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*Committee on Employment and Social Affairs*

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# **DRAFT REPORT**

on the European Platform against poverty and social exclusion  
(2011/2052(INI))

Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

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## MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

### on the European Platform against poverty and social exclusion (2011/2052(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Treaty on European Union, in particular Article 3(3) thereof, and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, in particular Articles 9, 148, 160 and 168 thereof,
- having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, in particular Articles 1, 16, 21, 23, 24, 25, 30, 31 and 34 thereof<sup>1</sup>,
- having regard to Decision No 1098/2008/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 October 2008 on the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion (2010)<sup>2</sup>,
- having regard to the conclusions of the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council meeting of 8 June 2010 on the theme ‘Equity and Health in All Policies: Solidarity in Health’<sup>3</sup>,
- having regard to the conclusions of the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO) meeting of 7 March 2011<sup>4</sup>,
- having regard to the opinion of the Social Protection Committee of 15 February 2011 entitled ‘The European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion: Flagship Initiative of the Europe 2020 Strategy’<sup>5</sup>,
- having regard to the report of the Social Protection Committee of 10 February 2011 entitled ‘SPC Assessment of the social dimension of the Europe 2020 Strategy’<sup>6</sup>,
- having regard to the opinion of the Social Protection Committee entitled ‘Solidarity in health: on reducing health inequalities in the European Union’<sup>7</sup>,
- having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions on the European Platform

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C 303, 14.12.2007, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> OJ L 298 of 7.11.2008, p. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Council of the EU, Press Release 10560/10 (Press 156), 3019th Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council meeting, Luxembourg, 7 and 8 June 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Council of the EU, Press Release 7360/11 (Press 52), 3073rd Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council meeting, Brussels, 7 March 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Opinion of the Social Protection Committee (SPC) addressed to the Council, Council of the European Union, 649/11, SOC 124, 15 February 2011.

<sup>6</sup> Report of the Social Protection Committee to the Council, Council of the EU, 6624/11 ADD 1 SOC 135 ECOFIN 76 SAN 30, 18 February 2011.

<sup>7</sup> Opinion of the Social Protection Committee (SPC) addressed to the Council, Council of the European Union, 9960/10, SOC 357 SAN 122, 20 May 2010.

against Poverty and Social Exclusion<sup>1</sup>,

- having regard to the Commission recommendation of 3 October 2008 on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market<sup>2</sup>,
- having regard to the Commission communication entitled ‘Solidarity in health: reducing health inequalities in the EU’ (COM(2009)0567),
- having regard to the Commission communication entitled ‘Strategy for the effective implementation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights by the European Union’ (COM(2010)0573),
- having regard to the Commission communication entitled ‘Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth’ (COM(2010)2020),
- having regard to its resolution of 4 October 2001 on the United Nations World Day to overcome extreme poverty<sup>3</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 9 October 2008 on promoting social inclusion and combating poverty, including child poverty, in the EU<sup>4</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 6 May 2009 on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market<sup>5</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 16 June 2010 on EU 2020<sup>6</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 20 May 2010 on the contribution of the Cohesion policy to the achievement of Lisbon and the EU 2020 objectives<sup>7</sup>,
- having regard to its legislative resolution of 8 September 2010 on ‘the proposal for a Council decision on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States: Part II of the Europe 2020 Integrated Guidelines’<sup>8</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 20 October 2010 on ‘the financial, economic and social crisis: recommendations concerning the measures and initiatives to be taken (mid-term report)’<sup>9</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 20 October 2010 on the role of minimum income in combating poverty and promoting an inclusive society in Europe<sup>10</sup>,

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<sup>1</sup> CoR 402/2010 final, <http://toad.cor.europa.eu/corwipdetail.aspx?folderpath=ECOS-V/012&id=20923>.

<sup>2</sup> OJ L 307, 18.11.2008, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> OJ C 87E, 11.4.2002, p. 253.

<sup>4</sup> OJ C 9E, 15.1.10, p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> OJ C 212E, 5.8.10, p. 23.

<sup>6</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2010)0223.

<sup>7</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2010)0191.

<sup>8</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2010)0309.

