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Assembly

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EU Work Programme 2013: Areas of Potential Interest to the Committee for OFMdfM

1 Introduction

This paper is written in the context of the responsibility of the Research and Information Service (RaISe) to monitor and disseminate key developments in the European Union that may impact on policy development in Northern Ireland¹:

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.

In this case, the rationale for the selection of themes related to the European Commission Work Programme 2013² of relevance to the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMdfM) is briefly outlined.

¹ Action 8 of the Committee for OFMdfM Inquiry into Consideration of European Issues, 13 January 2010: http://archive.niassembly.gov.uk/centre/2007mandate/reports/2009/Report_33_09_10R.htm.

² European Commission Work Programme 2013: http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/key-documents/index_en.htm.

OFMdfM has responsibility for the oversight of EU issues across all departments. However, this paper highlights three areas that are the specific responsibility of OFMdfM:

- Integration of the Roma
- Elimination of obstacles to EU citizen's rights
- EU enlargement

This is by no means the totality of EU issues for consideration by OFMdfM under the current Commission Work Programme, but examples where the Executive's EU priorities³ and the Commission Work Programme coincide.

A summary is at Appendix 1.

2 Integration of the Roma

Under the heading 'Growth for jobs: inclusion and excellence', initiative no 31 of the Work Programme⁴ is described as follows:

Commission Recommendation aimed at fostering implementation of National Roma Integration Strategies, based on the work of a Pilot Group of Member States representing a geographical balance and the diverse situations concerning Roma within the EU and identifying good practices and effective approaches to Roma Integration.

On 5 April 2011, The Commission adopted a Communication creating an EU Framework for National Roma Integration strategies up to 2020⁵. Its aim is to encourage Member States to adopt further a comprehensive approach to Roma integration. They are asked to set realistic, achievable national goals for Roma integration in four crucial areas (employment, education, housing and health) and to allocate sufficient funding to actions supporting Roma integration from national budgets complemented by international or EU funding.

This initiative directly deriving from the 2011 Communication aims therefore at ensuring that all national authorities create or adapt national Roma integration strategies/sets of policy measures in proportion to the size of the Roma population living in their territories and taking into account their starting points.

This initiative has relevance for the Executive's European Priorities, as follows:

³ Northern Ireland Executive (2012), *European Priorities 2012-2013 Implementation Plan*, Belfast: NI Executive: <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/index/co-operation/about-the-european-policy-and-co-ordination-co-operation/european-priorities-2012-2013.htm>.

⁴ The initiatives examined in this paper are taken from the Annex to the Commission Work Programme: http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/pdf/cwp2013_annex_en.pdf.

⁵ European Commission (2011), *An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020*, COM(2011) 173, Brussels: EC: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/policies/discrimination/docs/com_2011_173_en.pdf.

SC 10. Use European funding to reduce poverty, support social inclusion and combat discrimination

SC 10.2 To pursue any competitive EU funding opportunities that arise during 2012-13 that are designed to reduce poverty, support social inclusion or combat discrimination and support projects in making applications [OFMDFM; all Departments]

SC 14. Promote the use of European funding programmes to organisations within the region who are working in the area of social cohesion

Over recent years members of the Roma Community have arrived in Northern Ireland. There are similarities between the circumstances of the Roma and those of the 'Traveller Community', however, Roma may also face language barriers. In June 2009, a major incident in Belfast brought treatment of the Roma in Northern Ireland to international attention⁶.

In terms of numbers, research in Northern Ireland for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation stated⁷:

There are no official estimates of the Roma population in Northern Ireland, but unofficial estimates put the figure in the hundreds, with the overwhelming majority being Romanian nationals.

The report identified job insecurity, discrimination, documentation issues, poor working conditions and labour exploitation with regard to Roma in Belfast. In part, vulnerability to exploitation was linked in the report to labour restrictions for Romanian nationals⁸.

