

Two sessions set out to discuss the achievements and the future of the social Open Method of Coordination (OMC), and on the other hand of the 'social clause' in the Lisbon Treaty.

Social Open Method of Coordination

It is unclear how the European Platform Against Poverty (EPAP), set up to achieve social inclusion objectives under [EU2020](#), will affect the existing practices of the [OMC](#). There is concern that important work will be lost.

In most cases it has not yet become a central part of decision making at national level. Civil society involvement in the process is modest at best. Efforts for participation can be difficult and yield very limited improvements, but participants reflected that this 'teething process' is common as national political structures have to adapt to a wider range of participants.

The OMC would not be necessarily be more effective if it involved sanctions for failing on what was agreed: the dialogic, collaborative approach has advantages. Various contributions pointed out the positive impact that OMC has had in putting social cohesion high up on the policy agenda.

People agreed that OMC should be strengthened and continue to exist independently of the

EPAP. It should become less bureaucratic and attempts should be made to engage stakeholders. It should go local and be linked to actions carried out with the [ESF](#). Peer reviews should lead to national roadmaps for social cohesion. The OMC should be used nationally to take an integrated approach to policies so that they are mutually reinforcing. Transparency and participation of relevant stakeholders should also be emphasised.

Lisbon Treaty Article 9: Horizontal Social Clause

The clause is a promising tool to achieve the paradigm shift evoked in the first session. It underlines the need for mutually reinforcing targets and methods in all policy fields. It was suggested that the EC should take responsibility for ensuring this.

Participants felt that this social clause was in part a result of coordinated and effective lobbying from the social NGOs, and shows that working together in this way can make a big impact, but also implies that for the social clause to be applied by EU institutions and Member States will need constant pressure on them to make sure that it is applied and its potential is fully exploited. It was recommended to promote awareness raising and best-practice dissemination from Member States' application of the social clause. The dilemma is how to bring the notion of social issues closer to the citizen: public procurement and consulting the European Court of Justice were considered for this. The recent announcement that existing public procurement regulations will be reviewed offers an important window of opportunity to fully embed the Lisbon Treaty's social clause in EU and national legislation.

Social impact assessment was identified as a key tool in reconciling social and environmental imperatives with economic concerns this, and they pointed to progress over the last 15 years in fields such as environment. However, the social clause should not be limited to impact assessment.

Certain important challenges were evoked, not least of which the limited human resources of the EC, as national governments are reluctant to increase EU budget in spite of ever increasing competences. This puts a further responsibility on public authorities at national and subnational level to ensure that the clause is put into action, and in this they should look to the participation of competent civil society organisations with a valuable expertise in the particularities and needs of local populations.

CSOs should to continue to organise themselves around shared goals not only make noise but concrete proposals. They should continue to underline their competence and willingness to contribute and be proactive in engaging with politicians.