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Renewed Social Agenda

P6_TA(2009)0370

European Parliament resolution of 6 May 2009 on the Renewed social agenda (2008/2330(INI))

(2010/C 212 E/05)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Commission communication of 2 July 2008 on the Renewed social agenda: Opportunities, access and solidarity in 21st century Europe (COM(2008)0412) (Communication on the Renewed Social Agenda),
- having regard to its resolution of 18 November 2008 with recommendations to the Commission on the application of the principle of equal pay for men and women ⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 22 October 2008 on challenges to collective agreements in the EU ⁽²⁾,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 2 July 2008 entitled 'A renewed commitment to social Europe: Reinforcing the Open Method of Coordination for Social Protection and Social Inclusion' (COM(2008)0418),
- having regard to its resolution of 3 February 2009 on non-discrimination based on sex and intergenerational solidarity ⁽³⁾,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 2 July 2008 entitled 'Non-discrimination and equal opportunities: A renewed commitment' (COM(2008)0420),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 26 November 2008 on a European Economic Recovery Plan (COM(2008)0800),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 3 October 2008 entitled 'A better work-life balance: stronger support for reconciling professional, private and family life' (COM(2008)0635),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 12 October 2006 entitled 'The long-term sustainability of public finances in the EU' (COM(2006)0574), and to Parliament's resolution of 20 November 2008 on the future of social security systems and pensions: their financing and the trend towards individualisation ⁽⁴⁾,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 17 October 2007 entitled 'Modernising social protection for greater social justice and economic cohesion: taking forward the active inclusion of people furthest from the labour market' (COM(2007)0620), and to Parliament's resolution of 9 October 2008 on promoting social inclusion and combating poverty, including child poverty, in the EU ⁽⁵⁾,
- having regard to Council Recommendation 92/441/EEC of 24 June 1992 on common criteria concerning sufficient resources and social assistance in social protection systems ⁽⁶⁾,

⁽¹⁾ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2008)0544.

⁽²⁾ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2008)0513.

⁽³⁾ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2009)0039.

⁽⁴⁾ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2008)0556.

⁽⁵⁾ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2008)0467.

⁽⁶⁾ OJ L 245, 26.8.1992, p. 46.

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- having regard to the Commission communication of 27 June 2007 entitled ‘Towards Common Principles of Flexicurity: More and better jobs through flexibility and security’ (COM(2007)0359), and to Parliament’s resolution of 29 November 2007 on Common Principles of Flexicurity ⁽¹⁾,
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 25 June 2008 entitled ‘Think Small First - A “Small Business Act” for Europe’ (COM(2008)0394),
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 26 February 2007 entitled ‘Social reality stocktaking – Interim report to the 2007 Spring European Council’ (COM(2007)0063), and to Parliament’s resolution of 15 November 2007 on social reality stocktaking ⁽²⁾,
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 24 May 2006 entitled ‘Promoting decent work for all - The EU contribution to the implementation of the decent work agenda in the world’ (COM(2006)0249), and to Parliament’s resolution of 23 May 2007 on promoting decent work for all ⁽³⁾,
 - having regard to its resolution of 13 October 2005 on women and poverty in the European Union ⁽⁴⁾, and the definition of poverty therein,
 - having regard to its position of 17 June 2008 on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion (2010) ⁽⁵⁾,
 - having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, and in particular to the provisions therein regarding social rights, and to Article 136 of the EC Treaty,
 - having regard to the Commission Green Paper of 22 November 2006 entitled ‘Modernising labour law to meet the challenges of the 21st century’ (COM(2006)0708),
 - having regard to the Commission Green Paper of 18 July 2001 entitled ‘Promoting a European framework for Corporate Social Responsibility’ (COM(2001)0366), to the Commission communication of 22 March 2006 entitled ‘Implementing the partnership for growth and jobs: making Europe a pole of excellence on Corporate Social Responsibility’ (COM(2006)0136), and to Parliament’s resolution of 13 March 2007 on corporate social responsibility: a new partnership ⁽⁶⁾,
 - having regard to its declaration of 22 April 2008 on ending street homelessness ⁽⁷⁾,
 - having regard to the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966,
 - having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and the opinions of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs, the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, the Committee on Culture and Education and the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality (A6-0241/2009),
- A. whereas the major negative consequence for the EU arising from the current financial and economic crisis will be the dramatic increase of unemployment which will more severely affect the most vulnerable social groups; whereas higher levels of unemployment are associated with the increase in poverty, health inequalities, exclusion, criminality, insecurity and lack of trust,

