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A consultation paper from the bureau of European policy advisers

Europe's social reality

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How can the social well-being of all Europe's citizens be best advanced within a globalizing world?

In its May 2006 **Communication "An Agenda for European citizens"** the **Commission proposed** a "social reality check" to prepare the ground for a forward looking agenda for access and solidarity. In June 2006 the European Council supported that approach, asking the Commission to **take stock of the social situation in the Union, with a particular emphasis on questions of "access and opportunity"**.

Conclusion

European societies face major social challenges. The knowledge economy can seem threatening to those with low skills and low educational aspirations. Unemployment and inactivity still blights too many people's lives, as do unresolved problems of widespread poverty. Generational disadvantage may be becoming more embedded and social mobility more problematic. The social consequences of self perceptions of failure in our unequal societies may be causing new stresses and problems in terms of family dysfunctionality, crime and anti social behaviour, mental illness and the new diseases of affluence. The ties of solidarity that underlay the European Social Model may be corroding, particularly as a result of welfare dependency and the issues relating to the integration of minority communities into our societies.

That said there are many grounds for optimism. Life satisfaction and happiness is higher in Europe than any other part of the world. Life expectancy has increased and could increase a lot further, as could the possibilities of leading healthier as well as longer lives. The jobs people do in the knowledge economy have more potential to be more fulfilling. Educational opportunity is expanding. Women are more independent and in control of their own lives. Diversity has the potential to be a great source of creative strength. Successfully managed migration can help meet Europe's economic and social needs.

Europeans can look forward to a world full of fresh opportunities. The task of policy makers in our Member States and at EU level is to ensure the widest possible access to them.

1. Trends: how European societies have changed

"All Member States face common challenges such as demography, increased ethnic and cultural diversity, and an individualisation of values".

Social change has however in the main been internally driven but globalisation may be accentuating some key trends:

- the disappearance of traditional industrial jobs (in conjunction with the impact of new technology and the emergence of new consumer demands as our societies get richer);
- the requirement for a highly educated society able to develop the talents of all its citizens to the full;
- the emergence of striking new geographic and income inequalities as the fortunes of "winners" and "losers" diverge;
- the imperative of designing a more environmentally sustainable economy to ensure that Europe's long term energy needs are met and tackle the looming threats of climate change;
- and the challenge to the benefits of openness from the problems of mismanaged migration and failed integration.

As traditional communities erode and our societies become more diverse, feelings of insecurity grow, fear of crime increases and questions of identity and citizenship come in question.

Europe's rapid trajectory to a post industrial knowledge and service economy

"Is transforming the nature of work and social class divisions as well as the conditions of access to economic opportunity, the extent of social mobility and the incidence of poverty and inequality".

- In 2006 the most advanced Member States are rapidly becoming post industrial, with manufacturing accounting for less than a fifth of employment in the EU25 as a whole. Service jobs account for more than two thirds of all jobs.
- Between 2000 and 2004 over eight million new service jobs were created in the EU 25, while employment fell in industry (down 1.7 million) and agriculture (down 1.1 million).
- In the EU15 workforce, in 2005 just over 40% was employed in "knowledge based" sectors, with Sweden reaching the highest level (54%) and Portugal the lowest (26%). In the EU15 job growth over the last ten years in knowledge based sectors (at 23.9%) comfortably outstripped the rest of the economy (at 5.7%).

"These changes in economic structure are resulting in new occupational divisions."

