



**EUROPEAN  
MOVEMENT**  
I R E L A N D

European Citizens' Consultations  
Regional Conference

Farmleigh, Dublin

20 November 2009



## Thank you from European Movement Ireland

On behalf of European Movement Ireland I would like to thank you very much for your participation in our European Citizens' Consultations Regional Conference in Farmleigh last Friday.

It was undoubtedly a big ask to bring over 80 people from five countries together to draft legislative proposals within the space of a few hours, but you all rose to the challenge and produced some excellent proposals.

Though the regional conferences represent the final phase of this year's European Citizens' Consultations initiative, these proposals will now be circulated to EU policy-makers and further plans are being made with regard to the dissemination of the results of the regional conferences.

Our thanks to the King Baudouin Foundation, European Movement International, the team in Farmleigh and to you all for making the conference the success that it was.

Regards,

Andrea Pappin  
Executive Director  
European Movement Ireland





## Contents

Legislative Proposals	3
Group 1: Legislative Proposal for Recommendation 14	3
Group 2: Legislative Proposal for Recommendation 14	4
Group 3: Legislative Proposal for Recommendation 14	5
Group 4: Legislative proposal for Recommendation 7	6
Group 5: Legislative Proposal for Recommendation 7	7
Group 6: Legislative proposal for recommendation 7	7
The next steps	9
Our legislative proposals	9
Conference materials	9
Getting your feedback	9
List of participants	10
Conference Photos	11



## Legislative Proposals

Below are the legislative proposals produced by conference participants, as based on the following recommendations from the first phase of the European Citizens' Consultation initiative.

### Recommendation 7

The European Commission must propose legislation that would combat social inequalities, and create conditions for a convergence of social insurance and welfare systems in all Member States. This would cover salaries and pensions, and would establish "floors" and "ceilings" for social benefits. The EU should create a mechanism to monitor Member States' social policies and, if needed, should issue binding recommendations for Member States to ensure that the EU moves closer to a common EU social system.

### Recommendation 14

The EU should increase social protection for vulnerable members of society in all phases of life, such as elderly people, the disabled or poorer members of society, homeless and unemployed, as well as carers. It should rate countries' spending of GDP and impose enforceable targets for Member States in the fight against poverty. These measures should be given particular attention in times of economic recession.

## Group 1: Legislative Proposal for Recommendation 14

*Whereas the Member States are already committed to the rights as set out in the charter of fundamental rights and freedoms in the ECHR,*

*Whereas the Member States have committed to ensuring that all individuals resident in their Member States shall live at or above the poverty line as defined by 60% of the median income,*

*Whereas employment provides one of the biggest mechanisms for social inclusion and poverty reduction,*

*Whereas many Member States do not have a legal minimum wage,*

*Whereas access to quality social services are essential to the elimination of poverty and social exclusion,*

1. The Member States shall take all the necessary measure to ensure that all individuals in their Member States shall live at or above the poverty line as defined by 60% of the median income;
2. The Member States shall report annually to the European Commission and European Parliament on their performance and the progress they have made towards achieving targets;
3. The Member States shall ensure ease of access to income support and social services.
4. At all stages in the policy making process, the EU and the Member States shall consult with those representative target groups impacted by a policy, and provide capacity building funds at the local, regional, national and European levels.



## Group 2: Legislative Proposal for Recommendation 14

1. The EU shall ensure an adequate level of social protection for all members of society, including all resident non-citizens;
2. All Member States shall implement a minimum standard of income for all members of their societies, including all resident non-citizens, of not less than 60 per cent of the median income pertaining in that Member State, by 2020;
3. Recognising that the rights to education and work are fundamental rights, the EU shall focus on protection but also on empowering and enabling people to participate in society in order to realise and maximise their economic and social potential;
4. The minimum wage rate in each Member State shall be set at a level to take an individual's income above the poverty line for the number of hours constituting a normal working week in that Member State;
5. The EU shall oblige all Member States to recognise the fundamental human rights of all residents of its Member States, including those who are not legal residents and or are engaged in the black economy;
6. The EU shall set a minimum percentage of GDP that each Member State shall raise in taxation revenue in order to discharge its responsibilities in the full range of social, health, caring and education provision;
7. The annual evaluation report of the Social Open Method of Coordination shall be considered by both the National Parliament of the Member State and the European Parliament;
8. The European Court shall take into account the EU social objectives when reaching its decisions;
9. All EU legislation and policy shall be subject to a Social Impact Assessment;
10. In renewing the Lisbon process account shall be taken of all existing social policies. Social protection shall be given equal status to the economic and environmental objectives of the Lisbon process.



