



Contribution of
RIPESS Europe – Solidarity Economy Europe
Intercontinental Network promoting Social Solidarity Economy

To the European Commission public consultation on a European
Pillar of Social Rights

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The RIPESS European Network is made up of 34 networks in over fifteen countries proposing hundreds of European initiatives that offer a collective and emancipatory response rooted in the development of the solidarity economy: cooperatives, associations, self-managed initiatives, fraternal organisations, credit and resistance unions, mutual benefit societies and trade unions, solidarity finance mechanisms, circles and people’s universities, encyclopaedic centres, workers’ libraries, solidarity-based cultural organisations, inclusive markets, etc. **They have gradually built up a social and cultural legacy whose main objective underpins our work: to construct ties of solidarity.**

Ensuring that our solidarity takes active form is both the goal and the mission of RIPESS Europe and the initiatives it comprises. These initiatives develop people’s capacity for resistance and resilience, rooted in organisational models that foster freedom, reciprocity, solidarity and equal opportunities and adopting approaches that span every level, from local to global. We reject the causes of the current crisis, we refuse to accept the imposed consequences – and these initiatives reinforce our power to overcome the effects. The crisis is the product of speculation in uncontrolled financial flows and an inequitable economic model that impoverishes and excludes an increasing number of people and territories by destroying the entire planet’s natural and cultural heritage.

In response to this destructive economic model, citizens are self-organising and getting involved in collective projects. “Quality over quantity”, “people before property” are examples of the sort of slogans that illustrate these initiatives, based on the pleasure of taking action together. Resources comprising talents, knowledge and skills are pooled within an open-knowledge approach to work together to create “buen vivir”. Both in Europe and throughout the rest of the world, we are seeing the birth and growth of thousands of concrete initiatives inspired by the solidarity economy. Organisations opening up new paths and seeking to bypass the principles of individual benefit and market economy capital to propose alternatives rooted in solidarity that support local territories are active in all spheres of economic life, including production, marketing, consumption and finance. The determination of all these initiatives is increasing, along with practices based on interaction and coordination, resulting in the creation of platforms, consortiums, federations and networks representing them.

These are the values and experiences we want to, and can, use as the basis for constructing a fairer, more equitable and democratic economy and society that exclude no one.

We wish to take part in the European Commission public consultation on a European Pillar of Social Rights on the basis of a desire for democracy, social justice and emancipation that underpins these initiatives.

On the social situation and EU social "acquis"

1. What do you see as most pressing employment and social priorities?

Regarding the Preamble of the Treaty on European Union

CONFIRMING their attachment to the principles of liberty, democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and of the rule of law,

CONFIRMING their attachment to fundamental social rights as defined in the European Social Charter signed at Turin on 18 October 1961 and in the 1989 Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers,

Regarding the second article of the Treaty on European Union

"The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail."

The economy is a political construct that concerns everyone. Rather than the so-called "invisible hand of the market", we prefer to concentrate on the democratic construction of a new social contract taking into account the commons, solidarity – as a starting point and not a process for redistribution – and individual and collective wellbeing. We need to switch from an economy that extracts and destroys resources to a resilient regenerative economy where nature and its limits are truly taken into consideration.¹

RIPSS Europe thus affirms that the fundamental rights laid out in the treaties that are the common core of the EU, as well as the texts that commit members to defending the fundamental human rights they refer to, constitute the cornerstone for implementing European development policies and the guidelines for EU relations with other countries as well as between European countries within the EU.

We feel it is important here to cite the preamble of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which recognizes that, in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "**the ideal of free human beings enjoying freedom from fear and want can only be achieved if conditions are created whereby everyone may enjoy his economic, social and cultural rights, as well as his civil and political rights.**" We maintain that these objectives of shared human development and social justice must provide the common core for all EU development policies.

In particular, we want the European Pillar of Social Rights to be based on the principles of universality, non-conditionality and indivisibility of rights and to combat the various risks and unknown factors that make people more vulnerable and harm their family and professional lives.

The 1989 Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers, a mainstay of the European social model, stipulates that "in the context of the establishment of the single European market, **the same importance must be attached to the social aspects as to the economic aspects and whereas, therefore, they must be developed in a balanced manner.**"

It is therefore now essential to ensure that solidarity economy initiatives can develop fully throughout the European space, thereby reinforcing the social value they foster by means of decent work, two aspects that are vital to EU development focusing on greater social justice.