- At least half of existing jobs demand a high level of cognitive and/or personal skills. A quarter of all jobs demand advanced qualifications in IT and the proportion is rising fast. Yet one third of the existing workforce has very few skills and one in six young people are still leaving school without qualifications.
- Women are heavily represented in the low skilled service sector: over a quarter work part-time. While generally job satisfaction is high, there are issues concerning the gender pay gap, fewer opportunities for training and career progression, weaker job tenure and reduced access to social benefits which lead to gender segmentation in the labour market that denies equal opportunity.
- The position of the unskilled – particularly men – is generally worsening, above all in areas of manufacturing industry decline. There are jobs available for the unskilled – but sometimes not in the right place, not with same protections and not jobs that some men feel able or comfortable to do as they require face-to-face social skills outside the traditional experience of their immediate communities.
- "Changes in economic structure are altering the pattern of regional inequalities."
- Some cities are successfully remaking their future as centres of the knowledge economy.
- However once prosperous industrial towns, even those situated relatively near these cities, in regions like Lorraine in France, the Ruhr in Germany and Lancashire and South Yorkshire in the UK, have lost their old economic backbone and face difficult challenges of adjustment in discovering a new one.
- While the income gap between richer and poorer countries within the EU 15 has substantially narrowed (and has been spectacularly eliminated in the case of Ireland), the gap between the richest and poorest regions has widened, even within the EU15.
- Enlargement is adding a whole new dimension to regional disparities. Two thirds of the EU 10 live in regions where GDP per head is half or less the EU 15 average. In the whole of Bulgaria and Romania, the average is less than a third.
- Mass affluence and economic modernization have profoundly shaped values
- "We see (this) in the trend to individualization, new patterns of family life, the changing position of women in society, the rise of post-material concerns and the new challenges of democratic engagement".
- It has changed attitudes to authority, the family and what ordinary people seek out of life. Life is no longer something to be accepted and lived as part of the collectivity into which one happened to be born – worker or peasant, village or town, church or religious sect.
- More people now see their lives in terms of a personal biography they write for themselves. This is not to say that people are no longer concerned about "social cohesion": on the contrary surveys suggest that many are, but many have no desire to return to the old conformities of family, class or religion.
- Europe, especially but not only Northern Europe, is a lot less religious than the United States. Only 30% of Europeans attend church regularly; 40% attend solely on special occasions; yet three quarters still find a religious service appropriate at birth, marriage and death.

- The divorce rate has virtually doubled in a single generation. The pattern of divorce follows more of a “religious v secular” pattern than that of fertility. The Member States with the lowest divorce rate in 2003 in rank order were Ireland, Italy, Greece, Spain, Poland and Slovenia; the Member States with the highest were the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Estonia, Belgium, Denmark, and the UK.
- Couples living together today are increasingly prepared to have children without getting married first. Over a quarter of children are born outside marriage: ranging from a high of 56% in Sweden (40% plus in Denmark, France, Finland and the UK) to less than 1 in 10 in Italy. However the proportion of Italian births outside marriage has doubled since 1960.
- The hold of the extended family appears to be weakening across Europe. Only half of children continue to live with their parents up to the age of 25 and only a fifth to the age of 30 across the EU25. 1 in 8 adults live on their own, even in the prime of life – up by half in two decades. Only a quarter of grandparents care for grandchildren on a regular basis and half had not cared for them on a single occasion in a twelve month period.

The rise of the citizen as consumer

"The way we think about issues such as choice in housing and public services, individual responsibility for one's health, the management of waste and recycling, food safety and quality - is changing, while other concerns such as ethical consumption and community empowerment emerge."

- Individuals define themselves more by the choices they make over consumption than their role as producers. Consumption is so important to people that they are prepared to incur large consumer debts in order to sustain it: as a percentage of annual household disposable income, consumer debt stands at over 90%.
- For the affluent, rising incomes have fuelled new sets of demands in an increasingly post-materialist society: as consumers, for new hobbies, organic food, gyms and personal trainers, and personal counselling; in business, for all kinds of consultancy; and in politics for environmental concerns.
- There is evidence that most of us find the “hedonic treadmill” ultimately unsatisfying and for those who cannot keep up in the consumption race, it seems a source of stress, accentuating problems of self esteem and feelings of personal failure. So alongside the explosion of healthy eating fads and diets, gyms and jogging, psycho-social factors are thought to be big contributory factors to binge drinking, obesity, and mental illness.

Challenges to democratic engagement

- Civil society tends to be stronger on a North- South, West - East axis. Poles are Europe's most regular church goers, but levels of civic engagement since democratisation are weak and may have fallen since 1990.
- Voluntary activity is apparently complementary to a well developed welfare state, not a substitute for it. The Nordics are poor church attenders, but along with the Dutch and British are the most actively engaged in one form or another of voluntary organisation in Europe.
- The old political dividing lines of class and religion are eroding fast. Electoral turnout is in decline in many Member States, though there is an interesting contrast between the new democracies of Southern Europe where it remains relatively high and the former Communist Member States where voting in elections as well as civic engagement is generally low.
- There is also a growth of support in many Member States for parties on the extreme Right and Left of the political spectrum. The extremes tend to draw support from the losers from economic transition, especially from the old industrial economy to the knowledge and service economy of today.

