



**Informal Meeting of Ministers for Employment and Social Affairs,
Cyprus 12-13 July 2012**

Discussion note for workshop 2

Fighting poverty and social exclusion

**The role of social partners, NGOs and local authorities
in the implementation of the poverty and social exclusion targets
of the Europe 2020 Strategy at European and national level.**

Chair: Karen Hækkerup, Minister for Social Affairs and Integration of Denmark

The social impact of the economic crisis in Europe is severe. In 2010, 115 million people, or more than 23 percent of the EU27 population, were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. This is an increase of nearly two million people from 2009. Furthermore, the percentage of children living in poverty or social exclusion is on the rise.

The fight against poverty and social exclusion is a key target of the Europe 2020 strategy. But it is not only a matter for the European governments and European Institutions. The role of the social partners is clearly acknowledged in the Lisbon Treaty which confirms the importance of social dialogue and of the consultation of social partners (Article 154, TFEU).

The continued and reinforced involvement of regional and local authorities, social partners and the civil society underpins the Europe 2020 Strategy:

**EUROPE 2020 - A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth,
Communication from the Commission (page 29)**

National, regional and local authorities

All national, regional and local authorities should implement the partnership, closely associating parliaments, as well as social partners and representatives of civil society, contributing to the elaboration of national reform programmes as well as to its implementation.

By establishing a permanent dialogue between various levels of government, the priorities of the Union are brought closer to citizens, strengthening the ownership needed to deliver the Europe 2020 strategy.

The European Council has repeatedly recognised the role of all stakeholders, (March 2011 and March 2012), and stated that the Europe 2020 Strategy should be developed and implemented in close partnership with all national, regional, and local authorities.

The role of social partners, NGOs and local authorities in the implementation of the poverty and social exclusion target of the Europe 2020 Strategy is important both at the European and the national level:

1) Involvement at European level

It is widely recognized that both **Social Partners and the NGO's** has a key role to play both at **European level** in the monitoring of the implementation of the strategy and throughout the process of the European Semester.

It is furthermore important to continue and improve the involvement of social partners and NGOs with a view to increasing the ownership and effectiveness of the policies in the context of the Social Open Method of Coordination.

The **European platform against poverty and social exclusion** aims at including all relevant actors and bolstering work at all levels to reach the agreed target of lifting at least 20 million people out of poverty and exclusion. In order to facilitate this involvement, the EU funds numerous NGO networks, primarily under the Progress programme (from 2014 the Programme for Social Change and Innovation).

2) Involvement at national level

All relevant actors are instrumental in bringing the European priorities closer to the people and strengthening the feeling of ownership of the targets of the Strategy.

In relation to stronger governance, the European Semester monitors progress within the field of social inclusion through the **National Reform Programmes (NRP)** and the **National Social Reports (NSR)**. Both Strategies emphasise stakeholder involvement in the process of national policy design, implementation and monitoring. While the first paper deals with all five Europe-2020 targets the latter focus on reduction of poverty and social exclusion as well as the wider social policy efforts in the Member States, with a view to increasing the ownership and effectiveness of the policies in the context of the Social Open Method of Coordination.

Furthermore, the role of **local authorities** is fundamental in implementing effectively the Strategy as regional and local authorities in many EU countries are responsible for or actively involved in direct implementation of the social policies.

The same can be said about **NGO's and civil society** in general who in many countries play an essential part in social inclusion policies and the delivery of social services and thereby often function as contact-points for European citizens living on the margins of society.

The Europe 2020 strategy thus underlines continued and reinforced involvement of all relevant actors as well as stronger governance as a key element in reaching the poverty and social exclusion targets.

Questions for the debate

In the context of implementation of the Europe-2020 Strategy as well as the wider social policy efforts aimed at poverty and social exclusion, Ministers are invited to debate:

- How do you at national level involve social partners, NGOs and local authorities in the combat against poverty and social exclusion?
- How can we at European level best ensure the continued and reinforced involvement of local authorities, social partners and NGOs?