1

) RIPSS Europe - The vision of RIPSS Europe: changing the economic paradigm - see: <http://www.ripess.eu/docs/strategic-orientations-2016-2018/>

2. How can we account for different employment and social situations across Europe?

Regarding the article 3 of the TUE, especially paragraphs 1, 2 & 3:

“1. The Union's aim is to promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples.

2. The Union shall offer its citizens an area of freedom, security and justice without internal frontiers, in which the free movement of persons is ensured in conjunction with appropriate measures with respect to external border controls, asylum, immigration and the prevention and combating of crime.

*3. The Union shall establish an internal market. It shall work for the sustainable development of Europe based on balanced economic growth and price stability, a highly competitive social market economy, **aiming at full employment and social progress, and a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment. It shall promote scientific and technological advance.***

It shall combat social exclusion and discrimination, and shall promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of the child.

It shall promote economic, social and territorial cohesion, and solidarity among Member States.

It shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and shall ensure that Europe's cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced.

The economic doctrine that dominates the social market economy does not respect the founding texts, but instead encourages predatory behaviour and the unequal development of economies as well as endangering opportunities for social development that need to emerge in democratic countries. The ensuing economic policies have, in particular, taken a radically anti-democratic turn, with deeply destructive and disgraceful effects when applied via the Troika intervention to the countries suffering the most from the crisis; Greece is the most striking symbol of these effects, but is far from being the only country concerned.

In the name of “free and fair competition” – devised as the only indicator for market regulation – **public action, fundamental social rights, labour law in particular, and, more broadly, all European policies have been subordinated to objectives centred on economic performance and the competitiveness of the European market.** This means that competition-focused principles as well as “New Public Management” jeopardise social rights in the name of a “flexibility” that supposedly offers easier access to employment, but in fact makes people more vulnerable, increases job uncertainty and insecurity and creates a lucrative “social sector market”. **This intolerable contradiction threatens the very heart of the EU, neglecting the necessary balance that ties together economic and social development – with the former serving the latter – and hence equally neglecting the crucial goals of justice and social protection which form a shared political perspective.**

“The picture of poverty across the EU

The most recent data available (2015) show that 23.7% of the EU population, that is about 118.7 million people, are at risk of poverty or social exclusion. 17.3% of the population in the EU is at risk of relative income poverty, 8.2% is severely materially deprived, and 10.5% is living in households with very low work intensity. (Source: Eurostat December 2016)

However there is a wide difference between Member States: for instance, between 11% and 17% of the population are at risk of poverty or social exclusion in Iceland, Norway, Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Sweden and Finland, whereas 37% or over are at risk in Bulgaria and Romania.

Children (0-17) have a particularly high rate of poverty or social exclusion at 26.9%. One-parent households and those with dependent children have the highest poverty risk. For single parents with dependent children the risk of poverty is 47.8%. (Source Eurostat November 2016)

The risk is also particularly high among young people (16-24) at 30.9%. (Eurostat March 2017).

Women are globally more at risk of relative monetary poverty with a rate of 17.7%. (Source: Eurostat – SILC Database March 2017).

Of course, these figures do not include some of those in the most extreme situations such as some minority ethnic groups, especially the Roma, immigrants including undocumented migrants, the homeless, people living in or leaving institutions etc. Just to give an example, in 2015 40.2% of the non-EU-born population in the EU was assessed to be at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) compared with 21.7% of the native-born population (Source: Eurostat February 2017).

EAPN – European Network, Facts and Trends

<http://www.eapn.eu/what-is-poverty/poverty-facts-and-trends/>

The economic and political dogma of competitiveness and a lucrative single market brings social protection systems and all general interest services into competition with each other in line with a benchmarking process – including services relating to education, the social sphere and culture. This dogma does not recognise economic hybridisation in any form, including initiatives working towards not-for-profit goals, thus challenging the very foundations of all balanced development based on a solidarity and public economy. Such initiatives are targeted as “competitors” and seen as the source of potential profits. General interest services are thus challenged on a broad scale, and are now under threat of being forced into a market- and competition-based system. They are, however, the pillars of the democratic process and recognised by the founding treaties as essential to countries and the EU.

There is no doubt that this doctrine of competition is imperilling peace and our capacity to live together, encouraging as it does the accumulation of wealth and inequalities: poverty, inequalities and social injustice within the European space clearly raise the question of whether we are capable of creating humanity together.

