

**Question for written answer E-004408/2012
to the Commission**

Rule 117

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Subject: Poverty in the EU

Last month, Eurostat announced that in the EU in 2010, some 115 million citizens – approximately 23 % of the population – were on the verge of poverty. These people were at risk of privation and lacked the material resources to guarantee a minimum standard of living, or found themselves facing short- or long-term unemployment. Proportionately the worst examples of exclusion from an active social life and the risk of poverty were in Bulgaria (42 %) and Romania (41 %), followed by Latvia (38 %).

In the more developed EU countries, the Czech Republic had the least poverty (14 %); followed by Sweden and the Netherlands (15 %); and Belgium, with just over 20 %. The most common measure for assessing poverty was the lack of financial resources to pay basic bills, e.g. gas, electricity and water.

This means that conditions in this section of the community differed from generally accepted living standards. In financial terms, income was also below the established poverty line. The main cause of exclusion is identified as long-term unemployment without any prospects for change.

- How does the Commission intend to fight the risk of exclusion from social interaction for this large sector of the population, and how is it implementing the laws of the Treaty on European Union, in particular Article 3(3) and (5)?
- Are programmes being implemented to stimulate the employment market and to create new jobs, with particular reference to the poorest EU countries?
- Within what time period does the Commission intend to improve the situation for these poor people, as defined by Eurostat?