



# The Future of the European Union Social Inclusion Strategy

The 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion is an important year for raising awareness of poverty and social exclusion. 2010 also marks an important policy crossroads at EU level as existing commitments under the Lisbon Strategy (or Lisbon Agenda), including the commitment to make 'a decisive impact on poverty by 2010', come to an end and the decisions on new commitments take shape. This paper briefly summarises what has been in place and what is now being proposed for the 2010 to 2020 period.



## 2000: Lisbon Strategy (Agenda) Agreed

This commitment to addressing social exclusion was part of a broader ten year strategic goal for the European Union agreed by EU Member States at the Heads of State (European Council) meeting in Lisbon in March 2000:

*'to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion'.*

This commitment, known as the 'Lisbon Agenda' or Strategy, for the first time gave economic, employment and social goals an equal priority in the EU. Following a Council meeting the following year in Göteborg, the Environment was also added as another pillar.

The method agreed on by the Heads of State to deliver on the different elements of the Lisbon Agenda was the 'Open Method of Coordination' (OMC). This was a process, coordinated by the European Commission, which was approved by EU citizens in the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997.

In Nice in 2000 the EU Heads of State agreed on the social inclusion element and to 'make a decisive impact on poverty by 2010'.

This process (initiated in 2000) had two core components:

1. **Social Inclusion Strategy:** Member States were required to submit biannual National Action Plans against Poverty and Social Exclusion to the European Commission (one for 2001-2003 and one for 2003-2005).
2. **European Employment Strategy:** (started in 1998). Member States were required to submit biannual National Employment Action Plans to the European Commission.

Under each process the European Commission then produces annual Joint Reports, including overview and country reports.

## Open Method of Coordination

The Open Method of Co-ordination was agreed in the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997. The OMC is known as 'Soft law' as it applies to areas where the European Union has no power to force Member States to act. There are a number of different OMC across a variety of policy areas however the broad structure is as follows:

<b>1</b>	<b>EU Objectives:</b> Agreed by Member States
↓	
<b>2</b>	<b>National Plans:</b> Submitted to Commission
↓	
<b>3</b>	<b>EU Joint Report:</b> Progress Report/Assessment with Country Specific Report also Included

## Other Elements to the Process

1. **Indicators** – measure progress on a number of areas e.g. at-risk of poverty
2. **Targets** –EU employment targets for OMC on employment - 70% overall employment rate by 2010, 60% for women and 50% for those age 55 and over.
3. **Peer Reviews**- A number of States meet to discuss an example of good policy or practice highlighted by a country in their national plans. A report is produced on each (e.g. in 2007 the EU Peer Review the Irish Annual Social Inclusion Forum)
4. **Funding** – Currently the Programme for Economic and Social Stability (PROGRESS). Commission provides funding for activities at EU and national level to support the OMC. Includes statistics, NGO engagement, research etc

## 2005 – Lisbon Strategy Reviewed

In 2005 the EU carried out a review of the Lisbon Agenda. As a result of this review the priority shifted to the economy and employment, with the downgrading of the social inclusion objectives. At the same time the reporting process was reframed. The new process incorporated:

1. **Integrated Guidelines for Social Protection and Social Inclusion:** Member States were required to submit biannual National Reports on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion (NRSPSI for 2006-2008 and 2008-2010). The National Action Plans for Social Inclusion was one of three chapters the others being on Pensions and Health and Long-term care.
2. **'Growth and Jobs Strategy':** Member States were required to submit 2 yearly National Reform Programmes (2006-2008 and 2008-2010) to the European Commission to see how they were progressing in achieving the 'EU Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs'.

## Save our Social OMC

When it became clear in 2005 that the revised strategy would prioritise the growth and jobs agenda; EU Social NGOs joined together in a campaign to ensure a social element in the revised strategy. While 'Growth and Jobs' did become the priority, social inclusion was kept as an important element of the overall strategy.

### NRSSPSI 2008-2010 Poverty Target

To reduce the number of those experiencing consistent poverty to between 2% and 4% by 2012, with the aim of eliminating it by 2016'.

## 2010 – End of Lisbon Strategy and Introduction of Europe 2020 Strategy

In 2010 the Lisbon Strategy and all agreements and plans related to it, including the Social Inclusion Strategy, come to an end. The EU therefore has to agree on how to move forward for the next ten years. EAPN and other EU and national NGOs have been actively involved in trying to ensure that addressing poverty, social exclusion and inequality are core elements of any successor to the Lisbon Agenda.

Following a consultation process the European Commission published its proposals for post 2010 on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2010. The proposals are contained in a Commission Communication entitled *Europe 2020: A European Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth*

This Strategy will be debated, revised, and agreed at the EU Spring Council (Heads of State) meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> March.

## Key Elements of Europe 2020

- Prioritises Growth
- Presents Five EU Targets
  1. 75% of 20-64 year olds employed
  2. 3% EU GDP on Research and Development
  3. 20% -33% reduction in Green house gasses (from 1990 levels)
  4. Reduce early school leaving rate to 10%
  5. 25% (approx 20 million) reduction in at-risk of poverty
- A 'European Platform Against Poverty' including a new renewed OMC Social Inclusion.
- New OMC on Employment
- A 'Youth on the move' initiative
- Other initiatives on innovation (R+D), youth, digital agenda, sustainability and industrial policy.

## Further Information:

EAPN (Europe) Lisbon Strategy: <http://www.eapn.eu/content/view/99/68/lang,en>

EAPN Ireland, Anti-Poverty Strategies: <http://www.eapn.ie/eapn/policy/social-inclusion/anti-poverty-strategies>

Europe 2020 - European Commission: [http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/index_en.htm)

Lisbon 'Growth and Jobs Strategy' European Commission: [http://ec.europa.eu/growthandjobs/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/growthandjobs/index_en.htm)