The institutional functioning of the European Union, which has repeatedly ignored the democratic expression of its constituent peoples and inflicted disgraceful austerity measures on the most vulnerable member states, exposes us to the risk of fragmentation, endangered peace and the rise of radical identity-based movements.

3. Is the EU "acquis" up to date and do you see scope for further EU action?

Regarding article 11 of Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union:

“Environmental protection requirements must be integrated into the definition and implementation of the Union's policies and activities, in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.”

Regarding the article 14 of the TFEU:

“Without prejudice to Article 4 of the Treaty on European Union or to Articles 93, 106 and 107 of this Treaty, and given the place occupied by services of general economic interest in the shared values of the Union as well as their role in promoting social and territorial cohesion, the Union and the Member States, each within their respective powers and within the scope of application of the Treaties, shall take care that such services operate on the basis of principles and conditions, particularly economic and financial conditions, which enable them to fulfil their missions. The European Parliament and the Council, acting by means of regulations in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure, shall establish these principles and set these conditions without prejudice to the competence of Member States, in compliance with the Treaties, to provide, to commission and to fund such services.”

Regarding the Protocol 26 on services of general economic interest, annexed to Treaties, having the equivalent legal authority:

“THE HIGH CONTRACTING PARTIES,

WISHING to emphasise the importance of services of general interest,

HAVE AGREED UPON the following interpretative provisions, which shall be annexed to the Treaty on European Union and to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union:

Article 1

The shared values of the Union in respect of services of general economic interest within the meaning of Article 14 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union include in particular:

- the essential role and the wide discretion of national, regional and local authorities in providing, commissioning and organising services of general economic interest as closely as possible to the needs of the users;**
- the diversity between various services of general economic interest and the differences in the needs and preferences of users that may result from different geographical, social or cultural situations;**
- a high level of quality, safety and affordability, equal treatment and the promotion of universal access and of user rights.”**

There is an urgent need to reorient EU policies towards **a strategy for cohesion that takes into account the diversity of economies active in the countries** and the ability of each person to contribute to the public and common good. **In particular, civil society initiatives that express – and seek to meet – people’s aspirations for real democratic and economic freedom** must be encouraged and supported.

The conditions that allow initiatives to develop are based on their recognition and visibility, which in turn relies on their recognition at the European level as economic and “non-economic” general interest services, based on a not-for-profit or for-limited-profit model and not the competitive model. Their development also depends on the close link with their environment and the general interest services they work with to implement socially beneficial activities that contribute to a democratic and equitable economy.

It is worth examining the various historic elements that could help to improve the way European policies and their planning process take into consideration a solidarity economy favouring the implementation of fundamental social and economic rights.

“What characterized strong, democratic solidarity when it emerged? **It aimed to expand democracy that had been won at political level, to all economic and social life, fighting inequalities and seeking social justice through forms of self-organization and a commons’ oriented approach** (Bollier, 2014; Ostrom, 2010). Incidentally commons are not just property, but are co-activities, collectively conducted activities that enable people to progressively define rules. Learning and democratic forms of socialization allow new institutions to emerge. They fall under associationism, extended by cooperatives and mutual societies characterized by their willingness to combine protection and emancipation. So there was a democratic solidarity movement that emanated from these societies in the first half of the nineteenth century.”²

Placing the desire expressed by these initiatives to take part in the Union’s public and democratic life at the heart of EU development will result in the emergence of a shared perspective for Europe. The Pillar of Social Rights must be at the heart of this perspective, supporting, among other things, the solidarity economy in order to guarantee workers universal social security alongside education and culture. These three human dimensions, by definition non-competitive and non-commercial, must form the emancipatory and democratic pillar needed to reinforce our capacity to create humanity together.

To support the economy and citizen life, **structural funds must concentrate on financing sustainable development goals with the aim of promoting social justice, territorial equity and redistribution, focusing on:**

- **funding necessary public services** that guarantee countries’ social and institutional development, based on the principles of universal and unconditional access and respecting cultural rights as part of their implementation;
- **funding local citizen initiatives**, with not-for-profit goals and structured as an association or equivalent, which ensure that civil society can freely take part in the co-construction of public policies, both in their conception and implementation;
- **funding and support for cooperation processes** that encourage citizen initiatives to form networks in order to guarantee a diverse range of activities and spaces for citizen action, as processes for development that incorporate territorial equity and sustainable social development.