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 297 E, 20.11.2008, p. 174.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 282 E, 6.11.2008, p. 463.

⁽³⁾ OJ C 102 E, 24.4.2008, p. 321.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ C 233 E, 28.9.2006, p. 130.

⁽⁵⁾ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2008)0286.

⁽⁶⁾ OJ C 301 E, 13.12.2007, p. 45.

⁽⁷⁾ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2008)0163.

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- B. whereas, regardless of the current crisis, the EU already faced difficulties as a result of weak economic growth, an explosive demographic situation and the difficulty of living in an increasingly globalised economy,
- C. whereas in 2007, 15,2 % of the citizens of the Union aged between 18 and 24 were early school leavers,
- D. whereas employment still does not guarantee a route out of poverty for many people in the EU, with 8 % of people at work at risk of poverty in 2006,
- E. whereas in 2006, 16 % of European citizens were at risk of poverty; whereas children, large families, single parents, unemployed people, people with disabilities, young people, elderly people, ethnic minorities and migrants are particularly vulnerable,
- F. whereas women still face a higher risk of poverty than men, because of factors such as their economic dependency the gender pay gap and women's higher presence in lower-paid jobs; whereas that situation increases the risk of perpetuating poverty into the next generations,
- G. whereas price increases in recent years have had a considerable effect on household budgets and have disproportionately affected vulnerable social groups,
- H. whereas various studies (such as the Future of Work Research of the Russell Sage Foundation) have shown that one in four of those working in the most developed economies may soon be low-paid and find themselves at increased risk of poverty; whereas low-wage jobs appear to exhibit much uniformity as they often take the form of a non-standard employment relationships with low-skilled workers, part-timers, women, immigrants and young workers at a higher risk; whereas there is a tendency for low-wage work to be passed on from generation to generation and whereas low-wage work limits access to good education, good health care and other basic living conditions,
- I. whereas Article 2 of the EC Treaty provides that equality between men and women is one of the fundamental principles of the European Union,
- J. whereas the EU faces a demographic change of which the most important features are an increase in life expectancy and a decreasing fertility rate although some countries are showing signs of reversing the trend of decreasing fertility,
- K. whereas the demographic change is expected to lead to the doubling of the old age dependency ratio until 2050 with consequences regarding in particular the physical and mental health of the population,
- L. whereas the Commission 'Demography Report 2008: Meeting Social Needs in an Ageing Society' (SEC(2008)2911), recognises the pivotal role that informal carers play in society; whereas the Commission should consider the strong social arguments for the inclusion of carers in the formulation of future policy,
- M. whereas the effects of the financial crisis on the real economy are not fully known but it will be impossible to reach the target of creating 5 million jobs in the EU between 2008 and 2009; whereas an economic recession will lead to higher unemployment and will certainly lead to more poverty and will present challenges to the European social model,
- N. whereas the financial and economic crisis is causing increasing unemployment and insecurity, in which social cohesion across the EU is under substantial strain with social fractures and tensions in numerous Member States,

