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Response to the Questionnaire for the Evaluation of the Open Method of Co-ordination

In 29 countries across the globe, the **International Movement ATD Fourth World brings people living in poverty together with others from many different walks of life to learn from each other, build mutual support and take action together.** It is in this way that we move forward towards our objective of eradicating poverty and building an inclusive society where everybody can enjoy access to all fundamental human rights.

Poverty and social exclusion are ever present across Europe and those affected by them continue to feel mistrusted, seeing themselves as non-participants in the construction of society, not really associated with the struggle against poverty, and unable to exercise their rights as citizens in their own communities. The people of Europe refuse to accept that this situation continues in repeatedly demanding that the fight against poverty and social exclusion be treated as a priority of the European Union.

ATD Fourth World has been active in pursuing this priority at EU level for the past 30 years. The establishment of our Delegation to the EU has allowed us to build relationships with the various EU institutions and to act as a bridge between people living in poverty, those working alongside them and the decision makers that are shaping the future of Europe. We are founding members of both the European Anti-Poverty Network and the Platform of European Social NGOs and it is as a member of the latter, that we have been invited to prepare a response to the questionnaire developed by the European Commission for the evaluation of the Open Method of Co-ordination (OMC).

This response has been prepared by ATD Fourth World's Delegation to the EU with regard to the **OMC in the field of social inclusion.** The questions are answered on the basis of our involvement in the EU Social Inclusion strategy at both a European and national level. The national teams of ATD Fourth World in the EU Member States that have been active in the OMC process in various ways are those in France, Belgium, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Ireland, Spain, Germany and Poland.

1. The added value of the OMC

To what extent has the OMC helped to achieve progress in the national policy making process and at European level?

The significance of the very existence of an EU level strategy to fight against poverty and social exclusion must not be underestimated. In this sense alone, the use of the OMC in the field of social inclusion represents major progress in terms of both political recognition of the need to combat poverty and exclusion in Europe and concrete policy responses to address the situation.

ATD Fourth World had been demanding that the fight against poverty be addressed by means of a global European strategy for nearly 30 years before the use of the OMC was called for to “*make a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty*” at the European Council meeting in Lisbon in 2000. Critics of the OMC, as it had been applied in the field of employment, were right to point out that it was a ‘soft’ option but considering that there had previously been little or no co-operation at all in this area, it was nonetheless felt by us to be a major step forward. This was then confirmed with the adoption of comprehensive and ambitious Common Objectives at Nice that recognised the multidimensional nature of poverty, spoke of access to rights, preventing exclusion, helping the most vulnerable and mobilising all of society, including people experiencing poverty themselves.

So at European level, the added value of the OMC on social inclusion is indisputable. This said, however, the breakthrough that has been made has sadly remained far from visible to Europeans struggling on a daily basis to overcome poverty or even to those committed alongside them. It is still the case that groups without representation in Brussels are largely unaware of EU co-operation in this area and the average European, whilst consistently affirming that the fight against poverty and social exclusion be a priority for the EU in surveys, has not been made aware of progress towards achieving this objective. The fact that members of national parliaments are on the whole ignorant of the existence of this process is also a huge barrier to its development.

It is mainly government departments with direct responsibility for social inclusion and social protection issues and other stakeholders already active in the fight against poverty, which have become the most engaged with the OMC. The impact that this has had on the national policy making process has varied greatly from country to country. A lot depended on to what extent the different Member States had global strategies to combat poverty at a national level already in place.

For countries where there was little previous activity in this domain, either in terms of recognising the extent to which poverty and social exclusion existed, or in terms of comprehensive strategies to fight against it, the OMC on social inclusion provided a huge boost. It created a whole new dynamic bringing different people and groups together both horizontally and vertically; on the ground and within local, regional and national administrations. Admittedly this activity did not spring up overnight, but five years down the line it is safe to say that an increased understanding of the existence of poverty and social exclusion, its multidimensional nature and the mobilisation required to effectively fight against it, are tangible results of the existence of the OMC in many Member States.

