

EUROCITIES

CITIES ACTION AGAINST SOCIAL EXCLUSION (CASE)

FINAL REPORT

Ali Madanipour

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SUMMARY

This project is coordinated by Eurocities and is a collaboration between a number of European municipalities: Aarhus, Barcelona, Bologna, Dublin, Glasgow, Lewisham (London), Newcastle, Rotterdam, Stockholm, and Trikala. It has identified innovative inclusive policies and practices in the participating cities, taking into account the outcomes but also emphasizing the processes (causes, agents, mechanisms) and contexts.

Two sets of criteria were used to undertake comparative research. To identify good practice, the four common European criteria to combat social exclusion were used (To facilitate participation in employment and access by all to resources, rights, goods and services; To prevent the risks of exclusion; To help the most vulnerable; To mobilize all relevant bodies). To analyse the good practice cases, six criteria for innovation were used (Open coordination; Horizontal and vertical coordination; Integrated policies; Clear purpose and direction; Clear tasks and responsibilities; and participation).

A comparison of the general profiles of these nine European cities shows a number of similarities: All cities are committed to fighting against social exclusion. Municipalities are becoming more important actors in dealing with social issues in their areas. In all municipalities, the social services department is a key player for addressing social exclusion issues. A more pluralist model of urban governance is promoted, through cooperation with partners from public, private and voluntary sectors. All cities have geographical concentrations of vulnerable groups. Vulnerable groups are broadly similar. All agencies acknowledge the importance of public participation.

There were also significant differences: Historical and typological differences, differences in social exclusion configuration, differences in focus, economic configuration, the size and pace of change, and in the degree of the strength of welfare state and its relationship with social support at the local level. Variation can also be found in the vertical division of labour and the degree of horizontal cooperation, amount and depth of information and analysis, the concepts and terminologies, and the approaches and foci for action. Innovation depends on the context, and the gap between policy and implementation and the effectiveness of the policy are difficult to evaluate.

Almost all the good practice case studies meet the European criteria to combat social exclusion. Specific local characteristics are evident. The general pattern that emerged from the cases was that cities were focusing on the provision of training and employment, introducing new ways of delivering public services or additional services, through a leading role by the municipality but involving and linking public, private, voluntary and community organizations, and the targeted recipients of these services.

Overall, the cases showed that when agencies, policy areas, and target populations are clearly related to each other around a clear agenda and a clear division of roles and responsibilities, a degree of success for the initiative can be guaranteed. This success can be in the substantive outcome of the project, as well as in the way trust and a culture of collaboration can be built up between the interested parties.

This project has contributed to application of the open method of coordination to addressing social exclusion by strengthening the territorial dimension of the process by extending the method to the urban level, through focusing on cities' actions against social exclusion; broadening participation by involving new actors in addressing social exclusion, through local steering committees or consultation with relevant local agencies; taking into account the four common European objectives as the normative focus of the city case studies, identifying good practice examples of combating social exclusion in cities, facilitating collaboration among the social affair departments in participating cities, promoting mutual learning across different cities and regions by establishing a knowledge sharing platform, and providing theoretical and empirical bases for the development of city action plans to combat social exclusion.

The project's recommendations, therefore, emphasize the importance of a multi-agency approach, the participation of the socially excluded groups, a multi-dimensional and integrated policy approach, mainstreaming social inclusion, and coordination between different government levels.

INTRODUCTION

The fight against poverty and social exclusion, encompassing several policy fields including the labour market, housing, health, education and training, is a priority theme for the majority of local authorities in the major cities of Europe¹

Social exclusion is highly concentrated in cities due to the processes of economic and social transformation which they have been undergoing. Because local authorities are responsible for promoting urban social cohesion as the necessary basis for social and economic progress, they continuously develop and implement policies to counteract segregation and fragmentation among the urban population and to foster social inclusion. Some of these policies fail, others seem to be successful, yet not much is known about the conditions under which some fail and others succeed, and why some are proclaimed 'best practice' is often unclear. Even more dubious is the point of view that best practice in one location would be best practice everywhere: local conditions are often completely different. This state of affairs necessitates an in-depth transnational comparative study into not only the characteristics of social inclusion policies and practices themselves in cities, but also into the local conditions under which they are developed and implemented.

Local authorities have a pivotal role to play in the new National Action Plans to combat poverty and social exclusion, as they are responsible for the policies and practices at the local level, where the fight against social exclusion is carried out. They possess, often in a wide variety of partnerships with other relevant local actors, i.e. the non-governmental organizations, the voluntary sector, trade unions and the private sector, the required knowledge regarding the effectiveness of different policies and practices.

