



ELISAN and the Open method of coordination

Communication [COM(2008)418final] entitled “A renewed commitment to social Europe: reinforcing the Open Method of Coordination for social protection and social inclusion”.

ELISAN, the European network of local elected representatives responsible for social affairs welcomes the European Commission’s intention to strengthen and improve the Open Method of Coordination in the field of protection and social inclusion (“Social OMC”). It therefore welcomes the commitment of the European Commission and the European Council “to make a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty”.

Although the different coordination processes have yielded a number of positive developments so far (efforts towards convergence of national policies, exchange of information and good practice, better knowledge thanks to statistics, definition of common objectives while respecting the principle of solidarity), ELISAN points to the lack of legislative and financial instruments needed for lasting solutions for effectively combating the many different examples of poverty and precarity at local level.

“Reinforced OMC” according to ELISAN

Elected representatives in the social field and members of ELISAN would like all stakeholders to be involved in the reinforced OMC, be it its drafting, implementation or assessment. Such an approach would make up for the **democratic deficit** associated with a method that currently sidesteps the European Parliament and national parliaments.

Based on the European Commission’s communication of 4 July 2008, according to which local and regional officials will be involved in peer reviews, thanks to the Social Protection Committee, ELISAN calls upon the European Commission and national governments to **respect the principle of subsidiarity by ensuring that local and regional representatives responsible for social affairs are also involved, as of the 2009 peer review cycle.**

Lastly, ELISAN **wholeheartedly supports the following measures it considers essential for achieving the objectives of the reinforced OMC** in the best possible way:

- Setting of quantitative targets at national and European level for keeping a closer eye on achievements;
- More account taken of social policies and better integration of such policies in Community and national policies;
- Development of better analytical tools: statistical capabilities and data collection;

ELISAN calls particularly to invest in and to guarantee an equal access in social services of high quality and affordable ones for all (particularly in term of health, transport, education, social care, financial, cultural, recreational and legal)

ELISAN would like to stress that local authorities and public social services are directly in touch with social realities and changing local needs. Consequently, they can prove a valuable source of proposals and can play an important role in ensuring data collected are of high quality. It is important that this bottom-up approach be given the credit it deserves.