

To the
Presidency of the European Union
Gregorčičeva 20, 25
SI-1000 Ljubljana
Slovenia

Brussels, 6th March 2008

European Council March 2008: honouring the commitment to Social Europe

Dear Prime Minister Janez Janša,

Eurodiaconia welcomed the commitment made by Member States to reinforce the social dimension of the Lisbon Strategy in the 2007 European Council conclusions which stressed that *“the need to fight poverty and social exclusion”* and *“the common social objectives of Member States should be better taken into account within the Lisbon agenda”*. In 2006 the Spring Council stressed that *“the policies for social protection and social inclusion have to be closely coordinated with the Partnership for jobs and growth”*.

This year’s planned review of the integrated guidelines provides the opportunity to turn these words into deeds. The guidelines are the basis for the Lisbon Strategy reforms, so taking the social dimension *better into account* should be done here, yet we fear that the opportunity for insuring close coordination will not be taken, threatening the legitimacy of the Council’s commitment.

We call on the Council to give greater recognition and commitment to the Open Method of Coordination on Social Protection and Social Inclusion in the guidelines as this process is the key vehicle for the social dimension of EU cooperation, for implementing the common social objectives. As such it is an integral and essential part of the Lisbon Strategy. Strengthened interaction between the OMC and the growth and jobs strategy, as well as the monitoring of the social impact of reforms is necessary to enable coherent and effective policy making in order to *“make a decisive impact on poverty and social exclusion by 2010”*.

We therefore urge Member States to support the European Commission plans to *“deepen”*¹ the OMC process and to make it *“more dynamic and more focused on implementation”*², fully involving all stakeholders and their expertise.

I remain, yours sincerely,



Heidi Paakjaer Martinussen
Secretary General
Eurodiaconia
The European Federation for Diaconia

¹ COM(2007) 620 final

² COM(2007) 726 final

***Eurodiaconia** is a federation of 34 members - churches, welfare organisations and NGOs in Europe - operating at national and international level. Our members are rooted in the Christian faith within the traditions of the Reformation as well as in the Anglican and Orthodox traditions. We network diaconal and social work of institutions and church communities and cooperate with civil society partners.*

***Our Mission:** We link our members to serve for solidarity and justice. Our strategic aims are to ensure quality of life for all in a social Europe, to link institutions of diaconia, social initiatives and churches in Europe, to be and to enhance a network of competence.*

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