



2nd EUROPEAN MEETING OF PEOPLE EXPERIENCING POVERTY

We also participate in Europe!

A conference of the Greek Presidency of the EU

Brussels, 10 & 11 May 2003





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Foreword from the Greek Presidency

The Greek Presidency has directly supported the Belgian initiative of Minister Johan Vande Lanotte to organize the 2nd European Meeting of People experiencing Poverty, which supplements the European measures against poverty. Indeed, participation of people experiencing poverty has to be improved through the different channels initiated by the Treaty of Nice.

In a rich Europe, 15 % of the population (56 millions of people) is living in poverty. Moreover, 9% of Europeans are continuously on the verge of social exclusion; these figures do not take into account many people living in poverty. Despite the progress achieved, there is still a lot to be done.

If some objectives of the Treaty of Nice actually appear as utopist, it's precisely now the time to increase humanitarianism which is the base of our European model. This can be made possible by coordinating European social policies by integrating them with economic policies. Social policies are not luxury but a factor of economic development. Participation in employment is also a channel to social participation. However, aiming exclusively at profit, while abandoning social measures for work protection is not acceptable. Today 75 % of people living in poverty are women: it is therefore necessary to promote policies for gender equality, to fight against all forms of segregation and for access to individual rights.

New tools are now available: qualitative indicators have recently joined the quantitative ones. We insist on the necessity to elaborate the new National Action Plan for Employment with the participation of all actors.

Greece has recently created a National Committee at which people experiencing poverty will be invited. At the European level, the Convention will have to include the fight against poverty in its work.

All people involved have a role to play if we are to avoid empty Treaties. The Greek Presidency, will forward the most important results of this Meeting to the forthcoming Council of Ministers of Social Affairs in June.

Fighting against poverty in cooperation with people experiencing poverty is a guarantee of democracy.

DIMITRIOS REPPAS

Minister for Employment and Social Affairs

Table of Contents

Foreword by the Greek Presidency	3
Table of Contents	4
I. Introduction	6
Background	6
Overview of the Second Meeting	6
Message from the Greek Presidency to the Council of Ministers, June 2003	8
II. Reports from the workshops	9
Preliminary remarks	9
Workshop 1 Overview of inputs	10
Plenary session statement	14
Workshop 2 Overview of inputs	15
Plenary session statement	21
Workshop 3 Overview of inputs	23
Plenary session statement	29
Workshop 4 Overview of inputs	31
Plenary session statement	36
Workshop 5 Overview of inputs	37
Plenary Session Statement	43
III. Taking the debate on participation forward	45
Participation – elements arising from the workshops	45
Avenues for future Exploration	53
Annex I - Preparatory report	55
Annex II - Contributions	66
Annex III - List of participants	70
Annex IV - Bibliography	81

I. INTRODUCTION

Background

The Lisbon European Council of March 2000 agreed to put in place an EU strategy aimed at making a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty in the European Union countries by the year 2010. The Nice European Council (7 to 9 December 2000) agreed common objectives for this strategy. One of the agreed objectives was to mobilize all actors – including people who experience poverty – to engage with the elements of the strategy. The First European Meeting of People experiencing Poverty which took place on 1 and 2 December 2001 aimed to make a contribution to this objective of the strategy. The meeting was organized under the Belgian Presidency of the EU as an initiative of Belgium's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Budget, Social Integration and Social Economy, Johan Vande Lanotte.

The first meeting confirmed the importance of the participation of people experiencing poverty in

the process and demonstrated that such participation improves the standards of the decision making and implementation processes. At the conclusion of the meeting and in response to the strong request of all the participants, Minister Vande Lanotte committed to supporting a second European meeting and to seeking support from the European Institutions for this event.

The Greek Presidency of the European Union responded to this initiative and included this 2nd European Meeting of People experiencing poverty in their Presidency programme. In committing to this second meeting the ambition of all concerned was to establish such an event as a regular contribution to the EU strategy in the fight against poverty and exclusion which can complement the many other efforts by all actors concerned to meet the ambitious goal set in Lisbon.

Overview of the Second Meeting

The 2nd European meeting of people experiencing poverty took place on 10 and 11 May 2003 in Brussels under the Greek Presidency of the EU, with support from the European Commission and the Belgian Ministry for Social Integration. The aim of the meeting was to celebrate and reinforce the contribution of people experiencing poverty and exclusion to society and to enhance the impact of their 'voice' on the legislation, policies and administrative arrangements, that have an impact on their daily lives.

The objectives of the Second Meeting were:

- To develop a creative learning and reflection space where the participants can share their experiences of participating and engaging in society.
- To develop an input based on the experience of the participants that will contribute to 'best practice' in relation to the engagement of people experiencing poverty and exclusion.

- To enhance participants' capacity to contribute to the work of NGOs combating poverty and exclusion and to engage with representatives of public authorities and other actors.
- To enhance the commitment of the key European Union institutions to the engagement of people experiencing poverty and exclusion and the organisations in which they participate, in policy making and policy implementation, at all levels and on all aspects of their lives.

The 2nd European meeting of people experiencing poverty took place on 10 and 11 May 2003 in Brussels under the Greek Presidency of the EU, with support from the European Commission and the Belgian Ministry for Social Integration.

The meeting was attended by 120 participants from the Member States of the EU countries plus delegations from Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria and

Latvia. The participants were people who are experiencing or have experienced poverty. Some frontline social or community workers were also in attendance.

The principal challenge facing the meeting was to go beyond the stage of personal accounts and the exchange of experience in order to attempt to move closer to analyse participation models, currently known as or termed “good practice” for, effective strategies to secure and achieve participation of people experiencing poverty at all levels.

The possibility of taking a step towards this challenge emerged from two points:

- the results of the first meeting of this kind (Brussels, 1 and 2 December 2001), which demonstrated the ability of people experiencing poverty to make a relevant analysis of the mechanisms behind their exclusion from society;
- the desire of the Greek Presidency and the Belgian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for the Budget, Social Integration and the Social Economy, Johan Vande Lanotte, to increase participation by people experiencing poverty in European politics and specifically in the process of the social inclusion strategy through the forthcoming National Action Plans on Social Inclusion (NAPs Inclusion), and other key dates on the European agenda.

The 2nd Meeting was prepared on the basis of a methodology developed by EAPN¹ in conjunction

with EAPN’s national networks. An EAPN contact person in each country was tasked with:

1. making contact with
 - participants at the 1st Meeting (if possible)
 - people experiencing poverty who might be available to take part in the 2nd Meeting
 - and/or field social workers
2. preparing the 2nd Meeting on the basis of a checklist of questions focusing on
 - experiences of participation at all levels: personal, as part of an organization, through contact with policy-makers (local, regional, national, European)
 - knowledge and the impact of the 1st NAPs/inclusion
 - improvements to be made in the 2nd NAPs/inclusion

The replies to these questions are contained in Annexe 1 ‘Preparatory Report on the 2nd Meeting’; this document spans a very wide range of topics, not all aspects of which could be explored at the 2nd Meeting for want of time. This Preparatory Report could provide the groundwork for a further exploration of the issue of participation by people experiencing poverty in the future.

At the conclusion of the 2nd Meeting, the 5 workshops put forward key areas for inclusion and/or strengthening in the 2nd National Action Plans 2003–2005.



¹ European Anti-Poverty Network - The European Anti Poverty Network is an independent coalition of non governmental organisations involved in the fight against poverty and social exclusion across the Member States of the EU. EAPN is primarily a lobbying organisation seeking to put the issues of poverty and exclusion at the top of the EU agenda.

Message from the Greek Presidency to the Council of Ministers, June 2003

Following from this meeting, this message was sent by the Greek Presidency to the European Council of Ministers meeting of June 2003:

“To achieve participation by people experiencing poverty:

1. The daily problem of survival has to be overcome; in other words, all (poor people) must have access to their rights and to a standard of living that allows reflection. Basic needs must first be met before participation can work;
2. There must be good communication between leaders and citizens. Information must be clear and transparent and capable of reaching everyone;
3. There must be sufficient resources (financial, technological and human support) to permit and sustain participation. These resources will provide support for the associations which work with people experiencing poverty. Continuous, long-term support should be given to projects, particularly vocational reintegration projects with sustained back-up guaranteeing stable employment on completion of the reintegration pathway;
4. It is necessary to involve people experiencing poverty as soon as ideas are launched and until policies are evaluated. Such an evaluation calls for clear quality criteria. This procedure should be included in the NAP on social inclusion;
5. Participation by people experiencing poverty should be included when social measures are

drawn up, particularly at this time when European structures are changing;

6. The current evaluation procedures of the NAP on social inclusion should be intensified, as regards both quantitative and qualitative indicators;
7. Each Member State should give sufficient support to the establishment/strengthening of networks (local, thematic, transversal, urban, rural...) where people experiencing poverty and their organisations are represented;
8. In order to give social measures greater cohesion, the complementarity between the NAPs Inclusion and Employment is to increase.

Following the 2nd European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty, the Greek Presidency proposes that:

- The Member States
Intensify their efforts to foster the participation at all levels of people experiencing poverty and to develop structural networks.
- The Member States and the Commission
Make plans for and/or strengthen the involvement of people experiencing poverty in general and in the development of the NAP in particular.
- The European Commission and successive European Presidencies make provision to organise this type of meeting as part of the annual work programme (like the annual Round Tables).”

II. REPORTS FROM THE WORKSHOPS

Preliminary remarks

The participants at the 2nd European meeting of people experiencing poverty were split up into 5 workshops which met for 4 sessions of 1 hr 30 min each. Each workshop was supported by a three-strong team made up of a facilitator, rapporteur and coach. Allocation of participants between the 5 workshops was dictated by language constraints and the technical limitations of interpretation facilities.

The specific chemistry involved in the composition of each workshop produced reports that differ widely from one another; some issues – like employment and democratic organization – were discussed in some workshops but not at all in others. Some groups worked more on personal testimony and narratives; some examined the National Action Plans on Social Inclusion in more depth, while others spent less time on them.

The reports of the workshops in this report reflect these differences. It was thought inappropriate to try and reproduce the contents of each report into a standard format mould, even if the issues discussed were in some instances less directly concerned with the 2nd Meeting's core theme, as this would exclude much valuable input.

In the reports of the workshops different type faces are used to distinguish between participants interventions, synthesis, comments and key ideas and text that is used to make necessary links or introductions. The following characters correspond to:

- *necessary links or introductions.*
- *participants interventions, structured from verbal expression to written expression so that thought processes can be followed up*
- *synthesis, comments and key ideas*

At the end of each workshop's reports, you will find the synthesis given by the participants to the final plenary session.

WORKSHOP 1

Overview of inputs

1. The process of participation (France)

The starting point

“I live in a hostel where there are 24 mothers with their children. As soon as you move in, you lose control of your own and your children’s lives. Support was guilt-creating and picky. I went there because of a life crisis: I had lost my house, my job and my independence. I didn’t like being in the hostel, but I didn’t have any other choice. Some things about it I found unbearable, but the people living there put up with it; they had given up after suffering and become bitter; they felt guilty. It also felt like being in a hospital: you got given drugs to keep you quiet. The children suffered most: they got taken over by the support staff. There was no way of getting back control of your life”.

An opportunity to start up a process of participation

“There was a house dinner at Christmas with the residents, director and support staff. The director introduced himself to me: it was the first time that someone had treated me like a human being. I had been there 6 months and it was the first time he had seen me. He didn’t even know my name, only my room number. He was often not there, and had no idea about how the hostel was run on a daily basis. I made sure he did”.

“A bit later on, following a law passed in 2002 (Hostels/Residents’ Councils Act) the director remembered about me and put me up for election. I told the Council about my experience, which created some distrust among the support staff and residents. The staff didn’t realize that res-

idents could participate; the other mothers weren’t convinced either. They were worried about the comeback. A lot had to be done to build up relationships of trust. Eventually, they were won over to the idea that it didn’t mean turning everything upside down, but just working together to improve things. That was a revolution”.

The participation process brings about positive changes

“The atmosphere and attitudes have changed. Now, instead of the residents wanting to see the director, it’s the other way round. Before, there was a homework club. Now there are the creative workshops where the children learn to express themselves in different ways. Room allocation has been improved so that the mothers have more privacy. The washing and toilet facilities have been done up, so hygiene is better. The support staff are discovering new scope in their work. There is a feeling of being part of a community; before, you couldn’t feel you had any dignity. Eventually, the Council will be able to run without me. I’m very hopeful about my future. It’s comforting to know that laws and rights exist that you can demand for yourself and others”.
FRANCE

Starting from an extremely unfavourable situation, the occurrence of enabling circumstances coupled to an external opportunity (new legal provisions) was turned to account to start up a participation process.

2. Networking

An established legal framework for participation

“There are a lot of community groups and a political will to organize and support community life. Voluntary organizations get official funding, but that doesn’t stop them being free to speak out and criticise. If it did, public opinion wouldn’t like it and it would affect voting behaviour. Municipal councils must support user groups; that has been the law for a long time. Given the focus that has been put on homelessness, dialogue on this issue

has also increased; there are meetings every 3 months”. DENMARK

A win-win situation

“The decisions taken that way gain in legitimacy. The participants have their security guaranteed”.
DENMARK

Maintaining the information flow

“The (Danish hostel) network tries to bring

together people living in hostels, who tend to be those who have slipped through the social safety net (relationship breakdowns, drink, drugs and other problems). Being in a network gives hope not just for influencing the authorities and getting things changed, but also for working on better ways of addressing common concerns.