2) “Social innovation in Europe: what relation with solidarity economy? - Towards a plural European vision of social innovation”, Jean-Louis Laville & Rogerio Roque Amaro, RIPESS advisory committee

On the future of work and welfare systems

4. *What trends would you see as most transformative?*

5. *What would be the main risks and opportunities linked to such trends?*

6. *Are there policies, institutions or firm practices – existing or emerging – which you would recommend as references?*

In this field, the work carried out within RIPESS must be taken into account, both in terms of public policies promoting the social and solidarity economy (SSE) and of research on social innovations developed by solidarity economy initiatives. The analysis and compilation of the social solidarity initiatives and experiments that spread across the whole of Europe provide a better understanding of fairer and more equitable economic and social ecosystems and help them to develop.

These initiatives propose a political approach to social transformation based on opening up debate within the SSE networks on the notion of wealth, the role of money, and financing at the service of society and territories, while adhering to the principles of redistribution and reciprocity as well as democratic and citizen-based mechanisms for regulating economic activities. **Solidarity economy initiatives work to incorporate new forms of citizenship and citizen action in the economic space, thus creating a new public and local space lying between the political and economic spheres.**

These initiatives, along with the networks and collective organisations they are composed of, strongly highlight the fact that democratic principles can be a tool for economic management, mediation and regulation within the production and consumption of goods and services as effectively as the market and the state (Fraisse, 2004).

This approach, based on economic democracy, radically alters the question of labour and employment. **Labour cannot be considered as a commodity**,³ and neither can employment or any other form of work, including independent work.

Workers' status – under the pay system as well as other modes of production – must be able to take into account the principles of equity and social justice as set out in international texts, particularly the texts ratified by the ILO.

“Humane conditions of labour”⁴ must be encouraged, as adopted by a community of workers who share the same values, under conditions that promote emancipation and recognition of the importance of each person's role. Collective rights, first and foremost the right to strike, must be fully recognised and implemented. People's difficult situations as well as their aspirations must be taken into consideration and the social rights that correspond to them enforced, not in the form of individual insurance against the ups and downs of employment and the market, but as fundamental rights.

The conditions and scope for the exercise of regulations and policies in the context of an ambitious European social pillar rooted in the European Charter of Fundamental Rights need to be explored. The ILO's studies on decent work,⁵ equitable globalisation and the issues involved in social protection must be taken into account. Another interesting reference is the European report *Transformation of Labour and Future of Labour Law in Europe*, 1999.

On the European Pillar of Social Rights

7. *Do you agree with the approach outlined here for the establishment of a European Pillar of Social Rights?*

8. *Do you agree with the scope of the Pillar, domains and principles proposed here? Are there aspects that are not adequately expressed or covered so far?*

3) First Article of the Declaration concerning the aims and purposes of the International Labour Organization (DECLARATION OF PHILADELPHIA), 1944, see appendix

4) To take analyses and debates further, see *The International Labour Organization and the Quest for Social Justice, 1919-2009*; and in the appendix the preamble to the Treaty of Versailles, 1919

5) “Decent work sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives. It involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.” ILO definition. See <http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/decent-work/lang--en/index.htm>

9. What domains and principles would be most important as part of a renewed convergence for the euro area?

10. How should these be expressed and made operational? In particular, do you see the scope and added value of minimum standards or reference benchmarks in certain areas and if so, which ones?

Regarding the International Labour Organisation Constitution's Preamble, 1919

Whereas universal and lasting peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice;

*And whereas conditions of labour exist involving such injustice, hardship and privation to large numbers of people as to produce unrest so great that the peace and harmony of the world are imperilled; and an improvement of those conditions is urgently required; as, for example, by **the regulation of the hours of work, including the establishment of a maximum working day and week, the regulation of the labour supply, the prevention of unemployment, the provision of an adequate living wage, the protection of the worker against sickness, disease and injury arising out of his employment, the protection of children, young persons and women, provision for old age and injury, protection of the interests of workers when employed in countries other than their own, recognition of the principle of equal remuneration for work of equal value, recognition of the principle of freedom of association, the organization of vocational and technical education and other measures;***

Whereas also the failure of any nation to adopt humane conditions of labour is an obstacle in the way of other nations which desire to improve the conditions in their own countries;

We feel that it is essential, in terms of fundamental rights, to draw on these objectives to open a democratic debate within the European Union on the social and economic development goals we will set ourselves.