This project, which is coordinated by Eurocities, in the result of a collaboration among a number of European municipalities: Aarhus (Denmark), Barcelona (Spain), Bologna (Italy), Dublin (Ireland), Glasgow (UK), Lewisham (London, UK), Newcastle (UK), Rotterdam (The Netherlands), Stockholm (Sweden), and Trikala (Greece). The participating cities acknowledged a need for new comparative material that surpasses the often superficial exchange of information on the issues in question, in order to make their local actions more effective. The motive of the project "CASE" is therefore to enable this knowledge to be adequately collated and disseminated at the transnational level, to provide the necessary basis for cities and their local public and private organizations to (re)consider the effectiveness of their actions and improve them in a continuous process of innovation.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Starting from the aim of the preparatory actions for the new open method of coordination to promote social inclusion, and specifically from the aim of Strand 3 to promote innovative approaches in policies for combating exclusion through the exchange of good practices, the overall aim of the project '*Cities' Action to combat Social Exclusion*' (CASE) is:

- to enable local authorities and other relevant players in the cities of Europe effectively to contribute to the process of the National Action Plans to combat social exclusion by promoting the exchange of good practices between local authorities and other relevant local players as regards innovative approaches to combat social exclusion, and by fostering cooperation at the local and transnational levels.

The specific objectives of the project are:

- to identify through the joint, comparative effort of a number of cities in Europe innovative policies and practices at the local level, developed and implemented to foster the inclusion of the (most) vulnerable within society;

¹ Eurocities, 1993, *European Social Policy and the City*; Eurocities, 2000, *Position Paper on Social Exclusion*.

- to establish whether the policies and practices in question not only target the outcomes of the processes of exclusion, but also the processes themselves in terms of their causes, agents and mechanisms;
- to identify the social, economic, administrative and organizational conditions under which policies and practices at the local level to combat social exclusion are effective and may function as exemplary good practices;
- to establish whether 'open coordination', vertical and horizontal cooperation between the relevant players, a multi-dimensional, integrated approach, and the participation of the groups at which the policies are directed, are characteristics of the inclusion policies and practices presently implemented in the cities;
- to review whether social inclusion is being 'mainstreamed' into wider urban policies.

ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

The report consists of three sections:

1. The main report, which provides the main findings and the conclusions and recommendations. Thirty three case studies of good practice in combating social exclusion were identified and studied in nine European cities. What follows is a report of the analyses of city profiles and good practice case studies, as well as the conclusions and the policy recommendations that emerged from the study.

2. Methodology and process of research are explained in the **Appendix One**, which provides information on: how social exclusion was defined, how good practice cases were identified and analysed, how the project teams were organized and how the study was conducted, and the questionnaires that were used. It also provides the tables of comparative material, which formed the basis for the identification and analysis of the findings.

3. City profiles and good practice case studies are provided in the **Appendix Two**. It consists of the general profile of nine cities plus detailed information on the thirty three case studies of good practice.

TEN EUROPEAN CITY PROFILES

This section draws on the profiles of 10 European cities (Aarhus, Barcelona, Bologna, Dublin, Glasgow, Lewisham, Newcastle, Rotterdam, Stockholm, Trikala), which were produced to provide a general context for the study. The brief city profiles that are produced in the Appendix Two are summaries of a range of documents (brochures, statistics, published documents, websites etc), produced by the municipalities and summarized by the local teams and the scientific consultant. An analysis of these profiles shows a number of patterns of similarities and differences.

SIMILARITIES

A general pattern of similarity that is emerging is that a more plural model of governance has been promoted in all cities, which includes public-private partnerships and citizen participation, paying specific attention to addressing social exclusion.

- **All cities are committed to fighting against social exclusion.** This is part of a larger European agenda, which has incorporated earlier efforts by municipalities to address poverty and social exclusion in their areas. The terminology of social exclusion, which was less known and used a few years ago, is now widely embraced.
- **Municipalities are becoming more important actors in dealing with social issues in their areas.** This is part of the European agenda for strengthening subnational levels of government, following the principle of subsidiarity. This is partly to compensate for the democratic deficit that is a result of the growth of supranational agencies in the processes of European integration and globalization. It is partly to balance the reduction in the role of the nation state, which has had to leave room for manoeuvre for higher and lower level structures. It is partly to support the process of a more active role for the market forces in productive and distributive tasks. It is also partly due to the democratic pressure from below to develop a stronger role for local agencies in running localities.
- **In all municipalities, the social services department is a key player for addressing social exclusion issues.** In some municipalities, in countries with a longer history of welfare state, this structure has been in place for a long time. In others, this seems to help institutionalizing the activities of dealing with social problems, and devising a vehicle that can manage projects and bid for funding from European and national sources. This can be interpreted in different ways. On the one hand, it can be seen as passing the responsibility to the local authorities of dealing with the social problems that are caused at other, higher levels. In other words, municipalities may have been made responsible for distributive activities as distinctive from productive concerns, therefore limiting the social damage caused by neoliberal economic restructuring adopted at higher levels. On the other hand, it can also be interpreted as expanding the autonomy of the local authorities in their areas and developing the institutional structure needed to support it.
- **A more pluralist model of urban governance is promoted, through cooperation with partners from public, private and voluntary sectors.** This is another aspect of the process of European integration, as the EU promotes the establishment of local forums such as local employment partnerships, to bring together various agencies to address local problems. This can also be interpreted in functional and political terms. It may be seen to be similar to contracting out and franchising, which allows those at the top of the hierarchy to save costs. It can also be interpreted as passing unpopular decisions to lower levels². It may also be seen as the opening up of decision making to a wider range of agencies, hence enabling the local groups to have a stronger role in shaping their area. It is difficult to assess how far this model has been adopted and implemented in different cities, how far this has involved other agencies, and how far

² see Jeffrey Sellers, 2002, *Governing from Below*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p.94

the involvement has gone beyond the formal organizations and businesses to include local citizens.