The network operates along democratically representative lines.

Each hostel sends a delegate to the network.

Each hostel has a users' council

- for everything to do with the internal running of the hostel
- and where information and decisions feed back to the national network”.

Participation is not an easy process to set going

“It is hard to put your own problems aside and still find the strength to work on common problems. Those who leave the hostel don't stay in

3. Moving towards participation

The first step

“It was hard to actually go through the family centre's doors. I'd walked past it several times without daring to go in. That was until I decided that I was doing it for myself and that whatever anyone else thought wouldn't make me change my mind” IRELAND

“A woman came to see us with a question about a drink problem. She started getting to know our creative workshops. The visits got more regular”. DENMARK

... and subsequent steps

“The next step is coming to a meeting and

4. Participation and democratic processes

“The right to participation also includes responsibilities”. SWEDEN

“A lot of people don't bother voting any more because of the wide gap between what politicians say and what they do. And they aren't interested in our problems, either”. UNITED KINGDOM

“We are experiencing an erosion of the concept of democracy. But a state only exists through the country (geographical) and the people who live in it. Politicians tend to forget that. And no-one listens to the people any more, representative democracy no longer works. So, you very often

contact, but there is a solid core of workers”. FRANCE

“Although the right to organize in this way is legally recognized, users don't find it easy to speak out. It starts getting easier when people feel they are being really listened to”. DENMARK

A legal framework and well-developed community life are clearly two decisive starting points.

Two things must be said, however:

- **people experiencing poverty have often had a long and harsh experience of life, which makes it hard for them to speak for themselves.**
- **on the evidence, the authorities cannot stick just to the legal framework if they want real participation: there is still ground to make up.**

speaking at it: it makes you feel proud of yourself and gives you the courage to go further. It's important to have someone you can trust in”. IRELAND

“Coming gave her the strength to take a difficult step towards a better life. She decided to leave her husband because he wouldn't do anything about his drink problem. She now lives in her own apartment”. DENMARK

Participation takes different forms; it need not be about speaking, it can be about activities of all kinds: drawing, singing, writing, cooking...

see “democracy” being replaced by “citizenship” or “democratic participation”. The focus shifts to the individual. But even more than the right to vote – which is being exercised less and less – there is the right of assembly. But no-one pays attention to voluntary organizations any more either, which creates a feeling of disempowerment” FINLAND

“It is extremely depressing to hear how democracy is declining in the western countries. For the countries of the former Soviet Bloc, achieving democracy is a cardinal challenge that we have been waiting years for. Europe absolutely must

give a clear signal so that injustice is no longer enshrined in law". BULGARIA

"In Latvia, there is no public funding for NGOs, but sponsorship that companies can take off their tax. Community life is still under-developed because the scattered population isn't conducive to it, but Community foundations are starting to be developed, and they could be an interesting idea".

These contributions call the forms of democracy to account:

- **representative democracy, where elected**

5. Strategies for participation

"We have something to offer them (policy-makers). They need us to get in touch (with realities). With us, they can make better laws". SWEDEN

"A good strategy of persuasion is to show policy-makers where their measures have fallen down through not listening to us". UNITED KINGDOM

"Turning the right to participation into something compulsory is a good measure". NETHERLANDS

"The senior civil servants we met recently in a debate on tackling poverty were very ill-at-ease and nervous. The thing is, they hope to influence policy decisions. This meeting taught me that you also have to take the civil service into account, because their work is tied to politics and any change of Minister will affect it". UNITED KINGDOM

representatives get a mandate to run all aspects of community life;

- **representative democracy coupled to participatory processes: this is a vast field and being increasingly explored in all areas: town planning inquiries, neighbourhood committees, participatory budgeting.**

These problems do not all stem from identical set-ups but from events in widely differing countries, but whose common ideal remains a working democracy delivering more equality, social justice, solidarity and transparency.

"Three town councils are taking part in an EAPN-Eurocities project where the priorities are disability, welfare and homelessness. This programme offers an opportunity for working locally". SWEDEN

From these contributions, the following relevant strategies can be identified:

- **Playing on the complementary contributions which can be made;**
- **Analyse measures and policies and point out their failings;**
- **Demand and keep demanding until participation is written into the law;**
- **Include and involve all the actors;**
- **Seize every opportunity.**

WORKSHOP 1 - Plenary session statement

The workshop took as its basis personal accounts of different models for participation and also addressed the conditions for effective participation by people experiencing poverty.

This brought us back to what had been said at the First Meeting in 2001. It is important to reiterate these things as a means of building confidence among first-time participants.

But the group also queried "why" the conditions for proper participation needed restating. It concluded that they were due to the fact that the conditions are still not in place, including the

most important one: that of being listened to. The group notes that a number of countries have put participation into law, making it compulsory, such as through users' councils.

The group sees this as a positive development, but rather than force the authorities to listen to us, we want to persuade them that participation is important and necessary. The authorities need us to manage policy measures; we offer them our knowledge of life at the sharp end, the impact that measures taken have on our daily lives. Listening to us, and to anyone having difficulty, is essential before we can talk about real democracy.

WORKSHOP 2

Overview of inputs

Inputs on group experiences

The things that bring the group together are what defines their model of participation. The workshop participants gave several examples of this:

1. Travellers (Ireland)

Travellers are a homogeneous community that exists with a strong and positive sense of membership, it is geographically disperse and experiences wide spread discrimination.

“We have the support of the Development Group with which we prepare meetings. But often, the politicians don’t turn up”.

Travellers got housing built, but they are not con-

nected up to mains water, electricity, or services.

“The houses are like that because they don’t want us to have houses. That’s why the authorities don’t do anything: they think that if they did anything for us, the majority population would vote against them in the next elections”.

“We need to win over public opinion. Without that, meetings won’t do much good”.

2. Immigration (Spain)

A uniting factor for another group is immigration; but in the host country, it is often seen as a negative factor, synonym of illegality and failure to integrate.

“There is a homeless shelter, but immigrants can only stay there a week because they don’t have papers”.

Migrants are supported by NGOs but face all the problems involved in not having legal status, which means widespread discrimination. Some positions in the voluntary organizations are held by migrants.

“Migrants acting alone will never get participation. It took the voluntary organizations 10 years

to get this started. And there has to be interest on both sides: from the migrants and from the host country”.

Migrants have achieved participation in voluntary organizations. The road to participation still seems to be a long one; recognition of the basic positive unifying factor (same country of origin) is an obstacle in the host country; the process has to go through a change of the group’s image - from negative to positive - in public opinion, coupled to major changes in the law and the combating of discrimination.

3. Women on benefit (Netherlands)

“Our first contacts were made with the social services, which hadn’t happened for 20 or 30 years. They weren’t overjoyed about having to listen to us”.

“Every year, there was a conference that talked about participation without us and about us. Thirty or so people went to it and demanded to be let in and speak. It worked, and it’s still working”.

The group wages campaigns to capture public attention using the following method: “finding out what common ground we have, like education; the

conclusions were that education should be free for the children of families experiencing difficulties. I noted that 3 of the 4 parties put this into their programmes”.

This group displays several features that can facilitate the participation process:

- **cohesion**
- **the group’s lasting power**
- **inventiveness and boldness**
- **successes and official recognition**
- **plans for the future.**

4. Homelessness and unemployment (Germany, Sweden)

“No-one’s going to make me live in a flat”.

“Street people don’t want anything to do with social services, or the authorities: they don’t want to be put on file and have constraints. so they don’t exist”².

“The big problem is the shifting nature of the homeless: a matter of weeks or months. If you are lucky, they may still be living 2 or 3 years later. Changing names and faces creates added difficulties. You can only build a relationship if the people stay the same for a certain time. You can only discuss things properly with people that you are getting to know”.

“You need 3 to 5 years’ training. Otherwise It’s like living in Paris with the Beijing phone book”
GERMANY

Participation by people enduring exclusion does happen in voluntary organizations. Social integration has both positive over-

tones – if achieved, it is at least a partial success – and negative overtones – refusal to live “like everyone else”.

Factors identified as obstacles to integration were:

- **The vicious circle: no permanent address no job;**
- **Contingent, underpaid, fixed-term work**
- **The belief that policy-makers know their situation full well but don’t want to improve it, and that the measures taken are just “a sop”.**
- **The time needed to speak the same language.**

The plus points identified were:

- **The number of homeless and jobless who have got involved**
- **The determination to lift oneself out of it in an organized way, going so far as to strike up dialogue with policy-makers.**

5. Ex offenders, drug addiction (Sweden)

This group experienced total social exclusion, it set up its own centre and its rules are based on returning to society and making a clean break with the past; its methodology is based on self help.

“What we do, we do with experience and expertise. A politician, policy-maker or civil servant could never have done this; if we hadn’t set up this group, nobody else (other than ex-offenders and former drug addicts) could have done it”.

This voluntary group helped raise politicians’ awareness of the total legal limbo in which prisoners exist. It is valued in political circles for the results it gets. Crime figures are down by 50%. The group gets no public funding. It receives financial assistance from local shopkeepers, and does its own fund-raising to supplement its meagre income. But lack of funds remains an acute problem. The group has expanded rapidly in size (from 11 members to 4000 in 5 years) and geographical coverage.

“Our organization has grown and all the members of our organization have grown”.

The group is engaged in a debate with the Ministry of Justice on a debt freeze. The plan is to freeze for 2 years the debts contracted by ex-offenders before they were imprisoned to give them a chance to get settled when they leave jail. Having to repay debts immediately on leaving prison is one thing that

pushes ex-offenders straight back into a life of crime. “We are on the way to changing things. We want to pay our debts, but the first thing we need is somewhere to live and food on the table. We are pretty proud: the chairman of our board of directors did over 20 years inside and now he has talks with the Minister of Justice. We’re proud of what we’ve achieved and how far we’ve come and we try to help others. We know about crime and drug addiction. I’m now getting paid to help youngsters out of a life of crime. I can hold my head high because I know what I’m talking about. When I’m talking to a kid who’s just stolen his first car or is on his first high, I can relate to him because I know how he feels”.

The group isn’t expecting immediate results.

“It isn’t so much a question of what the Minister can do for us; he can’t push the law, he can listen to us. Sometimes it is important to have a Minister who’ll just listen. He can’t do much this year or next year, but he still has change in his sights”.

The group also set up the first ever meeting between politicians and prisoners during an election period in order to put a public spotlight on the “politically disempowered”: “There was a big debate between the politicians who had never met a prisoner; it was the start of an awakening”. *Its members also use inven-*

² In Workshop 3, a group of homeless people agreed upon some common objectives. A better understanding of this project would help in analysing similarities and differences, and perhaps put together the basic building blocks and stages of a methodology.

tive methods, like contacting opposition candidates – “ambitious politicians looking to get into government next time” – to make allies who will table parliamentary questions. When they were broke and unable to pay the rent for their centre, they staged a sit-in and threatened to break their “no drugs” rule.

Factors enabling the development of the participatory process:

- **Members of the group have similar life experiences; there is identification with the group;**

6. Open door centre (Belgium)

This open-door centre for people experiencing poverty provides long-term support which respects their individual paces and plans.

“When I came here 10 years ago, I could only sit and watch what went on. It took a long time before I was ready to say anything. I was able to do it because they went slowly, at my pace; they left it to me to take part in the group”.

Those who use the centre are called to a monthly debate (called a “parliament”) which will lay down the broad outline of activities and group projects.

“An organization needs to be strong enough before moving towards participation”.

Participation is progressive, incremental, from the local (neighbourhood) up to town and regional levels. The methodology is developed from the reference point of people experiencing poverty.

7. Hostel for people experiencing poverty (France)

The group’s centre is a hostel for people experiencing poverty. People experiencing poverty are taken in after major life crises of different kinds. The statutory participation body has only recently been set up.

“The first move was taken by the centre’s management who wanted to introduce participation into the organization. The users set up the meetings, draw up the agenda, give their views on how the house is being run, the physical organization, educational provision, intake”.

The need to respect the users’ pace

“People first need to reclaim ownership of the right to have their say. The first demands will be about everyday things: meals, opening hours, the

- **These experiences are put to positive use: the members know that they have knowledge and know how, and pass these on to peers (with similar life experiences)**
- **They set themselves internal rules: there is cohesion.**
- **They have a positive self-image: they are proud of who they are and what they have achieved.**
- **They have gained recognition by civil society and politicians alike.**

“When we go to the political authorities, the file has to be ready and include all the key points. *But we* run the meeting: people experiencing poverty give their personal testimony and analyses and put forward proposals. Then the political authority can take action”.

Here again, there are a series of participation-enabling factors:

- **Respect for people and a belief in what they are capable of**
- **Open discussion before setting common objectives**
- **A sound organization and structured preparations**
- **People experiencing poverty are the reference point of participation meetings.**
- **The levels targeted are progressively widened.**

showers. Then broader issues that involve everyone will start coming in. Getting users’ views on the running of the centre is very difficult in itself”.

