



Moscow, 27 February 2009

**COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS
RESPONSIBLE FOR SOCIAL COHESION**

**“INVESTING IN SOCIAL COHESION -
INVESTING IN STABILITY AND THE WELL-BEING OF SOCIETY”**

Moscow, 26 - 27 February 2009

DECLARATION



FINAL DECLARATION

We, the Ministers responsible for Social Cohesion of Council in Europe member States, meeting in Moscow, on 26 and 27 February 2009,

Emphasising that social cohesion, the capacity of a society to ensure the welfare of all its members by minimising disparities and avoiding polarisation, is more relevant than ever and requires a renewed political commitment;

Convinced that a rights-based approach to social cohesion calls for social and economic policy measures that provide effective access to their rights for everyone, especially for anyone who lives in, or is at risk of, poverty and social exclusion;

Recognising that, while building and maintaining social cohesion is first and foremost the duty of individual member States, mutual co-operation - particularly through the exchange of knowledge and experience and through dialogue on issues that transcend national borders - greatly assists progress towards social cohesion;

Building on the valuable contribution of the Council of Europe in this field, particularly through the transformation of the social cohesion concept into a series of policy goals and actions;

Expressing our support for Council of Europe legal instruments for social rights, in particular the European Social Charter and revised European Social Charter, the European Code of Social Security and its Protocol, the European Convention on Social Security as well as for the Disability Action Plan;

Aware of the fact that responsibility for social cohesion is shared by all and requires active and integrated policies involving different levels of government, the private sector and civil society in a transversal approach;

Suggesting that governments should react to current challenges and opportunities - particularly globalisation, the democratic functioning of institutions, political, socioeconomic, demographic and health-related changes, migration and cultural diversity - and strengthen citizens' confidence in the future by taking relevant measures, particularly developing new approaches taking into account the Revised Social Cohesion Strategy and the High-Level Task Force report;

Underlining the important role of the European Committee for Social Cohesion (CDCS), particularly in its steering, coordinating and evaluating functions and its role of facilitating co-operation among member States.

WELCOME the report of the High-Level Task Force, particularly the four priorities that it suggests, and on this basis

REQUEST the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe:

- to recognise that social cohesion supports the core objectives of the Council of Europe on human rights, democracy and the rule of law;
- to review the Revised Social Cohesion Strategy in the light of the High-Level Task Force report, taking into account the challenges resulting from the global economic crisis;
- on the basis of this review, to draw up a Council of Europe Action Plan in the field of social cohesion, building on existing activities and taking financial resources into account;

- to entrust this work to the European Committee of Social Cohesion, in co-operation with other relevant Council of Europe bodies, and with a view to reporting to the Committee of Ministers regularly;
- to intensify cooperation with the European Union, relevant United Nations bodies and other international institutions working in this field, in order to optimise efforts and create synergies;

COMMIT OURSELVES

Taking into account the transversal approach to social cohesion, which is advocated in the High-Level Task Force report, to develop an integrated social cohesion policy in conformity with our national conditions;

With particular regard to the discussions held during the Conference:

- **Promoting social rights:** to acknowledge that social security and social protection are pillars of social cohesion; to promote the ratification of relevant Council of Europe instruments, including the European Social Charter and Revised European Social Charter, as well as the European Code of Social Security and its Protocol and the European Convention on Social Security;
- **Sharing responsibilities and strengthening mechanisms of representation and social and civic dialogue:** to encourage public authorities at all levels (central, regional and local government) to develop co-operation with civil society and, through constructive dialogue, to promote shared responsibility for social cohesion and effective cooperation in working towards achieving it;
- **Building confidence in a secure future for all:** to provide good governance and develop innovative policies which encourage individuals to trust democratic institutions; to alleviate the consequences of the current economic crisis by providing adequate social protection in conformity with both Council of Europe standards and active labour market policies; to facilitate social mobility, providing opportunity for all, and to encourage individuals, families and local stakeholders to develop their own life projects, with a specific focus on work as the best route out of poverty and on the reconciliation of private and working life;

SUGGEST that the next session of the Conference of Ministers take place in 2012;

Welcome the offer from Turkey to host the next Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Social Cohesion in 2012;

INVITE the Secretary General to forward the declaration adopted by the Conference to the relevant bodies of the Council of Europe and other international institutions.

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The Ministers responsible for Social Cohesion in Council of Europe member States express their sincere gratitude to the Russian Government for all its efforts, which ensured the success of the Conference, and their congratulations on the perfect organisation of the event.