Radical demographic change

- "Declining fertility and longer life expectancy raise issues of social and economic sustainability, new and diverse housing demands, work life balance in dual earner households, and gender equality in who shares the burden of care and equity between the generations."
- The majority of women of working age (55.7%) now have a paid job, which is true of all Member States except Italy, Poland, Spain and Malta: in Denmark and Sweden, the employment rate for women is over 70%. Across the whole EU the gender employment gap continues to narrow and is now around 15%.
- The dual earner household is now the norm. The relative position of the family in terms of income and status no more depends on the earnings of the "male breadwinner", but on the earning power of both partners and the long term stability of their relationship.
- Declining fertility has been pretty universal throughout the EU. In 2003, the EU 25 fertility rate was an average of 1.48, far below the 2.1 figure estimated to be necessary to sustain the present level of population (disregarding migration). Fertility rates have fallen by 45% since the 1960s. In 1960 the EU 15 fertility rate was 2.69. By 1980 it had fallen to 1.82. In 2000 it was 1.53. In Ireland for example, the fertility rate fell from 3.2 as late as 1980 to 1.9 in 2000.
- Despite frequently assumed differences between northern and southern European societies, it is precisely in the latter group of countries that women have rebelled most sharply against having children and their traditional role as mothers – and the conflicts between having a job and having a family are most stark. (In 2003 the fertility rate) was only 1.3 in Greece, Italy and Spain. The new Member States have also seen dramatic falls equivalent to Southern Europe regardless of their levels of secularization.
- In the last twenty years the average age of women's first marriage rose five years to 28. There is some evidence that because of economic pressures, women are not having as many children as they would ideally prefer.
- In 1950 40% of the EU25 population was under 25. By 2000 the figure had fallen to 30% and by 2025 it is expected to be less than a quarter. By contrast in 1950 fewer than 1 in 10 of the population were over 65. In 2000 the figure was around 1 in 6. By 2025 it will be well on the way to 1 in 4.

"These figures represent more than numbers. They will have a profound impact on consumer trends, housing and care needs, social attitudes and political priorities. In all our democracies, the elderly are most likely to exercise their right to vote."

The development of the welfare state

"It is well understood how welfare states insured people against the risks of the industrial age. But in meeting physical and material needs, they have also profoundly shaped broader life opportunities in our societies".

- The expansion of higher education offers well-attested benefits in terms of increased earning power, but has also had a profound impact on middle class attitudes.
- The abolition of extreme poverty and the availability of comprehensive health care have contributed to longevity.
- Pensions and social insurance have greatly reduced what was once the scourge of indigence and indignity in old age. In the EU 15, the "ageing society" means for many at present a long and comfortable retirement. This has created a major issue of fairness and sustainability between the generations.
- The largely universal provision of social benefits has facilitated personal independence, but it may also have fostered dependence. There has also been an inevitable impact on work incentives. Nordic experience suggests that welfare states can be generous as long as real conditionality is attached to benefits, which depends on both the quality of a public administration's ability to pursue active labour market policies and a culture of social obligation on the individual's part to find a job.
- But in many Member States generous welfare states successfully ameliorate poverty but are less good at providing access to new opportunity. Welfare has not been comprehensively recast from a safety net that cushions failure to a trampoline that enables people to bounce back from the personal setbacks that life events randomly cause.
- Too often in the past for example the social consequences of industry restructuring have been met by early retirement, not by re-integrating older workers into the labour market.

"In the absence of clear duties alongside established rights, welfare can foster perceptions that the system is being abused, which in turn undermine the ideas of "fairness" that underlie the solidarity offered by Europe's Social Models. Ideas of fairness are further challenged by the increasing diversity of our societies and perceptions (often false or partial) of some groups' willingness to work and alleged abuse of social benefits".

2. Measuring European well-being in the post industrial age

"On both subjective assessments of happiness and the objective facts of life expectancy, Europeans have something to be optimistic about".

- Life satisfaction is highest in Denmark, Luxembourg, Sweden, the Netherlands and Ireland. In the EU 15 it is lowest in Greece, Italy and Portugal. It is significantly lower in the former East Germany compared to the West; and in the New Member States, thirteen points lower on average than in the EU15.
- Bulgaria and Romania, alone of the New Member States, contain more people dissatisfied than satisfied with the lives they lead.
- The only significant measure on which the measure of life satisfaction drops relates to the individual's "financial situation". On that only 68% profess themselves satisfied. Significantly, that figure drops to a low of 17% among those who express themselves dissatisfied with their lives. The poorer the country, the more likely that the individual's "financial situation" will affect life satisfaction.
- By comparison with most of the rest of the world, Europeans emerge as a happy lot. On other hand money appears to make some difference. In the generally "happy" Benelux countries, 53% of high earners declare themselves happy, but only 32% of low earners. Comparing Member States, the numbers declaring themselves to be very happy -all over 40% -are highest in Northern Ireland, the Netherlands, Denmark, Ireland and Belgium (all generally speaking prosperous small welfare states) while all of Central and Eastern Europe scores at less than 20%, but so also, interestingly, do Germany, Spain and Portugal.