Meetings of the hostel Federation

“In October 2002, we brought together hostel users for the first time. The idea was for users to talk to one another and rediscover their vigour, the ability to initiate, to do something together. To realize that they are not alone, be able to call up other people ...”

“The law was discussed with the big federations: directors and social workers; it isn’t the same as users. It is a big job of work to start from the grassroots”.

Inputs on general issues

1. The NAPs/incl

“The National Department talks to us, at the European Union’s request. We will be writing two or three pages of our own for the 2nd NAP”.

On the NAP, a group of homeless people also point to the lack of transparency involved in consulting only “the big players; they go no farther than the trade unions and churches: their interests aren’t our interests. We can’t work with them and they aren’t interested in working with us”.

People experiencing poverty are socially defined by what they lack: homes, jobs. But they are not homogeneous social groups;

2. Solidarity and access to rights

Pre-condition for participation

“The first thing is to solve the daily problems of people experiencing poverty”.

A group that runs (among other things) a holiday centre where people experiencing poverty can relax and discover their voice set a discussion rolling on “the biggest challenge to participation: reaching those that are currently being left behind”.
IRELAND

“A poor European at least has something: a minimum income guarantee. Migrant poverty is of a different order because their reality is different. But when talking about poverty, we need to talk globally, we need to talk about human rights”.
SPAIN

“An immigrant doesn’t have the same ‘chances’ because he doesn’t have the same choices: there is discrimination from the word go”. SWEDEN

Depending on what point people are at, there are stages: “When they first come here, people are not really able to say much. They get given a job, such as serving coffee. After a while, they might say something to the ones who don’t bring their cups back”. IRELAND

their composition varies widely, nor do they necessarily have the same life goals, takes on the mechanisms of exclusion, demands for participation, or methods.

Notwithstanding these obstacles, participation is at work in small voluntary groups. But if it is to succeed, then in addition to working on the above factors, it needs to find a positive political will, combined with a gradual shift in values, shifting away from the over-reliance on employment as the only key to social integration.

“Us here, we’re the top guns; it’s our turn to find solutions in our regions and towns so that those who are still holding up achieve a certain level of participation”. GERMANY

“Whatever differences there might be, poverty is a denial of rights, injustice”. BELGIUM

“Migrants or homeless, there is no difference. Neither has a choice”. GERMANY

“If we allow ourselves to be divided, we will already have lost. We have to start with a political awareness, from scratch. The first demand is solidarity. Then, we can go on from there”.
GERMANY

People experiencing poverty do not all come from the same starting point. The differences cannot be denied; they have to be talked out, worked on, bearing in mind that these are degrees within the same process of social exclusion. To disregard these degrees would sooner or later end up creating breaches. Solidarity has to be developed or strengthened between all people experiencing poverty.

WORKSHOP 2

Plenary session statement

Participation

Satisfying the basic needs of people experiencing poverty is a pre-requisite to any participation.

Participation is a right, not a favour.

The participation process must include the following things:

1.1. Respect for the individuals concerned:

- their life experiences, their “being”
- their pace and their level
- their methods of communication, their language
- their life: people experiencing poverty are fighting on two fronts:
 - the daily struggle to survive
 - dealing with poverty

1.2. Dignity

1.3. Means:

- to live with, decent incomes
- to meet and work to good purpose in voluntary groups

1.4. Networking

- In the community where they live
- In the sector of poverty where they are involved
- In their country
- In Europe.

1.5. Policy management with people experiencing poverty

- The participation process must be engaged from the start
- People experiencing poverty must be involved by giving them the choice of issues, methods,

decision-making and evaluation processes, and action to be taken

- The content of the participation must be what is closest to people experiencing poverty, and must be included as focal points in the decision-making
- People experiencing poverty are realists: they are not asking for the moon, but will not be nannied.

1.6. Participation has to start in the community, not just with the political authorities.

- To locate allies through awareness-building
- Because communal life is made up of free choices.

1.7. Participation is a joint responsibility and a mutual commitment.

- Policy-makers must be fully engaged from start to end.
- The participatory process is non-negotiable and must lead to automatic enabling mechanisms being put in place.

1.8. Participation takes place through a ping-pong mechanism:

- Deciding on the issues to address
- Discussing them
- Writing up proposals
- Discussing them with the authorities
- Putting the measures into practice
- Analysing the results
- Evaluating

National Action Plans on social inclusion

- Participation in the first NAP by people experiencing poverty was negligible.
- For the second NAPs, attempts were made to consult, but unfortunately at too short notice to enable a proper process to be run.
- Consultations were mainly addressed to large-scale organizations, not grassroots groups. Some of these big organizations missed their opportunity by failing to face up to the fact that they had not been allowed enough time.
- Lack of time is a poor reason for not consulting the grassroots.
- The fundamental needs of people experiencing poverty do not feature enough on the NAPs' agendas.
- The NAPs are developed at a level way above that of people experiencing poverty.
- Consultations focus too much on mean poverty levels.
- The NAPs do not touch the reality of people's lives.
- Until the contents of the NAPs are made binding on the Member States and/or backed up by penalties, the NAPs will just go ignored.

WORKSHOP 3

Overview of inputs

1. Employment

“Back-to-work” schemes

“Schemes last a year or two then fall apart because the funds have run out”. GERMANY

“Having been on these schemes doesn’t give you access to a real job or unemployment benefit”. AUSTRIA

“Cooperatives are funded for short-term schemes, so it’s hard to achieve continuity of employment”. ITALY

“People experiencing poverty end up accepting the first thing that is offered to them. It’s all just exploitation and a vicious circle: you don’t move on at all. We get offered any old thing and because it’s that or nothing, we take it”. FRANCE

“If schemes are to have results, they need to be run over the long term. Someone who has a long term opportunity will manage. You can get back into society over the long-term. The European Union should underwrite the long term approach: it would do away with persistent subsidized poverty”. GERMANY

These personal testimonies are informative about “back to work” schemes, regarding

- **Their duration**
- **Their status: they should be recognized/ validated by access to a steady, decently paid job or at the very least a substantial improvement in status and income**
- **One essential condition: the ability to make choices**

Integrating into society takes time

“Integration is a long term thing. People experiencing poverty are employed in the community sector. And then they are left to it. They are worse-off than before. Losing what you had is even harder. Working must result in recognition. Why do only people with jobs get (social) recognition, when there are millions of people in Europe that work but don’t necessarily have a job? Why can’t there be recognition for people who don’t have jobs, but still work?” GERMANY

A failed reintegration is worse than nothing at all, but because they are too short, many back-to-work schemes are doomed to failure.

Integration into work and society requires flexibility, creativity, support...

“Our project provides individualized training courses: we look at the individual’s difficulties and draw up a personalized training plan and support that is appropriate for them. There is also a special programme for young people: music can also be a way into the labour market”. SPAIN.

“People participate as active players in mapping out their way back into the labour market. The need for ongoing support has been highlighted for people long out of touch with the employment market, for whom the standard routes back do not work well. Employment opportunity schemes are as important as the right to work. People do not just have the right to work, but also that of being integrated into the labour market in a way adapted to their difficulties”. ITALY

The more difficulties a person has experienced, the more their labour market re-entry needs to be granted attention, respect and appropriate support.

(Re)integrating the labour market

*When policy-makers talk about employment, they may be using the same term as people experiencing poverty - (re)entry into work - but they see employment as mainly an **end**, an objective to be achieved. For people experiencing poverty, the long-term perspective is key.*

Back-to-work schemes are generally too short for people who have experienced extreme and/or long-term poverty to get settled long-term.

“If schemes are to have results, they need to be run over the long term”. GERMANY

For policy-makers, employment is one possible pathway towards social integration/reintegration. Having a job is anything but the end of the struggle for people experiencing poverty. When people

experiencing poverty and social workers talk about employment, they see it as a means, a pathway towards general recognition and not purely an occupational outcome.

“When I was sleeping in my car, wearing dirty clothes, I never felt poor. Now I have a job, when my daughter asks me for something that I can’t give her because I don’t earn enough, I feel poor”. SWEDEN

“This year, we had 5 people die even though they didn’t have to struggle any more; they had found somewhere to live. Despite that, they still couldn’t get by. They were alone.” AUSTRIA

“Losing what you had is even harder”. GERMANY

This confusion between ends and means creates massive misunderstandings and mistakes in social policies, the result of which is to strengthen the “culture of failure”.

‘Second chance’ schemes: one size doesn’t fit all
“The need for ongoing support has been highlighted for people long out of touch with the

2. Participation

The starting point

“A sufficient basic income”.

“What makes you participate first is your personal experience of poverty. Afterwards, it is everything you see around, not just your own personal problems”. FRANCE

Collective action and networking

“Being in a voluntary group is important”. UNITED KINGDOM

“Our management committee is made up of Gypsies: their views are taken into account in developing the association’s activities”. SPAIN

“Voluntary organizations working in the same field linked together to form a regional set-up”. SPAIN

“The network lets you speak out more freely, and call officialdom to account without the fears that come from the unequal relationship that exists between a funded NGO and the funding authority”. ITALY

employment market, for whom the standard routes back do not work well”. ITALY

*Most labour force re-entry schemes start from a definition of categories and **profiles of non-working population groups** from which to frame policy options for **priority “target” groups**.*

But this kind of approach does not work for those who are very deeply disadvantaged and/or have been enduring long-term poverty.

“we look at the individual’s difficulties and draw up a personalized training plan and support that is appropriate for them”. SPAIN.

Traditional back-to-work schemes do not always appear to work well: entry or re-entry into the labour market needs to be planned over the long term, using methodologies based on individual situations and life courses.

Two documents brought to the 2nd Meeting by the Italian delegation explore this way forward in more depth³, one describing a personalized access scheme, one looking at “sheltered pathways” into employment.

“In October 2002, the FNARS⁴ set up a meeting of the different hostels; everyone took part, residents, users, professionals and voluntary workers. It had a lot of knock-on effects”. FRANCE

“Our way of getting participation going is to bring people together in action groups according to the type of difficulties they face” (in this case, housing) BELGIUM

Obstacles to networking

“A lot of voluntary organizations face the difficulty of devoting time – that they don’t have – to a common project”. SPAIN

Also, they “don’t want to be spoken for by the big charities. Small voluntary groups are often not in the networks because they don’t have the means”. GERMANY

“What used to be wine-growing rural areas are in the grip of radical change. Contact with policy-makers is not easy. These regions need jobs, employment assistance through the social economy, training provision”. SPAIN

3 Progress and note for the debate, Italian Delegation: Annexes 2.1 & 2.2

4 Fédération Nationale des Associations d’Accueil et de Réinsertion Sociale – France

Small voluntary organizations are vulnerable and work under very tight restrictions: dealing with urgent situations is their priority. Joining a network takes more than just money to put in: you must also have the ability to make yourself heard and stand up

3. Strategic approaches to participation

Getting organized

“One of the lessons of this experience⁵ is that before participation, we want to hold discussions with one another; you have to be clear about where you stand with regard to officials and policy-makers. You have to appreciate that for them, dialogue with people experiencing poverty requires a change of culture.”

“NGOs have a fundamental role; they have to persuade policy-makers of the need for participation by people experiencing poverty”. UNITED KINGDOM

“Sometimes, we get the press involved, sometimes we hold demos. It’s down to us to do the talking, stir things up on TV and radio: that requires organization, clear, firm ideas, and tracking down the right people”. BELGIUM

Preparing for participation requires people experiencing poverty to:

- **have a clear common project**
- **be determined**
- **start changing their mindset - which probably cuts both ways -**
- **make appropriate use of allies**
- **have a good understanding of the political environment**

The means needed

“You cannot participate without (financial) resources. But knowledge and infrastructure are resources, too”. AUSTRIA

“We have a good network of field organizations that can come together and speak to policy-makers with some authority and a fairly strong voice. People experiencing poverty often think that what they do is going to have an impact. But if they don’t get feedback, they can’t check to see whether the fall-out is good or bad. Ensuring information feedback is the responsibility of NGOs, who must create an understanding of the importance of feed back for people experiencing poverty”. UNITED KINGDOM

to the bigger players. Moreover, in rural society, the geographical dispersion/isolation of people experiencing poverty is compounded by being distant from decision-making centres and the scale of the provision needed.

As well as financial resources, which are essential, other resources need to be available and leveraged, such as an appropriate infrastructure, skills, particularly communication skills, know-how (authority) and conviction (having a strong voice).

Consultation

“We were invited to take part in framing housing, education, health, employment and training policies. We are currently setting the framework for developing a range of measures that we hope will go beyond the ‘thinking about it’ stage. At national level, we are in a consultation process which will lead to a collection of ideas. Once they have been brought together, they will be incorporated in the NAP. This is ground-breaking: it is the first time in Spain that social workers have participated”. SPAIN

“Demands are a problem in this work committee. It is a very “us and them” situation. We’re afraid to put our demands over too strongly, too assertively, because that could scupper the dialogue. We’re a bit reluctant. On the plus side, we have got recognition and a Gypsy mediator to interface between the institutions and the Gypsy community. The positive thing is that a channel of communication has been opened”.

