



EUROCITIES
The network of major European cities

THE EU STRATEGY FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION:
Making it Work at the Local Level

**Report of the Conference organised by
EAPN and EUROCITIES**

Athens, 28 February- 1 March 2003



*Hosted by the City of Athens
under the patronage of Ms Anna Diamantopoulou, Member of the
European Commission*



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Acknowledgement: EAPN and EUROCITIES wishes to acknowledge the work of Katherine Duffy in drafting this report.

The organisers wish to acknowledge the contribution of the EUROCITIES CASE project – Cities’ Actions against Social Exclusion – to the report. The project was funded under the EU preparatory actions to combat and prevent social exclusion (2001). More information can be found on the project website: www.eurocities.org/case

Duffy K (2003) “The EU Strategy for Social Inclusion: Making work at the local level – report of the conference organised by EAPN and Eurocities, Athens, 28 February – 1 March 2003”, Brussels, EAPN/ Eurocities, September 2003

ISBN: 2-930252-28-6

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD	4
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
THE CONTEXT FOR THE CONFERENCE	5
STRUCTURE OF THE CONFERENCE REPORT	5
SEMINAR CONCLUSIONS	5
CONFERENCE CONCLUSIONS	8
PART 1: INTRODUCTION - SETTING THE AGENDA FOR THE CONFERENCE	9
THE AIMS OF THE CONFERENCE	9
OPENING REMARKS	9
THE CONTEXT FOR THE CONFERENCE	10
THE CONFERENCE AGENDA: MAKING THE EU STRATEGY WORK AT THE LOCAL LEVEL	11
PART 2: MAKING IT WORK AT THE LOCAL LEVEL: THE CASE STUDIES PRESENTED IN THE THREE SEMINARS	15
SEMINAR A: LINKING BETWEEN LOCAL ACTIONS TO COMBAT POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND THE NATIONAL ACTION PLANS	15
SEMINAR B: THE EXPERIENCE OF COLLABORATION BETWEEN LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND NGOS IN COMBATING POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION	25
SEMINAR C: SHARING EXPERIENCE ON LOCAL LEVEL ACTIONS TO COMBAT POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION	37
PART 3: LEARNING FROM THE CONFERENCE: KEY POINTS RAISED	53
PRINCIPLES AND VALUES	53
MAKING THE EU STRATEGY WORK AT THE LOCAL LEVEL	53
PART 4: CONCLUSIONS AND FINAL DECLARATION	57
APPENDIX: PARTICIPANTS LIST	60

FOREWORD

EAPN and EUROCITIES are convinced that the EU Social Inclusion Strategy launched at the Lisbon Council in 2000 has the potential to meet the ambition stated at the time, by the heads of states and governments, to make a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty in the EU by the year 2010. However without the involvement of the local level in the strategy, such ambition will not be achieved.

This conference, held at a time when Member States were concentrated on producing their second set of National Action Plans on Inclusion, aims to strengthen the local dimension in the second generation of plans. The ideas generated at the conference and recorded in this report should not only assist with the preparation of the plans but also with the implementation and evaluation of the actions proposed. Our members will seek to ensure that the fruits of this reflection are reflected in the second set of plans to be submitted in July 2003.

EAPN and EUROCITIES would like to take this opportunity to thank Ms Anna Diamantopoulou, Member of the European Commission for her patronage of this Conference and for the financial support of the European Commission. We would like also to thank Ms Dora Bakogianni, Mayor of Athens for the hosting and hospitality received from the City of Athens. The presence of Mr Dimitris Thanos, Greek Minister for Health and Social Affairs was also appreciated. Finally we would like to thank all of the people who contributed and participated in the conference for their generous exchange of experience and thought provoking ideas.

We hope that this report will be of benefit to all those concerned with the EU Social Inclusion strategy and that reading the report will be a source of encouragement and ideas for all committed to addressing the needs of those experiencing poverty and exclusion within our wealthy European society.



Ludo Horemans
President of EAPN



Wolfgang Tiefensee, Mayor of Leipzig
President of EUROCITIES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The conference on ‘the EU Strategy for Social Inclusion: *Making it Work at the Local Level*’, took place in Athens from 28 February- 1 March 2003.

The context for the conference

At the Lisbon Council in 2000, European Union leaders launched the strategy to boost competitiveness and economic growth – to achieve higher employment rates and better quality jobs and foster social cohesion. Following Lisbon, EU leaders agreed to make a ‘*decisive impact on the eradication of poverty by 2010*’. They adopted a Social Inclusion Strategy based on the Open Method of Co-ordination (OMC). This combines common EU-wide objectives, National Action Plans and a European Programme to encourage co-operation in this field. The first National Action Plans for Social Inclusion (NAPs Inclusion) were presented in 2001, with the aim of sharing best practice and learning from each other.

Now that the OMC is established it is necessary to address some shortcomings of the first round. Delivery on the ground, consultation with local actors and co-operation with regional and local levels are all crucial areas to be addressed in the second round of the NAPs Inclusion, which are being prepared for the period July 2003 – July 2005. It is in this context that the Conference took place, with the aim of making an impact on the next round of the NAPs Inclusion.

