



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## Research and Library Service Briefing Paper

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# European Commission Work Programme 2010

## 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. This briefing paper contains the results of an initial screening of the European Commission's 2010 Work Programme to identify initiatives which relate to the work of the COFMdFM.

### **European Commission Work Programme 2010**

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. On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010, the European Commission published its 2010 Work Programme for which it provided the following overview:

The Commission Work Programme (CWP) 2010 translates the priorities of President Barroso's political guidelines into concrete actions. Overall, emphasis of the CWP is on (1) putting the Europe 2020 Strategy into practice thereby building the basis for exiting the economic crisis and creating sustainable growth and jobs (2) enhancing the rights and security of European citizens and (3) strengthening Europe's role on the world stage.<sup>1</sup>
6. Notably, the format of the 2010 Work Programme differs from that of previous years' legislative and work programmes. For the first time, the Work

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<sup>1</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/index_en.htm)

Programme provides a four-year rather than an annual overview of the Commission's legislative and non-legislative priorities. This format is designed not only to improve predictability for all stakeholders, but also to facilitate cooperation with the other EU institutions. Through annual updates of the Work Programme, the Commission will identify new annual strategic initiatives and adapt the multiannual strand as necessary.

7. Whilst the body of the Work Programme describes the Commission's ambitions and commitments for 2010 and beyond, a number of annexes provide detail on individual initiatives which it plans to take forward.
8. Under the following headings, Annex I contains a list of 34 strategic initiatives on which the Commission commits to deliver in 2010.
  - o Tackling the crisis
  - o Advancing the "Europe 2020" flagship initiatives
  - o Tackling Europe's bottlenecks
  - o Putting people at the Heart of European action and building a citizens' Europe
  - o Ensuring an open and secure Europe
  - o Addressing long-term societal changes
  - o Deepening Europe's trade agenda
  - o Modernizing EU instruments and the ways of working
9. Annex II contains a list of 280 major proposals under consideration during 2010 and beyond, which are tentative prospects for the rest of the mandate. These are broken down under the following headings, which map closely to the Departments and Services of the European Commission.<sup>2</sup>

Agriculture and Rural Development Budget Climate Action Competition Development Digital Agenda Economic and Monetary affairs Education, Culture and Youth Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion Energy Enlargement and Neighborhood Policy Environment Health and Consumers Home Affairs	Humanitarian Aid & Crisis Response Industry and Entrepreneurship Internal Market and Services Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Regional Policy Research and Innovation Services of general interest Smart Regulation Taxation and Customs Union Trade Transport
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10. A list of simplification proposals and withdrawals is included as Annexes III and IV to the Work Programme.

<sup>2</sup> The term 'Commission' is used within the European Union in two senses. First, it refers to the team of men and women from Member States appointed to run the institution and take its decisions. Secondly, the term 'Commission' refers to the institution itself and to its staff.

11. The remainder of this paper identifies those initiatives contained in Annexes I and II which are most relevant to the work of the COFMdFM. One initiative from Annex I is identified.

**Strategic initiatives the Commission is committed to adopt in 2010 (9 months: April-December)**

Nature	Title of the document	Likely date of publication
<i>Communication</i>	The Platform against Poverty	4 <sup>th</sup> quarter 2010
<p><b>Communication on the Platform against Poverty</b></p> <p>The Europe 2020 strategy has put forward three mutually reinforcing priorities, one of which is “inclusive growth: fostering a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion.”<sup>3</sup> The European Platform against Poverty is a flagship initiative which will support delivery on this priority by ensuring “social and territorial cohesion such that the benefits of growth and jobs are widely shared and people experiencing poverty and social exclusion are enabled to live in dignity and take an active part in society.”<sup>4</sup></p> <p>The Commission communication (expected to be adopted in October 2010) will put forward proposals for the Platform against Poverty explaining the changes that will need to be made to the social open method of co-ordination (OMC) to help achieve these. The OMC will enable Member States to co-operate on the fundamental and largely shared challenges of strengthening social inclusion and reducing poverty by 2020.<sup>5</sup></p> <p><i>The Communication will look at progress in the social domain and push forward an agenda to generate greater political commitment and visibility, and a stronger positive interaction with other policies. Particular focus will be on active inclusion and child poverty.</i><sup>6</sup></p>		

**Indicative list of possible strategic and priority initiatives under consideration (the initiatives listed cover 2010 and beyond)**