"In the EU 15, the twentieth century saw the biggest recorded advance in life expectancy in human history":

- Life expectancy at birth increased from 43.5 for men and 46.0 for women at the turn of last century to 75.4 and 81.4 at the turn of this.
- Life expectancy has improved at a steady rate by an average of 8 years since 1960.
- For 2050 the projections forecast life expectancy of 82.3 for men and 87.4 for women.

"But what are the factors that could make our lives longer and happier still? This is what we examine in the remaining sections of this paper".

3. Issues in raising social quality

3.1. Employment opportunity

Unemployment remains the top political concern in a big majority of Member States. Eurobarometer consistently shows around half of European citizens naming unemployment as one of the two most important issues facing their country – more than double other issues such as crime, healthcare or immigration. Some regions and groups remain particularly hard hit by unemployment:

- Youth unemployment at 18.7% across the EU is double the unemployment rate overall.
- Among 55-64 year olds, over 40% of men and nearly 60% of women have dropped out of the labour market.
- The concentration of high unemployment and low activity in particular regions and at either end of the age range suggests there are strong institutional barriers to equal access to employment opportunity in many Member States.

"Progress in overcoming these barriers and raising employment rates remains fundamental in terms of social justice. Having a job is of proven importance to individual perceptions of life satisfaction and happiness."

3.2. Are people satisfied with the jobs they have?

- 84% declare themselves very satisfied or fairly satisfied with their working conditions. Europeans famously work short hours: six weeks a year less than Americans on the basis of a 36 hour week. Working conditions in the EU have been continuously improving. Between 1994 and 2004 the incidence rate of fatal accidents fell by 38% and that of accidents leading to more than 3 days absence from work by 29%.
- Yet about 28% of the European workforce feels their health is at risk because of work. The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions point to an increase in work intensity, complaints of backache and muscular pain as well as stress.
- A more obvious cause of insecurity is the increasing number of employees - about 14%- on fixed term contracts. Over half fixed contract workers would have preferred a permanent job if they could get it. Fixed term contracts account for a fifth of jobs in Portugal, a third in Spain – and have grown rapidly in some new Member States – in Poland to over a quarter of all jobs. In Germany there has also been a growth of part-time, non-standard jobs outside the normal rules of the social insurance system.
- Old jobs are lost and new jobs created at an ever faster pace. A Euro barometer showed that while 23% of retired workers and 21% of the over 55s had never changed employer, the figure was only 16% for all younger age groups. "Good" industrial working class jobs, often in unionised large firms, are disappearing and tending to be replaced by "Big Mac" service jobs that are perceived as offering little status or prospects.
- Trade union density has fallen in the last decade – in Britain and Germany by about a quarter; in Italy and the Netherlands by over 10%. In the New Member States it more than halved. Only in the Nordics has union density been maintained. There is a huge issue for the trade unions in how they make themselves relevant to employees in private sector services and small and medium sized businesses and among younger workers.

"Structural economic change is giving rise to the need for a more competent labour force with higher skills; it may be forcing changes in work organisation, content and pace as well as requiring continuous restructuring of firms. As Europe becomes

more of a knowledge economy, and as the workforce becomes more highly educated and skilled, for the majority jobs should become more satisfying, more autonomous and less routine, with more focus on teamwork and less on hierarchy. But not all jobs can be made intrinsically rewarding. There is an issue of “respect” in our societies for those in poor quality jobs. Also if education is increasingly the gateway to a decent job, this message can come across as extremely threatening to those groups in society who have traditionally failed in the education system.”

3.3. Access to educational opportunity

“Education in the knowledge and service economy makes a huge difference to employment prospects. In the old economy, early school leavers could get by; in the new economy it is an almost certain guarantee of losing out.”

- The better educated you are, the less risk that you will become unemployed. In 2004 the unemployment rate of 25-64 year olds with a tertiary educational qualification was only 4.7% compared with 8.3% for people who ceased formal education at upper secondary level and 11.2% among those who had not progressed beyond lower secondary education.
- People with tertiary education earn 120% of their national median. Only 7% were at risk of poverty compared with 20% of those with low level education.

“In some Member States, educational performance appears to be static or even in decline.”