- **All cities have geographical concentrations of vulnerable groups.** These may be in central or peripheral locations and may have ethnic or age group configurations. This is the outcome of the broadly similar socio-spatial processes that shape cities in market economies.³
- **Vulnerable groups are broadly similar.** These include those who are economically, physically and culturally more at risk of marginalization: the elderly, children, youth, women, single parents, single households, disabled, unemployed, low income earners, ethnic minorities, refugees and asylum seekers. Each city has a different combination of vulnerable groups.
- **All agencies acknowledge the importance of public participation.** The shape and extension of participation, however, vary widely. It is not possible to assess how far public participation actually takes place, whether at the stage of decision making on the provision or distribution of services and whether local groups are empowered by funds or asked to comment on the delivery of services.

DIFFERENCES

There are many differences between the participating cities. Although a general model is being promoted across Europe in response to Europeanization and globalization challenges, there are major differences in local contexts and levels of implementation. Some of the differences that can be identified in the profiles include:

- **Historical and typological differences.** The response to social exclusion is partly influenced by historical and typological differences in municipalities⁴. There are also major differences between those that belong to one historical and typological group.
- **Differences in social exclusion configuration.** Although the long list of vulnerable groups are broadly similar in different cities, their particular configuration is different. The dimensions and the shape of social exclusion vary in different localities, depending on the base of the economy (agriculture, manufacturing industry, services) and other national factors.
- **Differences in focus.** The centrality of social exclusion as an area of concern varies, depending on the strength of the city's economy and the size and configuration of vulnerable groups.
- **Economic differences.** Stronger urban economies have more concern for integrating migrants from widely different backgrounds; weaker economies have more concern for combating poverty as a widespread phenomenon.
- **The size and pace of change have been important.** In larger cities, some vulnerable groups are in a faster process of transition. The larger the number of migrants and the faster the pace of their arrival or transition to other localities, the more challenging the conditions and the more difficult dealing with them have been. Longer experiences of dealing with migrants have led to more elaborate efforts and complex schemes.
- **There is a relationship between strength of welfare state and social support at the local level.** The extent of development of welfare state at the national level is a

³ See A.Madanipour, G.Cars, and J. Allen, 1998, eds, *Social Exclusion in European Cities*, Jessica Kingsley/Routledge, London, for the processes of social exclusion at the local level.

⁴ See Robert Bennett, 1993, *Local Government in the New Europe*, Belhaven Press, London, for a typology of the local government into fused, dual and split-hierarchy systems, corresponding to southern, Anglo-Saxon, and northern models.

factor in the effectiveness and complexity of responses to social exclusion. Availability of funds other than municipal, available institutional and legal frameworks, and experience of dealing with welfare issues would make it easier to deal with new waves of problems. Although this might also work against it, as the existing frameworks may be too rigid to respond to changing circumstances. At the same time, the relative absence of the national state from welfare provision in some regions has encouraged municipalities to engage in service provision in areas that may not be customary in the strong welfare state regions.

- **The vertical division of labour varies.** The roles and responsibilities of national, regional and local government vary in different cities. This depends on the significance of the city in its regional and national contexts; larger cities seem to take on more complex roles. It also depends on the degree of clarity in the institutional division of labour, whether as a result of historical precedent or legislative arrangements.
- **The degree of horizontal cooperation varies.** The municipal literature often mentions good relationship between the actors involved. It is, however, difficult to assess whether all actors would agree with this assessment. Sectoral divide seems to be a continuing feature within some municipalities, while some others have shown a strong degree of collaboration for arriving at shared visions and policy syntheses.
- **Innovation depends on the context.** Different cities start from different positions and therefore move in different directions. For example, while Aarhus promotes autonomous departments (vertical integration), Glasgow promotes area-based policies and neighbourhood management (horizontal integration), each seeing it as innovation in their current context. While in both cases the shake up of the current arrangements may be an innovative step, the substance of the old and new arrangements may be less innovative.
- **The amount and depth of information and analysis vary.** Some municipalities have detailed information and analysis about the different social groups in their constituency. Others have started to develop these. Some have collected systematic data about local groups and areas. Others have focused on problem areas and groups. Some have only gathered statistical data. Others have also undertaken qualitative studies of their constituencies.
- **The gap between policy and implementation and the effectiveness of the policy are difficult to evaluate.** Some municipalities have explicit policies for public-private cooperation, public participation, and social integration. It is difficult, however, to assess the degree to which these policies have been implemented and their degrees of success.
- **The type and focus of approach differs.** While some focus on areas, others focus on groups. Some prepare plans to deal with targeted individuals, others deal with improving the services given or dealing with particular problems. All mention the participation of the target groups, but the shape and extent of this vary from place to place.
- **Terminologies and concepts are different.** This is exemplified in the difference in the way foreign origins are reported. In Rotterdam, even people with one parent born abroad, i.e., the second generation with ethnic and mixed backgrounds, are included in the statistics on ethnic diversity. This suggests the children of the mixed ethnicity/nationality households are seen as outsiders rather than insiders, despite the fact that one of their parents is a native resident. In Stockholm, only the first generation are mentioned in the profile, perhaps partly because large scale immigration is more recent here. Different cities use different terms to refer to immigrants, some taking citizenship and nationality into account and others ethnicity.