Northern Ireland is included in the UK strategy, which, as with the equivalent strategy in the Republic of Ireland, includes measures for the integration of Irish Travellers⁹. Travellers are designated a 'racial group' within the provisions of the Race Relations Order 1997¹⁰. Disadvantage in the Traveller community is well documented, demonstrated in the Promoting Social Inclusion (PSI) Working Group on Travellers 2001¹¹, but particularly in the areas of education¹², health¹³ and accommodation¹⁴.

⁶ 'Only Two Roma from 114 Remain after Northern Ireland Race Shame', *Belfast Telegraph* 27-06-09:

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/local-national/only-two-roma-from-114-remain-after-northern-ireland-race-shame-14366153.html>.

⁷ Les Allamby, John Bell, Jennifer Hamilton, Ulf Hansson, Neil Jarman, Michael Potter, Sorina Toma (2011), *Forced labour in Northern Ireland: exploiting vulnerability*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, p.44:

<http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/forced-labour-northern-ireland-exploiting-vulnerability>.

⁸ Romanian and Bulgarian (A2) nationals have been subject to temporary restrictions since accession in 2007, but these restrictions can remain in place only until 2014.

⁹ European Commission (2012), *National Roma Integration Strategies: A First Step in the Implementation of the EU Framework*, Brussels: European Commission, pp.61-62:

http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_nat_integration_strat_en.pdf.

¹⁰ Section 5(3)(a) of the Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1997/869/contents/made>.

¹¹ PSI Working Group reports on the OFMDFM website: http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/index/equality/race/race_publications.htm.

¹² See publications from the Task Force on Traveller Education 2011:

http://www.deni.gov.uk/taskforce_on_traveller_education.htm.

3 Elimination of Obstacles to EU Citizens' Rights

Under the heading 'Building a Safe and Secure EU', initiative 47 of the Commission Work Programme is described as follows:

Report on progress made since the 2010 Citizenship Report and identify further actions towards completing the removal of obstacles to EU citizens' enjoyment of their rights under the Treaty. It will be one of the deliverables of the European Year of Citizens.

EU citizens are guaranteed certain rights across all the Member States and this is to be emphasised in European Year of the Citizen 2013. The Commission intends to report on progress since the EU Citizenship Report 2010¹⁵, which highlights problems for EU citizens in relation to rights as private individuals (such as property rights, access to justice, access to health care, etc.), as residents, students and professionals (such as free movement, recognition of qualifications, social security, etc.) and as political actors (such as voting rights).

The initiative has relevance for the Executive's European Priorities as follows:

SC 10. Use European funding to reduce poverty, support social inclusion and combat discrimination

SC 14. Promote the use of European funding programmes to organisations within the region who are working in the area of social cohesion

Northern Ireland has been a destination region for migrants from across the EU (and beyond) in recent years¹⁶. However, successive research has identified difficulties experienced with discrimination, employment and integration¹⁷.

The Racial Equality Strategy in 2005¹⁸ was intended to run until 2010. A Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Strategy¹⁹, intended to fuse approaches to community

¹³ See the All-Ireland Traveller Health Study 2010: <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/hss/equality/eq-travellers/all-ireland-traveller-health-study.htm>.

¹⁴ See the Travellers Accommodation Needs Assessment 2008: http://www.nihe.gov.uk/travellers_accommodation_needs_assessment_2008.pdf.

¹⁵ European Commission (2010), *Citizenship Report 2010: Dismantling the obstacles to EU citizens' rights*, COM(2010) 603, Brussels: EC: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/citizen/files/com_2010_603_en.pdf.

¹⁶ See Research and Information Service Research Paper 31/12 *Migration in Northern Ireland: an update*, February 2012: <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2012/general/3112.pdf>.

