



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Information Service Briefing Paper

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European Commission Work Programme 2012

Introduction

1. The Committee for the Office of the First and deputy First Minister's 'Report on its Inquiry into Consideration of European Issues', which was published in January 2010, contained a series of recommendations addressed to the Executive together with a number of actions which were for the Assembly itself to address. Action 8 of the report stated that:

The Committee [COFMdFM] will highlight to all statutory committees the importance of their role when dealing with European issues and departments should take into consideration European policies and directives when completing business plans and strategies. Research and Library Services will screen the annual European Legislative and Work Programme and produce a prioritised menu of scrutiny topics relevant to each statutory committee. For those scrutiny topics which are of particular interest to statutory committees, the Research and Library Service should monitor the development of policy at European level and provide regular information updates which would, amongst other things, identify all relevant draft legislative acts. The Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister will receive all information from Research and Library Services. The Brussels Officer will also have input here.

2. Action 8 requires the Research and Library Service to support Committees by:
 - i. screening the annual European Legislative and Work Programme;
 - ii. producing a prioritised menu of scrutiny topics relevant to each statutory committee;
 - iii. monitoring the development of policy at European level;
 - iv. providing regular information updates; and
 - v. identifying all draft legislative acts.
3. The Research and Library Service undertook a screening of the Commission's 2010 and 2011 Work Programmes, and this paper provides an update on progress in relation to initiatives identified of interest to the COFMDFM committee. The paper also presents the results of a screening of the 2012 Work Programme, which was published on 15th November 2011.

European Commission Work Programmes

4. Each year the European Commission publishes a work programme which sets out the legislative as well as non-legislative proposals which it will put forward during the forthcoming year. The work programme, which is usually published in the Autumn, is particularly important, as the Commission has the 'right of initiative' within the European Union. In other words, the Commission alone is responsible for drawing up proposals for new European legislation, which it presents to Parliament and the Council. The Commission is also responsible for managing and implementing EU policies and the budget. Furthermore, together

- with the Court of Justice, it is responsible for making sure EU law is properly applied in all Member States.
5. The 2012 Work Programme provides a list of Commission legislative and non-legislative priorities up until 2014.
 6. The Committee considered the Commission's previous 2011 Work Programme on 17th November 2010, and the Research and Library Service have monitored developments regarding a number of initiatives contained within that programme.
 7. Appendix 1 of this paper contains a list of initiatives identified in the 2011 Work programme and an update on their progress. Appendix 2 of this paper contains a list of the initiatives identified from the 2010 Work Programme and an update on their progress.
 8. The Commission's Work Programme 2012, which was published on 15th November 2011 also provides a multiannual overview which is designed to help stakeholders and other EU institutions plan their work with the Commission. The overarching objectives for the Work Programme¹ 2012 are:
 - Building a Europe of Stability and Responsibility
 - Building a Union of Sustainable Growth and Solidarity
 - Giving the EU an effective voice in the wider world; and
 - Smart regulation and effective implementation.
 9. A number of annexes which accompany the Work Programme list forthcoming initiatives in 2012 and 2013-14. Annex 1 lists 129 strategic Initiatives which are scheduled for adoption in 2012. After a screening the following initiatives look to be of most relevance to the work of the Committee:

Child Poverty (soft law) Legislative
A Recommendation will support the EU and Member States' efforts to tackle child poverty. It will set out common principles for effective policy intervention in the following key areas: support to families (access to labour market for parents, income support), services (childcare, education, healthcare, housing, social services) and participation in society.

EU Strategy Against Trafficking in Human Beings Non-legislative
The overarching objective of this initiative is to formulate a comprehensive policy framework, through which the main goals of significantly preventing and reducing the phenomenon trafficking in human beings, of prosecuting criminals and of better protecting victims will be pursued.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/index_en.htm

Advancing Roma Integration-First report of the European Commission Non-Legislative

The first annual report will assess the national Roma integration strategies that Member States must submit to the Commission by 31/12/2011.
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Improving the gender balance in the boards of companies listed on stock exchanges (soft law) Legislative

Following the gender equality strategy, a recommendation would aim to improve the gender balance in company boards. As well as being a fundamental right, gender equality is crucial for the EU's growth and competitiveness.

10. The Commission identified a number of initiatives that will be forthcoming in 2013 and 2014 also. After a screening the initiatives that are most relevant to the committee appear to be taking place all in 2013. Those initiatives which have most relevance for the committee are the following:

Youth on the Move Card (2013) Legislative
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An action of the Youth on the Move flagship initiative should facilitate both the mobility and participation for all young people aged between 13 and 30 years old residing in Europe. It would build on existing cards which already provide young people with benefits in various fields (travel, culture, goods, accommodation, etc.). Existing cards which meet the EU quality criteria could be granted a YoM label.