THIRTY SIX GOOD PRACTICES FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION

Following the analysis of city profiles, 36 cases of good practice in fight against social exclusion were identified by local steering groups and project teams in 10 cities (Aarhus, Barcelona, Bologna, Dublin, Glasgow, Lewisham, Newcastle, Rotterdam, Stockholm and Trikala). A complete description of these cases is provided in the Appendix Two. These cases were analysed along two sets of criteria: four common European criteria for social inclusion, and six criteria identified in the project for innovative approaches to social exclusion.⁵

- **Meeting the common European criteria** Almost all the good practice case studies meet the criteria 2, 3, and 4 of the European criteria to combat social exclusion. These are: preventing the risks of exclusion, helping the most vulnerable, and mobilizing all relevant bodies. The good practice cases meet, to varying degrees and with different foci, the first criterion, which is to facilitate participation in employment and access to rights, goods and services.
- **Specific local patterns** A review of the 36 good practice cases shows a wide range of initiatives in a number of areas of concern. It is possible to identify some broadly defined foci for the cases in each city, which to some extent shows a local approach. These include focusing on:
 - Employment, through partnership with the private sector and the NGOs, led by the Municipality; involving the participants in developing their career and in deciding on the allocation of resources (Aarhus).
 - Connecting the socially excluded to mainstream services, through partnerships between regional, local governments, NGOs, some private firms and volunteers (Barcelona).
 - Delivery of services by non-profit organizations, and coordination of management and funding between local and regional authorities (Bologna).
 - Employment and environment (improvement as well as redevelopment) through area-based, multi-agency projects (Dublin)
 - Mainstreaming into schools training and food programmes, thematic and area-based social inclusion partnerships (Glasgow)
 - Integration of local stakeholders, provision of support around themed regeneration (Lewisham)
 - Development of new information and research for integrated and evidence based policy formulation (Newcastle)
 - Employment and poverty alleviation through creative use of social insurance and engaging the disadvantaged groups in new activities (Rotterdam).
 - Specific public-sector institutional provision of services for targeted groups (Stockholm)
 - Establishment of the necessary organizations to focus on social exclusion problems (Trikala)
- **General patterns in good practice cases** Together, these good practice cases show a number of clear directions:
 - Focus on unemployment, finding new ways of training, support and provision of jobs
 - Ensuring access to existing services and provision of additional, targeted services
 - Targeting specified vulnerable groups
 - Involving new agencies from public, private, voluntary and community sectors
 - Involving the disadvantaged target groups in helping themselves

These seem to amount to a **general pattern** across the cases:

⁵ For a detailed discussion of these criteria, see the Appendix One on methodology and process of research.

focusing on the provision of training and employment, introducing new ways of delivering public services or additional services, through a leading role by the municipality but involving and linking public, private, voluntary and community organizations, and the targeted recipients of these services.

- **Open coordination within cities** This is not the same as the inter-governmental or inter-city cooperation, which will be discussed in the next section. Here the coordination is between the public, private, voluntary and community organizations and the participation of the target groups. This may seem different from the inter-city cooperation, but in general, they are both examples of **multi-actor, multi-level governance**.
- **Overcoming fragmentation** When these multiple levels of governance have been involved in setting up initiatives, the chances of success have improved. One of the main positive outcomes of such coordination, despite the amount of preparation needed, is the **trust and improved communication** among the participating parties (e.g. Bologna³). This is a form of social capital that has been produced in the process, which can then be used in other initiatives and areas of mutual concern.
- **Horizontal coordination** This has been essential in the success of cases. The good practice cases show how a broader range of agencies have been involved in the initiation and implementation of new measures against social exclusion. In this multi-agency environment, the only way to succeed has been to adopt a participatory and collaborative approach. Coordination among the members of a network of NGOs, coordination among public and private agencies, and complex coordination among public, private and voluntary organizations have been characteristics of all examples of good practice.
- **Area-based approach** Several cities have an area-based approach to social exclusion, concentrating attention and resources on particular pockets of disadvantage (e.g., Aarhus, Bologna, Dublin, Glasgow). The area based initiatives have emphasized the need for **horizontal coordination** among a rising number of stakeholders in the fight against social exclusion. It is, however, interesting to see how Aarhus, in its reorganization of the Municipality's Health and Care department, has signalled a move away from territorial basis of horizontal coordination (away from 'independent kingdoms') to a vertical departmental structure, where each department is given a budget and identifying and measuring targets that it should meet.
- **Vertical coordination** This varies according to institutional arrangements of different countries and regions. In addition to multi-agency nature of good practice examples, some show evidence of multi-level governance. National and regional government levels have been actively involved in designing, initiating and funding schemes that have been made operational by local agencies. The European level has also been involved in promoting strategic lines and in funding specific schemes. This has not implied close collaboration between these different levels. It has, however, shown a division of labour between these different levels.
- **Regional government** The existence of a regional tier of government, as in Barcelona, Bologna, and Glasgow, has made the task of vertical coordination more complicated, but not less effective, especially when the regional authority has been involved as an interested party to support initiatives.
- **National government** The task of vertical coordination with the national government has been more complicated, especially when there has been a need for a flexible interpretation of national laws and introduction of experimental programmes (e.g., Rotterdam). In cases of national capitals (e.g., Dublin), or large cities (e.g., Rotterdam), the possibility for this coordination may have existed more, due to the geographical and political reasons. For the same reasons, such schemes have been easier to be **mainstreamed** in the country as a whole.