¹⁷ For example, Kathryn Bell, Neil Jarman and Thomas Lefebvre (2004), *Migrant Workers in Northern Ireland*, Belfast: Institute for Conflict Research: <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/migrantworkers.pdf>; John Bell, Anne Caughey, Ulf Hansson, Agnieszka Martynowicz and Maura Scully (2009), *A Report on Migrant Workers in Northern Ireland*, Belfast: DEL: http://www.delni.gov.uk/a_report_on_the_experiences_of_migrant_workers_in_northern_ireland.pdf; Robbie McVeigh and Chris McAfee (2009), *Za Chlebem: The Impact of the Economic Downturn on the Polish Community in Northern Ireland*, Belfast: NICEM: http://www.nicem.org.uk/uploads/publications/Za_Chlebem_Report.pdf; Agnieszka Martynowicz and Neil Jarman (2009), *New Migration, Equality and Integration: Issues and Challenges for Northern Ireland*, Belfast: Equality Commission: <http://www.equalityni.org/archive/pdf/ICRMigrantworkersJanuary2009.pdf>.

¹⁸ OFMdfM (2005), *Racial Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland 2005-2010*, Belfast: OFMdfM: <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/index/equality/race.htm>.

¹⁹ OFMdfM (2010), *Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration*, Belfast: OFMdfM: <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/index/equality/community-relations/csi-consultation.htm>.

cohesion with regard to Protestant and Catholic communities, migrants and minority ethnic groups, has not been agreed for introduction.

4 EU Enlargement

Under the heading 'Europe as a Global Actor', initiative 56 in the Work Programme is described as follows:

The Commission has been invited by the Council to regularly report on the candidate countries and potential candidates. The Commission Strategy Paper allows the European Council to define main strategic orientations on enlargement at the end of each year.

Croatia is acceding to the EU in 2013 and Iceland, Montenegro, Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey are candidate countries. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo are potential candidates²⁰.

The initiative has relevance for the Executives EU Priorities as follows:

SC3. Share our experience of conflict resolution to assist others

Northern Ireland has been the recipient of generous EU and other funds in support of post-conflict reconciliation²¹ and has accumulated considerable experience and expertise in institution-building in a region in transition from conflict. As part of the enlargement process, Northern Ireland has much to offer potential accession states and Northern Ireland can also learn from their experiences.

In this context, the Northern Ireland Assembly has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Kosovo Assembly. Both relatively young post-conflict legislatures, there is significant potential for mutual learning and Northern Ireland in particular has much to offer in its experience of the use of EU funds for post-conflict transition in all its dimensions to share with a region on the path towards EU accession. Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia may also provide opportunities to share experiences of the use of EU funds in the transition from conflict.

²⁰ European Commission Enlargement web pages, accessed 12 February 2013:

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/countries/check-current-status/index_en.htm.

²¹ The EU Peace III Programme 2007-2013 has brought €225m, plus €108 Member State contributions, towards peacebuilding in Northern Ireland, building on Peace I and Peace II, with plans for Peace 4 under way:

<http://www.seupb.eu/programmes2007-2013/peaceiiiprogramme/overview.aspx>.

Appendix 1: Summary of Potential Priorities for OFMdFM in the European Commission Work Plan 2013

EU Initiative	Type	Executive Priority
31: Integration of the Roma	Soft law	SC-10, 10.2, 14
<p><i>Commission Recommendation aimed at fostering implementation of National Roma Integration Strategies, based on the work of a Pilot Group of Member States representing a geographical balance and the diverse situations concerning Roma within the EU and identifying good practices and effective approaches to Roma Integration</i></p>		
47: EU Citizen Report 2013: Progress Towards Eliminating Obstacles to EU Citizens' Rights	Non-legislative	SC-10, 14
<p><i>Report on progress made since the 2010 Citizenship Report and identify further actions towards completing the removal of obstacles to EU citizens' enjoyment of their rights under the Treaty. It will be one of the deliverables of the European Year of Citizens</i></p>		
56: Enlargement Package 2013	Non-legislative	SC-3
<p><i>The Commission has been invited by the Council to regularly report on the candidate countries and potential candidates. The Commission Strategy Paper allows the European Council to define main strategic orientations on enlargement at the end of each year</i></p>		