In countries that already had well established strategies and actions to fight against poverty, much of this dynamic was already in place. The OMC on social inclusion was not necessarily seized upon in the same way by civil society in Belgium and France, for example, which was already engaged in national level processes. At a government level, the outcomes of national processes and consultation structures already in place did not automatically feed into the EU

level reporting mechanisms as they should have done. In some cases the OMC initially created a parallel process but over time, the obvious synergies between the national and EU level dynamics have become more evident and this is reflected in the increasing levels of engagement in the OMC. **The main added value of the EU level process in these countries has been the trans-national learning that has taken place**, allowing for the enrichment of existing anti-poverty strategies via experiences from other countries. At the same time, the OMC has provided the opportunity for countries with well-established principles and practices to inspire the development of strategies, policies and measures in other countries.

The knowledge base on poverty and social exclusion has most definitely been one of the main beneficiaries of the OMC at both EU and national levels. The OMC on social inclusion has promoted exchanges of experience and ideas, alongside the development of tools to measure the extent to which poverty and social exclusion exist and progress being made in the fight against it. **Essentially, the importance of the knowledge of people who are experiencing poverty themselves is becoming more and more recognised** thanks, in part, to the OMC and the objective that calls for *“the participation and self-expression of people suffering exclusion, in particular in regard to their situation and the policies and measures affecting them.”*

In the long-term, the development of partnerships with people who are ‘real-life experts’, combined with the further extension of the knowledge base about poverty and social exclusion, could have a real impact on the mobilisation of public opinion, political will and policy development at both EU and national levels. It is critical, however, that the time and resources be made available for these developments to take place and for the emerging visibility of the OMC on social inclusion not to be undermined via the streamlining process.

2. The Common Objectives

Are the common objectives still in line with key policy priorities and do they still address the most important challenges as identified in the most recent Joint Reports?

The Common Objectives adopted at Nice, then reaffirmed and strengthened at the Copenhagen European Council in 2002, reflect in many ways the expectations of the people living in extreme and chronic poverty that belong to the International Movement ATD Fourth World. Their proposed revision brings along with it the danger that the demands of those the most difficult to reach and to hear will be lost in the desire to simplify and streamline. Extreme poverty is by its very nature complex and whereas general overarching objectives may suffice to generally alleviate poverty and social exclusion in Europe, once again, those who have been entrenched in deep poverty for generations risk being left behind.

The final report on ‘Human Rights and Extreme Poverty’ presented to the United Nations Economic and Social Council in 1995, states the following:

“The lack of basic security connotes the absence of one or more factors enabling individuals and families to assume basic responsibilities and to enjoy fundamental rights. The situation may become widespread and result in more serious and permanent consequences. The lack of basic security leads to chronic poverty when it simultaneously affects several aspects of people’s lives, when it is prolonged and when it severely compromises people’s chances of regaining their rights and of reassuming their responsibilities in the foreseeable future.”

This definition of chronic poverty is based on that proposed by Joseph Wresinski, founder of ATD Fourth World, in the report 'Chronic Poverty and Lack of Basic Security' adopted in 1987 by the French Economic and Social Council. **Present within it are the aspects of multidimensionality, persistence and access to fundamental rights. It should not be forgotten that extreme poverty in this sense is not restricted to developing countries and continues to exist in Europe today.**

It is largely recognised that the current Common Objectives have contributed to the understanding of the multidimensional nature of poverty by the Member States and in particular, by the European Commission as illustrated in the 2005 Report on Social Inclusion on in the new Member States, when it is stated that people living in poverty *“may experience multiple disadvantage through unemployment, low income, poor housing, inadequate health care and barriers to lifelong learning, culture, sport and recreation. They are often excluded and marginalised from participating in activities (economic, social and cultural) that are the norm for other people and their access to fundamental rights may be restricted.”*

Indeed, effective access to the fundamental rights of employment, sufficient resources, decent and sanitary housing, healthcare, education, justice, culture and participation are all alluded to within the Common Objectives (albeit with varying degrees of emphasis). Those at risk of facing persistent poverty are identified as being a vulnerable group and often experience multiple disadvantage, affecting their access to several, if not all, of these fundamental rights. **It is impossible to choose which of these rights are more important and which should remain within the Common Objectives, as they are indivisible and interdependent. The ambition must remain for everyone to have access to all fundamental rights.**

In addition, there are objectives concerning the prevention of poverty and exclusion, which tackle issues such as e-exclusion, indebtedness, exclusion from school and homelessness, and which recognise the need to support family solidarity as a means to fight against poverty. The Common Objective concerning the mobilisation of all relevant bodies has been hailed as being one of the success stories of the OMC on social inclusion and it is unimaginable that this does not continue to remain a key element of the streamlined OMC.