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- O. whereas the EU has committed itself to the aim of socially and environmentally sustainable development, and whereas the opportunities for job creation that can arise from that commitment should be fully exploited,
- P. whereas social dialogue can be important to tackle the crisis in confidence that is being aggravated by the economic crisis as many people in our society are afraid of the future; whereas equal priority must also be given to those who are already excluded and whose current position is worsening in the current crisis,
- Q. whereas the EU's more interventionist institutional arrangements, characterised by a certain degree of income redistribution and the common notion of a 'European social model', have a positive effect on the quality of the working lives of millions of men and women in the more disadvantaged segment of our labour markets,
- R. whereas respect for national legal and conventional frameworks, characterised by balancing labour law and collective agreements, which regulate those models, are a precondition for harmonised values in a diversity of systems,
- S. whereas in the case of non-standard employment relationships the rules and procedures defined by the partners in collective bargaining no longer apply,
- T. whereas the renewed social agenda should be based on the principle that effective and efficient social policies contribute to economic growth and prosperity, and whereas this can also help restore the declining support of citizens for the EU,
- U. whereas it is regrettable that the renewed social agenda does not deal with the question of legal security for social services of general interest,
- V. whereas considerable concern has been voiced about the role and visibility of the renewed social agenda, including the lack of clarity of its purpose or how it will be followed up on as well as the lessening of the prominence given to the social Open Method of Coordination (OMC),
- W. whereas the European social models are a unity of values in a diversity of systems and are, in general, within the competence of the Member States; whereas the aims of social Europe, provided for in the EC Treaty, the Charter of Fundamental Rights and in the Lisbon Treaty, must be emphasised as the overarching goal for the EU, if they are to meet with the expectations and allay the fears of its citizens; whereas successive Spring European Council meetings have reiterated the objective of the eradication of poverty and social exclusion and the need to reinforce the social dimension in the Lisbon Strategy; whereas the failure and success of national social and employment policies also have an impact on other Member States, therefore, the debate on the reform of the European social model must be placed at the heart of the interaction between the EU and the Member States,
- X. whereas the failure of the Lisbon Strategy to decrease poverty - currently 78 000 000 people in the EU are living in poverty - and rising inequality must be of central concern; whereas the EU must make progress in relation to the development and implementation of EU and national targets on reducing poverty and social exclusion, and in key areas where indicators currently exist if people are to be convinced that the EU is there to serve the people first and only then businesses and banks,
- Y. whereas in several proceedings before the Court of Justice of the European Communities, the notion 'provisions that are crucial for the protection of the political, social and economic order' has been used without clarifying who can decide, in this regard, which provisions are crucial for the protection of the general public policy provisions in a Member State,

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- Z. whereas in the Court of Justice held that it is not up to the Member States to define unilaterally the notion of public policy or to impose unilaterally all the mandatory provisions of their employment law on suppliers of services established in another Member State and whereas it is unclear in whose hands that competence lies if not with the Member States,
- AA. whereas there is no clear distinction between labour-only subcontracting and dubious trafficking and provision of services that is based on lawful contracts with genuinely self-employed people; whereas the difference between fraudulent practices and true civil and commercial business relationships should be addressed,

Priority actions*European social models*

1. Calls upon the Council and the Commission, given the economic recession, to reaffirm the importance of a strong social Europe, incorporating sustainable, effective and efficient social and employment policies; calls on the Commission to develop an ambitious social policy agenda for the period of 2010-2015;
2. Urges the Commission to put forward a coherent policy plan on decent work in line with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union;
3. Stresses the importance of putting job creation and promotion at the top of the social agenda in these difficult times; considers that greater flexibility in the workplace is now more important than ever;
4. Invites the Commission to combine the renewed social agenda with other initiatives such as the European pact for gender equality, the European Youth Pact and the European Alliance for families, in order for disadvantaged social groups to have better access to social benefits;
5. Is concerned that the measures proposed in the Commission Communication on the Renewed Social Agenda are insufficiently coherent to impact on the current levels of poverty and exclusion in the EU and to address the current challenges to social cohesion;
6. Regrets, in particular, that the Commission Communication on the Renewed Social Agenda lacks proposals on the following issues, which are crucial in order to achieve a balance between economical freedoms and social rights:
 - a directive providing for basic labour rights for all workers, regardless of employment status, to protect the ever-increasing numbers of atypical workers;
 - a review of Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000 establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation ⁽¹⁾, accompanied by a gender-neutral work evaluation system, in order to reduce gender pay gaps both within and between economic sectors; and
 - a directive on cross-border collective bargaining, in accordance with the realities of cross-border business operations;
7. Stresses the need to further develop minimum standards in employment rights; is aware that neither economic freedoms nor competition rules prevail over fundamental social rights;
8. Notes that social policy should cover key actions such as a better balance between stronger social rights and freedoms, combating discrimination and promoting equality, modernising and reforming the European social models while strengthening their values;