There are limitations to a “top-down” consultative process:

- **it puts voluntary groups in an unequal relationship;**
- **freedom of speech is not achieved (reluctance, fear of coming over too forcefully);**
- **the relationship is dominated by fear (of the dialogue breaking down).**

On the other hand, the advantages include:

- **recognition for the group;**
- **an interface;**
- **a communication channel.**

Empowerment

“A homeless group formed around the lack of day centre provision. They held a bric-à-brac sale not just to raise funds, but also to raise public awareness. At the same time, a social action centre⁶ was set up in the town. It gave recognition and a participation budget to the homeless group which enables them to carry out a certain number of activities each year that are chosen and run by the homeless, and for which they are accountable”. BELGIUM

The approach centres around:

- **awareness that there is a lack**
- **setting up a common project (bric-a-brac sale)**
- **raising public awareness**
- **getting together with a structured local network**
- **recognition for the group of people experiencing poverty and their project**
- **contributing resources**
- **achieving empowerment**

“Once the resources are there, it is the people experiencing poverty - not officialdom - that must have the decision of how to use the funds: that is empowerment, expansion of responsibilities” AUSTRIA⁷ .

Direct questioning

“We also ask officials from (housing) services and local policy-makers to come to these groups (social action centres). Direct questioning sometimes brings agencies and politicians face to face with some very harsh realities: they can even feel as though they’ve been mugged. Face-to-face talking with officials creates a greater understanding between pure theory and daily reality”. BELGIUM

This methodological aspect partakes of what in other workshops is called “officials learning about poverty” or “culture change”.

“The local Bar Association published a guide asking its members to use ordinary language. Our expertise in housing is recognized, and so policy-makers seek our opinion on regulations and special cases. The only shame is that these requests come very late in the day, so that we don’t have the time to get back to the front line on them or develop work procedures”. BELGIUM

Here is a clear element of recognition of the expertise of people experiencing poverty and their group. But for best effect, the authorities also need to learn to look again at the time factor, which is essential to running the process properly.

6 Social action centre: (Belgium) is emergency response provision for people in acute social need. It is the first link in a chain (...), a network of public and voluntary services linked to the public and private bodies tasked with tackling exclusion. (...) Its guiding principles are: dignity, solidarity, citizenship. (...) It operates on a basis of professionalism, confidentiality, transparency, consultation, evaluation within a structure for coordinating city-wide public service provision; public welfare centres (CPAS) and the voluntary sector. Two social action centres are operating in two cities.

7 See also: L’expérience édifianche de la démocratie directe à Porto Allegre (Brazil) in “Citizen participation and urban policy”, European Conference, Brussels, 8& 9 October 2001, p 10-12
www.politiqueurbaine.be or www.hacer-europe.org

WORKSHOP 3

Plenary session statement

Enabling factors for participation

Policy-making level

- Policy-makers must actively listen to people experiencing poverty
- Participation must be funded:
 - with sufficiently frequent meetings
 - with technological resources (Internet.)
- Direct access to European subsidies for small organizations must be facilitated and the number of administrative intermediaries and bodies cut down.
- Information between the European level and small associations must be made much more fluid and transparent.
- Participation must be guaranteed over the long term in order to ensure follow-up and continuity
- A permanent European observatory should be set up which would combine research and action and could also coordinate activities.

Individuals and organizations

- People experiencing poverty must be more involved in the participation process, thereby avoiding over-representation of social workers.
- Participation must include a funding aspect

(participation budget). Example of such schemes are already running.

- Organizations must pay great attention to what they say and how they say it. They must also be able to act at the right time, i.e., at the resource allocation stage.
- Cooperation between organizations, people experiencing poverty, officials, the media, etc. is essential.
- Policy-makers must be supplied with good examples of participation.
- Participation requires simple language.
- There must be more forums like this one; among other things, the feed back they provide is helpful in evaluating progress.

“This meeting must not stop short at just a good report”. SPAIN

“You can say anything on paper”. NETHERLANDS

“Participation is the basis of democracy. At what levels? At every level: without it, nothing will really have changed”. GERMANY

For the next National Action Plans on Social Inclusion

- a. Decent, stable funding must be given to grass-roots associations.
- b. We propose that a European observatory which is not a research centre be set up in Brussels. The observatory would have charge of the two-way exchange of information and evaluating the NAPs.
- c. The future NAPs must comply with the principles set out in the Declaration of Human Rights.
- d. All people experiencing poverty must gradually be involved in decision-making, which is the foundation of democracy.
- e. Participation is a process of empowerment which involves communication with politicians and the media alike.
- f. It is important for knowledge to be transferred on both good practices and practices to be avoided.

WORKSHOP 4

Overview of inputs

1. Forming alliances

Approaching a voluntary organization

“When I arrived in town, someone took me to the association. They made me feel welcome”.

BELGIUM

“I was put into contact with the association by a street paper seller”. AUSTRIA

“Before I lost all my money, I had fixed ideas about people that I only knew about through television; now, for me, a human being is a human being; it’s the social system that has put them where they are, so it’s also up to society to give them a chance”. FRANCE

There are many ways of forming a group or alliance, not least of which is word of mouth.

In rural society

“The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) led to structural changes in agriculture which were bad for small farmers. Despite appearances (the farmhouses are very fine), some of these farmers live in total isolation - even the postman doesn’t call any more - and are completely marginalized. Also, they hide their poverty because they are ashamed. Our county has the highest recorded suicide rate in the country”. IRELAND

- **The impact of the CAP on poverty and social exclusion needs to be studied.**
- **People experiencing poverty in sparsely-populated rural areas might have few if any opportunities for practically linking up with others or getting organized.**

2. Participation through empowerment

“Our association encourages people to be proactive. I now make the effort to get up in the morning and start getting things done. Our contract with the association is that they take us in exchange for work, each according to their means”. DENMARK

“The residents are supported by social workers who actively encourage them to get things done,

- **Shame about one’s situation and/or oneself seriously affects confidence when it comes to making steps towards others and traps people experiencing poverty in fear. The first step towards participation is the courage to push a door open, to speak, to trust someone.**

“I am now active in the group that took me in”
BELGIUM

“In 1997, when I found myself homeless again for the second time, I found shelter in a hostel which was absolutely ghastly. I swore to myself that if I managed to get through this, I would help others”. THE NETHERLANDS

“I am an immigrant and I had problems integrating because of language and culture. I especially want to help immigrants understand the culture and feel at home in Finland”.

“I was sick, unemployed, and badly housed for a long time. There came a time when I decided to go out and do something about my difficulties. So I got actively committed. The reason I am here is because we want to change things, because we are neither fatalistic, nor stupid”. UNITED KINGDOM

The reasons for people’s commitment are deeply rooted in their life experiences, and the areas they engage in tend to be determined by those experiences. Commitment is mainly aimed at breaking the cycle of bad life experiences.

to take care of themselves,” FRANCE

“People experiencing poverty turn to the social workers for individual support. So the social workers are there to listen to them and sort things out a bit, because one problem is linked to lots of others. When people experiencing poverty manage to explain their problems, they find the solutions themselves. The professionals will then try

and look for different approaches, options, relevant information and then, which roads to go down. People experiencing poverty can make choices. Once they have made their choice, it should be respected: the social workers' job is to support that choice". BELGIUM

The participants mentioned three ways of achieving empowerment:

- **a barter agreement between equals: intake and support in exchange for work**
- **rediscovering one's identity through self-respect**
- **respect for free will through support for the choice made by the individual**

Developing a common project

"The people experiencing poverty themselves choose and vote on meeting and leisure activities at a monthly 'Parliament'. Outside approaches towards authorities always start from people's concerns and experience". BELGIUM

"Two homeless people came back from a seminar with a project to open a centre for the homeless with nowhere to go during the day. A meeting was called and the question put: who is in favour of doing something about opening a centre? Everyone was in favour". BELGIUM

Common projects can come from the association members who are experiencing poverty.

Training

a. Peer training

"A homeless person will listen more readily to someone that he knows he will understand". NETHERLANDS

"Some people can't fill in the training enrolment forms (literacy skills). To address that, we employed one of the clients to provide support to the others and set up pre-training". IRELAND

"Training is given every Thursday and lasts about ½ hour. The sellers (of street papers) don't have to follow it. What it is in fact is coaching by experienced sellers". AUSTRIA

Mutual support (self help) which here takes the form of peer training gives:

- **Recognition of the abilities developed**
- **Proof that they can "manage it"**

b. Empowerment: personal sense of purpose, common projects and training

"Catherine was seriously ill and was taken in while under treatment. First, her daughter came to help her, but after Catherine had a leg amputated, her daughter could no longer give her all the help she needed; so then, Catherine's husband came, but he could only stay on 3 month tourist visas. One day, Catherine confided in X that her husband was an alcoholic and used to beat her. Intervening was a big responsibility: either Catherine wanted to keep her relationship going and help her husband through his problem, which meant taking steps to get her husband a residence permit; or it meant helping Catherine leave her husband". FRANCE

"Sylvie had nowhere to live. She contacted the appropriate agencies to be told there were no places available. I met Sylvie and asked the agencies to do something for her. Because the agencies know me, we got a place for a week". FRANCE

"We followed training on how to deal with violence, what to do when someone falls ill ... to learn to understand our own reactions to people with the same problems we had, to give support based on experience". BELGIUM

"I follow courses with other homeless people in order to learn how to help others in a more professional way. It requires a strong commitment". DENMARK

"A lot of people don't dare follow assertiveness training, but all those who did are delighted with it: it helps them achieve their aims" NETHERLANDS

"The training is to get you to feel at ease, so that you have the courage to speak up. In my association, everyone is asked to take turns chairing the meetings or writing up the minutes". BELGIUM

"Training in political action is essential. Participation is not an end in itself; it has to result in a decision being taken". UNITED KINGDOM

Spontaneous mutual self-help can drift off course by not being aware of one's own limits, amongst other things. People experiencing poverty recognize that, although they have (or have had) similar life experiences to the people they are supporting, their experiences need to be structured. Training contributes to their empowerment.

Other enabling factors are needed to start the process off, include:

- active listening and respect from the authorities

3. Networking

Star networks

“We set up an association open to asylum seekers and refugees. Because we have no financial resources, we work with other associations, like the “Lucia” group for lone women with debt problems; for housing problems, we contact the social housing corporations; we have contacts with the Immigration Office to try and help with the red tape; we work with Médecins sans Frontières and the Red Cross on health issues. Our association is a member of our region’s anti-poverty forum”. BELGIUM

In this particular case, the network was set up as a result of a lack of funds. It is important to emphasize the creativity demonstrated by the association in turning a major shortcoming into a positive method of working.

Thematic networks

“The first national conferences on users’ rights were held in 2002. Despite the large numbers of participants, a real exchange took place”. FRANCE

4. Authorities and networks

“As of this year, every local council has had to draw up a Local Health Plan. As soon as we learned that, our network put in proposals for school prevention programmes on obesity, drug abuse and unwanted teenage pregnancies”. NETHERLANDS

“The General Report on Poverty was drawn up on the basis of dialogue between people experiencing poverty and public agencies. The Report is interesting because it contains both personal testimonies and recommendations. An inter-departmental conference was set up to translate these recommendations into legislation; the conference decided to set up the Anti-poverty Unit where the partner NGOs meets monthly. It’s working well”. BELGIUM

The examples given include (or derive from) public initiatives which successfully speak to people experiencing poverty, their NGOs

- the confidence of the support staff, social workers, management
- a venue and times for meetings
- sometimes, media support.

Thematic networks can be very targeted (Network of social housing association tenants) or very broad (e.g. women’s network) with, therefore, very different sizes and impacts.

Geographical networks

“My town has a social action centre⁸ where everyone can go one Wednesday a month; that is where we met the deputy mayor, who gave us addresses of places to go and look at”. BELGIUM

Many networks start life in a neighbourhood or population cluster as a way to address all aspects of the life of people experiencing poverty within a defined area. Some networks reflect more than one of these types of network.

The most practical description of what a network is : “it’s like the tiles on a roof”.

and networks, who see these public initiatives as chances and opportunities for furthering their aims.

These two examples show how, through their analysis - and probably also their method of working and experience - NGOs turned a process that could have stopped short at a consultation exercise into a participatory partnership.

These cases point out the scope for turning around an initially consultative approach: instead of the authorities “using” people experiencing poverty, the latter “use” the authorities’ invitations to further their own aims.

This aspect is highlighted in another workshop when people experiencing poverty stated that: “they need us for their policies to work”.

8 Social action centre: see footnote to Workshop 3.

Both sides trying to instrumentalize the other, coupled to a mutual commitment to improvement of policies and policy delivery - both from policy-makers and people expe-

riencing poverty - is an enabling framework for participation which, when combined with other factors (communication, time, respect) has a good chance of success.

Workshop 4

Plenary session statement

Composition and functioning of the group

The group is distinguished by the widely diverse contexts in which the participants are used to working - participating - but also by many points in common. The group includes people currently undergoing training, people living in shelters, former homeless people now active in the sector, plus a number of social workers who only know poverty from the outside. Notwithstanding these

different life experiences and preparation time that everyone found too short, all the participants engaged with the discussion, and the group succeeded in making progress in a constructive and coherent dialogue. Despite the setbacks they have had, the participants are not bitter towards society and do not reject it. On the contrary, they have a very strong desire to be part of it.

