** experience-sharing between the Member States, local and regional authorities, and international organisations involved in the fight against poverty, in a process of mutual learning;

*Recommendations*

8. **endorses** the proposal to reaffirm the importance of collective responsibility, involving not only decision-makers but also public and private actors;
9. **notes** that the commitment to fight poverty and social exclusion at every level of government, and the political commitment to prevent these phenomena, must be affirmed and continued;
10. **calls** for structured measures to be taken to bring about a decisive change in the campaign against poverty and all forms of social exclusion which both inhibit the freedom of individuals and harm society itself;
11. **would like to** see greater determination when it comes to implementing measures to ensure complementarity with other relevant Community action to promote social inclusion, such as the PROGRESS programme, the Structural Funds and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), and in relation to action to combat discrimination and promote gender equality and fundamental rights, as well as action in the areas of education and training, culture and intercultural dialogue, youth, childcare and elderly care, citizenship, immigration and asylum, and research;
12. **wishes** all types of discrimination that encourage poverty and exclusion be tackled;
13. **considers** that it would be useful to make involvement in the European Year open not only to the Member States, but also to local and regional authorities or groupings of these as entities in their own right;
14. **sees a need to strengthen** the open coordination method in relation to social protection, social inclusion and the European employment strategy ensuring greater involvement for the regional and local level. The effectiveness of this method depends largely on the efforts of local and regional authorities in drawing up regional action plans to combat poverty and social exclusion and in promoting a broader approach that embraces the three major dimensions of active inclusion;
15. **observes** that when it comes to improving access to services, local and regional authorities deliver social services in most Member States. These levels of government are therefore in a better position to frame and apply new rules for managing services in order to facilitate access to them;
16. **draws attention** to the need to focus in particular on the situation of children, because children who grow up in a situation of poverty and exclusion are drawn into a "cycle" that is passed from one generation to the next, with serious long-term consequences, depriving them of the right to develop their full potential and threatening their personal development, education and general well-being. More attention must be paid to large families and young

families looking at potential risk factors of social exclusion; **otes** that full participation of the younger generations is ensured primarily by access to training services – the PISA-OECD's latest survey identified a close link between low skills and social exclusion. The commitment and involvement of EU citizens is crucial to social cohesion and development in Europe; **rges** the Community institutions to pay close attention to the complex and multidimensional forms of poverty and social exclusion, so as to formulate coherent preventive measures and strategies focusing on social empowerment processes;

17. **calls for** more account to be taken of the problems faced by local and regional authorities, especially those in border areas near points of entry to the EU, in relation to asylum requests and illegal immigrants.

## II. PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

### Amendment 1

Article 2b)

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR amendment
<b>Ownership</b> — Increasing public ownership of social inclusion policies and actions, emphasising everyone's responsibility in tackling poverty and marginalisation. The European Year shall foster awareness, participation and engagement, and create new opportunities for ordinary citizens to contribute.	<b>Ownership</b> — Increasing public ownership of social inclusion policies and actions, emphasising everyone's responsibility in tackling poverty and marginalisation. The European Year <del>shall</del> <u>is intended to</u> foster awareness, participation and engagement, and create new opportunities for ordinary citizens <u>residing in EU countries</u> to contribute.

#### Reason

It is important to state explicitly and strongly that the Union is committed to taking measures that will actively transform European citizens' attitudes towards poverty and social exclusion.

### Amendment 2

Article 2c)

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR amendment
<b>Cohesion</b> – Promoting a more cohesive society by raising public awareness of the benefits for all of a society where poverty is eradicated and no-one is condemned to live in the margins. The European Year shall foster a society that sustains and develops quality of life, social well-being	<b>Cohesion</b> – Promoting a more cohesive society by raising <del>public</del> <u>all citizens'</u> awareness <u>that an egalitarian society can exist which upholds rights and opportunities,</u> <del>of the benefits for all</del> of a society where poverty is eradicated and no-one is condemned to live in the margins. The European

and equal opportunities for all regardless of their background, ensuring sustainable development and solidarity between and within generations and policy coherence with EU action worldwide.	Year shall foster a society that sustains and develops quality of life, social well-being and equal opportunities for all regardless of their background, ensuring sustainable development and solidarity between and within generations and policy coherence with EU action worldwide.
---	---

**Reason**

It is essential that the Union's social policy commitments include all citizens, that the Union recognise full and equal citizenship rights for everybody, enabling people to participate and ensuring equal opportunities in application of Article 5(a) of the Lisbon Treaty: "In defining and implementing its policies and actions, the Union shall take into account requirements linked to the promotion of a high level of employment, the guarantee of adequate social protection, the fight against social exclusion, and a high level of education, training and protection of human health."