- **Role of Municipalities** Municipalities have been playing a leading role in the fight against social exclusion. Municipalities are dealing with the consequences of changes in the larger economy, where the shift from industrial to service economy has created a surplus of labour that is not trained for and capable of entering the new economy. These consequences also include the entrance of a large number of immigrants, who have taken over the role of the most vulnerable members of society from the native poor. As part of broadening **participation** to a wider range of actors, as promoted by the EU Governance White Paper, urban and regional authorities are expected to contribute more to tackling social exclusion, which may result from the process of economic integration. It is not clear, however, whether this is supported by the allocation of extra **resources** to these authorities, or is considered as devolution of responsibility from higher level authorities without providing the necessary help needed to develop the relevant capacities and competencies. It has been argued that if increased public spending is to have disincentive effects on the economy, the combat against social exclusion should focus on capacity building that enables individuals to participate in society and economic activity⁶. This means the need to

*emphasize the **significance of cities in the fight against exclusion**, as the socially excluded often live within urban jurisdictions. Cities need to be involved in the wider networks of policy making. In implementation, they need to be supported by funds and capacity building, so that new competencies can be developed.*

- **Multi-agency approaches** Most cases of good practice are examples of **partnerships** developed and led by municipalities, involving NGOs, private sector firms and at times the target groups. However, partnerships have also been initiated and led by private companies (Aarhus1, Barcelona3) and social organizations (Barcelona1). In all projects, the presence of **civil society** organizations and efforts are significant. Interested and organized groups and activities have targeted the socially excluded residents of these cities to help them find jobs, access to services, and improve living conditions.
- **Role of the private sector** The participation of some private sector organizations in the process, either through the mediation of the public and voluntary organizations or on their own accord, has been significant. These private organizations have either initiated a scheme, or have supported the schemes started by others, through contributions in cash or kind. Their presence and effectiveness, however, have been less pronounced than the public and civic organizations.
- **Integration of policies** An aspect of integrated policies is that different areas of need are addressed by the same initiative. As social exclusion is multi-dimensional⁷, for any initiative to be effective, it needs to address several issues at once. What is therefore considered as innovative is integrating areas that were separately dealt with before, and creating new networks and synergies, as exemplified by connecting employment and social work (Barcelona1, Aarhus2).
- **Integration of agencies** Another aspect of integrated policies is that different agencies, with their different areas of expertise and concern, come together to address particular needs of specified vulnerable groups. This can lead to not only integration of policies, but also groups and agencies, and even connecting the target groups together. Rather than meeting the needs by public or voluntary organizations, the vulnerable groups are put in touch with each other and supported to help each other and themselves.
- **Participation** Some good practice case studies have elements of participation by those who are the targets of the initiative. Examples include encouraging people to

⁶ Mayes, David, 2002, Social exclusion and macro-economic policy in Europe: a problem of dynamic and spatial change, *Journal of European Social Policy*, Vol.12, No.3, pp.195-209.

⁷ Madanipour, Cars & Allen,1998.

come up with new ideas, start new businesses, and be involved in deciding on the applications received. There are fewer examples, however, of more substantial participation in deciding on regeneration strategies or be given the resources and the choice of how best to use the resources. In most cases of dealing with social exclusion, the target groups are still considered as passive recipients rather than active participants in the process.

- **Individual action plans as useful tools** As part of the participation agenda, several cities have been involving the target groups in producing an individual action plan for them, in which they have been helped to identify the problems they face and some practical steps to overcome them.
- **Targeting and efficiency** The cases show that most initiatives are targeting specific vulnerable groups, such as the homeless (Barcelona5, Bologna2,4, Stockholm2), prostitutes (Barcelona2, Glasgow2), long term unemployed (Dublin1,2, Rotterdam1,2, Stockholm5), the elderly (Barcelona1, Bologna1, Stockholm3), ethnic minorities (Aarhus1,2,3, Barcelona1, Bologna3, Stockholm3), children and young school leavers (Barcelona4, Glasgow1,3, Stockholm1,4), etc. One of the advantages of targeting specific groups has been the efficiency of the initiative, which can draw on integrated policies and collaboration of agencies around a specified group and their needs.
- **Targeting and social diversity** The general labels 'disadvantaged' or 'socially excluded' may be a useful tool to attract attention to the general processes of leading to, and common experiences of suffering from, social exclusion. However, beyond this recognition, there is need for specific and practical measures to deal with different groups with their diverse problems and needs. Identifying and targeting begins to acknowledge social diversity within disadvantaged groups, rather than labelling and treating them as all the same.
- **Mainstreaming** This has been the case in some cities (Glasgow1,3, Rotterdam1, Stockholm3), where the higher level governments have seen the initiative as successful and have been willing to fund and extend it as part of their mainstream policies. Social exclusion has been defined as one of the main areas of concern. However, the process of mainstreaming of social inclusion policies still remains at an early stage of development.
- **The general pattern** that the cases show is that

when agencies, policy areas, and target populations are clearly related to each other around a clear agenda and a clear division of roles and responsibilities, a degree of success for the initiative can be guaranteed. This success can be in the substantive outcome of the project, as well as in the way trust and a culture of collaboration can be built up between the interested parties.