The key issues addressed

Because of the high proportion of people who are or have been affected by homelessness, the discussions often focused on the issues of accom-

modation and housing. But other issues were also addressed, including employment, training, integration into society and work, and isolation.

The models for participation developed

Four levels of participation were identified, each referring to different forms of participation:

- (inter-)personal participation (social work done by people who have lived the problem)
- participation within an organization (partly self-running a hostel, for example),
- inter-organizational participation (networking), and
- political participation (participation in policy-making).

Participation at all levels encounters the same types of obstacle. A series of preconditions to

effective and efficient participation emerged clearly from the exchanges:

- people in poverty must be listened to and taken seriously
- their expertise must be valued
- they must be given the means to participate, in particular training
- people in poverty must be involved at all levels, right up to the top
- the people they deal with must also make an effort, as part of a process of change

Conclusions

Everyone as best they can within their own context tries to improve things. Those who are already engaged in contacts with the authorities give hope to the rest: they are proof positive that a participatory dialogue is possible, and can lead to a result. The fact that participation works better in some countries than others shows the importance of exchanging experiences and (good) practices.

The National Action Plans for Inclusion could be a worthwhile opportunity for putting participation of disadvantaged people in the EU into general practice when devising solutions that affect them, provided participation is written into them as an essential principle.

Workshop 5

Overview of inputs

1. Finding potential allies

The media

The media can be a valuable partner in profile-raising, because the media bring pressure to bear on the political authorities and reach public opinion. So, a television broadcast led not just to a positive political contact, but raised the profile of a homeless support group. An advert brought sales opportunities for a group that recycles and resells second-hand goods.

But the participants also stressed the ambiguity of the media's role. They are only concerned with things that will increase readership/audience share, hence their interest in big human interest cases.

“The media can help with a specific case, but not a general situation. If there was a powerful media organization that supported people, we would get somewhere”. PORTUGAL

The media are also seen as manipulative, so people experiencing poverty must:

- **structure their communications very carefully**
- **represent a sizeable number of people, or in any case a group**
- **work on their image.**

People experiencing poverty do not recognize themselves in the negative stereotypes by which they are portrayed: tramps, night shelters, meal kitchens.

The law

City or regional economic development schemes can be used as an opportunity to get recognition for the abilities and experiences of local residents.

Laws that make certain types of discrimination (disability, race) illegal can also provide leverage.

This involves:

- *being informed about these economic development schemes*
- *having representatives (or allies) where the discussions are carried out at an earlier stage in the proceedings.*

Churches/charities

In Finland, churches have a very progressive attitude towards supporting people experiencing poverty. In other countries, big charities with links to the churches can be an obstacle to direct access to the political authorities for people experiencing poverty and exclusion.

Social workers

These potential allies are perceived to have an ambivalent role. Defined as “essential”, people experiencing poverty want them to train themselves/be trained in group work, which does not happen everywhere in Europe.

“Forming a group is the only way to stop being just a user, and become a representative of interests. Whether that happens, in my experience, depends a lot on the role of social workers. Why? Because they have their own interest and that may be to encourage an individual approach and keep people locked into client roles, because it is easier for them, and because they don't have the group work skills to work collaboratively. So social workers' group work skills need to be strengthened. If they have the necessary skills, the fears will disappear”. FRANCE

Without training in participatory group work, social workers will carry on using the individual approach taught by conventional career training (case work) for these occupations.

This methodology:

- **is reassuring: they are on familiar territory, keeping up their user numbers and so maintaining their legitimacy;**
- **creates uncertainty: users do not respond as social workers would like, so social workers lose control over their clients.**

People experiencing poverty also see social workers as trapped by their budgets, always having to justify themselves to keep their funding. This constraint can run counter to the interests of people experiencing poverty.

Finally, social workers seem to guard their status jealously, obstructing recognition for people experiencing poverty who have developed expert abilities and experiential knowledge in tackling social exclusion.

The best social workers are those who:

- understand the experience of those who are poor or experience exclusion.
- are trained and qualified
- will work in close cooperation and as an equal with people experiencing poverty who have developed expertise through life experience.

Academic research

Some participants have taken part in participatory

2. Volunteering and employment

“A person who has an occupation can move on”.
ITALY

“Where do you find volunteers: in poor organizations, because in organizations with more money, as soon as their project is accepted, there is already a paid job”. BELGIUM

“Who are volunteers? People with money, not people in poverty”. BELGIUM

“Volunteering let me take hold of my life and find work. It’s a great way of getting to like myself again. Social relationships and social networks are also ways of tackling poverty”. UNITED KINGDOM

There are many aspects to volunteering. It is not a quick fix. But people experiencing poverty can use it as a means of getting back in touch with society and empowerment.

Employment

“I work off the books. It would be nice to have a fixed income. To rent a room, you need money coming in regularly to pay the rent”.

“I work in a reception centre for political asylum seekers. Many are traumatised. They have to wait 18 months before finding out if their application has been accepted. What do they do during those 18 months? Some find a way: undeclared work. Others abide by the law that prohibits them from working during the waiting period, even if they find work. Most end up in psychiatric wards”.
UNITED KINGDOM

academic research bringing together researchers, political authorities and people experiencing poverty, who saw that the purpose of the research was more to test out the political and tax impact of social measures than to listen and feed back experience of social exclusion.

If it is to be an ally, the research community must respect people experiencing poverty, who must be the benchmark throughout their time working together⁹.

Others

Trade unions can act as a support base, bearing in mind that their first job is to represent workers.

Specialists: When groups of people experiencing poverty are questioned about policy measures, they can respond - given sufficient time - with the assistance of specialists, (e.g., lawyers).

“There is too much talk about paid work in the European Union: robots are taking more and more of our jobs”. FINLAND

People experiencing poverty have abilities, skills, and the desire to do something about their situation. But, legally, they are often unable to make use of their full potential.

At the end of a long journey, people experiencing poverty have developed skills in the field of tackling social exclusion. Examples given showed that sometimes these skills are not recognized, or qualified social workers are obstructive.

“Where people experiencing poverty have been able to develop knowledge, they are disappointed because their skills are not given recognition, they don’t form part of the category of people with paper qualifications. Some social workers don’t know as much as us about some things. I can’t accept that when I suggest an initiative, they send a social worker along to hold my hand”.
GERMANY

Skills and experience must progressively be granted recognition on an equal footing with paper qualifications.

Some immigrants and children of immigration also possess qualifications. But in their case, because of the law, their qualifications do not help them find jobs.

“The qualifications of Africans who studied with European teachers are not recognized. The aver-

age age of the European worker is rising. Let qualified children of immigrants work instead of keeping them dependent on welfare benefit! In any event, they will be working in the banks in 15 years time, so why not now?" BELGIUM

Protectionist stands and racism (among other things) are the concrete expression of dominant stereotypes and bar access to employment for whole groups of the population.

Participation

The word 'participation' can refer to a range of processes ranging from consultation to effective participation, but also tokenism, manipulation...

"You have a cup of coffee and an informal chat, and nothing happens afterwards".

"Every time, it's a big battle to get you a small step forward".

The image of ' participation as a set of stairs' emerged in this workshop

The first step could be seen as getting from the cellar to the ground floor. Here the difficulty people in poverty have is getting their entitlements. They are in the cellar, in a survival situation. They can only leave this condition of disempowerment behind through readily available information, access to and getting their entitlement which can procure them a minimum income which will enable them to leave behind an existence where each day is taken up with solving immediate problems (eating, sleeping, having somewhere to live, paying the rent, keeping neat and clean, keeping your children with you and seeing they get an education, ...).

Overcoming this first step can take huge efforts. The development of awareness may generate the drive

needed to either start to form a group or join an existing group. Their shared purpose will include a determination to change and improve the living conditions that they have experienced (breaking the cycle) and get them to the first floor.

The questions that arise at this stage include:

- "how to develop the knowledge needed?
- how to find resource people or groups, i.e., who can contribute the knowledge needed?
- how to find partners and financial support?
- where to get the information from?" Germany
- how to get the right to have a say?

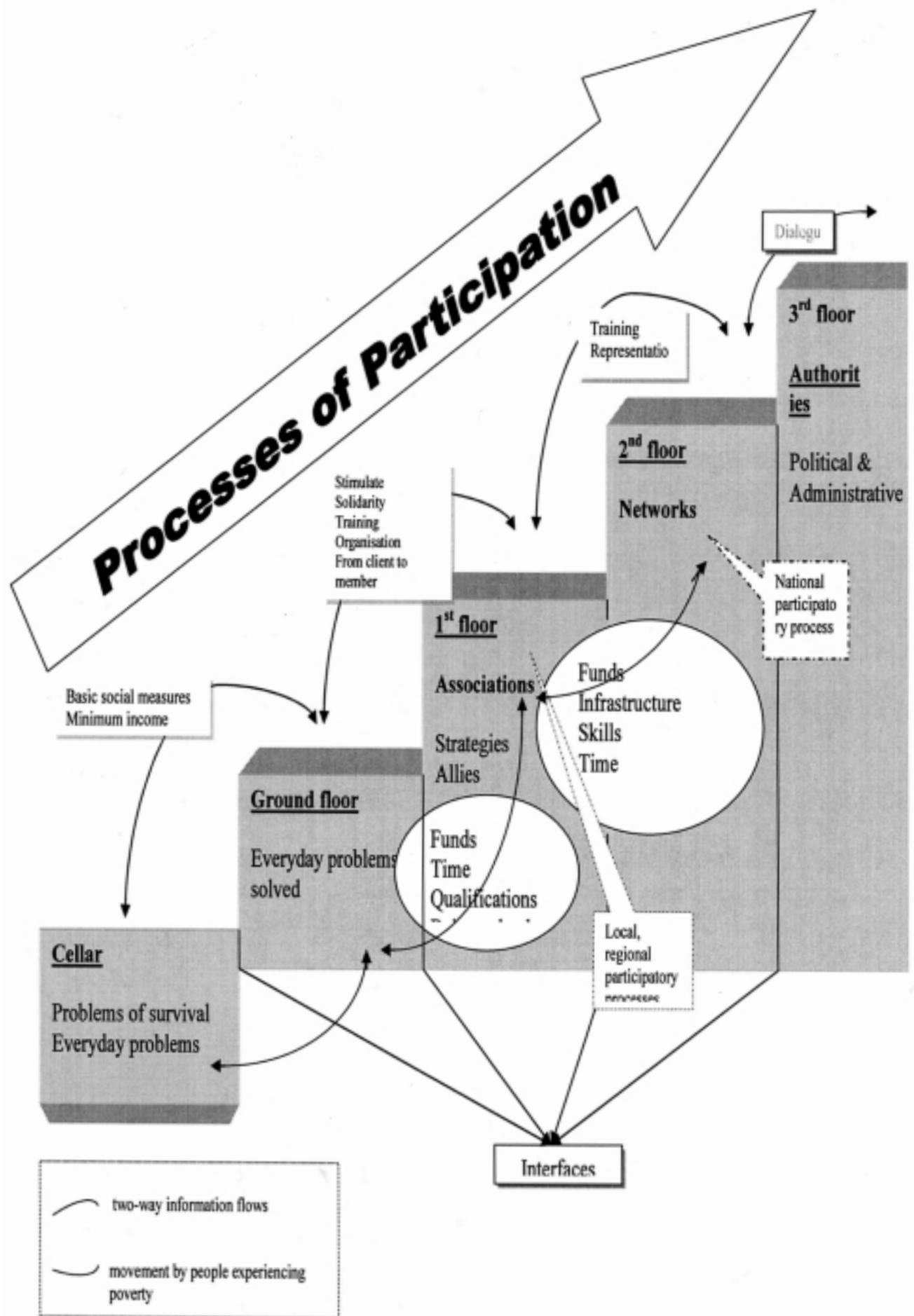
Moving from the ground floor to the upper floors involves:

- *making local contact with people experiencing poverty within voluntary groups*
- *setting-up regional meetings with the support of existing voluntary groups*
- *making contact with the political authority.*
- *Involvement in representative councils at different levels*
- *Involvement in national meetings which can attract the attendence of a Minister or people with leverage the development of a legal base for the participation processes.*

It was also recognised in the workshop that participation rarely follows such neat progressive steps but can be a case of two steps forward one step back even in the best scenario.

The diagram below illustrates this image of participation.

If participation is to be lasting and real it must be structured within a formal framework, through an organized two-way communication in appropriate language, with places and times set aside specifically for meetings.



Workshop 5

Plenary Session Statement

1. Participation

If policy-makers want people experiencing poverty to participate, they can only do so **once their basic needs have been met**. How can someone who is hungry, ill or living on the street be asked to participate?

Participation needs:

- To start off from **organized small coherent voluntary groups** with clearly defined aims and viewpoints
- The means for proper participation: **partners**, setting up a **network** in terms of knowledge (leveraging what we know), resource persons or groups; and finally **having forms of financial support** that can be easily accessed by small organizations.
- An understanding of the system, i.e., understanding the political and institutional environ-

ments that are the essential basis for the development of participation.

- **Formalizing** (legislation, regulations, meeting places), which also acts as a basis.