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 303, 2.12.2000, p. 16.

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9. Notes that the delineation of what constitutes Member State provisions that are crucial for the protection of the political, social and economic order' is a political matter and should be defined in a democratically legitimised process; therefore calls upon the Commission to initiate an open debate in order to clarify the notion of what constitutes those general public policy provisions and propose legislation where necessary;
10. Considers that this is not the time to reduce social expenditure but rather to reinforce structural reforms; adds that the EU should support the infrastructures of the Member States' social models, including social services of general interest, by reaffirming the importance of their universal access, quality and sustainability;
11. Regrets that although the financial crisis demonstrates the importance of State action in regard to maintaining economic activity and strengthening social cohesion, the Commission has not ensured the future of and the crucial role played by public services in the EU by proposing a framework directive on services of general interest;
12. Calls on the Commission to submit a legislative proposal seeking to guarantee the legal security of social services of general interest;
13. Emphasises the need to find ways to modernise and reform the national security systems to eradicate poverty with a long-term perspective, especially concerning adequate minimum income, pensions and health care services; stresses that there is potential to strengthen the financial sustainability of the minimum wage and pensions systems and the quality and efficiency of health care services by improving their organisation and access and increasing partnership between the public and private sector, respecting the principle of subsidiarity, and supporting increased efforts to establish progressive taxation systems in order to reduce inequality;
14. Notes that some Member States have introduced the concept of a minimum wage; suggests that other Member States might benefit from studying their experience; calls on the Member States to safeguard the preconditions for social and economic participation for all and, in particular, to provide for regulations on such matters as minimum wages or other legal and generally binding arrangements or through collective agreements in accordance with national traditions that enable full-time workers to make a decent living from their earnings;
15. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that all citizens have access to basic banking services;
16. Maintains that sport and cultural activity are essential instruments of social inclusion and help to foster personal development, promote the good of society, and nurture talents;
17. Asks the Commission to ensure that environmental and health issues are rapidly integrated in all EU policies in order to ensure a high level of health and environmental protection, in accordance with the provisions of the EC Treaty;
18. Shares the Commission's determination to extend the social agenda to include new areas; deplores the fact that the environment is too often being considered only from the point of view of climate change; welcomes the renewed declarations by the Commission in favour of a sustainable economy with low CO₂ emissions, but regrets the fact that the Commission's proposal contains no specific measure to take into account the social and health consequences of the environmental and climate crises;
19. Stresses that extreme poverty and the ensuing social exclusion cannot be understood in economic terms on the basis of figures alone, but must also be understood in terms of human rights and citizenship; recognises that the principle of the free movement of capital and goods cannot, in itself, eradicate poverty and, in particular, persistent poverty and that extreme poverty deprives those affected of opportunities and prevents them from fully taking part in the community life by making them indifferent to their surroundings;

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Social and employment policies

