

## Current legislation and policies on social issues at EU level:

Recent EU legislation offers the following documents and public links on our social issues:

### 1) Violence and abuses, (BG)

#### Violence:

The EU is working to combat all forms of violence, notably football hooliganism, sexual violence against women and illegal use of firearms.

*Source: Website of DG Justice and Home affairs*

- Physical, sexual and psychological violence against children, young people and women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life, constitute a breach of their right to life, safety, freedom, dignity and physical and emotional integrity and a serious threat to the physical and mental health of the victims of such violence. Such violence, being so widespread throughout the Community, constitutes a genuine violation of fundamental rights, a health scourge and an obstacle to the enjoyment of safe, free and just citizenship.

The fight against violence should be placed within the context of the protection of fundamental rights, as recognised by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the accompanying explanations, bearing in mind its status, which recognises, inter alia, the right to dignity, equality and solidarity. It includes a number of specific articles relating to protection and promotion of physical and mental integrity, equal treatment for men and women, the rights of the child and non-discrimination, as well as recognising the prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment, slavery and forced labour, and child labour. It recognises that a high level of human health protection is necessary in the definition and implementation of all Community policies and activities.

Violence against women takes many forms ranging from domestic violence, which is prevalent at all levels of society, to harmful traditional practices associated with the exercise of physical violence against women, such as genital mutilation and honour-related crimes, which constitute a particular form of violence against women.

Children, young people or women who witness a near relative being assaulted should be regarded as victims of violence.

#### Documents and sources:

DECISION No 779/2007/EC OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL

#### **ABUSES**

There is no definition of abuses created by the European Commission or other organizations related to EU. It is important to note some examples of abuses

according of the European Commission which it communicated in some press releases:

- human rights abuses
- abuses of human and minority rights

The definition abuse has two different meanings which have to be taken into consideration when working on this topic. On the one hand abuse can mean

a) to use or treat someone or something wrongly or badly, especially in a way that is to your own advantage (e.g. *several of the children had been sexually/physically/emotionally abused*) or on the other hand

b) to behave in a wrong, misusing way (e.g. alcohol abuse, abuse of a privilege).

## **2) Youth involvement (participation of young people), (AT)**

Youth participation is the active engagement of young people throughout their communities. It is often used as an umbrella term for youth participation in any many forms, including decision-making, political involvement, sports, leisure-time activities, schools and any activity where young people are not historically engaged.<sup>1</sup>

Youth participation means participation in democratic institutions and in a continuous dialogue with policy makers. At the same time the needs and interests of these young people as well as their strength and abilities should be respected. Involvement in cultural activities is also seen to enable young people to express their creative energy and contribute to fostering active citizenship. Furthermore, cultural activities can promote inclusion and facilitate intergenerational and intercultural dialogue by forging links between individuals and helping to transcend national identity.

### Documents:

COM (2006) 417: Commission Communication on the follow-up of the White Paper on a new impetus for European Youth: Implementing the common objectives for participation by and information for young people in view of promoting their active citizenship (20.07.2006)

COM (2007) 242: Commission Communication on a European agenda for culture in a globalizing world (10.05.2007)

European Youth Portal: overall source of information for young people.

<http://europa.eu/youth>

---

<sup>1</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Youth\\_participation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Youth_participation) (last update: 22.01.2008/access: 27.02.2008)

COM (2005) 206: Commission Communication on European policies concerning youth – Addressing the concerns of young people in Europe – implementing the European Youth Pact and promoting active citizenship (30.05.2005)

### **3) Poverty, (RO)**

In 2007 the 'poverty alleviation' policy line is not only emphasised in the framework of the European Development Fund, focusing on the Union's 78 African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) partner countries but also in the Development and Co-operation Instrument, covering development assistance for the other developing countries.

Thus, poverty alleviation has become the core of both geographical and thematic programmes. This covers the themes of governance and democracy, social development, economic support, security and conflict, natural resources, and infrastructure and transport. This focus also permeates through the national, regional and programmes.

Different measurements on homelessness at European level take place. Homelessness and housing deprivation exist in all European countries and yet there are few official statistics on homelessness, and those that do exist are rarely comparable between different countries. The lack of clear data on the extent of homelessness makes an understanding of its nature, causes and the effective action needed to tackle it all the more difficult.

In the EU, one child in five lives under the poverty threshold, and in most countries they face a greater risk of poverty than the rest of the population.