All these knowledge bases can create a **public focus**, and the **media** are a major means of communication for this. People experiencing poverty must decide what **image** of themselves they wish to convey.

Participation is a **long process** built up **step by step**.

But, when faced with hard choices, fear is very much present.

How to overcome this?

Specifically, by doing what is proposed here.

2. National Action Plans on social inclusion

We were not sufficiently familiar with these Plans; we have 7 enabling principles to propose to facilitate their development:

1. Access

The plans should apply at national, regional and local levels in the existing and forthcoming EU countries.

2. Communication

The plans must include an obligation for all Member States to disseminate them and give information to the civil society actors concerned.

3. Prevention

Prevention should be developed as a cross-cutting policy across all strands instead of just addressing issues separately.

4. Implementation

More resources must be put into implementing the NAPs.

5. Harmonization

There should be more focus on the commitment to harmonizing social policies.

6. Evaluation

A more detailed evaluation of the NAPs is essential, with clear indicators that connect up with the previous NAPs and specific criteria for measures so as to avoid a fractured approach.

7. Employability

There is a wide range of employment opportunities between Member States. Where employment opportunities are scarce, action should be taken to strengthen the cooperative, mutual and non-profit sector.

III. Taking the debate on participation forward

Participation - elements arising from the workshops

What follows is taken from the exchanges that took place in the 5 workshops at the 2nd Meeting. The summary draws together the key ideas and messages that were common across the 5 workshops.

Factors enabling and adverse to participation were identified by the participants; these factors operate in three “spheres” 1) Groups and associations, 2) Authorities and policy-makers and 3) Society and the potential allies it offers. These factors culminate in outcomes

1. Factors enabling a participatory process

1.1 Groups and associations

a) Existence as a group

- The very first condition for setting up a group is being able to meet freely and easily.
- The group must have an existence, i.e., its constituent members must have a shared agenda and/or values to create an “us”.
- People experiencing poverty involved in or associated with (clustered around) the group must stay in it for a sufficiently long time to be able to “grow” (develop positively) within it.
- Turnover of group membership cannot exceed a certain percentage within a specific time without putting the very existence of the group at risk.
- The shared agenda and values create a feeling of belonging to the group, an awareness of forming and being a member of that group, i.e., a part of the whole.
- The group must be visible, recognized by outsiders as a specific entity.

b) Strengthening the group and its constituents

- The group must (at least) develop a common project, a reason for being and acting together based on its members’ shared agenda and values.
- It must be grounded in what moves its individual members to action - e.g., determination to break the cycle of life experiences, bringing a halt to the processes they have suffered from. The personal motivations can reinforce the group’s shared values.
- Within the group, the focus must be put on rebuilding self-confidence and confidence in others.
- The group must nurture its internal cohesion, e.g., by drawing up its own rules and adopting working methods that are accepted by all. The differences and conflicts that develop in all voluntary organizations must be openly recognized

and discussed until the divisions are healed, applying the necessary resources in terms of time and skills.

- An important focal milestone will be the transition in status from client or user to member then representative of the group.
- Respect for the individual and their own pace must be guaranteed within the group.
- The group must focus on developing and strengthening its internal solidarity above and beyond whatever differences may exist between the members, with full respect for what distinguishes each individual.
- It must also develop and strengthen its external solidarity, i.e., the group’s image with other groups and in the public eye. To that end, it will (more than likely) give thought to what it must do to change from having a negative to a positive image: reversing external perceptions of the group. A specific focus will also be put on getting different types and degrees of poverty recognized: this is an incontrovertible reality. It will be analysed in depth through facets of the process of social exclusion that affect people in different ways and the different aspects and sectors of their lives.

c) To lay the groundwork for the participatory process

- The capabilities of the group members will be fostered and enhanced, specific places and times will be set aside for the expression of views, running of meetings, note-taking.
- The group members will establish and develop whatever is needed to create a feeling of individual and collective pride.
- Ways will be sought to support the determination and sense of purpose of the group members because participatory processes are protracted and those involved experience disappointment from the frustration of their hopes for more immediate results.

- The members of the group will gradually be required to assume greater individual and collective responsibilities, e.g., setting the agendas for meetings, making the practical preparations, follow-up, involvement in managing the budget, making the choices for resource allocation, etc.
- The members' expertise, skills and capabilities will be valued and so far as possible validated by the upgrading of their status.
- The group will work out a clear and robust organization and structure.
- The objectives will be clearly defined.
- The necessary training will be provided or accessible in all areas: basic literacy skills, self confidence, self-advocacy, note-taking, knowledge of political institutions and how they work, knowledge of social welfare and policy, as well as its methods and techniques.
- The groups will either instigate the setting-up of networks, or join existing networks.
- Social workers who are not skilled in community and group work and methods of participation need to undergo training in this area.

d) Strategies for participation and during the participatory process

- Political, social and economic constraints - i.e., the environment in which the group will find itself when engaged in a process of participation - will be studied and analysed, which will also bring out areas of free expression, i.e., structures which are open and unoccupied and can be explored. So, for example, social policies which are not joined up and conducted without a participatory process will be examined critically on the basis of what could have been achieved if participation had taken place.
- People experiencing poverty will take care to be realistic in their demands, both in the proposals put forward and discussed with policy-makers and in the time-frames within which they hope to get results.
- The participatory process will take care to encompass all the actors - social, political and administrative. People experiencing poverty will analyse and make use of any areas of crossover: so, for example, officials can become partial allies because they also are directly affected by policy changes.
- A key methodology will be to start by looking at what similarities exist between people who are and are not enduring exclusion (e.g., one similarity which could be used is that (nearly) everyone has children for whom they want a good future); this will be the method of choice, as well as focusing on the positive aspects of dif-

ferences and dissimilarities.

- All actions will be carefully prepared. Among other things, preparations will check whether the target(s) correspond to the aims sought.
- Within their groups, people experiencing poverty will insist on being involved from the start of the participation process, i.e., from the ideas through to the evaluation stages. Here, dialogue at meetings with the authorities will be conducted according to the model developed and approved by the group.
- The dialogue will be conducted incrementally, leaving the group the time it needs to review what was said/decided at each meeting.
- The group will show proof of creativity by using new and non-conventional methods (e.g., a sit-in); it will even resort to assertive methods like inviting itself, engaging policy-makers into direct discussions, etc, if such methods have been assessed as appropriate to the situation. Similarly, the group will use stratagems, tactics like siding with the political opposition on specific aims, such as putting parliamentary questions to the ruling party.
- Where projects are carried out in partnership with (administrative and/or political) authorities, the group will ensure that it is involved in budgeting, and budget management and control.
- Communication and information flows between the group and the authorities will be two-way, fluid and conveyed in clear, simple language. Specialized terminology will be translated into terms that people experiencing poverty can gradually assume ownership of.
- Every opportunity to engage dialogue with policy-makers will be exploited.

1.2. Authorities and policy-makers

- Openness, a genuine preparedness to listen, respect for people in poverty and their pace of doing things are the basic building blocks of any process of participation.
- The dialogue will also be guided by the political will to improve social measures and their impact on the daily lives of people experiencing poverty.
- These factors must be combined with a commitment to understand (in the etymological sense of the word: to take upon oneself) and learn from the personal testimonies and experiences that they encounter.
- The authorities will recognize the skills and expertise of people experiencing poverty in the matters that they know about because they have lived/undergone them.
- There will be no place for discrimination in the

dialogue and exchanges: they will be based on a mutual long term commitment built on the forging of bonds of confidence creating mutual reliability.

- Simple and accessible language will be used. Technical terms will be clarified until they are properly understood.
- Two-way communication will be ensured throughout the process; it will ensure the necessary clarity, fluidity in the exchanges and ensure that interactions are exploited to best effect.

1.3. Society and the potential allies it offers

- The media will be approached. In order to forge an objective alliance, the main focus should be on newspapers, magazines, television and radio programmes that produce non-sensationalist output that reflects the image that people experiencing poverty wish to convey. This partnership will require groups to do very professional and detailed groundwork that includes clear messages. When working in such alliances, groups or networks will also seek to maintain the process as transparent as possible from the beginning to the end of the article or report. It will also be useful to have dealings with media that peddle stereotypes, sensationalist exclusives, and simplistic images of people experiencing poverty to get them to change the images they portray.
- The trade unions will be approached. The first step will be to look closely with them at “employment” (recognized, paid work) as a value, the structural changes that have occurred in this sphere, and how open-minded they prove to be in this approach. Are they, for example, ready to push for experiential skills coupled to innovative training schemes to be granted equivalence with educational achievements validated by formal qualifications?
- In studying certain proposals, groups will seek out alliances with specialists, e.g., lawyers for projects involving complex legislation, town planners and architects for urban or rural planning, renovation, social housing,
- Groups of people experiencing poverty will seek out potential alliances with private groups, be it churches, charities, firms or academic institutions.
- While the charitable approach is not enough to solve the problems connected with social exclusion, it must be valued for what it is: a lifeline. Also, it often provides meeting places where other relevant activities could be based.
- Academic researchers that work with and

respect people experiencing poverty and share their aims, are valuable allies; their studies will have leverage with the policy-makers that commissioned them, the social work community and public opinion via the media.

- Voluntary organisations of people experiencing poverty will seek out allies either within the network(s) that they are part of, or by contacting other groups/networks that can supply them with the knowledge and skills they need.
- Existing laws are potential allies. Voluntary organizations can find leverage in legislation prohibiting discrimination, governing access to basic rights, etc. Similarly, benchmark instruments that are universally recognized, like the Declaration of Human Rights, European Charters, etc. can usefully be invoked.
- The total number of people experiencing poverty can be used as a support base, as much as it is an organized and structured total, and represents a recognized social force.
- Availability of appropriate, high-powered resources in terms of infrastructure, technology, human skills and funding is paramount.
- People experiencing poverty can refer to social workers that are trained in group work and collaborative working methods.

1.4 The outcomes of participatory approaches

- Useful information is effectively disseminated; it reaches people experiencing poverty including those grouped together in very small local groups.
- Policies implemented through participatory processes increase the effectiveness of the policy measures by limiting/eliminating the negative impacts.
- The group work qualifications of the social workers involved in the participatory dialogue are used to good effect; the qualifications are turned to account and augmented by the practice of participation.
- The values and experiential attainments of people experiencing poverty are given (better) recognition: stereotypes gradually fade and the (more) positive real image of people experiencing poverty emerges. Clear linkages appear between segmented policies: the economic, financial, tax, agricultural and social spheres are interconnected and this linkage leads on to a new stage of work directed towards achieving coherence for the well-being of society as a whole. This process could (perhaps) also pave the way for more efficient use of all resources.

2. Factors hindering the participatory process

2.1. Groups and associations

- The shame that people experiencing poverty feel about their situation and/or themselves is a major obstacle to the first step in participation: reaching out to others.
- No or too few shared values, benchmarks, aims and methods are all factors that undermine a group.
- Similarly, too much fluctuation and/or too high a turnover of people involved in or around a group will work against it engaging long-term activities and the continuity that is essential to any process of participation
- Whether in rural or suburban society, the geographical dispersion and isolation of people experiencing poverty constitute major technical obstacles to group formation.
- Groups where,
 - daily activities are dictated by crisis management
 - the time and/or means for forging linkages with other groups/networks are lacking
 - resources are applied first and foremost to “top-down” aid and assistance will experience difficulties in fostering participation. Such groups can be inward-looking, parochial, closed to the opportunities for development and receptiveness to participation.
- People experiencing poverty involved in very small, purely community-level groups have great difficulty in accessing directly usable information or recognition as representatives of their groups and their concerns.
When groups of this kind form part of a larger organization, they rarely recognize and even deny that the delegates of the umbrella organization speak for them.

2.2 Authorities and policy-makers

Policy-makers cannot be capable of delivering a process of participation if they:

- Abide by market and productivity rules only, i.e., over-emphasizing economic objectives
- fear a potential electoral backlash from measures that address poverty and social exclusion
- go so far as to deny the existence of poverty
- endorse discriminatory attitudes and/or measures
- support short-term measures and schemes
- hinder the structures and adequate functioning of public policies
- deny the linkages between distinct policy

spheres and their negative impacts on people experiencing poverty

- see access to employment and/or housing as ends in themselves and as conclusive proof that (all) the problems of people experiencing poverty are solved by such access
- focus on standard, category-specific, short-term employment measures to get people back into the labour force.

2.3 Society and other actors

A society is not in a position to bring positive change to the daily lives of people experiencing poverty, by denying them the status of human beings in their own right, if it:

- does not recognize that poverty exists
- automatically stigmatizes people experiencing poverty
- condones or encourages discrimination
- thinks and acts out of fear of difference
- does not offer an environment in which groups and people in poverty have an opportunity to improve their daily lot
- accepts as normal (or shuts its eyes to):
 - the growing and recurrent shortage of steady, decently-paid jobs,
 - the shortage of decent, affordable housing
 - all the situations of non-entitlement: lack of access to care, to legislative rights,...
 - the perpetuation of sub-human, scandalous living conditions

Trade unions are unlikely to be receptive to forming an alliance with people experiencing poverty and their groups if they:

- are concerned only with people in work
- do not open their structures to the unemployed
- cannot line up with the idea that experiential knowledge of poverty coupled to innovative training schemes should be granted recognition on the same basis as formal educational qualifications

Churches and charities cannot be allies if they:

- want to confine activities to simply doling out aid and assistance
- will not involve people experiencing poverty in their structures
- make a show of including people experiencing poverty, but do not really give them a share in responsibilities or decision-making (i.e., organizations where people in poverty superfi-

cially have a say, but in fact cannot influence the group)

Academic researchers will hinder improvements if they:

- o do not agree to openness and clarity in their studies

- o refuse to disclose information (e.g., who has commissioned it, its objectives, to what use the results will be put,)

- o do not treat people in poverty with dignity and respect cannot collaborate with people experiencing poverty.