20. Welcomes the proposals included in the Commission's work-life balance package launched at the end of 2008; encourages the Commission to make recommendations to the Member States that are clearly lagging behind the objectives of the 2002 Barcelona European Council as regards the provision of childcare for 2010; invites the Commission further to encourage employers' openness regarding flexible work arrangements, optimising the use and knowledge of ICT and new forms of work organisation thus promoting the flexibility of work schedules and its compatibility with business, administration and school hours;
21. Invites the Commission to put forward a proposal on a better reconciliation between private, family and professional life optimising the use and knowledge of ICT and new forms of work organisation, taking into consideration the needs and well-being of children, whilst promoting more effective employment protection, which confirms parents' and carers' right to flexible working patterns, corresponding to their needs and paying particular attention to access for those on low incomes and in precarious or low-quality employment;
22. Deplores the weakness of EU and Member State policies in the face of growing poverty, especially child poverty;
23. Encourages Member States to provide for guaranteed minimum income schemes for social inclusion, in accordance with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality;
24. Suggests that new demographic challenges could be tackled by addressing the situation of women who live in poverty, who have unequal and inadequate access to nutrition, housing, education and pay, and who face difficulties in reconciling work, family and private life;
25. Calls for a more effective prevention and combating of early school leaving under the motto that 'school pays off'; calls for effectively organised education systems and school curricula adapted to tomorrow's job market which take account of society's needs and technological developments; calls for the further promotion of and assistance to the concept of Second Chance Schools and informal and non-formal learning that have proved to lead to higher participation of young people and adults than traditional school environments contributing to lower the drop-out rate in the EU; for that purpose, calls for the long-awaited elimination of any and all inequalities of opportunities in educational systems in the EU, in particular, the elimination of low-level and segregated education which has irreversible negative effects on marginalised groups, particularly on Roma;
26. Insists on the need for more effective lifelong learning and training actions aiming better to equip citizens, especially the less qualified, to (re-)enter the job market smoothly and without discrimination and to contribute to social innovation; suggests emphasising entrepreneurial skills principally the entrepreneurship of women and young people, ICT and communication competences, financial literacy and language skills;
27. Stresses the need to improve education in the EU by mobilising the process of compatibility and comparability of the Member States' educational systems with a view to facilitating the mutual recognition of professional qualifications and standards;
28. Considers that active social inclusion policies must make a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty and social exclusion, both for those in paid employment (the 'working poor') and for those not in paid employment;
29. Highlights the necessity of promoting University-business cooperation as it is important to ensure that these partners cooperate and that they support each other for the benefit of their own organisations, of their staff and their students; considers that bridges should be built between university curricula and the world of enterprise, and that businesses should have the possibility, inter alia, to complement study programmes, to offer internships, organise open days for students, etc.;

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30. Draws attention to the need for a more balanced approach between flexibility, security and the need to ensure decent wages aiming at integrating young and elderly people, women, long-term unemployed people and disadvantaged groups into the labour market; suggests that the Member States take into consideration Parliament's resolution of 29 November 2007 on Common Principles of Flexicurity when implementing national flexicurity strategies;

31. Considers that especially in a time of financial and economic crises, often resulting in redundancy and restructuring, worker participation in the decision-making process within companies that affect their jobs and livelihoods is of the utmost importance; welcomes the recent revision ⁽¹⁾ of Council Directive 94/45/EC of 22 September 1994 on the establishment of a European Works Council or a procedure in Community-scale undertakings and Community-scale groups of undertakings for the purposes of informing and consulting employees ⁽²⁾; reiterates its call for the further strengthening of the functioning of European works councils as laid down in its resolution of 4 September 2001 on the application of Directive 94/45/EC ⁽³⁾;

32. Stresses that social and employment policies should foster job creation and be quickly activated as a response to the current economic crisis, should provide job and education opportunities, and should mitigate loss of income; considers that those policies should actively motivate people to look for job opportunities or to start their own entrepreneurial activity; to this end considers that Member States should consider affordable financing channels, such as credit guarantees, reduced interest rates or providing a lump sum of unemployment benefits which, while also mitigating income loss, provide opportunities for education which will help unemployed people to find new jobs; recalls the Commission's holistic approach to active inclusion which encompasses adequate income support, access to inclusive labour markets and high-quality social services;

33. Invites the Commission to take initiatives that will lead to a clear distinction between employers, genuine self-employed and small entrepreneurs on the one hand and employees on the other;