- Fewer young people attained the upper secondary standard in France and Sweden in the 1990s than in the 1980s.
- University numbers are rising in most Member States but between the two decades the numbers attaining tertiary qualifications actually fell in three Member States – Austria, the Czech Republic and Germany.
- The Finns have reduced the number of pupils without basic literacy and numeracy proficiency to 5.7 % (and only 2.4 % for girls), the Dutch and Irish to 11%, the EU as a whole still averages an unacceptable 19.8 %.

“The figures cannot be explained by differences in intelligence, but only by differences in the performance of national education systems that ought in principle to be capable of mutual learning and remedy.”

3.4. Social mobility: the transmission of life chances to future generations

“The question is whether in the next generation social mobility will decline.”

- There are very large family background effects on school achievement. The country where maths and science comparative performance is most influenced by books in the home is England: where it matters least is France, which is a tribute to the French school system in countering family background effects.
- If one compares the proportions of students going to university from graduate homes as opposed to those from homes with no educational qualifications, there is a huge gap which cannot be accounted for by intelligence. In France the figure for 1994-95 was 66% as against 20%; in Italy 60% as against 18%; in the Netherlands 40% as against 18%; in Sweden 55% as against 15%.

- There is also evidence from the United Kingdom that intergenerational mobility is declining over time. Sons born in 1958 with fathers in the top quartile of the income distribution had a 35% chance of themselves being in the top quartile by the age of 30. But sons born in 1970 had a 42% chance of being there by the age of 30. Conversely if one examines the bottom quartile of the income distribution, sons born in 1958 to fathers in the bottom quartile had a 31% chance of ending up there by age 33. But for those born in 1970 the chance had increased to 38%.

"Some social scientists believe that such a decline may well be a feature of modern societies, given the increased importance of education in life chances, the increased tendency for highly educated people to marry and partner together, and the greater time commitment that professional fathers today devote to their children. None of these trends are in themselves undesirable, but they do suggest that in the knowledge economy, unless corrective mechanisms are put in place, our societies may become more unequal and polarised."

3.5. Demography and the “ageing society”

- The proportion of the EU 25 population over 65 is forecast to rise from 15.7% in 2000 to 22.5% in 2025 and 29.9% in 2050, contrasting with 9.1% a century earlier in 1950.
- The proportion of over 80s is expected to triple to 11.4% in 2050.
- One in six over-65s in the EU are still count as poor – some 12 million people and over a quarter of old people living alone are poor.
- A far wider group is affected by problems of loneliness and the need for care. 28% of people at the age of 70 already live alone and the figure is over 40% by the time people are in their 80s. Between a third and two thirds of over 75s are already dependent on some form of informal care, varying between Member States.
- As the demand for care grows, so the children of the very elderly (mainly late middle aged women in their 50s or 60s) who have fewer siblings to share the responsibility of care), will at the same time be expected to stay in jobs longer in order to improve pension sustainability. The extended family is still strong in Southern Europe, where getting on for a fifth of all households still contains three generations, while the equivalent figure for Finland and Sweden is barely over 1%.

"The extended family may not be able to bear the strain. Will it withstand for much longer the pressures to stay in work longer, the demand for gender equality and the value shift to individualisation."

3.6. Family life and well-being

- In the EU 15, the birth rate has held up best and women’s participation in the labour market is highest, where Member States have a variable mix of child benefits, child care and flexi security to promote the availability of part time work.
- The “dual earner” household is more and more the social norm that determines decisions about whether and when to have children.

"Making the “dual earner” model work successfully and all the issues surrounding it such as work life balance and the sharing of responsibilities within the home - is now a central issue for family in Europe – in terms of relationship stability, gender equality, and the alleviation of child poverty. Not least the issue poses a huge question for the economic and demographic sustainability of European societies."

3.7. Poverty and its impact on access to life opportunities

"The statistics show that Europe has a serious poverty problem. The measure that the EU uses of poverty is a relative one: 60% of median income in each Member State. In all 72 million EU25 citizens -15%- are at risk of poverty, with another 36 million on the verge of that risk."

- No fewer than half of the people living in a low income household had an income more than 23% below the poverty line.
- 9% of the EU's population - or 35 million people – have been living in a low income household for at least two of the preceding three years. This will include many of the poor elderly.
- 12 million of the 72 million poor are elderly
- There is also significant poverty, as measured by income statistics, among single under-30 year olds living alone, concentrated in Northern Europe. Some of the poverty among single young people may well be found among students and ex-students, who have left the parental home, most of whom will eventually find their way in the world.
- The risk of poverty however is concentrated among families with children. Nearly 20% or 18 million of the EU's 94 million under 18 year olds are at risk of poverty: and to them we have to add their parents. The last three decades have seen a pervasive increase in child poverty rates which in all Member States are higher than those of the population as a whole.
- Children with a high risk of poverty often live in single parent families and jobless households. Across the EU, 10% of all children live in jobless households. In the EU15 as a whole 60% of those children are at risk of poverty. But in Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Portugal and the UK the risk is over 70%.