Avenues for future Exploration

Expressed as questions, the avenues for exploration opened up by the 2nd Meeting range across a wide spectrum, from questions to be asked and worked on within organizations, replies to which would inform and give direction to relationships with allies, potential allies and all actors involved in decision-making.

NGOs

- How to put sound strategies in place?
- How to get access to the media?
- How to forge alliances with/use the media?
- In activities directed towards society, how to avoid the mirror effect?

The public does not like to see people experiencing poverty so close to them. This is the mirror effect of “there but for the grace of God go I”.

- What happens to situations that do not attract media attention?
- How to knock down/tackle stereotypes?
- How to turn around the negative perception that the public have of people experiencing poverty?
- How to persuade anti or sceptical policy-makers that participation is a valid idea?

In countries, regions, towns where these support bases do not exist or do not work for lack of commitment by the political authorities, people experiencing poverty are unable to form grass-roots groups – it is bricks without straw

Is network development and/or building feasible in these circumstances? Is it enough to bring about an improvement in living conditions?

And if so, how much time is needed?

- How to develop solidarity between people experiencing different kinds of poverty?

NGOs, policy-makers and potential allies

- How to turn (move from) a consultative framework into a participatory framework?
- What is to be done at European level to bring the process of participation into the conception, framing, implementation and evaluation of the National Action Plans on Social Inclusion?

- How to open channels of communication between NGOs and policy-makers that:
 - o are two-way and ongoing
 - o are effective
 - o are transparent
 - o guarantee the necessary conditions
 - o use simple language and develop the language knowledge base of people experiencing poverty
- How to set participation-enabling policy agendas by facilitating the two-way information flow and scheduling the necessary time?
- On what basis to set the evaluation criteria?
- How to establish appropriate (re)entry into work programmes of sufficient duration that can be built on?
- How to develop appropriate training programmes?
- How to capitalize on skills gained through experience?
- How to reduce/eliminate the negative impact of European (economic, agricultural, etc.) policies? In other words, how to change European policies that have a negative impact on people experiencing poverty?
- How to promote/enable linkages between people experiencing poverty living in geographically dispersed or isolated situations?
- How to discuss deep-reaching changes to employment as a value?
- How to shape medium- and long-term social policies to ensure a sufficient life to individual and Community projects?
- How to harmonize European social policies?
- Where would trade unions stand on the demand for official equivalence between experiential skills and those granted recognition by training schemes leading to paper qualifications?

Towards a 3rd European Meeting of people experiencing poverty

- What should be the key types of objective?
 - o A meeting just between people experiencing poverty

- o A meeting between people experiencing poverty plus social workers
- o An impetus for political change
- o A symbolic media event
- What is the best way to prepare the 3rd Meeting?
 - o within networks, with the participants
 - o between networks and the hub organization
- How to combine continuity (the same participants returning) with the opportunity for new participants to participate ?
- How to enable/bring all participants up to the same level?
- How to choose the topic(s) using the 1st and 2nd Meetings as tools and basic inputs?
- How to develop/strengthen solidarity between people experiencing different types of poverty at this kind of meeting?

Annex I - Preparatory report

2nd EUROPEAN MEETING OF PEOPLE EXPERIENCING POVERTY

Brussels, 10 & 11 May 2003

This is a summary of :
the outcomes of the 1st Meeting (December 2001) and the replies received from the participants to the Preparation Checklist

I. Preconditions of participation

1. The right of association
2. Being involved in the process from the very start, i.e., from having the ideas, then putting them into practice and right through to evaluation.
3. Having one's expertise recognized: people experiencing poverty are experts in their situations
4. For people experiencing poverty to participate, a secure and reliable environment is vital, i.e., a setting in which the explanations asked for are given and where they are not afraid to speak up and give their opinion.
5. Allowance made for differences in how people communicate and come together, as well as the different starting points of people experiencing poverty.
6. Being given clear information about:
 - what is expected of people experiencing poverty,
 - what will be done with the information,
 - what limits are set on the participation process
 - the real scope for influencing the decision-making process
7. Having support in expressing our opinion
8. Having means
9. Having time.
10. Officials must go out to encounter and learn about poverty through contact and learning.
11. Acting not just in a personal capacity but on behalf of a group as a whole, which means
 - Overcoming problems of hand-to-mouth survival
 - Personal and family support

II. Results of the preparation checklists for the 2nd meeting

II.1. Strategies put in place by voluntary organizations

II.1.1. DEVELOP MOMENTUM

1. Expand capabilities, mainly through voluntary service
2. Develop greater understanding of the problem
3. Increase contacts (of all kinds)
4. Develop more internal solidarity (not just within the association, but with all categories of people enduring poverty)
5. Prepare key events and work in concert with other associations (through networking).
6. Get access to relevant information; exchange it with others
7. Develop an improved understanding of political, economic and social mechanisms
8. Act to gain recognition as a group by peers and society as a whole, and as a contact by policy-makers.
9. Be in a position to employ professional social workers.
10. Publish, inform, build awareness, speak out, bring home the facts about what poverty is.

II.1.2. DEVELOP ALLIANCES

1. With private sector allies:
 - other voluntary organizations
 - in networks
 - the church (charities)Private sector allies "bridge the gaps" between people experiencing poverty and official bodies.
2. Public allies ("Look for GOOD contacts")
 - Local
 - Regional
 - National
3. Headline-shaping allies
 - media
 - public opinion

II.1.3. OUTSIDE FORCES

In response to the question: "Do the authorities take account of what you say?"

one reply was: “Why should they pay any attention to us?”

- the present scale of values where the economic and financial approaches prevail over all other considerations, including those of simple humanity.

Arguably, economic and financial interests are fundamentally opposed to the interests of people experiencing poverty.

But some replies point out that keeping a large and growing number of people living below the poverty line, and especially in subhuman living conditions, entails a serious risk of alienation from society sooner rather than later.

- Policy-makers’ abandonment of people experiencing poverty is clearly seen in the meagre social welfare budgets
- lack of transparency in political mechanisms and administrative structures (a jungle)
- lack of easily accessible, understandable information
- officials taking over proposals made by people experiencing poverty, so they are deflected from the objectives initially set by their originators; people experiencing poverty cannot continue to cooperate when this kind of thing is done
- resistance from officials to meeting people experiencing poverty, and especially to working and discussing with them. Stereotypes and preconceptions are so strong that they form part of the collective unconscious and are ingrained in all officials that people experiencing poverty come into contact with.

This resistance is particularly strong and turns to fear when faced with the poorest communities like undocumented migrants, the houseless, refugees, gypsies and Travellers.

Officials would rather work with (and fund) groups that work for people experiencing poverty and/or minorities than work with and support groups comprised of these people.

There is also official resistance towards:

- o the unemployed
- o people with disabilities

- Lack of organization at forums set up by the authorities.

Or a type of organization unsuited to people experiencing poverty in terms of

- o the methods of communication,
- o lack of time allowed,
- o undefined framework and limits

o promises not kept

- Political authorities obey and work to their own logic. People experiencing poverty are not a good electoral constituency, or don’t have the vote, or don’t use it.

- The real lives of people experiencing poverty are not understood:

- o by politicians,
- o by civil servants
- o by public opinion

What none of these three groups understands is:

- o their continual struggle to survive
- o that no-one deliberately chooses to live on the margins of society, to be looked down on or even to be invisible
- o what it is like to be constantly having to cope with continually changing circumstances, how energy-sapping this struggle is

For example:

- * a change in health circumstances means losing entitlement to one kind of benefit and a file being opened in another department, so payments are stopped which may mean having to live “on the slate” (credit)
- * for the homeless, every night - or nearly - finding somewhere to sleep, something to eat, how to keep from dying (from street violence or cold)

- The denigration of people experiencing poverty, reflected in the disparagement/disregard of the value of what they have to say, their life experiences, and so the relevance of what they can bring to a participatory approach.

- General indifference and unresponsiveness, if not contempt

- Rudeness/impoliteness in public (social) services

- The humiliation of:

- o queuing,
- o not knowing the name of the official you are dealing with, or because it is so frequently a different one
- o having to tell your story time after time
- o having to prove your entitlements (e.g., the link between mental illness and unemployment)

- Disinformation/antipathy stirred up by the media:

- o The negative image of the unemployed, home-

- less, houseless, refugees, minorities
- o The singling out of isolated success stories, creating the impression that the problem(s) has/have been solved, or at least that “something is being done about it”
- o Charity shows
- The time it takes to get any result at all.
- The shaky position of front-line NGOs due to lack of resources and/or funding that is time-limited, uncertain, insufficient, or long overdue. This creates job insecurity among community workers, a high staff turnover and so frequent changes in contacts for people experiencing poverty.

II.1.3.2. Individually

Elements that go to make up a “culture of failure”:

- Time
Achieving (any) result is heavily
 - o time-
 - o patience-
 - o energy-consuming
- Disappointment
- Discouragement
- Loss of confidence
 - in society
 - in oneself
- Distrust, mistrust of the new
- Acquired guilt
i.e., accepting the prevailing attitude of “it’s their own fault if they’re poor in these situations”.
- Self-denigration
Acquired guilt can end up by convincing people experiencing poverty that they are stupid, different from other people, inferior,
- Scepticism about officials
The different authorities (political, economic, financial, social)
 - o Do they want to help us?
 - o Do they have the power?
 - o The means?
- Isolation, loneliness

- Fear:
 - o of street crime for the homeless,
 - o of being judged by officialdom
 - o of having their children taken into care,
 - o of domestic violence,
 - o of being evicted (deported if undocumented migrants),
 - o of becoming homeless or losing benefit,
 - o of not being able to put food on the table,
 - o of backsliding into dependency (drink, drugs, medicine abuse, etc...),
 - o of bailiffs (repossession),
 - o of their own rage
- Having no or too little leisure – paradoxically in countries where the “leisure society” is a platitude
- Lack of care: ill-health is almost always present, as well as the difficulty of accessing care – even basic care, let alone quality care.

And for “illegals”, no entitlement to care.

II.2. What helps people experiencing poverty

II.2.1. In NGOs

Practices related to:

- Empowerment (getting back in touch with one’s potential):
 - (re)discovering the ability to initiate,
 - (re)assuming citizenship
- Capacity building: accessing society by developing one’s capabilities (in any sphere), self-belief, relating,
- Decent funding for NGOs
i.e., having the technical, financial and human’s means to enable and develop empowerment.
- Resolving disputes by taking the time needed for discussion and exchange. This is based on the firm belief that there is no point skipping over things because tensions left unsmoothed are an obstacle to progress.
- A link between NGOs working either in the same area, or on the same issue or related issues.

II.2.2. During the participation process

The optimum conditions for participation being present, namely:

- Mutual respect
- Trust
- Openness
- Two-way exchange of information
- The necessary time
- That people experiencing poverty remain the benchmark throughout the process

Participation is fostered by:

1. Clear communication

Simple language: complicated terms and procedures are explained, all questions get answered.

Care taken to summarize progress at regular intervals, with opportunities for questions, requests for clarifications and, if need be, going back over things.

2. A framework defined from the word go by all partners in the participation process.

3. Expectations set out first.

- How far and how will action be taken on the problems raised and proposals made? And in what time-frames?
- What will be the gauge of success, partial success or failure of the participation process? Quantitative criteria? Qualitative ones?
- If the expectations and demands are unrealistic, the “authority” present must explain why and specify the limits to what it can do; the “authority” must appoint or ensure a channel towards the relevant people/authorities/government agencies.

Finding the right access point was unanimously regarded as being at best complicated, at worst impossible.

4. A time schedule

- Participation processes are often long if not very drawn-out (upwards of a year) approaches, so the stages need to be planned, and time segments marked out.

At the end of each participation meeting, a brief review should be done of:

- o The heads of agreement (even tentative); what will the practical consequences be? What is needed to go farther?
- o Points of disagreement: should they be put back to later? When? How should they be addressed?
- o Things to be discussed at the next meeting, a draft agenda.
- The information material already collected needs to be gone back over from time to time to explain what has been done with it, show what it has turned into after treatment, get approval of reworded texts.

5. Meeting reports

These are key, and should be available as soon as possible after meetings, while things are still fresh in the memory.

They are the basis for tackling aspects not yet addressed, proposing agendas, examining certain points in more detail,

6. Evaluation of the participation process¹⁰

Without this, the participants’ belief that “there’s no point to it, nothing’s changed” will be reinforced.

7. Deeds, not words

So, for example, the standard practice of having a politician attend only the start or end of a meeting will be seen in a participation process with people experiencing poverty as a sign of lack of interest.