These are just some of the reasons why these comprehensive and ambitious objectives were welcomed by ATD Fourth World in 2000 and why they are still relevant to the fight against poverty and social exclusion in Europe today. Whilst from a practical point of view, the need to simplify and streamline the reporting process can be appreciated; the logic behind modifying the objectives is questionable. Surely the Common Objectives as they stand remain appropriate until they are realised and poverty and social exclusion in Europe has become a thing of the past.

It could even be argued that there are certain gaps within the objectives, such as references to long-term accompaniment of people far from the labour market as part of their pathways into employment or other meaningful activity; full participation in social and cultural life; combating illiteracy; the right to a minimum income; the provision of all the support and means necessary for parents experiencing poverty to offer a better future for their children, with the aim that whenever possible, children remain with their family; partnerships with people experiencing poverty for the training of professionals, service providers, administrative staff etc. In this respect, **the modification of the Common Objectives could also be used as an opportunity to improve them and make them more comprehensive. This would be taking a step further to meeting the aspirations and expectations of people living in extreme poverty and increase the chances of the OMC having a real impact on their lives.**

This said, if the reporting process has to be simplified, then why not change the guidelines for preparing the NAPs/incl rather than the objectives themselves. For example, there could be a requirement to focus on those objectives that have recently been identified as priorities across the Member States, such as child poverty and homelessness. Crucially, however, the possibility would remain to focus on other objectives (improving the training of front-line staff, for example) that would remain as part of a broad and comprehensive range. This would give Member States the possibility to include in their NAPs/incl, a combination of concerted action in priority areas and good or innovative practice in other domains.

The Common Objectives themselves should remain comprehensive so that Member States do not lose sight of the multidimensionality of poverty and so that objectives which have not been thus far adequately addressed (access to culture and to justice etc.) do not disappear. The ambition to reach all of the Common Objectives as a long-term goal must remain, even if it is accepted that every NAP/incl cannot address every issue every time.

3. Indicators and Targets

Have indicators fulfilled their role in monitoring the progress achieved towards the common objectives? Have targets proved to be both feasible and effective in driving forward more ambitious policy reform?

The work done thus far to improve knowledge about the scale and depth of poverty and social exclusion in Europe is one of the most important outcomes of the OMC on social inclusion. In defining ambitious Common Objectives, that did not focus only on income or employment levels, the challenge was set to find ways in which to monitor and evaluate progress in combating poverty and social exclusion as a multidimensional phenomenon.

The agreement of Common Indicators at Laeken in 2001 was a significant political act even if it is accepted that these indicators do not go far enough in taking into account the multidimensional nature of poverty. Evidently, after only 5 years, this work is by no means near completion and so the ambition must remain to develop more and better indicators, to produce more and better data, at both EU and national levels.

Again, it is crucial that the desire be for indicators and targets to be developed that will assist in the monitoring and evaluation of progress towards reaching comprehensive Common Objectives; not vice-versa. In other words, the temptation must be resisted to limit the objectives to cover what it is already possible to measure, monitor and evaluate. Whilst this may serve to better focus the NAPs/incl on concrete policy outcomes in certain areas, it would run the risk of stagnating the development of improved data and indicators and limit the possibilities of the Social Inclusion Strategy to have a global approach.

The work being done at the moment to develop indicators of deprivation and multiple disadvantage is crucial if a real picture of the extent and nature of chronic and extreme poverty in Europe is to be built up. It follows that this work would be of better quality, and produce better results, if statisticians and analysts did not solely do it. **Partnership with people who have direct experience of poverty in the development of these indicators would result in new insights on what needs to be measured in order to establish whether or not policies are having an impact or, indeed, the desired impact. If the knowledge that people living in poverty possess is left out of the equation, then inevitably the full picture will never be understood.** There have been tentative attempts to develop such

indicators with the participation of people experiencing poverty in certain Member States, notably Belgium, and this work needs to be highlighted and further developed.

Whilst comparability of the situations in different Member States is important, what is more important is the quality of the indicators chosen in terms of whether or not they illustrate what effect policies are actually having at the level of the individual and the household. In this respect, the continued development of national, regional and even local level indicators is crucial alongside the work on common EU level indicators.