"Poor children experience a disproportionate share of deprivation, disadvantage, bad health and bad school outcomes. When they grow up, they are more likely to become unemployed, to get low paid jobs, to live in social housing, to get in trouble with the police, and are at a greater risk of alcohol and drug abuse as young adults. Moreover, in most countries, they are likely to transfer their poverty of opportunities to their own children. This has an economic, social and political cost which in a rational world should be set against the public expenditure costs of early interventions (assuming such interventions can be made effective) to reduce the risks of future negative outcomes and social exclusion."

3.8. Does inequality matter?

- High levels of inequality and poverty go together. If one measures inequality by the ratio between the earnings of the top quintile and bottom quintile, the Member State with the highest levels of inequality in the EU15 is Portugal (with a ratio of 7.2 against an EU average of 4.4), followed by Greece, Spain, Ireland, Italy and the UK: these also happen to be the Member States with highest 'at-risk of poverty rate after social transfers'.
- Among the new Member States, the countries with the highest levels of poverty are also those - Estonia, Latvia and Slovakia – with above average measures of inequality.
- Wage differentials appear to have widened between 1980 and the late 1990s in the UK, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden: they narrowed in France and Finland.

- As for Gini co-efficients, which measure how far the distribution of income deviates from a theoretical assumption of absolute equality, a comparison of the mid-80s with the mid -90s suggests a significant widening of inequalities in Britain, Italy, Austria and Belgium; some widening in Ireland, Denmark, Germany, Sweden and Finland; but some narrowing in France, the Netherlands and Luxembourg.
- OECD data suggest a decline of 7% in the relative disposable income of young adults, 60% of who are low paid in the Netherlands, UK and US and 40% in France and Germany.
- Anecdotal evidence suggests that incomes at the top have raced ahead in some Member States. The CEO of a major British company is now paid a hundred times earnings on the shop floor. Twenty years ago the figure was thirty times.

"It is clearly a myth to believe that it only in the Anglo Saxon world that inequalities are widening". If the consequence of existing inequalities is to embed disadvantage between the generations, then society will lose out as social mobility declines and all the talents of the people are not developed to the full.

Some social scientists believe that the more unequal a society, the more psycho social stresses it will experience as a result of the greater personal insecurity and loss of self esteem that people feel as a result of losing out in a positional struggle. So in more unequal societies, the greater will be problems of relationship instability, with relevance to the life chances of children; the risk of drug taking and mental illness; the propensity for people to resort to crime; and the prevalence of the diseases of relative affluence such as alcoholism and obesity."

3.9. Access to good health

"Within the EU there are wide variations in life expectancy by Member State and social category."

- Among Member States, for men Sweden is the best performer at 77.9; for women it is Spain at 83.7.
- Hungary performs worst for both men and women – 68.4 and 76.7 respectively. In Hungary 40% of male deaths are under 65 and life expectancy for the Roma is ten years less than the national average.
- When it comes to healthy life years, Italy comes out top – 92.2% of life for men and 89.7% for women. Finland is here bottom of the league on 76.3% and 69.1% respectively.
- There are wide variations in healthcare outcomes across the EU – for example, five year survival rates for bladder cancer range from 78% in Austria to 47% in Poland and Estonia.
- A recent study of life expectancy in Italy concluded that regions where income inequality is high, such as Campania and Sicily, have a significantly lower life expectancy than regions where income inequality is comparatively low, for example the Marches and Umbria.

"Recent years have seen a sharp rise in the so called 'diseases of affluence'."

- 7% of Europeans had taken prescription drugs in the previous 12 months due to psychological or emotional health problems and 3% had received psychotherapy in that period (7% in the Netherlands).
- As for obesity, the health risks can be as large as from smoking. Yet a Eurobarometer Survey showed that half of 15 -44 year olds had indulged in no vigorous physical activity in the previous seven days and 40% had not even taken part in moderate physical activity like walking for more than 30 minutes.