Structure of the conference report

This report of the Athens conference jointly organised between EUROCITIES and the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) has four parts. The conference aim was ‘making it work at the local level’. This was addressed in three parallel seminars: A: linking the levels, B: collaboration between the local actors and C: concrete actions. Part 1 summarises the conference opening plenary session. Part 2 summarises the three seminars, which presented the fifteen local case studies, the three rapporteurs’ reports and some concluding reflections. The fifteen cases are from Malmö, Sachsen-Anhalt, Offaly, Barcelona, Antwerp, Bologna, Dublin, Stockholm, Aarhus, Newcastle, Trikala, Rotterdam, Glasgow, Lewisham and North Karelia. Part 3 presents an overview of the issues raised by the experience presented in the conference. Part 4 brings together the conclusions and key points raised by the conference. In Part 5 recommendations for making the EU Strategy work at the local level, in particular with regard to the second round of the NAPs Inclusion, are set out in a joint declaration from EUROCITIES – EAPN which was debated at the conference.

Seminar conclusions

Seminar A: Linking the levels

The first lesson from the four presentations in this seminar is the importance of the governance structure - especially the degree of centralisation and decentralisation - in how anti-poverty and exclusion policies are developed, accepted and implemented. But it was evident that there is no one ‘best’ governance structure for anti-poverty and exclusion policy. In decentralised systems it may be difficult to get a national strategy accepted and delivered and in centralised systems there are difficulties in formulating local anti-poverty strategies when many of the delivery sectors – health, education etc., are regionalised arms of national departments and agencies.

Second, it is clear that the national reports of the first round of the NAPs Inclusion did not reflect the reality of work at the local level, – with insufficient attention to the competencies of local authorities in social inclusion and existing local social inclusion policy and practice.

Third, there are lessons on the best structural conditions for linking the levels. Legal agreements between the national and local levels of government (and regional where appropriate) crystallise roles and responsibilities in the coordination of national and local strategies for social inclusion. Such agreements also provide a clear framework for policy development, for monitoring and evaluation, and funding arrangements for the delivery of anti-poverty strategies.

The most effective institutional arrangements seem to be those where there are specific bodies at national and local level which have the job of co-ordinating and driving policy and it is important that these bodies have a specific anti-poverty and exclusion focus. Effective horizontal cooperation at each of the levels of government, as well as vertical cooperation, needs to be promoted to ensure the mainstreaming of social inclusion.

Fourth, political will, resources and a certain amount of flexibility are needed to put life into the institutional arrangements built around paper agreements. At a cross-national level, flexibility allows adaptation to the differing governance structures. Otherwise there might appear to be a dominance of the national level in states that do not necessarily see themselves as hierarchically arranged. At a local level flexibility leaves scope for partnerships to grow and develop.

Finally it seems that a dense ‘institutional middle level’ allows for a better articulation between states and individuals, strengthening the chain of communication vertically and horizontally. However, there is a risk too of a crowded and competitive terrain.

Seminar B: Collaboration between local authorities and social non-governmental organisations

The first lesson for successful collaboration of local authorities and NGOs is the importance of taking a bottom-up approach. Needs should be identified by disadvantaged people themselves and should drive local authorities and NGOs.

Respect for different cultures of participation is crucial. Intensive preparation work and dialogue between local authorities and NGOs is important to gaining understanding and support for innovative initiatives prior to their launch. Permanent processes of cooperation are needed in order to utilise the local knowledge of all actors in policy and planning and to develop a more effective strategic approach to combating poverty and social exclusion at the local level. – The process of empowerment of local communities is essential to the success of initiatives.

Successful partnership working depends on clear roles for local authorities, NGOs and vulnerable groups and communities. Local authorities have a leading role to play in coordinating local partnerships for social inclusion, involving NGOs and other key actors, and supporting the chains of communication and dialogue that are necessary for effective development, implementation and follow up of policies and initiatives.

A key theme of this seminar was how to hear and react to the voice of poor and disadvantaged people. Two routes were identified. The first was to offer a guarantee of a right and the means to enforce it. Such a strategy builds confidence amongst poor and excluded people and a willingness to access their rights and it increases contact with ‘hard to reach’ groups and communities. The second route is to support the organised voice of communities, as the key to appropriate and sustainable local development. Self-organisation makes this voice distinctive and so better heard.

The seminar demonstrated the importance for poor and excluded people of having a voice as well as a vote – a vote that many groups of disadvantaged people cannot or do not use. Organised voice, or participatory democracy, increases human dignity and supports representative democracy by generating a more appropriate agenda and priorities, ensuring the scope for policy sustainability and cutting the gap between politicians and disadvantaged groups.

Seminar C: concrete measures

The seven presentations in this seminar focused on the concrete measures taken by a broad range of programmes, projects and initiatives at the local level. Some were area based, others target group based, some were large and well funded and others small and more tightly focused. Some focused on employment integration, others on social support and some on local regeneration.

