



FOURTH WORLD EUROPEAN COMMITTEE

Intergroup Fighting Against Poverty and Exclusion

Translation

Brussels, March 5th, 2005

Open letter to the Heads of State and Government of the European Union and to the President of the European Commission regarding the revision of the Lisbon strategy

The eradication of poverty and the fight against social exclusion must be at the core of the revised Lisbon strategy

Created in 1980 the Fourth World European Committee, which gathers Members of the European Parliament from various political groups, is engaged in introducing in the work of the European Parliament the concerns of people living in extreme poverty in Europe.

On the occasion of the revision of the Lisbon strategy, the Fourth World European Committee would like to reiterate that in March 2000, the European Council acknowledged that the level of poverty in Europe was “unacceptable” and committed to “**making a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty**”.

Articles I-3, II-94.3 (chapter on « Solidarity » of the Charter of Fundamental Rights) and III-117 of the European Constitution, state very strongly the commitment of the UE to integrate the fight against poverty and social exclusion in all community policies.

Today, there still are **68 million people living in poverty**.

It is obvious that the fight against poverty and social exclusion should remain an essential component of all EU policies.

From the point of view of the Committee, the revised Lisbon strategy can not be reduced to a strategy of economic growth and job creation. However justified, these concerns conceal the problem of poverty and have little impact on people excluded from society, who are rarely affected by programmes relating to integration in the workplace and access to the labour market.

The Inclusion Strategy, through the Open Method of Coordination, has shown that poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon, where difficulties, deprivation and precariousness accumulate and interlink, whether in employment, housing, health, education, culture or access to services.

It is crucial to implement policies against poverty that take into account all areas of life, and that the objective of eradication of poverty and social exclusion is taken on board in the development of all policies.

Following from the commitments made in Lisbon, the development and implementation of the EU Inclusion Strategy with its core element of National Action Plans on Inclusion has successfully mobilised many different actors in the fight against poverty and social exclusion. As the process becomes better known and understood, people who live in situations of poverty have also been mobilised and engaged. To ignore the objective of the eradication of poverty is to underestimate the importance of their contribution and efforts to bringing this strategy closer to the reality of people who face poverty and social exclusion. The disappearance of such tools would be incomprehensible

for all these people, private and public organisations and institutions who have engaged in the struggle.

In light of this the Fourth World European Committee asks you to adjust your approach to the Lisbon strategy by:

1. Reconfirming the EU's commitment to social inclusion as a priority objective of the Lisbon Agenda.
2. Strengthening the Open Method of Coordination on Inclusion and guaranteeing that National Action Plans are maintained, in order to coordinate policies fighting against poverty and social exclusion by efficient and visible programmes,
3. Guaranteeing that the Spring Summit and overarching instruments such as the strategic annual report of the Commission, the Community Lisbon action programme and the national action programme do not only focus on "growth and jobs" but also integrate a balanced vision of the European Social Model.

We will follow the debates in relation to the Spring Council with great interest and we hope that you can respond positively to the views expressed in this letter.

Yours sincerely

On behalf of the Fourth World European Committee

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