3.10. Quality of Life

- 75% of Europeans now live in urban areas and the figure is forecast to be 80% by 2020.
- The overall size of built up areas has grown by a fifth in the last twenty years, when the EU population only increased by 6%.
- The amount of housing space per person has doubled in the last half century as a result of higher living standards, declining family size and the increasing tendency for Europeans to live alone.
- In the last decade alone the size of urban sprawl increased in Europe by three times the size of Luxembourg.

"Global warming will prove one of the major economic and social challenges for Europe in the decades ahead. Apart from energy production, the transport sector is the biggest contributor to CO2 emissions."

- Rising affluence is still fuelling growth in car ownership. There is scope for a considerable amount of catching up in the New Member States and demand for travel in EU urban areas is predicted to grow by no less than 40% between 1995 and 2030.
- Air travel is growing at an annual rate of 5%.
- In the 1990s 12,000 kilometres of new motorway opened in the EU 15. 1000km opened in the New Member States – a figure that may well increase as a result of the increased Structural Funds under the 2007-13 Financial Perspective.
- Despite the EU's success in radically reducing regulated pollutants by a quarter to a third as a result of vehicle design and emissions regulation, the increase in traffic overall raised CO2 emissions by a fifth.

3.11. Rising Crime and Insecurity

"By the standards of the rest of the world, European societies are not seriously crime ridden or violent."

- The crime rate accelerated after 1970, but since 1990 registered crime has remained fairly stable.
- In 1995 murder reduced life expectancy by 0.1 years in Western Europe (the EU15 plus Norway and Switzerland); and 0.4 years in the EU8 and former parts of the Soviet Union; as against 0.3 years in the United States (three times the rate for the EU15); 0.6 in Latin America; and 0.9 in Russia. The worst impact on life expectancy in the world was in Colombia: murder reduces life expectancy there by 2.2 years.
- Crime regularly registers as the second or third most important issue facing Europe with around a quarter of adults thinking that.

"The perception of increasing violent crime, often drug related, has gone along with a rise in anti-social behaviour: petty criminality such as vandalism on housing estates, or extreme rudeness, disrespect and lack of consideration for others."

- British research has established that this is a huge social justice issue. 1 in 3 people on low incomes, living on social housing or in inner cities complain of anti social behaviour as against only 1 in 20 people in wealthier areas.
- Among those aged 65 and over, 31% in the EU15 and 42% in the new Member States feel it is unsafe to walk around their area at night.

3.12. Migration, ethnic diversity and integration

"Recent waves of migration are transforming many European cities."

- The population in cities as different as Birmingham, Marseilles and Malmo is made up of more than one third ethnic minorities.

- The “non-native Dutch” population of Amsterdam and Rotterdam was 6% in 1973, is 34% today and is forecast to be over 50% by 2020.

"From the perspective of the migrant communities, many of whom are now full citizens of EU Member States; their treatment in our societies leaves a lot to be desired. Despite progress in tackling overt racism and intolerance, there remain huge problems of discrimination, unemployment can be high and educational attainment poor."

- In the Netherlands, two thirds of the adult population as a whole are in employment, but only 40% of Dutch Moroccans.
- 60% of Moroccans leave school with few or no qualifications: only 10% of the “native Dutch” do so.
- In Germany less than one in ten German Turks gets to university as against four in ten “native Germans”.
- Even in Sweden where the education system delivers for second generation migrants a performance on a par with “native Swedes”, members of migrant communities find it much more difficult to come by decent jobs.
- 25% of EU15 citizens reject the proposition that it is a good thing for any society to be made up of people from different races, religions or cultures; 48% believe it is better for a country if almost everyone shares customs and traditions; 60% believe there are limits to how many people of other races, religions or cultures a society can accept.

"The festering of unresolved tensions and the high levels of negativity towards people with whom Europeans live side by side are a challenge to the ideals of social cohesion and strong community which are a conventional part of our values and political discourse. Indeed the linkage of migration to issues of race, ethnicity and religion raises many of the old demons of Europe's past, which as several historians have pointed out, were current in many European cultures but are firmly rejected by the EU today."

4. Issues for discussion

4.1. Trends

This paper has set out a number of trends in a number of areas such as

- Transition to post-industrial knowledge and service economy
- The welfare state
- Consumer focus – impact of affluence
- Demographics
- Values – the individual, the family, the community, society.

Do you agree with the analysis Do you have additional data that would support (or contradict) the analysis?

4.2. Well-being

What do you mean by well- being? In addition to material possessions, what really matters in making our lives happy and satisfied?