Consultation of the European social partners on the review of the Directive of equal pay (2013) Non-legislative
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In view of the persistent high gender pay gap in Europe (around 18%), the Commission will consult the European social partners on an update of the EU legislation implementing the principle of equal pay.
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Regulation on EU hotlines for missing children (2013) Legislative
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This initiative is a follow-up of the communication on the 116 children hotlines of 2010 and aims at ensuring appropriate functioning of the 116 hotline in all Member States.
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EU Citizenship Report 2013: Progress towards eliminating obstacles to EU citizens' rights Non-legislative
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This report aims at assessing progress towards ensuring the effective exercise of EU citizens' rights through the implementation of the actions announced in the 2010 EU
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Citizenship report, and at identifying further measures towards completing the removal of remaining obstacles to the enjoyment of EU citizens' rights.

11. The 2012 Work Programme also contains a second annex that relates to simplification and administrative burden reduction initiatives, and a third annex containing withdrawals of pending proposals. A screening found that neither contained initiatives relevant to the work of the committee.

Appendix 1 Update on relevant initiatives in Commission Work Programme 2011

<i>Nature</i>	Title and Content of the document
<i>Legislative</i>	<p>Public Procurement</p> <p>The proposal for a directive was published on 20th December 2011 (COM (2011) 896) and seeks to modernise the EU Public Procurement legislative framework. The proposed reform aims to thoroughly modernise the existing tools and instruments of public procurement. Main objectives of the proposed changes include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Simplifying rules and procedures and making them more flexible. Therefore, the Commission proposals include the extension and, in the medium term, generalisation of electronic communication in public procurement and a drastic cut in the administrative burden. 2. Encourage access to public procurement for SMEs: access will be increased and made easier through measures to cut the administrative burden and strong incentives to divide tenders into lots and limit the financial capacity requirements for the submission of a tender. 3. The proposed reform aims to facilitate an improvement in the use of public procurement by ensuring greater consideration of social and environmental criteria such as life-cycle costs or the integration of vulnerable and disadvantaged persons. <p>The reform also includes improvements to the existing guarantees aimed at combating conflicts of interest, favouritism and corruption in order to better ensure the integrity of procedures, given the financial implications and the appointment</p>

	<p>by the Member States of a single national authority responsible for monitoring, performing and checking public contracts to ensure best practice.</p>
<i>Non-Legislative</i>	<p>An EU Framework for national Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020</p> <p>A Communication for National Roma Integration Strategies was published in Under the EU Framework for national Roma integration strategies, each of the EU's 27 countries will set out how they intend to improve the situation of the most vulnerable Roma communities living on their territory. Member States will have to address four key areas for better social and economic integration – education, employment, healthcare and housing – and set out measures proportionate to their Roma population. EU funding and a strong legal framework to combat discrimination are available to support national efforts. Governments have until the end of 2011 to submit their national strategies. The European Commission will then assess the plans and publish a report in Spring 2012.²</p>
<i>Non-Legislative</i>	<p>Reconciliation between work, family and private life</p> <p>The commission has yet to publish a communication in relation to this. However, in the 2011 work programme it states that a second stage consultation will take place in 2013.³ Depending on the results of this consultation the commission may bring forward guidelines. These measures will have the double aim of increasing female employment rates as</p>

² http://ec.europa.eu/justice/policies/discrimination/docs/com_2011_173_en.pdf

³ European Commission Work Programme Annex (2011) Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/docs/cwp2012_annex_en.pdf

	women bear the main responsibilities for caring for children and other dependents as well as tackling the demographic challenge. ⁴
<i>Legislative</i>	Regulation on EU hotlines for missing children The Commission has yet to produce a proposal for this and it states in the 2012 work programme that this will now be brought forward in 2013. ⁵ This initiative is a follow-up of the communication on the 116 children hotlines of 2010 and aims at ensuring appropriate functioning of the 116 hotline in all Member States.

⁴ European Commission Work Programme Annex (2011) Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/docs/cwp2012_annex_en.pdf

⁵ European Commission Work Programme Annex (2011) Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/docs/cwp2012_annex_en.pdf

Appendix 2 Update on relevant initiatives Commission Work Programme 2010

Nature	Title of the document
<i>Communication</i>	<p align="center">The European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion: A European framework for social and territorial cohesion</p>
<p>Published 16th December 2010</p> <p>In a policy communication (COM (2010) 758) adopted on 16th December 2010, the Commission announced the ambitious EU target of reducing poverty and social exclusion by at least 20 million people, from 80 million, by 2020.</p> <p>This Communication presents how different policies will contribute to this ambitious goal of reducing poverty and increasing inclusion, identifies a number of associated actions to help achieving the poverty target and explains the design and the content of the platform .⁶</p> <p>These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved access to work, social security, essential services (healthcare, housing, etc.) and education • Better use of EU funds to support social inclusion and combat discrimination • Social innovation to find smart solutions, especially in terms of more effective and efficient social support • New partnerships between the public and the private sector 	
<i>Communication</i>	<p align="center">European Disability Strategy 2010-2020: A Renewed Commitment to a Barrier –Free Europe</p>

