

Local and regional responses to poverty and social exclusion



FORUM of the Committee of the Regions
Brussels, 8 June 2010

**Making the best of the
Europe 2020 Strategy**

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2010
European Year
for Combating
Poverty and
Social Exclusion

Outline of the talk

1. The Europe 2020 Strategy: window of opportunity as well as risky business
2. Why EU cooperation on poverty matters for Regions and Cities (OMC and ESF)
3. Conclusions

Europe 2020: Window of opportunity

- Bring social dimension back in the heart of the EU's economic strategy (Lisbon I)
 - Political discourse
- Step-up to strengthening EU toolbox
 - Poverty target (litmus test)
 - Indicators, including 'participatory governance indicators' (White Paper CoR)
 - Targets (including *regional*)
- Flagship Initiative (Poverty Platform):
visibility!

Europe 2020: Risky business

- Overall architecture of the new Strategy remains vague
 - EU: Social Affairs Council, SPC? Role EP?
 - MS: Prime Min., Fin. Min. to coordinate (dominate) national reporting;
- Poverty target (agreed yesterday?) needs a machinery to make it happen!
 - Let's not throw out OMC without proper evaluation (cf. EES revised Lisbon)

Europe 2020: Risky business (II)

- “Poverty Platform” (Flagship Initiative)
 - Should not replace the OMC (SI, pensions, healthcare) - MS/EC?
- Stability and Growth Pact: overall framework
 - Financial *and* social sustainability
 - Greece was just the beginning

Why EU cooperation on poverty matters for Regions and Cities (OMC)

- Cooperation within context of OMC brings about substantive policy changes
 - “Child poverty”: new concept in SI policies of many MS: straight from OMC → cognitive shift
 - *Remarkable*: longstanding resistance against this issue (failed to halt the issue!)
 - Strong EU pressure (‘hard governance of soft law’, Greer and Vanhercke, 2010)

- Internationale Dag van het Gezin -

Ik wou dat ik een koe was.

Dankzij 41 miljard Europese landbouwsteun bestaan er geen kansarme koeien. Maar wat met de 19 miljoen kansarme kinderen in Europa? Kathleen Van Brempt laat deze kinderen niet in de steek. En eist dan ook een Europese wet die een minimuminkomen voor elk gezin garandeert.

Kathleen Van Brempt
Voor een menselijker Europa.

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sp·a

Nu zeker.



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Why EU cooperation on poverty matters for Regions and Cities (OMC) (II)

- EU cooperation within the context of the OMC brings about procedural changes, including vertical cooperation
 - Exchange of information between Regions (across language borders): discovering each other's policies ('national OMC')
 - Regional OMC (Gender Equality: Flanders); Local OMC (city of Leuven)

Why EU cooperation on poverty matters for Regions and Cities (OMC) (III)

- OMC initiated adoption of ‘targets’ in SI policies
 - NSR *national* targets for *regional* competencies (education, housing etc.)
 - Regions should obviously ‘have a say’ in these debates (defensive)
 - Provides opportunities for benchmarking regional efforts, using European indicators (offensive)

Why EU cooperation matters for Regions and Cities (ESF)

- Soft governance increasingly structures EU funding!
 - The European Employment Strategy and the Social Inclusion OMC provide the *overall framework* for the substance of ESF Regulations
 - But MS should be able to use OMC for *all* objectives of SI strategy (incl. child poverty, homelessness etc.), not merely ‘activation’

Conclusions

- EU 2020 represents formidable risk and opportunities for Regions and Cities
 - Seize the occasion to influence the terms of the debate (or let the national governments be the gatekeepers)
- Way forward for Social Europe
 - Using the full range of instruments, and linking them to each other (law, social dialogue, ESF and OMC)
- Make the best of the Europe 2020 Strategy

Comments/criticism/questions very
welcome, now or at:

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