

# EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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*Committee on Employment and Social Affairs*

**2005/2051(INI)**

14.7.2005

## **OPINION**

of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

for the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

on environmental aspects of sustainable development  
(2005/2051(INI))

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## SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs calls on the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Stresses that improvements on the road to sustainable development can only be achieved if all three dimensions of sustainable development – the environment, employment/social affairs and economic aspects – are taken equally into account;
2. Is concerned that the initial stocktaking in advance of the review of the sustainable development strategy confirms that large sections of the European population continue to suffer severe economic and social problems, such as poverty, unemployment, social exclusion and a lack of means and mechanisms to distribute resources more fairly; these problems are largely cancelling out every attempt to implement this strategy; also expresses great concern at the emergence of, and anticipated deterioration in, phenomena such as the dramatic demographic changes in the European Union and the reverse trends in the least developed countries in the South;
3. Endorses the Commission's view that the Gothenburg sustainable development strategy and the Lisbon Strategy are complementary, being based on improved competitiveness, job creation, greater social inclusion, environmental protection and risk prevention; stresses – in the light of limited financial resources – the need for a uniform and efficient procedure to enable the two strategies to be continuously and systematically monitored and reviewed;
4. Calls for the consistent expansion of the European social model and for recommendations, on the basis of that model, that the Member States take action to counteract the 'unsustainable' trends of poverty, social exclusion, and the consequences of the ageing of society; considers that, to this end, social situation indicators should be developed which would then be included in the sustainability impact assessment; emphasises that Europe needs a macro-economic framework to support sustainable development, strengthening environmentally friendly internal demand, employment and social cohesion;
5. Regrets the lack of concrete proposals to resolve the problems of poverty, social exclusion and the inequitable distribution of resources; urges the Commission to put forward concrete initiatives and efficient implementation measures to enable the desired objectives to be achieved in reality; regards the proposed guidelines as insufficiently binding to achieve any change in the existing trends; points in this connection, by way of example, to the Commission's initiative aimed at analysing the problem of an ageing society, which seeks to achieve concrete solutions based on the participation both of the various levels of political decision-making in the European Union and of civil society;
6. Notes that the Member States have a central role to play in relation to social security systems, poverty and social exclusion, but at the same time draws attention to the fact that pan-European objective setting and action plans are required; in this connection a

special role should be envisaged for action by social organisations, NGOs, the economic partners and in general for participation by European citizens; challenges the Commission to establish, under the open coordination method, what form these objectives and plans could take and how each individual Member State's progress or lack of progress can be continuously monitored and clearly documented;

7. Stresses that the sustainable funding of social security systems can only be achieved by enhanced solidarity between the generations; points up the particular importance of educating citizens in a responsible manner as regards social and environmental issues; calls for the burden of labour costs to be reduced in Member States' tax systems; calls for greater coordination within Member States in order to reduce social exclusion, more effectively guarantee social security for all European citizens, and achieve the same high ecological standards everywhere;
8. Calls for the financial perspective for 2007-2013 to make sufficient provision for appropriate action to be taken at various levels to combat unsustainable trends such as poverty, social exclusion and the consequences of the ageing of society; stresses that sustainable development must thus be a guiding principle for EU policies in all areas; recommends that the financial perspective provide for adequate funds to promote full employment, social inclusion and the eradication of poverty and to strengthen social, territorial and economic cohesion;
9. Insists that, particularly in view of the limited financial resources available, impact assessments must be further improved and the knowledge gained thereby must be put into practice in a consistent manner;
10. Supports the Commission's call for the setting of objectives to combat negative trends; one priority medium-term objective should be to achieve the European Constitution's call for the 'sustainable development of Europe based on balanced economic growth and price stability, a highly competitive social market economy, aiming at full employment and social progress, and a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment', an overarching objective from which concrete intermediate objectives may be derived;
11. Calls for the seventh framework programme for research to be implemented in such a way as to ensure sustainable development in as many sectors as possible and to create high-quality jobs;
12. Calls for expectations to be fulfilled with regard to bringing the whole workforce into work, regardless of age and sex, using opportunities for lifelong learning to reinforce action on sustainable development.