Targets can provide an important stimulus to the fight against poverty at both political level and where policies are being implemented on the ground. Caution must be taken, however, in choosing appropriate targets which do not have perverse effects on people experiencing the greatest difficulty. Any targets which resulted in the use of quick-fix solutions or the shifting of efforts and resources to those that are easiest to help, would end up worsening the situation for people living in chronic poverty.

4. Mobilisation of all actors and co-operation at national level

Has the OMC, on the national level been implemented effectively and in a way conducive to better co-ordination between different government departments and levels, and to greater mobilisation of stakeholders?

As already mentioned in answering question 1, it has to be acknowledged that it is mainly government departments with direct responsibility for social protection and social inclusion issues, and other stakeholders already active in the fight against poverty that have become the most engaged with the OMC. **This said, the fact that the Common Objectives are comprehensive and reflect the multidimensional nature of poverty, has encouraged co-operation between actors across different policy domains, from the level of government ministries down to grassroots level NGOs, which would not otherwise have taken place.** Of course the extent and the effectiveness of this co-operation varies wildly across the Member States and there are still key players missing. Nonetheless, this dynamic of mobilisation and co-operation at a national level is one of the most visible outcomes of the OMC on social inclusion and must be supported and further encouraged in the future.

The realities of the ATD Fourth World teams at national level in the EU Member States are very different and thus the capacity to get involved in processes around the development of the NAPs/incl was varied. Whilst all of the teams put a lot of energy and resources into supporting and working on a daily basis with individuals and families experiencing extreme poverty, they do not all necessarily have the time and the means needed to work with politicians and decision makers at national level. This said, however, with support from ATD Fourth World's Delegation to the EU and the resources made available via the first trans-national exchange programme, the majority of teams (9 out of 11) made contributions to either the 2001 or 2003 NAP/incl consultation processes; either directly or as members of national level networks and consultative bodies.

However, the level of involvement in the NAPs/incl process of small national or local level NGOs and associations has depended greatly on the role played by European networks such as EAPN and whether or not they are also members of organisations with representation at EU level. At the same time, it is these groups that are the closest to people experiencing poverty and social exclusion and in some cases, facilitate their direct participation. **The lack of visibility at national level of the NAPs/incl and the OMC on social inclusion more generally has limited the extent to which**

grassroots level stakeholders, and essentially people experiencing poverty and social exclusion themselves have been able to get involved in the process.

As has already been mentioned, even in countries where there are well established structures in place to facilitate the involvement of people experiencing poverty and the organisations of which they are members, or which represent them, in national policy making processes, these were not necessarily exploited in the production of the NAPs/incl. Nevertheless, the objective calling for the mobilisation of all relevant bodies opened new doors and provided new opportunities for some ATD Fourth World teams to enter into dialogue with national level policy makers during the production of the NAPs/incl, which had previously been denied them.

The objective which calls for the promotion according to national practice of “the participation and self-expression of people suffering exclusion, in particular in regard to their situation and the policies and measures affecting them” has played a key role in encouraging Member States to seek out the involvement of organisations such as ATD Fourth World in producing their NAPs/incl. What has not yet been adequate has been their subsequent involvement in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the policies contained in the NAPs/incl. This is in fact what the objective on mobilisation calls for, permanent consultation processes with people experiencing poverty and their organisations, rather than sporadic consultation on what should or should not be included in the NAP/incl itself.

Evidently there are many key players missing from the process at national level but crucially, this includes the majority of European citizens. It is these same citizens that time after time in Eurobarometer surveys on “*The priorities of the EU*”, respond overwhelmingly in favour of the fight against poverty and social exclusion being treated as a priority (90% in 2003) and yet remain largely unaware of EU co-operation in this field via the OMC on social inclusion. It is these same citizens that have been manifesting their discontent with the perceived priorities of the EU via low turnout in European elections and more recently, the ‘no’ votes in referendums on the European Constitution. **Their increased participation in the OMC on social inclusion could result in a greater understanding of the values on which the EU is founded and the policies that it has developed.**

However, this is not simply a question of visibility and public awareness. **The commitment and engagement of all citizens in the fight against poverty and social exclusion is crucial if it is ever to be overcome and a different kind of society is to be built where the dignity and rights of everyone are respected.** The founder of ATD Fourth World believed that **human beings created poverty and only human beings can eradicate it.** The need for the mobilisation of citizens is reflected in the current Common Objectives by “*encouraging the social responsibility and active engagement of all citizens in the fight against social exclusion*” and yet is a dimension of the OMC on social inclusion that hasn’t yet had a sufficient impact on the general public.