<sup>9</sup> Texts adopted P7\_TA(2010)0376.

<sup>10</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2010)0375.

- having regard to its resolution of 16 February 2011 concerning the Commission Green Paper entitled ‘Towards adequate, sustainable and safe European pension systems’<sup>1</sup>,
  - having regard to its resolution of 8 March 2011 on the face of female poverty in the European Union<sup>2</sup>,
  - having regard to its resolution of 7 September 2010 on the role of women in an ageing society<sup>3</sup>,
  - having regard to its declaration of 16 December 2010 on an EU homelessness strategy<sup>4</sup>,
  - having regard to the communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions entitled ‘The European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion: A European framework for social and territorial cohesion’ (COM(2010)0758),
  - having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and the opinions of the Committee on Budgets, the Committee on Culture and Education and the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality (A7-0000/2011),
- A. whereas the most vulnerable groups have been those most severely affected by the crisis and the associated austerity measures,
- B. whereas poverty and social exclusion increased between 2000 and 2008 despite the undertakings given by the Union; whereas it impossible to reduce poverty and social exclusion, or to boost inclusive growth, without combating inequality and discrimination,
- C. whereas the Europe 2020 strategy aims to reduce the number of people at risk of poverty by 20 million, on the basis of three indicators (the at-risk-of-poverty rate after social transfers, the material deprivation index and the percentage of people living in jobless households),
- D. whereas poverty is detrimental to growth, increases public budget deficits and undermines the EU’s competitiveness,
- E. whereas poverty is a multi-faceted problem requiring an integrated response which is tailored to different stages of life and to people’s multi-dimensional needs, and which is based on guaranteeing access to rights, resources and services,
- F. whereas employment alone is not sufficient to lift people out of poverty, and whereas the problem of the working poor has gained increasing recognition in recent years,
- G. whereas the poverty threshold of 60% of median national income is a helpful and

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<sup>1</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2011)0058.

<sup>2</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2011)0086.

<sup>3</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2010)0306.

<sup>4</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2010)0499.

necessary indicator, but whereas the concept of a ‘basket of basic goods and services’ is just as much a matter of public policy needs,

- H. whereas social protection, including minimum income systems, plays a key role in stabilising the economy by limiting the impact of crises and in redistributing resources at every stage of life, while also affording protection against social risks and preventing poverty,
- I. whereas health and life expectancy depend on the social environment and on child poverty, and whereas there is still a significant gap between rich and poor when it comes to health, which is continuing to widen in some respects,
- J. whereas elderly people, in particular women, are at greater risk of poverty than the general population as a result of their loss of income on retirement and other factors such as physical dependence; whereas the breakdown of intergenerational social bonds is a major problem facing our societies,
- K. whereas women are more vulnerable to poverty owing to various factors such as the persistent gender pay gap, the resulting pension disparities, and labour market discrimination,
- L. whereas 20% of children are at risk of poverty, compared with 17% of the EU’s overall population,
- M. whereas unemployment among young people, which is already higher than for other age groups, has exploded in the EU since the crisis,
- N. whereas migrants are being hit hard by the economic crisis,
- O. whereas the poverty rate among people with disabilities is 70% higher than average,
- P. whereas a significant proportion of European Roma are marginalised and living in deplorable socio-economic conditions,

#### **Methodology for the Platform**

1. Calls on the Commission to involve civil society at national and European level and to make discussions with people living in poverty a formal part of the annual convention on poverty;
2. Calls for regular, critical monitoring of the Member States’ progress towards achieving the poverty reduction target, and for the Member States to break this target down into sub-targets;
3. Calls for it to be made clear that the Commission will be legally accountable in the event that the horizontal social clause is not applied, and calls for the Commission to specify how the Platform will affect assessments of the implementation of that clause;
4. Calls on the Commission to identify the budget lines relevant to the Platform;

5. Calls for the open method of coordination to be strengthened and applied correctly in the field of poverty, inter alia through the common evaluation of national strategies for social inclusion;
6. Calls on the Commission to specify the common principles used to define the ‘basket of basic goods and services’ accessible to all;