## Group 3: Legislative Proposal for Recommendation 14

### Basic principles for legislation

1. Member States must spend at least the equivalent percentage of their GDP on poverty reduction and social inclusion as the average which the five EU countries with the lowest level of poverty rate, spend;
2. Member States must achieve at least the same level of social inclusion as the average of the five EU countries with the highest level of social inclusion;
3. Member States must eliminate economic and social poverty by 2020;
4. Member States must implement social and inclusion plans. Sanctions will apply against Member States which do not achieve their social inclusion targets within a specified time frame;
5. Member States shall ensure there is no discrimination in relation to access to public services, to the labour market and to social welfare provision for all. Discrimination must not be based on gender, origins, sexual orientation, race, political opinions and social background.

### Target groups for legislation

1. Member States must ensure that carers achieve economic independence, particularly through a pension system which does not discriminate on the basis of gender. Member States should increase flexibility in facilitating the combination of work and care. Domestic work must be given equal status to paid employment;
2. Member States must ensure that all citizens have access to decent accommodation through, for instance, the use of empty properties, the protection of families from eviction and the promotion of reintegration projects;
3. Member States must ensure integration into the labour market, improved workplace accessibility, improved access to social support for the unemployed, disabled and homeless;
4. Member States must establish fair and equitable procedures to support refugees, asylum seekers and undocumented migrants.



## Group 4: Legislative proposal for Recommendation 7

*While recognising the diversity that exists within the EU; Member States should set their own goals regarding social protection and social policy, while recognising the relationship between taxation and social benefits,*

*While accepting a broad definition of social protection, this should include equal opportunities for women, equality of outcomes for men and women, equal salaries for men and women, economic independence for women.*

*Social protection should further include the following:*

- *Access to childcare*
- *Empowerment of citizens*
- *Elder support*
- *Unemployment benefits*
- *Support for care takers*
- *Access to energy efficient housing, protection against eviction*
- *Equal access to health*
- *Equal access to the labour market*

The European Union should set the following targets in their social welfare policy agenda:

- a. Total eradication of 'absolute poverty' as defined by the UN by 2020;
- b. Tackling the problem of the 'benefit trap';
- c. Monitoring of social policies need to occur at the European, national and regional level;
- d. Everyone who is able to work should be enabled to work - those who are unable to work should receive sufficient support to enjoy a good quality of life;
- e. The 'floors' for social benefits should be enforced by the judicial system and should primarily be defined in accordance with the basic needs identified as constituting social protection;

Regarding specific legislation, the European Union should endeavour to complete the following:

- a. Structural funding should allocate more means to social inclusion and should give preference to projects with inbuilt social inclusion objectives by 2013;
- b. The EU should facilitate the monitoring of social policies and the implementation of welfare systems that need to occur at regional, national and European level. Data collection should be independent and pan European;
- c. That those policies should not only focus on protection but also on empowering and enabling people to participate in society;
- d. Countries should be allowed to accede to the European Union only if they have a social policy in place which would form part of the general entry criteria;
- e. EU Countries which do not meet the 'floors' for social benefits should be penalised;

Regarding specific legislation, the Member States of the European Union should endeavour to complete the following:

- a. Alignment of tax and social security systems in a way that does not discourage work, taking into account minimum wage legislation in those Member States that have it;
- b. Provision of income support (including pensions) in each Member State must be such that all beneficiaries of income support reach the poverty line as defined as 60% of median income by 2020;
- c. Member States should agree on a strategy for the convergence of their social systems.