34. Stresses the vital need to support mothers, by means of family allowances during infancy and the creation of a suitable framework for their return to the labour market, paying particular attention to single mothers in view of their vulnerability;

35. Points out that the social economy, as another form of entrepreneurship, plays an essential role in contributing to a sustainable European economy, by combining profitability with solidarity; adds that social economy enterprises need a secure legal framework; highlights the very important contribution of volunteer work in the social field particularly in the fight against poverty and social exclusion and in the support to the more disadvantaged groups in society;

36. Stresses that not all people are able to work, nor are there currently jobs for all, and restates the importance of implementing Recommendation 92/441/EEC, endorsed by the European Council meeting on 11 and 12 December 2008, on providing 'sufficient resources and social assistance to live in a manner compatible with human dignity', through the extension of minimum income schemes to all Member States and increasing levels to ensure access and adequacy;

37. Believes that the development of microcredit can play an important role in supporting (long-term) unemployed people to move into self employment; points out that microcredit has already helped in many such situations with reintegration into working life and that this is in line with the Lisbon Strategy; calls on the Commission to improve the generation of and access to information on the possibilities and availability of micro-credit and to target actively those groups in society that could benefit most from and that have most need of micro-credit supply;

38. Calls for the promotion of a stronger link between the implementation of flexicurity and the enhancement of social dialogue, respecting national customs and practices;

⁽¹⁾ Directive 2009/38/EC (not yet published in the Official Journal).

⁽²⁾ OJ L 254, 30.9.1994, p. 64.

⁽³⁾ OJ C 72 E, 21.3.2002, p. 68.

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39. Insists on the removal of bureaucratic obstacles for small and medium enterprises; calls for the further implementation of the principles proposed in the Commission's communication on a Small Business Act for Europe;

40. While fully recognising that Member States have competence for wage policy, suggests that the social partners at national level discuss new methodologies for wage policies which could reverse the current declining percentage relation between salaries and profits and include higher financial participation of employees in companies' proceeds through the use of schemes that mitigate the impact of inflation; considers that such schemes could allow for channelling employees' extra earnings to special capital funds created by companies; calls for a debate regarding ways of encouraging companies to engage in those methodologies, and furthermore calls for a debate regarding legal frameworks that regulate the access of employees to those funds in a gradual way over time; suggests to social partners the importance of a renewed commitment to 'decent living wages' which guarantee minimum wages significantly above the adequate income level, to enable people to move out of poverty and to benefit positively from work;

41. Insists that advancing non-discrimination and equal opportunities relies both on a sound legislative basis and on a range of policy tools and that non-discrimination and equal opportunities must be mainstreamed into all aspects of the renewed social agenda;

42. Asks the Commission to conduct studies on the medium and long-term impact of knowledge mobility, in order to use the results as a strong basis for measures to mitigate negative effects;

Immigration

43. Draws attention to the negative impact (possible brain drain) that immigration may have in the development process of the countries of origin including family structures, health, education and research; recalls, on the other hand, the effects of the economic crisis in terms of imbalances in the employment markets of the host countries;

44. Stresses the importance of ethical recruitment from third countries, particularly with regard to health-care professionals and calls on those Member States that have not already done so to develop a code of practice for international recruitment;

45. Emphasises that the long-term impact of immigration on the demographic change is uncertain since it depends on the volatility of migration flows, family reunification and fertility rates;

46. Considers that immigrants can, when legally employed, contribute to the sustainable development of social security systems and also guarantee their own pension and social rights;

47. Stresses that a successful human rights based immigration policy should promote a coherent and efficient strategy for the integration of migrant people on the basis of equal opportunities rooted in guaranteeing their fundamental rights and ensuring a balance between rights and obligations;

48. Welcomes the Commission proposal to impose sanctions on employers who employ illegally staying third-country nationals; emphasises the importance of combating the exploitation of illegally staying third country nationals whilst respecting the rights of those in vulnerable positions; in that context calls upon the Commission to promote the opportunities for lawful employment of legally staying third-country nationals;