OPEN METHOD OF COORDINATION

The method is considered a major invention in policy making in the EU in the last couple of years⁸. In the 1990s, alongside the highest rise in unemployment for generations in Europe, there were signs of a paradigm shift in approaches to governance in the EU. Rather than relying on 'hard' supranational legislation, the new approach is relying on a method of 'open coordination' among nation states, therefore changing both the level of intervention (from EU to nation state) and the nature of intervention (from legal obligation to coordinated decision).⁹ The term 'open coordination', which was coined during the Portuguese presidency in 2000, was developed first in the area of employment, but was extended to other social policy areas, in particular in combating social exclusion. Its main institutional ingredients are common guidelines, national action plans, peer reviews, joint evaluation reports and recommendations. According to the European Governance White Paper,

'Open method of co-ordination is used on a case by case basis. It is a way of encouraging co-operation, the exchange of best practice and agreeing common targets and guidelines for Member States, sometimes backed up by national action plans as in the case of employment and social exclusion. It relies on regular monitoring of progress to meet those targets, allowing Member States to compare their efforts and learn from the experience of others.'¹⁰

According to one of its chief architects¹¹,

'Open coordination is a mutual feedback process of planning, examination, comparison and adjustment of the ... policies of [EU] Member States, all of this on the basis of common objectives.'

The method is, therefore, seen as a vehicle of adopting a common approach to social policy while maintaining implementation mechanisms at the national level, which can take into account the differences in national contexts¹². When introducing and defending it in the field of asylum policy, for example, the European Commission saw the method of open coordination as supporting and complementing legislative policy and accompanying the convergence process¹³, as well as being transparent and leaving subsidiarity intact¹⁴. There were, however, some strong objections from the MEPs of different shades of the political spectrum. Some saw it as causing a downward trend towards the lowest common denominator of member state legislation, while others objected to it as circumventing the Community decision making procedures and a poor substitute for harmonization of legislation¹⁵. The pessimists even see the method as a smokescreen behind which the welfare state could be dismantled. They argue that by moving away from attempts to mandate uniform social and employment standards, the European Social Model can be eroded¹⁶.

⁸ Henning, Jenson, 2002, Introduction, *Open Method of Coordination (OMC): Improving European Governance?*, Conference, 30 September-10 October 2002, Committee of the Regions, Brussels.

⁹ Ferrera, Maurizio, Manos Matsaganis & Stefano Sacchi, 2002, Open coordination against poverty: the new EU 'social inclusion process', *Journal of European Social Policy*, Vol.12, No.3, pp.227-239.

¹⁰ Commission of the European Communities, 2001, *European Governance: A White Paper*, p.21.

¹¹ Frank Vandenbroucke Belgian Minister of Pensions and Social Affairs, quoted in Zeitlin, Jonathan, 2002, *The open method of coordination and the future of the European Employment Strategy*, Presentation to the Employment and Social Affairs Committee of the European Parliament, 8 July 2002. <http://wiscinfo.doit.wisc.edu/eucenter/omc/Papers/EUC/ZeitlinEESpresentation.pdf>, p. 1.

¹² Begg, Iain & Jos Berghman, 2002, Introduction: EU social (exclusion) policy revisited? *Journal of European Social Policy*, Vol.12, No.3, pp.179-194.

¹³ European Commission, 2001, On the common asylum policy, introducing an open coordination method, *Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament*, COM (2001) 710 final, 28.11.2001, EC, Brussels.

¹⁴ Mahony, Honor, 2002, MEPs urge thorough common asylum legislation, *EuObserver.com*, 24.9.02.

¹⁵ Mahony, 2002.

¹⁶ Trubek, David & James Mosher, 2001, New governance, EU employment policy and the European social model, paper to the Jean Monet Symposium: *Mountain or Molehill, ? A Critical Appraisal of the Commission White Paper on Governance*, www.jeanmonetprogram.org, New York.

The method of open coordination has been regarded as a vehicle with the capacity to address the externalities that emerge as a result of labour market integration in the EU and to develop more efficient instruments for income insurance for low-skilled workers¹⁷. Observers argue that the method's strongest possibility of influencing policy development lies in the relatively structured processes through which these institutional ingredients are organized. These recurring processes are seen to be capable of creating trust and cooperative orientations among participants and encouraging learning dynamics¹⁸.