**Amendment 3**

Article 2d)

<b>Text proposed by the Commission</b>	<b>Amendment</b>
<b>Commitment</b> – Reiterating the strong political commitment of the EU to the fight against poverty and social exclusion and promoting this commitment at all levels of governance. Building upon the achievements and possible shortcomings of the Open Method of Coordination on Social Protection and Social Inclusion, the European Year shall strengthen the political commitment to the prevention of and fight against poverty and social exclusion and give impetus to further development of the European Union’s action in this field.	<b>Commitment</b> – Reiterating the strong political commitment of the EU <u>and the Member States</u> to the fight against poverty and social exclusion and promoting <u>strong action by public authorities to combat poverty</u> <del>this commitment at all levels of governance</del> . Building upon the achievements and possible shortcomings of the Open Method of Coordination on Social Protection and Social Inclusion, the European Year shall strengthen the political commitment to the prevention of and fight against poverty and social exclusion and give impetus to further development of the <u>Member States' and the</u> European Union’s action in this field.

**Reason**

Whereas Article 2c) focuses on responsibilities, Article 2d) must draw attention to the role of public authorities, emphasising that the fight against poverty should be waged through political engagement rather than actions targeting individual behaviour.

#### Amendment 4

##### Article 6.1

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR amendment
Each Member State shall appoint a “National Implementing Body” to organise its participation in the European Year and ensure coordination at national level. That National Implementing Body shall be responsible for defining the national programme and the priorities for the European Year and for selecting the individual actions to be proposed for Community funding. The national strategy and priorities for the European Year shall be set out in accordance with the objectives listed in Article 2.	Each Member State shall appoint a “National Implementing Body” to organise its participation in the European Year and ensure coordination at national level. That National Implementing Body shall be responsible for defining <del>the national programme and</del> the priorities <u>and programme</u> for the European Year <u>at national level</u> and for selecting the individual actions to be proposed for Community funding. <u>This must be done in close coordination with the regional and local level.</u> The national <del>strategy and</del> priorities <u>and strategy</u> for the European Year shall be set out in accordance with the objectives listed in Article 2.

#### Reason

It is important for national programmes to first define national priorities based on the extent of poverty in the country concerned; strategic planning must be based solely on a thorough understanding of the problem, since the fight against poverty is multisectoral and requires an approach based on targeted measures.

#### Amendment 5

##### Article 13

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR amendment
For the purpose of the European Year, the Commission may cooperate with relevant international organisations, in particular the Council of Europe, the International Labour Organisation and the United Nations.	For the purpose of the European Year, the Commission may cooperate with relevant international organisations, in particular the Council of Europe, the International Labour Organisation and the United Nations, <u>the World Health Organisation and the World Bank.</u>

#### Reason

Poverty has serious long-term consequences, prevents people from achieving their full potential, and jeopardises health, personal development and general well-being. The experience of the WHO can help to expand knowledge and exchange of good practice. The experience of the World Bank is also important, since its approach is increasingly based on empowerment.

## Amendment 6

### Annex

#### I. ACTIONS ON A COMMUNITY SCALE

##### 1. Meetings and event

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR amendment
Organisation of meetings and events at Community level, intended to raise the awareness about issues related to the European Year and about poverty and social exclusion and to provide for a forum of exchange of ideas. They will gather relevant stakeholders and will be planned together with people experiencing poverty and civil society organisations representing them, to provide a good opportunity to address policy gaps and every day problems.	Organisation of meetings and events at Community level, intended to raise <del>the</del> awareness <u>among EU citizens</u> about issues related to the European Year <u>for combating</u> <del>and about</del> poverty and social exclusion and to <u>promote the</u> <del>provide</del> <del>for a forum of</del> exchange of ideas. They will <del>gather relevant stakeholders and will be planned</del> together with people experiencing poverty and <u>by</u> civil society organisations representing them, <del>to</del> <del>provide a good opportunity to address policy gaps and every day problems.</del> <u>The aim is to establish active participation of the social partners in developing social empowerment measures and practices.</u>

#### Reason

The fight against poverty must involve the citizens of the EU so as to develop and *increase* their responsibility. The objective of the Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion is to create conditions that limit the proliferation of social inequality, and measures and practices must therefore be based on social empowerment.