49. Welcomes the proposal for a directive on the application of patients' rights in cross-border health care (COM(2008)0414); draws attention, however, to the fact that the directive, in turn, must not lead to a greater discrimination of citizens of the Union on grounds of their economic status;

50. Considers that strengthening of the implementation and enforcement of existing labour laws under national and Community law and under International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions must be a priority for the EU institutions and the Member States;

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51. Stresses the need further to strengthen anti-discrimination laws throughout the EU; calls on the Commission to stimulate the exchange of best practises between the Member States with regard to promoting further the successful integration of migrants; notes that, especially in times of economic hardship, the most vulnerable people in society, who often include migrants, are disproportionately affected;

The EU at an external level

52. Believes that in its external relations the EU could have a more proactive role in promoting core social and environmental standards; is convinced that additional efforts need to be made regarding mechanisms on the prevention, surveillance and sanction of infringements;

53. Considers that the EU could do more to influence the international agenda concerning the decent work agenda and actively promote compliance with ILO conventions, human rights and fundamental freedoms, and that this could contribute to achieving world peace and also to the protection of the EU's interests and values;

54. Emphasises the fact that the development of the Community legal framework, either through primary or secondary legislation must not contradict international obligations under the ILO conventions;

55. Notes that the EU should aim for a globalisation process that is more socially inclusive and economically and environmentally sustainable; notes that the way in which corporations conduct business not only has a large economic impact but also has a significant social impact, within the EU as well as in third countries, in particular in developing countries; therefore urges the Commission actively to promote the concept of corporate social responsibility, either by means of the promotion of soft law or, where appropriate, by means of legislative proposals where;

Structural funds

56. Suggests strengthening the potential of structural funds, through simplification, flexibility and improvement of procedures, and the social integration dimension, with the aim to help Member States optimise the output of social and employment policies; calls on the Member States and the regions to involve the partners fully pursuant to Article 16 of the General Regulation on the Structural Funds ⁽¹⁾; strongly recommends making the European Social Fund (ESF) accessible to the partners in order to build up capacity;

57. Stresses that the renewed social agenda must make a clear commitment that EU structural and cohesion funds will help to achieve its objectives; therefore asks the Member States to use the ESF and all the other structural funds in order to improve not only employability but also the social infrastructure;

58. Recognises that the structural funds remain largely the main funding instrument to fulfil social objectives, asks the Commission and the Member States to promote synergies with other programmes and support coherence across the multiannual framework programmes, such as Daphne, Progress, the Public Health Programme, and the 'Europe for citizens' programme;

59. Calls for particular attention to be given to the regions that are most affected by globalisation as well as to regions in the new Member States that are in the process of social convergence;

60. Suggests that Progress could contribute to a better assessment of the modernisation of European social models through the evaluation of pilot projects;

61. Considers that, as a result of the freedom of movement for persons, new problems are emerging in some parts of the EU, and, in particular, in larger cities, in connection with the provision of emergency social protection for people who are unable to support themselves, putting extra pressure on (charitable) private and public services which provide emergency assistance, for example for the homeless or for marginalised population groups in society;

⁽¹⁾ Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 of 11 July 2006 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund (OJ L 210, 31.7.2006, p. 25).

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Instrumental actions*Social and civil dialogue*