In the absence of any real democratic debate, the EU runs the risk of fragmentation. Assessing EU acquis cannot draw on the same technical considerations as those used for competition, competitiveness and gauges of success as applied to economic approaches driven by the pursuit of profit. We therefore feel that it would be wholly ineffective to exploit or even extend the European Union's acquis using the approach proposed in this communication.

To illustrate this point, we feel it is important here to evoke the objectives set out by the RIPESS Europe advisory committee, as expressed by Jean-Louis Laville and Rogerio Roque Amaro:

“Obviously, social innovation in a perspective of weak solidarity, also follows the direction of a plea for the capacity of capitalism to reform itself as well as its moralization [...]

The second scenario is based on a model in which social innovation no longer has a strictly restorative function. It is also transformative, giving it its full complexity. In this second sense, it is not simply a matter of responding to needs, but also to aspirations towards a new paradigm of social change; it includes a reflection on the intermediate institutions, as well as on institutional and political mediation that is required to enable social innovation to transform the institutional framework.

This conception of social innovation combines two registers of democratic solidarity: one based on egalitarian reciprocity and the other on public redistribution. This leads us to conclude that social innovation passes through the reconfiguration of public issues, the public nature of citizens' initiatives, as determined in solidarity economy that advocates for the consolidation of representative and deliberative democracies. Furthermore, plural democracy must be linked to a plural economy. We thus return to the fundamental contribution of Karl Polanyi to which we can add that of Eleonor Ostrom on the question of the Commons. Reembedded in the question of a new conception of the non-State public sector through the plural economy, **the challenge is to proceed to rebalancing economic activity, within a problematic of hybridization. Thus, what is fundamentally different in this second scenario of social innovation and that leads to social transformation thanks to its strong solidarity, is that he suggested considering the relationship between the institutional framework and public action. It is therefore no longer a question of returning to private action, but rather about approaches that enrich public action to renew and redemocratize democracy.**

The challenges of a policy of social innovation

All the forms of social innovation need to be mobilized to preserve integration and cohesion in Europe. Some emerging trends however focus institutional support for those related to the version of weak solidarity. In relation to this, it is necessary to mention the importance of what the strong form of solidarity represents, as **expressed in the solidarity economy. All the constituent networks of RIPESS Europe therefore call for a thorough consultation with the European authorities, so that all member initiatives, of which some examples are mentioned above by country, are taken into account in the policies for social innovation.**" (Brussels, 28 January 2016).

To read more of the contribution ***“Social innovation in Europe: what relation with solidarity economy? - Towards a plural European vision of social innovation”***, Jean-Louis Laville & Rogerio Roque Amaro, RIPESS advisory committee, see here:

http://base.socioeco.org/docs/ripesseu_social_solidarity_innovation_en.pdf

Appendices

First Article of the Declaration concerning the aims and purposes of the International Labour Organization (DECLARATION OF PHILADELPHIA), 1944, stating the principles which should inspire the policy of its Members. In particular:

- a) *labour is not a commodity;*
- b) *freedom of expression and of association are essential to sustained progress;*
- c) *poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere;*
- d) *the war against want requires to be carried on with unrelenting vigour within each nation, and by continuous and concerted international effort in which the representatives of workers and employers, enjoying equal status with those of governments, join with them in free discussion and democratic decision with a view to the promotion of the common welfare.*

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, more specifically its Preamble, 1st article, article 22, and 23

Preamble

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law,

Whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations,

Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

Whereas Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in cooperation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Whereas a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge,

Now, therefore,

The General Assembly,

Proclaims this Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

Article I

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 22

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

Article 23

- 1. Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.*
- 2. Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.*
- 3. Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.*
- 4. Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.*

Article 6 of the TEU, especially §1-1 & § 2 and 3

1-1 The Union recognises the rights, freedoms and principles set out in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union of 7 December 2000, as adapted at Strasbourg, on 12 December 2007, which shall have the same legal value as the Treaties.

2. The Union shall accede to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Such accession shall not affect the Union's competences as defined in the Treaties.

3. Fundamental rights, as guaranteed by the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and as they result from the constitutional traditions common to the Member States, shall constitute general principles of the Union's law.

Article 8 of Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

“In all its activities, the Union shall aim to eliminate inequalities, and to promote equality, between men and women.”

Article 9 of Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

“In defining and implementing its policies and activities, the Union shall take into account requirements linked to the promotion of a high level of employment, the guarantee of adequate social protection, the fight against social exclusion, and a high level of education, training and protection of human health...”

Article 10 of Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

“In defining and implementing its policies and activities, the Union shall aim to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation...”