## Amendment 7

### Annex

#### 2. Information and promotional campaigns involving

##### Third bullet

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR amendment
An information campaign at Community level with positioning at national level, based on both traditional and new communication channels and new technologies;	An information campaign at Community level with positioning at national, <u>regional and local</u> level, based on both traditional and new communication channels and new technologies, <u>with the aim of widening the distribution of information and stimulating public interest;</u>



**Reason**

The local level is important because local and regional authorities have a particular role to play in recognising and promoting effective access to social, economic and cultural services for people living in poverty or social exclusion. Local, regional and national authorities have basic responsibility for framing, funding and carrying out policies designed to guarantee the integration of people who are excluded.

Information campaigns can reach the maximum number of citizens if they are based on participation of public bodies at every level and use a language appropriate to the specific target audience.

**Amendment 8**

**Annex**

*2. Information and promotional campaigns involving*

Fourth bullet

<b>Text proposed by the Commission</b>	<b>CoR amendment</b>
The production of communication and media tools available throughout the Community to stimulate public interest;	<del>The production of communication and media tools available throughout the Community to stimulate public interest;</del>

**Reason**

Repeats what is said in the third bullet.

**Amendment 9**

**Annex**

*2. Information and promotional campaigns involving*

Fifth bullet

<b>Text proposed by the Commission</b>	<b>CoR amendment</b>
Appropriate measures and initiatives for publicising the results and raising the profile of Community programmes, actions and initiatives contributing to the objectives of the European Year;	Appropriate measures and initiatives for <del>publicising the results and raising the profile of Community programmes, actions and initiatives</del> <u>raising the visibility of programmes, and providing information on measures, Community initiatives and outcomes</u> contributing to the objectives of the European Year;

**Reason**

Self-explanatory.

## Amendment 10

### Annex

#### 2. Information and promotional campaigns involving

##### Sixth bullet

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR amendment
Appropriate initiatives by educational institutions to disseminate information on the European Year;	Appropriate initiatives by educational institutions to <u>raise awareness among the younger generation and disseminate the principles of the fight against poverty</u> <del>information on the European Year;</del>

#### Reason

The sharing of responsibilities is strengthened by measures to increase participation in all sectors of society, especially the younger generation, in order to underpin application of the Lisbon Treaty, which in Article 149 aims at "encouraging the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe".

## Amendment 11

### Annex

#### 3. Other actions

##### First bullet

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR amendment
Community-wide surveys and studies to assess and report on the preparation, effectiveness, impact and long-term monitoring of the European Year. To facilitate a new consensus around political solutions, one such survey will also include a series of questions to gauge public opinion on policy to prevent and combat poverty and social exclusion, including social protection systems, and on the potential role of the Union in the fight against poverty and exclusion. This will be conducted in 2009 so that its results can be presented at the Opening Conference of the European Year;	Community-wide surveys and studies to assess and report on the preparation, effectiveness, impact and long-term monitoring of the European Year. To <del>facilitate a new</del> <u>broaden the basis for</u> consensus around political solutions, one such survey will also include a series of questions to gauge public opinion on policy to prevent and combat poverty and social exclusion, including social protection systems, and on the potential role <del>of</del> <u>which</u> the Union <u>undertakes to play</u> in the fight against poverty and exclusion. This will be conducted in 2009 so that its results can be presented at the Opening Conference of the European Year;

**Reason**

It is important to state explicitly and strongly that the Union is committed to taking measures that will actively transform European citizens' attitudes towards poverty and social exclusion.

**Amendment 12**

**Annex**

3. *Other actions*

Second bullet

<b>Text proposed by the Commission</b>	<b>CoR amendment</b>
Cooperation with the private sector, broadcasters and other media as partners in spreading information about the European Year as well as in actions aiming for long-term dialogue on social issues;	Cooperation with the private sector, broadcasters and other media as partners in spreading information about the European Year as well as in actions aiming <u>to develop for</u> long-term dialogue on social issues;

**Reason**

Self-explanatory.

**Amendment 13**

**Annex**

**II. CO-FINANCING OF ACTIONS AT NATIONAL LEVEL**

Point 7 f)

<b>Text proposed by the Commission</b>	<b>CoR amendment</b>
Training opportunities for civil servants, social partners, the media, NGO representatives and other actors to increase their knowledge of poverty and social exclusion phenomena, of European and national social inclusion policies and of the different policy tools available, to increase their capacity to deal with poverty-related issues, and to encourage them to play an active role in the fight against poverty and social exclusion;	Training <del>opportunities</del> for national, regional and local level civil servants, social partners, the media, NGO representatives and other actors to increase their knowledge of poverty and social exclusion phenomena, of European and national social inclusion policies and of the different policy tools available, to increase their capacity to deal with poverty-related issues, and to encourage them to play an active role in the fight against poverty and social exclusion;

**Reason**

Local, regional and national authorities have basic responsibility for framing, funding and carry out policies designed to guarantee the integration of people who are excluded, and it is important that civil servants should be prepared for these tasks.