⁶ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:0758:FIN:EN:PDF>

	<p>The policy communication was adopted on 15th November 2010, (Its adoption replaced the previous Disability Action Plan).</p> <p>The overall aim of the strategy is to empower people with disabilities so that they may fully participate in society and in the European economy, notably through the Single market.</p> <p>The Commission has identified eight main areas for action: Accessibility, Participation, Equality, Employment, Education and training, Social protection, Health, and External Action.⁷</p>
<i>Proposal</i>	<p>Decision on the Progress Programme 2013-2020</p> <p>Appears not to have been published.</p>
<i>Communication</i>	<p>The social and economic integration of the Roma in Europe</p> <p>In a policy Communication (COM(2010)133) adopted on 7 April 2010, the Commission outlined an ambitious mid-term programme to meet the biggest challenges for Roma inclusion, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobilising the Structural Funds, including the European Social Fund – which together represent almost half of the EU's budget – to support Roma inclusion; • Taking Roma issues into account in all relevant policy areas at national and EU level, from employment to urban development and from public health to EU expansion; • Harnessing the potential of Roma communities to support inclusive growth as part of the Europe 2020 strategy. <p>No further communications have been released</p>

⁷ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:0636:FIN:EN:PDF>

<i>Communication</i>	<p>Gender equality strategy 2010-2015</p> <p>Published 21st September 2010</p> <p>The Commission adopted a five-year strategy for promoting equality between women and men in Europe. The strategy aims in particular to make better use of women's potential, thereby contributing to the EU's overall economic and social goals. The strategy translates the principles set out in the European Commission's Women's Charter into specific measures, ranging from getting more women into company boardrooms to tackling gender-based violence. Meanwhile, a new Eurobarometer survey shows 87% of Europeans support EU action to tackle domestic violence. One out of four knows someone who has been a victim of such violence. The gender equality strategy spells out a series of actions based around five priorities: the economy and labour market; equal pay; equality in senior positions; tackling gender violence; and promoting equality beyond the EU.</p>
<i>Communication</i>	<p>The fundamental rights policy</p> <p>Published 19th October 2010</p> <p>COM(2010) 573 final - Strategy for the effective implementation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights by the EU</p> <p>The purpose of this Communication is therefore to set out the Commission's strategy for the implementation of the Charter in the new legal environment existing since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty</p>
<i>Communication</i>	<p>The strategy on the rights of the child (2010-2014), on the basis of an evaluation of the impact of the EU instruments affecting children's rights</p> <p>Consultation closed on 20th August appears not to have been published.</p>

	Expected to be published in December 2010, appears to not have been published yet. ⁸
<i>Communication</i>	<p>The fight against racism and xenophobia</p> <p>Appears not to have been published</p>
<i>Communication</i>	<p>Reinforcing the contribution of cohesion policy to the sustainable development of the EU's regions and delivering Europe 2020</p> <p>The Commission published on 6th October 2011 a comprehensive new cohesion policy for 2014-2020 as part of the "Europe 2020" agenda. The proposals seek to simplify access to funding, by bringing a number of funds under the umbrella of a single regulation and reducing the documentation burden on applicants. The proposals will also require national and regional authorities to set clear, attainable and measurable goals in priority areas linked with the EU's "2020" growth and sustainability strategy. The policy also includes a mechanism that allows the Commission to cut funding if it deems national budgetary policies as unsustainable.⁹ The legislative package consists of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An overarching regulation setting out common rules governing the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF). This will allow for the better combination of funds for a stronger impact of EU action

⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/governance/impact/planned_ia/docs/69_jls_rights_of_child_en.pdf

⁹ NI Assembly Research Service (2011) "Cohesion Policy 2014-2020" Available at: <http://assist.assemblyni.gov.uk/services/rsrchlib/products/researchpubs/dept/ofmdfm/2011/moore12711.pdf>

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Three specific regulations for the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Cohesion Fund.• Two regulations dealing with the European territorial cooperation goal and the European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC).• Two regulations on the European Globalisation Fund (EGF) and the Programme for Social Change and Innovation.• A communication on the European Union Solidarity Fund (EUSF)¹⁰ |
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¹⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/what/future/proposals_2014_2020_en.cfm