

Social Justice and Regeneration Committee

SJR(2)-05-07(p.4) Annex 1

Date: 31 January 2007

Time: 9.00 - 12.30

Title: EU policy and legislative priorities for 2007

Purpose of Paper

1. This paper invites Members to note which European Union policy and legislative issues in 2007 are relevant to the remit of this Committee and which it may want to refer to in its Legacy Report as issues to be taken forward in the Third Assembly.
2. The Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) has provided a summary of the European Commission's Legislative and Work Programme 2007 and its implications for the WAG to the European and External Affairs Committee.

Background

3. The European Commission's Work Programme was published on 24 October 2006. It lists all strategic and priority items which the Commission will propose in 2007. See here:

http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/docs/clwp2007_en.pdf

Suggested Priorities for 2007

4. The protocol for dealing with EU issues was agreed by the Panel of Chairs.
5. Members Research and Committee Services have sifted the 2007 work programme (including the Commission's non-priority items) for items which are relevant to this Committee's remit. These are listed below. The paragraphs in italics are excerpts from the European Commission's Legislative and Work Programme 2007. The Social Reality Stocktaking Report was identified as a priority area by the Assembly Government.

A. Social Reality Stocktaking

This is a report which does not involve legislative action.

In June 2006, the European Council, recognising that the complex dynamics of social change within our societies need to be better understood in order to strengthen Europe's response to globalisation,

asked the Commission to take stock of the social situation in the Union, with a particular emphasis on questions of access and opportunity.

This stock-take will examine the main drivers behind the social transformations in European societies. It will look at how these changes can be assessed against benchmarks of well-being. It will attempt to open a debate about some of the key factors that contributes to wellbeing – such as economic opportunity, the quality of working life, the challenges of the ageing society, demography and new patterns of family life, poverty and inequality, the barriers to good health and social mobility, crime and anti-social behaviour, and diversity and multiculturalism. This exercise in exploring Europe's social reality aims at building a new consensus on the social challenges facing Europeans

This stocktaking exercise will have a bearing on the mid-term review of the EU's Social Agenda (2005-2010) which set out revised priorities and implementation of the agenda in the employment and social fields until 2010.

B. Green Paper on the Establishment of the Second Phase of the Common European Asylum System

This Green paper aims to stimulate debate and dialogue with all stakeholders involved in asylum policy which will be taken into account in the preparation of the second stage legal instruments to be proposed by the Commission in order to complete the Common European Asylum Policy by 2010.

C. Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and the Council

Designating 2010 as the European Year of combating Poverty and Social Exclusion

The European cooperation on the fight against poverty and social exclusion has a limited impact, due to its lack of penetration beyond the restricted group of European and national policy-makers directly concerned. The main policy objectives of the European Year will be to: raise awareness of the problems of poverty and exclusion and the barriers faced by disadvantaged groups stimulate debate on ways to increase the participation in society of groups who live in situations of poverty and exclusion.

6. The Committee might also wish to continue to monitor developments in the following areas which they identified as significant in 2006:

Rights of the Child

Communication on the Rights of the Child - a framework for actions to implement children's rights in the context of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Drugs Policy

Green Paper on drugs and civil society - a framework for working with civil society to implement

actions in the EU Drugs Action Plan 2005-08. The Drugs Action Plan was one of the suggested priority items for consideration by the Social Justice and Regeneration Committee in 2005.

Alcohol-related Harm

Commission Communication on an alcohol policy aiming to reduce the health and social effects of alcohol consumption

Postal services

Proposal for a Directive on an internal market for postal services aiming to further progress the creation of a postal internal market towards the target date of 2009 which could affect rural areas in particular.

Action for Committee

7. The Committee is invited to note the relevant issues from the Commission's work programme for 2007 and decide which European issues they wish to prioritise.

8. Any items will then be included in the Committee's Legacy Report.

Janice Gregory

Chair of the Social Justice and Regeneration Committee