**Amendment 14**

**Annex**

**IV. PRIORITIES FOR THE EUROPEAN YEAR ACTIVITIES**

Second paragraph

<b>Text proposed by the Commission</b>	<b>CoR amendment</b>
<p>In line with the analysis carried out and the priorities identified in the Joint Social Protection and Social Inclusion Report, the European Year should focus around the following themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• child poverty and the intergenerational transmission of poverty;</li><li>• an inclusive labour market;</li><li>• disadvantages in education and training, including digital literacy training;</li><li>• poverty and the gender dimension;</li><li>• access to basic services, including decent accommodation;</li><li>• overcoming discrimination and promoting the integration of immigrants and the social and labour market inclusion of ethnic minorities;</li><li>• addressing the needs of disabled people and other vulnerable groups.</li></ul>	<p>In line with the analysis carried out and the priorities identified in the Joint Social Protection and Social Inclusion Report, the European Year should focus around the following themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• child poverty and the intergenerational transmission of poverty;</li><li>• <u>elderly people</u>;</li><li>• <u>active, integrated inclusion activities</u>;</li><li>• an inclusive labour market;</li><li>• disadvantages in education and training, including digital literacy training;</li><li>• poverty and the gender dimension;</li><li>• access to basic services, including decent accommodation;</li><li>• overcoming discrimination and promoting the integration of immigrants and the social and labour market inclusion of <u>ethnic and religious minorities and refugees</u>;</li><li>• addressing the needs of disabled people and other vulnerable groups.</li></ul>

**Reason**

Poverty is a condition that particularly affects the elderly, refugees and religious minorities. To ensure equal participation in political and social life, it is important to promote inclusive activities for these groups.

**Amendment 15**

**Annex**

**5. CHARACTERISTICS AND OBJECTIVES**

**5.3. Objectives, expected results and related indicators of the proposal in the context of the ABM framework**

<b>Text proposed by the Commission</b>	<b>CoR amendment</b>
The European Year should stimulate debate and create solutions to ensure the meaningful participation in society of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion, the strengthening of the organisations in which they participate, and the development of stronger frameworks to ensure their involvement in activities designed to make a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty. It will help the Open Method of Coordination have more impact on the ground.	The European Year should stimulate debate and create solutions <u>that allow inclusion and to ensure</u> <del>the</del> meaningful participation in society of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion, the strengthening of the organisations in which they participate, <u>and should create conditions that encourage effective empowerment measures</u> and the development of stronger frameworks to ensure their involvement in activities designed to make a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty. It will help the Open Method of Coordination have more impact on the ground.

**Reason**

Self-explanatory.

Brussels, 18 June 2008

The President  
of the Committee of the Regions

Luc Van den Brande

The Secretary-General  
of the Committee of the Regions

Gerard Stahl

### III. PROCEDURE

<b>Title</b>	Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion (2010)
<b>References</b>	COM(2007) 797 final
<b>Legal basis</b>	Rule 265(1)
<b>Procedural basis</b>	
<b>Date of Council referral</b>	30 January 2008
<b>Date of President's decision</b>	23 January 2008
<b>Commission responsible</b>	ECOS
<b>Rapporteur</b>	Linetta Serri
<b>Analysis</b>	6 March 2008
<b>Discussed in commission</b>	15 April 2008
<b>Date adopted by commission</b>	15 April 2008
<b>Result of the vote in commission</b>	Unanimously
<b>Date adopted in plenary</b>	18 June 2008
<b>Previous Committee opinions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– CoR opinion <u>in preparation</u> on the Communication from the European Commission "Modernising social protection for greater social justice and economic cohesion: <b>taking forward the active inclusion of people furthest from the labour market</b>", COM (2007) 620 final, CdR 344/2007.</li> <li>– Committee of the Regions opinion of 6 December 2006 on the Commission Communication "Implementing the <b>Community Lisbon programme: Social services of general interest</b> in the European Union", COM(2006) 177 final, CdR 181/2006 fin;</li> <li>– Committee of the Regions opinion of 15 June 2006 on the European Parliament Resolution on "<b>Protection of minorities and anti-discrimination policies</b> in an enlarged Europe", T6-0228/2005, CdR 53/2006 fin;</li> <li>– Committee of the Regions opinion on the Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on "<b>Non-discrimination and equal opportunities</b> for all - A framework strategy", COM(2005) 224 final; and on the Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and the Council on "<b>The European Year of Equal Opportunities for All (2007) Towards a Just Society</b>", COM(2005) 225 final - 2005/0107 (COD) - CdR 226/2005 fin.</li> </ul>