The method of open coordination appears to focus on relationship among the EU member states in addressing issues of common concern. However, at the sub-national level, urban and regional public authorities have also welcomed it, with some caution, as a possible way of involving cities and regions in the process of making contributions towards such coordination¹⁹. The White Paper acknowledges the increased role of the public authorities in cities and regions in implementing EU policies, and therefore their role as an elected and representative channel. It is argued that broadening the participation of the widest possible range of actors in policy formulation, implementation and evaluation at all levels would ensure the representation of diverse perspectives. This can also utilize local knowledge and hold public officials accountable for their mutually agreed commitments²⁰. Meanwhile, public authorities emphasize that 'cities should not be treated the same as private companies and NGOs', as these authorities are elected by people and can claim democratic legitimacy²¹.

The application of the open method of coordination to social inclusion has resulted in the initial round of national action plans and joint reviews. In particular, the open method of coordination in addressing social exclusion has relied on

- Common European objectives that were agreed at Nice Summit in December 2000.
- National Action Plans against poverty and social exclusion, which were adopted by the Member States in June 2001
- Joint Report on Social Inclusion, published in December 2001, and regular monitoring, evaluation and peer review
- Common indicators, a set of ten primary and eight secondary indicators, adopted by the Employment and Social Affairs Council in December 2001, serving the purpose of monitoring progress towards the common objectives, and
- Community Action programmes, to encourage cooperation among Member States²²

These have been regarded as showing encouraging signs, especially in OMC's capacity to identify common objectives and focus a normative consensus around them. It has identified common challenges and promising policy approaches, and has encouraged the involvement of NGOs and other civil society actors²³.

The extension of the method to the urban and regional levels has been emphasized by the European Commission. In the words of the President of the Committee of Regions, the starting point for improving governance in Europe should be connecting Europe with its citizens, hence the significance of subsidiarity, flexibility and legitimacy²⁴.

This project has contributed to **application of the open method** of coordination to addressing social exclusion by

¹⁷ Vandenbroucke, F., 2002, Social justice and open coordination in Europe, *De Economist*, March 2002, Vol.150, No.1, pp.83-94.

¹⁸ Ferrera, Matsaganis & Sacchi, 2002, p.227.

¹⁹ Eurocities, 2002, Eurocities Response to the Commission's White Paper on Urban Governance, 29 March 2002, Eurocities, Brussels, p.5; Henning, 2002.

²⁰ Zeitlin, 2002.

²¹ Siitonen, Eva-Riita, 2002, Eurocities response to the Commission's White Paper on European Governance, President's speech at the Eurocities conference, *New European and Local Governance*, Vienna, 15 April 2002, p.3.

²² http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/soc-prot/soc-incl/index_en.htm

²³ Zeitlin, 2002.

²⁴ Henning, 2002.

- strengthening the territorial dimension of the process by extending the method to the urban level, through focusing on cities' actions against social exclusion
- broadening participation by involving new actors in addressing social exclusion, through local steering committees or consultation with relevant local agencies
- taking into account the four common European objectives as the normative focus of the city case studies,
- identifying good practice examples of combating social exclusion in cities,
- facilitating collaboration among the social affair departments in participating cities,
- promoting mutual learning across different cities and regions by establishing a knowledge sharing platform, and
- providing theoretical and empirical bases for the development of city action plans to combat social exclusion.

As the list, however, shows, the project has gone beyond the initial formulation of the open method of coordination, by extending it to new spatial scales and broadening participation by involving new actors. Direct cooperation among cities adds a new layer to the multi-actor, multi-level governance arrangements that the open method promotes.

Cities around the world have increasingly been recognized as key players in a globalizing process, playing a significant role in democratization and decentralization of activities. To acknowledge this role, the United Nations promotes city-to-city cooperation as an effective mechanism to promote international cooperation in addressing issues of mutual concern. Such cooperation includes the adoption of broad-based participatory planning and management, networking and horizontal exchange of knowledge, expertise and experience²⁵.

²⁵ Warah, Rasna, 2002, City-to-City Cooperation, editorial, *Habitat Debate*, September 2002, Vol.8, No.3, pp.1-3.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS²⁶

The European Strategy for Social Inclusion emphasizes the need to involve all relevant stakeholders, at the EU, national, regional *and local* level, in the fight against poverty and social exclusion through the Open Method of Coordination.

It is indeed at the local level, in cities, where many of the policies needed to tackle social exclusion are being developed and implemented - by the local authorities, NGOs, community organizations, and other key partners - where policy-making is best able effectively to respond to the needs of the different groups experiencing exclusion. It is therefore in cities where 'open coordination' is taking place on the ground.

Different local and national contexts exist both in terms of the nature of the problems of social exclusion and the structures in which those problems are addressed. However, there are common organizational approaches currently being implemented and developed in cities, which can be highlighted as key elements in successful local policy and practice towards social inclusion.

1. A MULTI-AGENCY APPROACH

The joint working of a broad range of partners from both the public, private and voluntary sectors at the local level is fundamental to effectively tackling social exclusion.

Given the multidimensional nature of social exclusion, relating to a range of cross-sectoral issues including employment, housing, education, health, equal opportunities, community safety etc., it is essential that the various different local partners whose responsibilities lie in these areas are fully involved in the design and implementation of policies and practices to combat social exclusion.