5. Working methods at European level

Have the working methods developed at European level to promote mutual learning and discuss results of the Open Method of Co-ordination been the most appropriate and effectively managed?

Amongst the various working methods developed at EU level as part of the OMC on social inclusion, ATD Fourth World has participated in all of the annual Round Tables; the Peer Review that took place in

Italy in 2005 on supporting families living in poverty; various Presidency conferences and is represented on the Organising Committee for the European meetings of people experiencing poverty. In addition, we are members of networks that receive core-funding via the Community Action Programme to fight social exclusion (EAPN and the Social Platform) and we have benefited from the financing of a trans-national exchange project (Phase I and Phase II).

The Round Tables and other Presidency conferences have been the most visible platforms to promote learning via the OMC on social inclusion at EU level. Each conference has provided an occasion for different types of stakeholders at EU and national level to come together, learn from each other and evaluate the progress being made by the Social Inclusion Strategy, both generally and in specific areas. It would be true to say that the Round Tables, with such a wide variety of participants and diversity of experience, have not necessarily been able to produce concrete outcomes that have taken the process forward. This has been more effectively achieved by other Presidency conferences; in particular those which were backed up by independent reports such as that on social indicators (commissioned under the Belgian Presidency in 2001) and that on taking forward the social inclusion process (commissioned by the Luxembourg Presidency in 2005).

The Round Tables are still significant, however, because they provide a regular forum for networking and exchange; they involve national and EU level politicians; and because stakeholders in the process, such as EU level NGOs, are consulted during their preparation. They have provided an opportunity for ATD Fourth World, for example, to contribute to the mutual learning process via the participation of members from different grassroots teams across Europe, and to highlight the importance of the active participation of people living in poverty in the Social Inclusion Strategy. **The possibilities for mutual learning and alliance building would be further strengthened if similar events took place at national level in all Member States.**

The fact that each year the Round Tables take place on or around 17 October, the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, is particularly significant for people experiencing poverty. Millions have been commemorating this day since, in 1987, a stone in honour of the victims of extreme poverty was inaugurated by ATD Fourth World at the site of the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Paris. In 1992, 17 October was adopted by the United Nations as an international day and the fact that the EU brings together many of those involved in the first European global strategy to fight against poverty on this date, is an important symbol as well as a concrete contribution to international action on this day.

Another significant development at EU level has been the annual inclusion in the Presidency calendar, from 2003 onwards, of a European meeting bringing together people experiencing poverty. This is as a direct result of an initiative taken under the Belgian Presidency in 2001 to organise the first of such meetings and promote the principle of participation of people experiencing poverty at EU level. Of course, even though symbolically it is important that this meeting takes place annually at this level, **what is crucial is that the participants in these meetings are listened to and have the opportunity to continue to give their input wherever decisions are being made that will affect their lives.** An EU level meeting of this nature is limited in the possibilities that it can offer in terms of concrete outcomes but remains significant in a similar way to that the Round Table despite its limitations. **This initiative would again be further strengthened if similar events took place at a national level and if the questions and issues arising during the meeting were more systematically addressed at both national and EU level (at the Round Table for example).**

The Peer Review process is comparatively new, having only begun in 2004, so it is difficult to evaluate the contribution that it has made to the mutual learning process and to the OMC in

general. What should be noted, however, is **the fact that EU and national level stakeholders such as NGOs are involved in the Peer Review process as it is applied in the field of social inclusion (as opposed to that in the field of employment) has been generally accepted as giving added value to the process.** ATD Fourth World was invited by the European Commission to take part in the Peer Review in Italy in 2005. Participation in this meeting allowed for the concerns of families who experience poverty, who are the 'beneficiaries' of policies and projects such as the ones being presented for discussion by the Italian authorities, to be taken into account by the policy makers present that were considering its transferability to their countries. This kind of input can limit, in a restricted manner of course, the potential transfer of 'bad practices' from country to country.

In view of the separate evaluation of the **Community Action Programme to combat social exclusion** that is currently taking place, comments here are restricted to the fact that **the contribution that this Programme has made to the success of the OMC thus far has been sizeable. The work of the funded networks has been essential in increasing the visibility of the process, providing content to the process and mobilising all stakeholders at all levels.** In fact, it would be fair to say that without the work of these networks, the dynamic that has been created around the OMC on social inclusion, certainly at national level, would be practically non-existent.