## Group 5: Legislative Proposal for Recommendation 7

*Reminded of the fact that the European Union accepts that social justice is the key informing principle for any design of social policy frameworks for the eradication of poverty;*

1. Citizens most affected by poverty should be prioritised under the European Union's social justice policy and this policy should have as its aim to help those most affected by poverty become fully included in society;
2. The allocation and the spending of structural funds by each individual EU countries must incorporate quality of life measurements and impact assessments;
3. The European Union should develop the European Court Human Rights as a more representative judicial body, increasing its role in developing legal concepts on social protection and poverty;
4. Social insurance and welfare systems in all Member States should be bench-marked to basic needs and social needs under the "Modest but Adequate System";
5. Mandatory monitoring by an independent agency and ongoing reporting along with fixed time-frames shall be set;
6. EU countries which do not meet these targets set by the bench-marking and time frames should be penalised.



## Group 6: Legislative proposal for recommendation 7

The European Union should introduce a policy of benchmark spending against the top five best performing states in terms of poverty.

While recognizing the diversity that exists within the EU, it is proposed that each Member State should have well developed health and social policies that allow all citizens to live with dignity, independently and to enjoy a good quality of life.

Welfare systems should be implemented in a demonstrably effective manner that directly benefits the standard of living and quality of life of all people. Such policies should not only focus on protection, but also on empowering and enabling people to participate in society in order to realize and maximize their economic and social potential.

Member States should agree on a strategy and a time frame for the convergence of their social systems according to the following:

1. Each Member State should establish a minimum wage which should be benchmarked against the average wage in that Member State by 2015;
2. Each Member State should adopt measures to reduce overall income inequality to the level of the five Member States with the lowest levels of inequality by 2020;
3. Each Member State should adopt measures to reduce the gender income gap to the level of the five Member States with the lowest levels of inequality by 2020;
4. The European Union will establish a European wide pension system by 2020 which guarantees every European resident a pension of 40% of the median income of the EU-27, in addition, each Member State shall establish a universal pension system which guarantees each resident a pension of 60% of the median income of that state;
5. Each Member State shall establish an unemployment benefit scheme which guarantees each unemployed resident a payment of 60% of the median income of that state;
6. The EU will establish a fund to ensure that the unemployment benefit in each Member State is at least 40% of the EU27 average income;
7. Each Member State should adopt measures to ensure that child benefit payments are at the same percentage of average income as the level in the five Member States with the highest child benefit payments by 2015;
8. Common criteria for data collection should be established;
9. Relevant data should be collected by each Member State and subsequently audited by independent monitors who are to be appointed by the European Parliament;
10. Non-compliant states will be sanctioned by the European Commission subject to appeal to the European Court of Justice.



## The next steps

### Our legislative proposals

While these legislative proposals represent the final outcome of the regional conference, they also mark the beginning of a lobbying process – the ultimate goal: persuading EU politicians and policy makers to take on these proposals, address the issues that they raise and take them on board when drafting legislation or writing recommendations.

As you have heard from Proinsias de Rossa MEP at the conference, he has agreed to circulate the legislative proposals to the members of the European Parliament's Employment and Social Affairs Committee and will do so at their 1-2 December meeting in Brussels. He will also speak with the Chair of the Employment and Social Affairs Committee, Pervanche Beres MEP, about responding to the proposals.

### Conference materials

Photos, videos and presentations from the conference can be found on our website at: [www.europeanmovement.ie](http://www.europeanmovement.ie).

If there is something you are looking for from our conference and you cannot find it on our website, please do contact [nikki@europeanmovement.ie](mailto:nikki@europeanmovement.ie) or [n.jammes@europeanmovement.eu](mailto:n.jammes@europeanmovement.eu).

### Getting your feedback

The Dublin Regional Conference was unique in its format in that it was a highly consultative process. It is important to us to learn how you found this format to see if this is something that should be used in the future.

Therefore we would appreciate if you could fill out an online survey about the event which you can find at: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/YS2N2Y2>.

Please feel free to send us any other suggestions or comments you may have to: [nikki@europeanmovement.ie](mailto:nikki@europeanmovement.ie).



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## European Citizens' Consultations

**The economic and social future of Europe**



This conference has been organised in conjunction with the European Citizens' Consultations and the King Baudouin Foundation.



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