Commonly agreed indicators such as joblessness, in-work poverty, insufficient support to families are the predominant factors affecting child poverty in each country.

### **4) Environmental risks (climate change), (HU)**

The EU's environmental laws help protect against water, air and noise pollution and control risks related to chemicals, biotechnology and nuclear energy within the Union.

The overall direction of EU environment policy is laid out in the latest action programme "Environment 2010: Our Future, Our Choice." It concentrates on 4 priority areas: climate change; nature and biodiversity; environment and health; and natural resources and waste. Also, an Environment and Health Action Plan for 2004-2010 promotes a close relationship between health, environment and research policy.

The EU is a leader in global efforts to protect the environment. The EU, for instance, is one of the initiators of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) creating a strategic approach to the international management of chemicals. The EU is a signatory and active participant in the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change, which

entered into force in February 2005. Moreover, the EU is party to a number of international agreements and partnerships, including the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the UN Montreal Protocol on Ozone Depletion.

Internally, the EU has established a comprehensive system of environmental protection covering emissions into the air and water, noise, waste disposal, conservation of natural habitats, chemicals and industrial accidents. An example of such domestic actions is the EU Emission Trading Scheme (EU ETS) on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from industrial installations. In general, the EU's environmental policy is underpinned by the "precautionary principle." It is based on the "polluter pays" concept and the management and control of pollution at source.

The EU's treaty-based notion of "sustainable development" adheres to this practice by integrating environmental requirements into the definition and implementation of other EU policies and activities. The ultimate goal of sustainable development is to achieve a form of development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

## 5) Human rights, (UK)

Human rights, democracy and the rule of law are core values of the European Union. Embedded in its founding treaty, they have been reinforced by the adoption of a Charter of Fundamental Rights. Respect for human rights is a prerequisite for countries seeking to join the Union and a precondition for countries who have concluded trade and other agreements with it".

The **Charter of Fundamental Rights** proclaimed in 2000 outlines and brings rights, that had previously been clustered in different legislation, together in a single document. The Charter is made up of seven chapters, each concerned with a certain area of human rights. For instance, the right to life falls under Chapter 1 'Dignity'. Below is a brief description of the seven chapters of The Charter, as outlined in the EU website:

**Chapter I:** Dignity (human dignity, the right to life, the right to the integrity of the person, prohibition of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, prohibition of slavery and forced labour);

**Chapter II:** Freedoms (the right to liberty and security, respect for private and family life, protection of personal data, the right to marry and found a family, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of expression and information, freedom of assembly and association, freedom of the arts and sciences, the right to education, freedom to choose an occupation and the right to engage in work, freedom to conduct a business, the right to property, the right to asylum, protection in the event of removal, expulsion or extradition);

**Chapter III:** Equality (equality before the law, non-discrimination, cultural, religious and linguistic diversity, equality between men and women, the rights of the child, the rights of the elderly, integration of persons with disabilities);

**Chapter IV:** Solidarity (workers' right to information and consultation within the undertaking, the right of collective bargaining and action, the right of access to placement services, protection in the event of unjustified dismissal, fair and just working conditions, prohibition of child labour and protection of young people at work, family and professional life, social security and social assistance, health care,

access to services of general economic interest, environmental protection, consumer protection);

**Chapter V:** Citizens' rights (the right to vote and stand as a candidate at elections to the European Parliament, the right to vote and stand as a candidate at municipal elections, the right to good administration, the right of access to documents, the ombudsman, the right to petition, freedom of movement and residence, diplomatic and consular protection);

**Chapter VI:** Justice (the right to an effective remedy and a fair trial, the presumption of innocence and the right of defence, principles of legality and proportionality of criminal offences and penalties, the right not to be tried or punished twice in criminal proceedings for the same criminal offence); **Chapter VII:** General provisions

## **6) Addictions/health provision, (IT)**

EU Policies use the term addiction when referring to drug, alcohol and tobacco but it is sometimes applied to other compulsions, such as problem gambling, compulsive overeating, shopping, sex, pornography, computers, work and exercise.

The use of drugs, particularly among young people is at historically high levels. EU strategies in this field aim especially on information and prevention among young people and the fight against drug trafficking (EU Drugs Strategy 2005-2012). Smoking prevention and tobacco control as well as Prevention of harmful alcohol use among young people are also among the priorities.