<i>Communication</i>	EU disability strategy 2010-2020
<i>Proposal</i>	Decision on the Progress Programme 2013-2020
<i>Communication</i>	The social and economic integration of the Roma in Europe
<i>Communication</i>	Gender equality strategy 2010-2015
<i>Communication</i>	The fundamental rights policy
<i>Communication</i>	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
<i>Communication</i>	The fight against racism and xenophobia
<i>Communication</i>	Reinforcing the contribution of cohesion policy to the sustainable development of the EU's regions and delivering Europe 2020

<sup>3</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/pdf/COMPLET%20EN%20BARROSO%20%20%20007%20-%20Europe%202020%20-%20EN%20version.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> As above

<sup>5</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/governance/impact/planned\\_ia/docs/15\\_empl\\_platform\\_against\\_poverty\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/governance/impact/planned_ia/docs/15_empl_platform_against_poverty_en.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/docs/cwp2010\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/docs/cwp2010_en.pdf)

12. The tables above identify nine initiatives covering the period 2010-2014 which appear to be most relevant to the work of the Committee. It is proposed that, to support the work of the COFMdFM, the Justice and Equality Research Team will monitor the development of these initiatives. In addition, as the initiatives are clearly focused around the key policy areas of Social Affairs, Inclusion and Fundamental Rights, the team will also monitor the development of any new policy proposals, legislative or otherwise, in these broad areas.
13. At a later date, should it become necessary to prioritise the initiatives for continued monitoring, the criteria listed below could be employed.
  - Legislative versus non-legislative proposal (legislative higher priority)
  - Stage in policy development (earlier higher priority)
  - Relevance (links to other committee work for example)
  - Significance (based on likely impact of initiative in NI, for example financial)
  - relevance to Executive's Priorities for European Engagement<sup>7</sup>
14. In addition to updating the Committee directly via the Committee Clerk, the Research & Library Service's online current awareness tool HORIZON will be used to disseminate information on developments more widely.
15. As none of the key initiatives identified above are legislative proposals, they will not be subject to a subsidiarity check, which is triggered by draft legislation. Nevertheless, emerging developments in the policy areas highlighted above will be monitored closely to identify in any draft legislative acts that may emerge at a later date.

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<sup>7</sup> [http://www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk/priorities\\_for\\_european\\_engagement-action\\_plan\\_2008-2009\\_3mb\\_-2.pdf](http://www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk/priorities_for_european_engagement-action_plan_2008-2009_3mb_-2.pdf)

## Appendix 1

### **EU disability strategy 2010-2020**

The communication will outline how the EU disability strategy will aim to remove disability discrimination while securing rights and freedoms for persons with disabilities.

### **Decision on the Progress Programme 2013-2020**

Legislative in nature, this initiative refers to the Progress programme which is the EU's employment and social solidarity programme.

### **The social and economic integration of the Roma in Europe**

The aim of this communication is to show how the EU can work to further integrate the Roma and will outline "a concept to embed specific and effective approaches into relevant mainstream policies."<sup>8</sup>

### **Gender equality strategy 2010-2015**

The new gender equality strategy will contain actions that reflect the recently adopted Women's Charter.

*The Charter presents a series of commitments based on agreed principles of equality between women and men. It aims to promote:*

- *equality in the labour market and equal economic independence for women and men, namely through the Europe 2020 strategy;*
- *equal pay for equal work and work of equal value by working with Member States to reduce significantly the gender pay gap over the next five years;*
- *equality in decision-making through EU incentive measures;*
- *dignity, integrity and an end to gender-based violence through a comprehensive policy framework;*
- *gender equality beyond the EU by pursuing the issue in external relations and with international organisations.*<sup>9</sup>

### **The fundamental rights policy**

"This communication will set out the EU system of protection of fundamental rights and present the Commission's approach to ensure the effectiveness of the Charter for Fundamental Rights across EU policies."<sup>10</sup>

It will propose that all impact assessments contain a fundamental rights chapter and that the implementation of the Charter is monitored and reported on annually.

### **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**

The communication will outline the Commission priorities with regards to the rights of the child and will review existing hotlines for missing children.

<sup>8</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/docs/cwp2010\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/docs/cwp2010_en.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Europa, *European Commission strengthens its commitment to equality between women and men* (5 March 2010)

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/10/237&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

<sup>10</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/docs/cwp2010\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/docs/cwp2010_en.pdf)

**The fight against racism and xenophobia**

The aim of this initiative is to show how existing legal and financial instruments can be better used to tackle racism, xenophobia and discrimination.

**Reinforcing the contribution of cohesion policy to the sustainable development of the EU's regions and delivering Europe 2020**

A non-legislative communication which will provide guidance on “how to align Cohesion Policy objectives in the field of sustainable development with the Europe 2020 vision in terms of promoting a more resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> As above