Multiple agency involvement through a local partnership structure enables a strategic approach to be taken, allowing for the most effective and efficient use of local energies and resources. However, for a local partnership to be successful there are a number of important issues that need to be addressed:

Accountability

Effective partnership working requires effective leadership. Local authorities have a clear public responsibility to develop and coordinate policies and the provision of services with the aim of achieving greater social inclusion. As the local level of government, democratically elected by their citizens, they therefore have a legitimate role in leading local partnerships for the coordination of local action against social exclusion.

Trust

Building trust and a common agenda is vital to improve the involvement of different local partners. In particular, the public and private sectors have different organizational cultures and ethical differences that need to be recognized, and stronger efforts must be taken to develop levels of trust in involving the private sector.

Organizational factors

Partnership working can be inhibited because of the issue of resources. Different local authority departments and other agencies have to meet their own targets and protect their own resources, which can limit their ability/ willingness to collaborate in setting new agendas and pooling resources together through a partnership.

Good organization arises where there is mutual benefit for all partners. In some cases this involves working on an issue-by-issue basis within the partnership's overall agenda, so that each partner can see the clear benefits of collaboration - for example, where the local health

²⁶ This section was prepared by Isabel Shutes on the basis of the Transnational Steering Committee's discussions in their meeting in London.

authority, employers, local authority equalities department and local disabilities organizations are engaged in working together to tackle access to employment for people with disabilities. In taking into consideration the interests of the different partners in working together, it is essential that the various partners have clear roles and responsibilities.

2. PARTICIPATION OF EXCLUDED GROUPS

The notion of community representation in local partnerships raises the question of who represents 'excluded communities'? Some communities are extremely fragmented, and their involvement can be very problematic, especially where some groups are more organized, better represented and more vocal than others. The involvement of NGOs or community organizations on a partnership board who claim to speak in the interest of the 'excluded' is therefore not sufficient in itself. Furthermore, where certain groups in a community dominate access to resources through partnership structures, it can simply compound the exclusion of the more disadvantaged groups.

The direct involvement of the groups to which local policies and practices against social exclusion are targeted is therefore vital. The varying levels at which direct involvement can take place need to be identified. It is often difficult to involve certain groups precisely because of the problems of exclusion that they experience. Therefore, in some cases individual action plans are a form of direct participation that can be more realistic/ constructive for particular target groups.

In terms of the design of policies, capacity building and assertiveness training is often necessary to enable people really to participate. Resourcing the participation of excluded groups is also necessary, both from an ethical point of view and in order for the participation to be effective. Direct involvement has to ensure some form of incentive, such as employment.

The follow-up involvement of people who have been the users of a particular project in the evaluation and further development of the project can in this sense be an effective means to enable participation and improve policy design. Indeed, a key issue that needs to be addressed is the evaluation of participation itself. What is regarded as a 'success' in involving excluded groups may often be based on individual opinion. This underlines the need to involve the users in the evaluation process.

Participation has to be improved with specific approaches to the different target groups of social inclusion policies and practices, and a high level of personal commitment is necessary in making it happen. Informal networking has an important role to play in improving contact with groups that are harder to reach. A balance between formal approaches through partnership structures and informal links is therefore needed to ensure wider involvement.

3. A MULTI-DIMENSIONAL AND INTEGRATED POLICY APPROACH

A multi-dimensional and integrated approach is central to effective policy. To make this happen, it is necessary for different local authority policy departments to work together and in this sense horizontal structures are more positive in enabling integrated policymaking. Developing an integrated approach between departments often depends on getting the right individuals on board – those that have the commitment and leadership to take this approach forward.

If we are really serious about taking a multi-dimensional approach, policy design and implementation need to be linked together in local authority structures, to ensure that the design and planning process is clearly related to the experience of local delivery.

4. MAINSTREAMING SOCIAL INCLUSION

Social inclusion is increasingly starting to be mainstreamed across local policies. However, this is a transitional process that is highly affected by politics. Political change will often result

in a shift of priorities concerning social inclusion and the reallocation of resources, therefore inhibiting mainstreaming.

It is important to develop a local action plan for social inclusion, with the involvement of all local authority departments and local partners, in order to avoid a fragmented approach to tackling social exclusion through specific projects which are not linked up. However, to develop a truly holistic approach, social inclusion should be incorporated in the *wider urban strategy*, rather than being confined to a separate strategy. This would be a key step forward in ensuring that social inclusion is adequately prioritized and mainstreamed throughout all local policies.

5. COORDINATION BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT GOVERNMENT LEVELS

Processes of decentralization have resulted in the increasing role of the local level in policy design and delivery. Varying examples exist of partnership working between the local, regional and national levels on social inclusion related policy and practice. However, more often than not, this is very difficult to achieve successfully where political differences exist between the different levels.

It is nonetheless important that the outcomes of the local policy and project learning experience are linked to the political levels so that they are filtered outwards into wider policy-making processes. In particular, it is essential that this local knowledge is fed into the EU and national strategic processes, in terms of the National Action Plans for social inclusion. This is vital if European and national strategies are to become more than simply 'strategy documents', but meaningful processes linked into policy experience on the ground. Linking local strategies to National Action Plans should therefore be a fundamental part of the Open Method of Coordination.