### **Resolving the issue**

7. Calls for a timetable for implementing the Commission’s 2008 recommendation concerning the active inclusion strategy;
8. Supports the creation of decent jobs through vocational training and the provision of personalised job-seeking assistance, in particular for disadvantaged groups;
9. Calls for equal rights and equal social protection for all workers in each Member State;
10. Recommends that the Member States introduce or further develop measures designed to help people with disabilities find jobs with private companies or public bodies, so as to promote inclusion;
11. Acknowledges the need to assess the impact of EU funds in terms of achieving the poverty reduction target, even where this is not their primary objective; maintains that priority must be given to projects that combine employment targets and strategies with active inclusion;
12. Calls on the Member States to submit national reform programmes consistent with the aim of the Platform, and calls on the Commission to refrain from restricting the Member States’ capacity for investment and social spending in the context of economic governance, bearing in mind that poverty reduction requires smart, sustainable and inclusive growth as indicated in the Europe 2020 strategy;
13. Calls on the Commission to initiate a horizontal anti-discrimination directive with a view to further eradicating discrimination;
14. Welcomes the Commission’s desire to clarify the legal framework applicable to social economy enterprises so that there are no obstacles hindering their contribution to poverty reduction;
15. Advocates a proactive housing policy in order to ensure universal access to decent, affordable housing, along with a proactive energy policy that steps up the use of renewable energies and boosts energy efficiency;
16. Calls for Roma to be involved in all EU or Member State policies relating to their social inclusion;
17. Calls for the fight against child poverty to focus on prevention through the provision of access to early childhood services, ensuring that the network of such services covers all areas adequately;

18. Wishes the Commission to initiate a framework directive on minimum income, designed to prevent poverty and serve as a basis for people to live in dignity and make headway with finding employment or identifying training opportunities, with due regard for differing practices, collective labour agreements and legislation in the various Member States;
19. Maintains that elderly care facilities must be developed in all the Member States so as to prevent elderly people falling into exclusion or poverty;
20. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.

## EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Although the European Union is one of the richest regions of the world, there are more than 80 million people at risk of poverty, including 20 million children and 8% of the working population.

This situation is incompatible with the European values of justice and solidarity enshrined in the Treaties.

However, poverty and social exclusion have increased in recent years despite the Union's undertakings to reduce them.

The impact of the 2008 crisis has further exacerbated the problem by putting pressure on the most vulnerable groups.

While the fight against poverty and social exclusion is primarily the responsibility of national governments, the Union can nevertheless play an important role in terms of awareness-raising, coordination and funding.

In order to ensure sustainable, inclusive growth, it is essential to make the most vulnerable groups a central focus of European integration, since poverty reduction will be a driver of future growth.

Parliament and the Council designated 2010 as the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion in order to reaffirm and strengthen the initial political commitment made by the EU at the start of the Lisbon Strategy to having 'a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty'.

In the course of the year, Parliament – among other initiatives – adopted a report on the role of minimum income in combating poverty and promoting an inclusive society in Europe.

The Commission, for its part, published a communication on 16 December 2010 entitled 'The European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion: A European framework for social and territorial cohesion'.

This is one of the seven flagship initiatives of the Europe 2020 strategy. The Platform will provide the Member States with a 'framework for action' based on a multi-dimensional approach with a view to achieving the specific target set by the Europe 2020 strategy, namely that of lifting 20 million people out of poverty by 2020.

As part of a strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, the Platform is intended, inter alia, to promote innovation and social experimentation, reduction of poverty – in its various forms – at all stages of life, better use of EU funds and more effective social protection.

Over the next few months the Member States will have to submit their national reform programmes to the Commission, including details of how they intend to fight social exclusion and poverty. They will report on their initiatives as part of national reports on the Europe 2020 strategy.

Given that poverty is a multi-faceted problem, it calls for an integrated response involving the various tiers of public authorities, from European to local level, in partnership with those working on the ground.

That was the rationale for this report, which is based on a great deal of input from the relevant players, in particular as regards the proposals it puts forward with a view to helping eradicate the scourge of poverty and social exclusion.