How would you list in importance the key factors contributing to well-being: for example, being in work, satisfaction in the job, opportunity for a good family life, adequate housing, good health, access to educational opportunity, chances of social mobility, good neighbours and friends, strong local community ties, feeling secure on the streets and in one's home? What else?

And what do you think are the main obstacles to in Europe today: not enough money, lack of decent jobs, too much pressure on the family and leisure time, poverty and inequality, inadequate public services such as health and education, prevalence of crime, lack of respect, problems of migration and multiculturalism?

4.3. Opportunity and Access

What are the most important factors in maintaining or increasing one's opportunities in today's society? (Education, social status, wealth, health, public services etc)

- Education

What needs to be done to expand educational opportunity for all through life? What could be done to make up for the consequences of early educational disadvantage being reinforced later in life; to reduce the number of early school leavers; to widen access to further and higher education particularly for the socially disadvantaged; and to grant access to all to learn through life?

- Employment /the Work Place

What are the main barriers to finding a decent job and keeping up with the skills to obtain another, if need be? What are efficient solutions to overcome these barriers and enlarge access to jobs? What is the right balance of security and opportunity in the modern labour market?

Is stress at work rising and if it is, what is causing it – for example, new job demands, employment insecurity, inadequate work life balance?

What is needed to help “dual-earner” couples balance work, family and leisure? What can be done to ease the tensions of having a career and combining it with a decent family and private life for both women and men?

- Society and Social relationships

What are the social implications of changing values? The changing role of women? The role of men? What are the barriers in society to happy family lives and can governments do anything to help remove them? Is the declining birth rate a purely private matter or should it be one of active public concern?

Why is poverty, especially child poverty, still so prevalent in Europe? What is to blame, how serious are the consequences for society and what if anything, should be done?

Does it matter if our societies are becoming more unequal? How can an increasingly diverse society be also a cohesive one? How does diversity affect solidarity? How can integration be improved? How can access for all to (public) services such as justice, administration, culture, social services (and social housing) and social security be guaranteed?

As life expectancy increases, how much will the burden of care for the elderly rise and who should meet it - in both financial cost and personal time? What are the social implications of the increasing numbers of elderly people living alone? Where should the balance of responsibility lie between family, community and state? What are the social and economic barriers to older people working longer?

What explains the persistence of poverty among 1 in 6 old people in the EU?

What are the most important things that could be done to extend the number of years of good health that people enjoy? Can inequalities in health outcomes be reduced? What can be done about health issues that are the result of lifestyle choice and how do we strike the right balance between individual and societal responsibility? How can access for all to health services be guaranteed?

How have perceptions have quality of life changed in recent decades? What priority are Europeans prepared to give to environmental sustainability above other more

immediate objectives? What are the economic and social implications for Europe of a determined effort to offer a global lead on climate change?

How serious is the impact of crime and anti social behaviour on well-being and what can be done?

On EuVisions, Sharon Baute (KU Leuven) argues that the concept of Social Europe is more versatile than what we might have thought until now. On EuVisions, Sharon Baute (KU Leuven) argues that the concept of Social Europe is more versatile than what we might have thought until now: <https://bit.ly/2RFXSn>. Related Videos. 8:25. Maria João Rodrigues: "What we need is a fully fledged European Social Union". EuVisions. 741 views · April 8, 2019. Europe's Social Reality. Frédéric Lerais Bureau of European Policy Advisers. Brussels, 8 May 2007. What does the report do?. 1. Discussion paper on "Europe's Social Reality" to stimulate debate Citizens' agenda (10th May Communication) - PowerPoint PPT Presentation. Text of Europe's Social Reality. Europe's Social Reality. Frédéric Lerais. Bureau of European Policy Advisers. Brussels, 8 May 2007. 1. 1. Discussion paper on Europe's Social Reality to stimulate debate. Citizens agenda (10th May Communication). The 2017 publication Europe's New Social Reality: the Case Against Universal Basic Income by Sage and Diamond "which can be downloaded from Policy Network online" cites an earlier 2015 Policy Network report which was most concerned about a "growing social, economic and political divergence" developing between the EU nations. Yet despite the centuries of debate, the endless fiddling and tinkering with social programs and the never-ending "Social reality" refers to either the world implied by this belief-set or the social process that produces it. It can be confusing to talk about social reality because people engaging in this sort of coordination often find it much easier to treat social reality as reality than to track their own perspective and the shared perspective separately. Add Comment. moses. Dec 12, 2018. 14. Here's how I use the terms "(natural) reality" and "social reality" The funny thing about social reality is that it's not objective in this sense.