If this type of selective appearance goes on, an explanation will have to be given for it – and the reasons for having a packed agenda will be hard to find!

II.3. Obstacles to participation

• Discontinuity

both among NGOs and officials:

- o Many people experiencing poverty are affected by shifting circumstances: people move, go into hospital, have too many problems, These problems are so acute as to create conflicts within groups, which in turn slows down the processes – because the first priority is to resolve the conflict.

- Changes occur among decision-makers: political changes, officials change jobs.... so plans are scrapped, priorities changed, complete about-turns made.

• Defeatism

It is generally difficult to get people experiencing poverty involved in a participatory approach because of the crunch question “What’s the point?”

• Structural

Problems linked to the interface position of front-line social workers.

Social workers have to

- get officials to be receptive to the idea of participation, guarantees that the process is taken seriously and observance of conditions that will make it work

- AND at the same time, train people experiencing poverty in political and administrative structures, democratic debate, negotiation, the strategies to be put in place, the frustrations created by delays, long time-frames, cultural differences, etc.

II.4. Initial assessments

- Top-down approaches to participation (from officialdom towards people experiencing poverty) are not the same as empowerment and

difficult to get on with.

- The experience of one case of success, i.e., when a real desire for openness by the authorities coincided with a participatory approach developed by an NGO, was that it was a fragile success, and that a partial failure can set the process right back.

The fact was that most members of the “official bodies” failed to turn up at scheduled meetings, leaving members of groups feeling (once again) angry, frustrated, distressed and perplexed.

- In another case which had every hope of success, all it took was for the official representative to no longer be there for the action that had been started to gradually fall apart.

- People experiencing poverty attribute success (even limited in impact and time) to:
 - Their official contacts being caring individuals, i.e., honest people (no cronyism) who clearly spelled out what they could and could not do.
 - The way the problem was addressed
 - Mutual respect
- In official approaches, people experiencing poverty stress that it is important:
 - to be clear, precise and dispassionate
 - to have the strength to go on despite setbacks
 - to learn the lessons of failures.

III. NAPsincl - Proposals for the 2nd round of plans

Belgium

- Absolutely vital to increase the supply of housing that people experiencing poverty can afford.
- Plans to cut unemployment must take account of the time needed to learn to live as part of society again. This differs from one person to another; so what is needed is a system of periodic evaluations instead of a “one-size-fits-all” time frame within which the plan is to be completed.
- Give recognition to “social illnesses”.

Netherlands

- Gender equality: put theory into practice
- Status of refugees, migrants, rights and duties, access to health
- Fund sufficient help for: Housing, Debt alleviation, People with multiple problems
- Do away with the automatic work-social inclusion linkage

Austria

- Create a process for participation by the unemployed

United Kingdom

- Link up the NAP at all levels, and reach the community level
- The voices of people experiencing poverty are still not being heard.
- Encourage access to their rights for people experiencing poverty.
- Increase social inclusion and economic equality by creating, strengthening and increasing the number of forums for debate between people experiencing poverty and “decision-makers”
- Fundamentally tackle the victimization, self-

denigration and guilt feelings of people experiencing poverty.

Italy

- Give recognition to non-profit organizations and scrap customs barriers in Europe for trade in used goods (recycling)
- Bring the NAP in line with the real facts: shelter for the homeless, refugees, undocumented migrants, gypsies and access to care for them. Spell out courses of action, such as by turning the social services into “Individual Advancement Agencies”.
- Increase policy actions and means for
 - access to housing through subsidies and financial incentives
 - employment opportunities by creating “sheltered integration processes”.
 - Encourage participation by people experiencing poverty through increased, long-term support for structured and organized NGOs.

Germany

- The future NAP must provide more official support to the most vulnerable groups (including the homeless)
- It must also simplify the procedures for subsidizing NGOs.
- Tackle child poverty and literacy/educational problems.
- Everything to do with social security, especially access to health and the situation of families.
- With welfare budget cuts on the agenda, fund local communities, which, with the social system disintegrating, provide more work and services.
- Give thought to other working methods, e.g., support to and development of networks. ?

Disregard child benefits when calculating means-tested supplementary welfare benefits.

- Increase basic guaranteed income.
- Most of all, do not merge supplementary welfare benefits and unemployment benefit (currently planned)
- In government agencies: bear down on poverty, not the poor!

Sweden

- Encourage networking, within towns, with similar groups, inside a country and also at European level.
- Turn employment policy into a means of encouraging and empowering the unemployed
- Quite simply, give people their rights!

Denmark

- Change the tax policy (tax ceiling) which ultimately means having increasingly fewer resources to pay for social policies.
Allow people with multiple problems the time they need to become resocialized.
Increase financial help to NGOs.
Establish (a) reliable statistical database(s) that cannot be massaged for politicians' own ends.

France

- EMPLOYMENT: New jobs and new services must be developed through the cooperative, mutual and non-profit sector in an area where needs are better analysed and more relevant, with a view to achieving sustainable development and tackling social exclusion.

- TRAINING: Training must be seen as a stage in a pathway based on the individual's own real life plan. Have coherent policies to establish training provision that addresses the economic and sociological necessities of the area concerned.
- HOUSING: The right to housing must be seen as the basis of everyone's fundamental rights:
 - The policy of regeneration with community participation is not sufficiently developed.
 - The private rented housing stock could be made much more available.
 - Social Housing Fund help should be available before people get into too great difficulty.
- HEALTH: Community-based organizations should have responsibility for health: vulnerable groups are found to have chronic problems with sleeping, general fatigue, stress, ill-being... which they are not dealing with properly. To tackle these problems, NGOs run enthusing and motivation-developing social inclusion activities. They aim to get the individual to re-engage with a plan and work on self-esteem.. Invest more in the prevention funds.
- DEBT: Develop solidarity-group banking schemes. Inform banks and administrative departments about the financial mess that people experiencing poverty have got themselves in when applying for and being granted loans. Stop boosting consumption by peddling loans which are snares and delusions whereby people experiencing poverty buy dreams and end up deep in debt. Human dignity is not built on how much they consume. Have a number of indicators for maximum debt limits.

Annex II

Contributions

ANNEX II.1

Note for the debate

Italian delegation

“Poverty”, of course, is a sweeping, general concept, especially when cut across with the countless classifications and categories into which the different social policies have fragmented it in Italy; so, as well as poverty, we speak of sickness, old age, disability, all kinds of disadvantage: a series of categories that artificially separate needs. Italy recently brought in outline legislation to put in place a system of social action and services. These are now referred to as fully-integrated measures, rights for all that focus on cross-cutting rather than category-specific actions: whence the complexity of what we call “measures to combat poverty”.

“Poverty” is increasingly a multi-dimensional phenomenon because it results from wide range of social and economic processes: new family vulnerabilities, public spending cuts, the job shortage and structural unemployment plus the forms of contingent, low-paid employment. This build-up of processes adds to the mutually-reinforcing dynamics of the processes themselves, helping to erode the individual’s “basic resources” like (essentially):

- somewhere to live
- the ability to put food on the table
- health,
- education.

On these “resources” depend self-confidence, integration into the community, and the feeling of belongingness. Our remit was to work specifically from what goes to make up the individual’s *aspirations* in order to identify “good practices” which can give impetus to new schemes.

Over recent months, we – social workers and people experiencing poverty – looked closely at housing but also more widely at access to rights as the guiding principle for an analysis of the conditions of social vulnerability.

We see access to rights and basic resources as a prerequisite for participation in community life. But here, there is a dilemma to be resolved:

- Should resources be allocated to the “deserving”, which puts the focus on responsibility
- Or should they be allocated according to need?

These two approaches presuppose an unequal relationship between the giver and the recipient. Looking at the practical labour market re-entry schemes, for example, one can single out those

which put a focus on individual responsibility, but also foster collective responsibility by addressing the social conditions that underlie the individual exercise of responsibility.

This approach delivers inclusion and involvement for the beneficiaries of a project, through forms of organization and practical attention to detail, by focusing on the quality of the relationship between the service provider and beneficiary through playing up the beneficiary’s status as a recognized actor on the grounds of the potential he has and wishes to put to use rather than focusing on what he lacks in material or personal terms.

This is an approach by which processes can be set in motion that enable, and so clearly help empower, the individual. It is a difficult method, but

- **how** social justice is delivered is just as important as
- to **whom** (the beneficiary) and
- **what** (the social benefits granted).

This is where the issue of participation by people experiencing poverty being seen as “subjects” comes in, and the need to go beyond the promoter-beneficiary dichotomy.

1. EMPLOYMENT

We looked at employment and the conditions of vulnerability and insecurity. Vulnerability is now a feature of an increasingly “non-standard” job market that runs from agency staff to cooperatives: the jobs it provides are universally acknowledged to be insecure, but for a range of different reasons.

Cooperatives are seen as rising to a challenge, because they are where support is given to the employability of disadvantaged individuals through recognition of the decisive influence that employment still has not just in making people financially independent but also for how it contributes to recognition by society.

“**Sheltered pathways**” into employment are a fundamental challenge for delivering empowerment in practice, where people participate as active players in mapping out their journey back into work and society.

Through this, the need for ongoing support was highlighted for those longest out of touch with employment, for whom standard ways back in seem not to work.

These pathways include a **mentor** who oversees the individual’s integration into the chosen sector

of employment, ensuring that the support provision will be immediately brought into play to deal preventively with whatever difficulties they encounter. This kind of mechanism plays up the individual's personal resources, which when properly directed and supported can be an inherent part of their journey back into society through employment. In this kind of practice, the right to employment itself becomes an **instrument** of participation.

2. HOUSING

On housing, we looked at the importance of community schemes as resources, not just for "living somewhere", but also for sharing between individuals with different life courses, and hence an instrument for socialization. This is a response to inclusion policies dominated by the idea of total self-reliance, excluding a major component of the individual's personality: its social dimension; this kind of inclusion policy disregards the fact that in contemporary society, no one is completely independent. Community life is based on different forms of "dependency" - be it between individuals or on the community - which must therefore be considered as potential foundations for empowerment (self-actualization and capability to act) rather than manifestations of helplessness.

The thing to avoid is "*unequal dependency*", the domination-subordination relationship in which the person-as-subject does not participate in but merely suffers the decisions.

The issue of "support workers" comes in here again: they have an enormous job to do in helping bring out the strengths of vulnerable people. The support worker's job is highly-skilled, requires considerable capabilities and must be properly valued if it is not to be part of the broader field of insecure, low-paid jobs.

ANNEX II.2

PROGRESS

Promotion of an **O**rganized network to **G**uarantee **R**eintegration into the **S**ocial **S**ystem of homeless people and those experiencing extreme poverty

From the unrealistic to reality

From the individual to the system

*Anna Clemente
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Sweeping and deep-reaching changes have taken place in the last decade that have changed people's needs and demands in various ways, not least

through such things as immigration, structural changes in society, lengthening average life expectancies, serious social diseases which have rocked institutions, NGOs, voluntary preventative agencies and action on health for young people, elderly people, immediate and extended family units. All this has lifted the veil on the hidden and visible face of the new forms and recent aspects of poverty.

Inevitably, the methods and instruments used by the public services and civil society have sought to address the demands of these new citizens who had never before been seen as groups demanding rights and duties and access to them.

Within this new and complex reality, the most vulnerable - those with least resources to survive and adapt - are at very real risk of isolation and exclusion.

This necessitated specific schemes, rolled out in practical ways in specific areas to avoid if at all possible the labelling that would result from simply matching actions to needs, at the risk of fracturing the social fabric and ultimately proving worse than inefficient and counterproductive, to achieve an acceptable integration which the community could not support in terms of social spending.

The PROGRESS Project run out by CARITAS Rome since 2002 with support from the Latium Regional Council (Department of family policies) aims to help homeless people back into society through an intake, training and sheltered pathway into employment programme (selection, intake, support, integration).

What makes this experimental project different is the way it blends together action by public agencies, NGOs and voluntary workers, and the multidisciplinary nature of the promoters running the activities, but also the creation of a system of joint networks to rebuild personal, relational and work-related skills by empowering people and leveraging their physical work abilities.

A five-stage methodology is used to achieve the objective:

1. Reality-checking the institutional framework:
 - to frame a realistic project that is meaningful for the numbers involved,
 - to ensure the necessary financial, human, and work resources
 - to explore the project process

- to ensure integration into society and a job.
2. Selection of candidates on the criteria of capabilities and psychological aptitude to follow an integrated pathway under a compulsory contract aimed centrally at improving self-esteem and active measures to improve their own effectiveness in order to be more committed to fulfilling the technical requirements.
 3. Psychosocial and technical training to gradually develop capabilities and skills through the learning of manual, craft and professional skills in order to achieve financial independence and integration into work and society.
 4. Ongoing support towards achieving financial independence and integration into work and society.

5. Performance assessment of the intervention.

Time required	600 hours
Participants	15 to 20

The project began in August 2002 and is now nearing completion. Performance assessment of this kind of intervention has proved the validity of a idea which can form part of good practice based on networking of the players involved, selection of participants possessing the right basic aptitudes, networking of the different public agencies potentially required throughout the project.

Of 15 participants now poised to form their own social cooperative, 3 dropped out, 1 of them due to circumstances beyond his/her control.

Annex III

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