



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



**Council Declaration on
The European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion:
Working together to fight poverty in 2010 and beyond**

***3053rd EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL POLICY HEALTH and CONSUMER
AFFAIRS Council meeting
Brussels, 6 December 2010***

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council of the European Union:

Recalling that the European Union is founded on universal values of human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity, the Council singles out the fight against poverty and social exclusion as a priority for the Union. The Council expresses its strong commitment to prevent and to reduce poverty and social exclusion, and invites all relevant actors to take full account of this priority in the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

1. Encouraged by the achievements of the European Year

The European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion (2010) has contributed to give a stronger voice to the excluded. It has helped to shed light on a reality often underestimated or misunderstood in one of the richest regions in the world. This EU-wide campaign has mobilized a wide range of stakeholders, the EU institutions, national and sub-national governments, central, regional and local administrations, as well as social partners, people experiencing poverty and the NGOs that support them. The momentum created goes beyond raising public awareness; it is also a call for a strong political legacy that delivers concrete results and a commitment of everyone to build a fairer Europe for all.

P R E S S

2. Building on the Europe 2020 Strategy

The adoption of the Europe 2020 Strategy was a major step forward. For the first time, the EU has set itself a headline target on social inclusion and poverty reduction which constitutes a shared objective guiding the action of Member States and the Union: to lift at least 20 million Europeans out of the risk of poverty and social exclusion by 2020. Member States now have to implement this commitment at their level. By taking an increasing number of people out of poverty, providing for social protection and promoting quality jobs and active social participation, Member States will be contributing to sustainable recovery, a fairer distribution of means and opportunities and inclusive growth.

3. Promoting EU Values

The recognition of the fundamental human right for all women, men and children to live in dignity is at the heart of the EU commitment to social inclusion. Everybody should be given effective access to social, economic and cultural rights.

4. Facing challenges ahead

Taking into account lessons learned from the past, the European Union has to provide concrete, satisfactory and urgent answers to the difficulties faced by people living in poverty or social exclusion, by removing obstacles and empowering women and men to change their situation. Poverty is a multidimensional issue and fighting it will require the mobilization of all relevant policies, tools and levels of government. Policies to tackle poverty could also benefit from further exchanges of good practices on social innovation and social experimentation. The next decade will be crucial in demonstrating the commitment of the European Union and its Member States to the reduction of poverty and social exclusion.

4.1 Active inclusion is a key strategy to support the poverty reduction target. Implementation of this strategy should be developed further in a balanced way across the three pillars (adequate income support, inclusive labour markets, and access to quality services) and be subject to appropriate monitoring in the framework of the Europe 2020 agenda.

Everyone, both women and men, should be included, not just through decent work and adequate material resources, but also through access to a set of skills, to social and cultural resources and to all services necessary to meet basic needs like housing, access to water and energy, health care, education and mobility.

4.2 Combating child poverty should be a top priority. Children born in poverty face a substantially higher risk of getting stuck in it throughout their youth and into adulthood. Supporting vulnerable children and their parents from very early childhood onwards is essential to guarantee full opportunities for every child. This means preventing and alleviating family poverty, investing in care and education, particularly during early years and empowering children, in line with fundamental rights and particularly the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

4.3 Particular attention should be given to vulnerable groups such as migrants, the Roma and other ethnic minorities and to extreme forms of poverty such as homelessness. No one should be left behind.

4.4 Economic, employment and social policies should be mutually reinforcing and complementary. Policy proposals should all take into account their potential impact on poverty and social exclusion. Financial consolidation and budgetary policies should duly take into account the need to protect all vulnerable people and to prevent social exclusion.

Effective and appropriate use of the Structural Funds, including the European Social Fund, to deliver social cohesion and help to combat poverty in line with the Europe 2020 Strategy is a key element in this respect.

5. Shaping the future together

The legacy of the European Year to combat poverty and social exclusion (2010) will be further developed through the flagship initiative "European Platform against Poverty". Active inclusion and the fight against poverty of children and their families should be central in this respect.

The EU and its Member States should work together at European, national, regional and local levels in the fight against poverty, with full participation of the civil society including social partners, the private sector and all relevant stakeholders. Partnerships between decision makers and people experiencing poverty should be encouraged and should continue to be developed in a structured way. In this respect, several initiatives have already emerged, such as the annual European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty.

A broad approach to poverty is crucial to safeguard the rights of future generations and to achieve our common vision: a fair, participative and inclusive society – in which everybody has a place and where poverty will no longer exist.