62. Stresses that flexibility and the acceptance of change by citizens can increase through more mutual trust which can be enhanced by a more effective and transparent social dialogue and by ensuring more effective participative democracy in policy design and delivery;
63. Considers it particularly important for the social dialogue to encourage policies on health and safety at work and, in general, to promote improvements in the quality of life at the workplace; calls on the Commission to launch a debate on how workers who are not in full-time employment (such as temporary workers, part-time workers or workers on fixed-term contracts) can be brought into the social dialogue;
64. Given that the results of the negotiations of the European social partners are not well-known or disclosed, calls for the promotion of awareness of the results of social dialogue to improve its impact and promote its development;
65. Believes that the culture of cooperation, which has been replacing the conflict-based culture in the labour market, should continue to be encouraged through the promotion of the social dialogue;
66. Believes that civil society organisations, and people experiencing poverty and social exclusion, must be more directly involved in the debates on the economic and social model, on an equal basis;
67. Notes that the social partners should make an effort to work with multiannual plans with specific calendars and deadlines aiming at a long-term sustainable strategy;
68. Calls for a wide debate between European stakeholders, national public authorities, employers, employees and civil society organisations, about the social agenda for the post-2010 period;
69. Notes that Member States should support new measurable, binding and quantitative social targets and indicators for the post-2010 Lisbon Strategy, including commitments to working towards the eradication of poverty and social exclusion, and the development of a new social progress pact which would establish the goals and architecture for a new social sustainable and globally fair EU, which should build on and reinforce the social OMC as a key pillar;
70. Notes that undertakings play an important role not only in economic terms but also in social terms in the EU; draws attention, therefore, to the promotion of corporate social responsibility and the need to make urgent progress as regards high-quality work, including a decent living wage, to underpin the social model and to prevent social dumping;
71. Favours an effective dialogue between Parliament and civil society organisations; suggests that such a dialogue is also needed within Member States at a central, regional and local level;
72. Notes that a European Year of Volunteering would be an ideal opportunity for the EU to connect with civil society organisations; calls on the Commission to prepare the ground for 2011 to be declared as the European Year of Volunteering by submitting an appropriate legislative proposal to this effect as soon as possible;
73. Considers that civil society organisations should be involved from the beginning of decision-making processes, and that information should be publicly accessible, feedback should be reciprocal, and scope for change should be made clear to participants;
74. Stresses the importance and value of the consultation process as an effective tool by which to empower citizens by enabling them to feed directly into the policy process at EU level; calls on the Commission to take further steps to raise awareness of future EU consultations via the media and other appropriate forums at national, regional and local level;

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75. Suggests that there is an urgent need for the European institutions, the social partners at national level, and civil society organisations to adopt a 'social pact' encompassing social actions with realistic, binding targets and indicators;

76. Notes that civic participation starts during childhood and calls for the promotion and support of participation structures and initiatives at local, regional and national level for children and youth;

EU law

77. Stresses the need to make progress and finalise the regulation regarding the coordination of social security systems and the directive on portability of pension rights and the proposal for a directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation;

78. Calls for an improvement of the legislative process at the EU level, by making it clear why action is needed at that level, ensuring the quality of the content and delivering strong and independent impact assessments covering the social, environmental and economic effects; calls, in particular, for the effective implementation of the 2003 Inter-institutional Agreement on Better Law-Making ⁽¹⁾;

79. Emphasises that effective cooperation between Member States and effective monitoring of the transposition of EU law should be a priority;

80. Considers that a better legislative process at the EU level should actively seek the involvement of civil society organisations and address the concerns of citizens, thus bringing them closer to the EU;

OMC

81. Considers that there should be a better link at the EU level between economic, environmental and social policies, with a reaffirmation of the original Lisbon Strategy goals and the need to ensure that economic and employment policies actively contribute to the eradication of poverty and social exclusion;

82. Emphasises the need for the adoption of a legally binding charter of fundamental social rights;

83. Notes that the Lisbon Treaty establishes that very relevant aspects of social policy should be taken into account when defining and implementing EU policies;

84. Considers that the post-2010 Lisbon Strategy should include a strengthened OMC and invites the Commission further to encourage Member States to define national quantified targets, namely as regards the reduction of poverty and the enhancement of social inclusion, particularly supported by new measurable and quantitative indicators;

85. Calls on the Council and the Commission to open up opportunities for Parliament's real involvement in the post-2010 Lisbon Strategy;

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86. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 321, 31.12.2003, p. 1.