From a health provision perspective, the EU aims to improve public health, prevent human illness and diseases, and identify sources of danger to human health. EU plays its part in improving public health in Europe through the development of a comprehensive health information system, enhancing the capability for responding rapidly to health threats, ensuring patient safety and the quality of healthcare but also through actions focused on environment, food, work, school, sport and health.

Documents:

COM (2007) 279: White Paper on a Strategy for Europe for Nutrition, Overweight and Obesity related health issues (30.05.2007)

## **7) Immigration and emigration (anti-discrimination), (MT)**

## **8) Disability, (SE)**

### **Disabled People and the Social Model of Disability<sup>2</sup> -**

It is important to have an understanding of the meaning of the word disability and who disabled people are. It can be confusing when people use different definitions of the word disability. For example, the medical model, which is the best-known model, looks at only the impairment. Other models include the administrative model,

---

<sup>2</sup> [www.disabilityinformation.com/disability/](http://www.disabilityinformation.com/disability/)

which looks at disability and doing an assessment process and the charity model looks at disability as a personal tragedy.

### **Who are Disabled People –**

Disabled people are those people with impairments who are disabled by society.

### **What is Disability –**

Disability is a disadvantage or restriction on doing things that is the fault of society and the way it is run. The world takes no account of people who have impairments and leaves them out and stops them from doing things other people do. Disability is discrimination very much like racism and sexism.

### **What is Impairment –**

Impairment is when a person has an injury or a disease for a long time that makes them different to other people. It can affect the brain or the body it can also cause pain, make the person feel tired, affect the way the person talks or they may not remember things very well. Impairment does not cause disability and impairment does not make disability the right thing to do.

### **The Social Model of Disability**

- The Social Model was developed by disabled people to help them describe and take action against discrimination.
- The model does not blame the disabled person for the problems they have.
- Disabled people, by using the social model can find areas in the world that need changing and find out about bad attitudes towards disabled people, why some people will not talk to disabled people and why disabled people cannot get into some buildings.
- The Social Model allows disabled people to get together to campaign for better things, like people being considerate towards disabled people, and more access to buildings no matter what the disabled person's impairment is.
- The Social Model helps disabled people to talk about themselves and to talk about human rights and equality.
- Disabled people can talk about what they can do to make people more equal rather than telling everybody what disabled people cannot do.

## **9) Labour inclusion/personal career/education (AT)**

The European Union regards education as one very crucial obstacle for young people's transitions into the labour market and successful integration and participation in society. The new Life Long Learning Programme (LLP) supports learning opportunities from childhood to old age in every single life situation.

Education systems should deliver efficient and relevant education in a lifecycle perspective, stimulating the individual's potential for creativity and autonomy, while avoiding mismatches with the labour market. Young people need to be prepared for entry into the labour market but also to be able to carry on their education through their lives, for their personal development and to help them adapt to

changing professional circumstances. Developing communication skills in foreign languages should be also promoted in this context.

Important European instruments which support labour market inclusion and employment policies, as well as education policies in order to reach the aims of the Lisbon Strategy:

- European Social Fund
- Programme PROGRESS 2007-2013
- EURES network
- Life Long Learning Programme

#### Documents:

Education and Training 2010 C 142/1: Detailed Work Programme on the follow-up of the objectives of Education and Training Systems in Europe (14.06.2002)

Employment in Europe (EiE) 2004: Employment in Europe 2004

Employment in Europe (EiE) 2006: Employment in Europe 2006

COM (2006) 208: Commission Communication "Delivering on the modernisation agenda for universities: education, research and innovation" (10.05.2006)

COM (2006) 481: Commission Communication on Efficiency and Equity in European education and training systems (08.09.2006)

Recommendations (2006/962/EC): Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on key competences for lifelong learning (18.12.2006)

COM (2006) 857: Commission Communication "Employment in rural areas: closing the jobs gap" (21.12.2006)

SEC (2007) 329: Commission Staff Working Document: Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion. Supporting document (06.03.2007)

Progress Report 2007: Progress towards Lisbon objectives in Education and Training: DG EAC 2007 Report based on indicators and benchmarks (forthcoming)

Career Guidance Handbook: Career Guidance – A handbook for policy-makers. Commission staff working paper and joint publication with OECD. <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/53/53/34060761.pdf>

## **10) International cooperation/intercultural dialogue, (UK)**

## **11) Community cohesion. (UK)**