Another essential element of the Community Action Programme has been the funding of **trans-national exchange projects.** Although it has been argued that these projects have not been having a sufficient impact on policy making, what they have been doing is promoting mutual learning and exchange involving grassroots, local and regional stakeholders, in a way that other aspects of the OMC (such as the production of the NAPs/incl) have not. **Essentially, it is largely via the trans-national exchange projects, such as the one in which ATD Fourth World was involved, that people experiencing poverty themselves are given the opportunity to have their voices heard; contribute to and benefit from the process of mutual learning and co-operation that is at the heart of the OMC on social inclusion.**

6. The links between the OMC and other processes

How do you assess the interaction between the OMC in the field of social inclusion and pensions and other relevant co-ordination processes on the EU level?

Evidently, considering the multidimensional nature of poverty and social inclusion and the comprehensive nature of the Common Objectives, there are obvious interactions between the OMC in the field of social inclusion and many other EU level co-ordination processes. In particular, as initially the OMC on social inclusion was developed as an integral part of the Lisbon Strategy, the aim has always been for the Social Inclusion Strategy and other EU social protection processes to interact in a more systematic way with, and be treated at the same high political level as, the European Employment Strategy and the Broad Economic Policy Guidelines. This was, in the main, the rationale behind the streamlining propositions first made in 2003, which have now, by and large, been undermined via the recent the mid-term review of the Lisbon Strategy.

The reality has always been that what is needed is not necessarily more streamlining of social inclusion issues but more mainstreaming. In other words, a more systematic evaluation of the potential impact of all EU level policies and processes on poverty, social exclusion, fundamental rights and vice-versa. The reality for people living in poverty is that what is often given in one hand is taken away with another, the positive effect of policies and measures implemented in one domain can

be negated by those implemented in another. This also applies to EU level policies and processes, not only those in the areas of employment and economic growth, but also concerning competition rules; regulation of services of general interest; structural funds; environmental and health legislation; the sustainable development strategy; youth and cultural programmes. **In fact it is hard to find an area of EU co-operation that would not have any impact at all on the lives of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion.**

Both the European Commission and the Social Protection Committee have an essential role to play in promoting this mainstreaming, by systematically looking at the potential impact on social inclusion and fundamental rights of EU legislation and processes in all areas, and by highlighting the positive effects that global efforts to combat poverty and social inclusion can have for society as a whole. ATD Fourth World would therefore support any increased co-operation, not only between the Social Protection Committee and other similar committees working in other areas, but also increased co-operation between DG Employment and Social Affairs and other DGs of the European Commission with this goal in mind.

7. Suggestions for the future development of the OMC in a streamlined context

What suggestions would you make for the future development of the Open Method of Co-ordination in the field of social protection and social inclusion?

Until social inclusion objectives have been successfully mainstreamed into all other policy areas and beyond, there needs to be a clear, distinct and visible EU strategy to fight against poverty and social exclusion. To accept anything less would be to take a step backwards and constitute a betrayal of the millions of people who have to endure living in poverty and social exclusion across Europe.

Streamlining of the different OMC processes in the field of social protection must therefore be undertaken with great caution. Apart from the fact that the European Council has agreed that Member States will co-operate in the areas of pensions and healthcare alongside that of social inclusion, and that the co-ordination of this co-operation has all been mandated to the Social Protection Committee and the DG Employment & Social Affairs of the European Commission, there is little logic behind integrating these processes in any but a limited way. Apart from a few overlaps regarding income levels and access to quality healthcare, for example, the different processes concern different groups and the expertise of different people with different competencies at all levels.

Of course, life would be easier for all the officials and administrators concerned if there were less paperwork and if simplifying the processes made them less costly. **The lives of the millions of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion, however, would not be made easier if the only comprehensive and global EU level strategy ever to have existed in order to address the root causes of their situation, were simplified and made less effective for the same reasons.**

There are certain arguments for simplifying reports that are produced at an EU level but the dynamic that has begun to gather strength and momentum at a national level as a result of the OMC on social inclusion must be allowed to develop and grow. **The Common Objectives must remain comprehensive and multidimensional and the Social Inclusion Strategy must retain its visibility if it ever hopes to “make a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty by 2010”.**