The first lesson in achieving success is to ‘start where people are’. This may involve building on the culture of the country of origin, involving existing community organisations and understanding group priorities and concerns. It is important to see people not as ‘bundles of shortcomings’ but as having unused qualities that can be drawn on for their own and the collective benefit. It is clear that there has been some mainstreaming of consultation at the local level, but most often with a ‘user’ advisory function. As the presentations illustrated, there are very significant benefits to be gained from greater upstream involvement of poor and excluded people and organisations working with them and from a stronger institutionalisation of the right to be heard.

The second lesson is that the successful initiatives had political backing and adequate resources. Local authorities are generally the lead partners and the major funders of local social inclusion initiatives, and are responsible for coordination with regional and national levels of government. In a context of welfare state restructuring and economic and social restructuring, multiple agencies are increasingly involved in the design and implementation of initiatives, including NGOs as well as the private sector.

There are great synergies from bringing together the skills and experience of local authorities and NGOs, working with poor and excluded people and communities and utilising their unused skills and capacities. It is important to invest in working together. Capacity for coping with change cannot just be drawn down, it must be continuously created. Trust relationships are an essential element of social capital and once lost are difficult and expensive to rebuild.

Finally, it is important to feed the lessons of local initiatives into wider urban strategies as well as national social inclusion strategy, in order to ensure effective policy integration and the mainstreaming of successful local actions.

Implications for the NAPs Inclusion

Despite the wide array of multi-level, multi agency social inclusion activity at the local level, it is abundantly clear that there was limited engagement in the first round of the NAPs Inclusion. Local actors were little involved vertically – with the European level and with their own national states - and little engaged horizontally, in partnership with other local actors in NAPs Inclusion focused activities.

It is equally evident that while the national state retains much of the power of initiative and control over most of the resources (though this varies from state to state), anti-poverty and exclusion policy do not exist only at national welfare level, but also at local level as area and sector policies. The seminars showed also that local and regional authorities are the lead partners and that the greatest synergies and successes come from working together with social NGOs and with the organised voice of poor and excluded people. A NAPs Inclusion process that does not

have a major and guaranteed place for these partners has lost the key opportunity for cross-national learning which is one of its major justifications.

The next round of the NAPs Inclusion could forward the implementation of Objective 4 by providing a stronger framework and guidance for piloting a stakeholder approach to social inclusion strategy and policy. A guaranteed right to be heard would advance the development of such a model and would encourage investment in strengthening and co-ordinating decentralised policy. It would be a major learning opportunity for the European Social Model, whose essence is the preparedness of stakeholders to work in partnership and to intervene actively to bring about social cohesion.

Conference conclusions

The conference reaffirmed the moral obligation on all parties to combat poverty and social exclusion. The foundation must be a right to high and equal social standards for all. The European Strategy for Social Inclusion is an important basis for concerted and coordinated action at all levels – local, national and European – towards the prevention and eradication of poverty, exclusion and inequalities in the European Union. The NAPs Inclusion are a major opportunity for cross-national learning and for policy and practice development.

The mobilisation of local actors in the NAPs Inclusion process requires adequate time and resources and a clear structure for engagement between the levels. Governments should commit to a mobilisation strategy and the means to implement it, which gives a strong role to the local level at all stages, design, implementation, evaluation and follow-up.

To ensure a coherent national framework and agenda, the relationships between NAPs Inclusion and existing national and local strategies, policies, plans and reports, must be clarified. There needs to be a clear link between the NAPS Inclusion and local priorities, policy and practice if a real impact on the ground is to be made. Partnership agreements between the local and national levels can enable an effective framework for defining clear roles and responsibilities, for setting objectives, targets and measures, and clarifying funding arrangements, with the allocation of resources to the local level to implement agreed measures.

The added value of bottom-up partnerships and participation of people with experience of poverty needs to be acknowledged and followed up in the NAPs Inclusion process at all levels. However, the NAPs Inclusion is not yet realised at the local level. It needs greater political support and visibility and resources to engage all stakeholders in the process.

The NAPs Inclusion can act as an important driver for change and policy integration. To get a higher political priority and acceptance for their engagement and influence on the NAPs Inclusion, the local actors need to work together to shift the dialogue towards the local level. Cooperation between the local actors through their networks at the local, national and European level is essential in order to push the local agenda at national and European level, and to ensure the ongoing development of an effective strategy to combat poverty and social exclusion at all levels. The European Commission must ensure that all new policies and programmes take into account their potential impact on poverty and social exclusion and that the integration of economic, employment and social policies is reinforced. To provide a robust framework for the NAPs Inclusion, the review of the Treaties, following the conclusions on the Convention on the Future of Europe, must give the social dimension more prominence. The OMC should be given a clear basis and legal framework in the Treaty, as well as formal recognition of the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

PART 1: INTRODUCTION - SETTING THE AGENDA FOR THE CONFERENCE

This Part outlines the aims of the conference and the plenary speakers' opening remarks concerning the conference agenda - reflecting on the experience of successful local strategies to combat poverty and social exclusion.

The aims of the conference

The conference took place at a key stage in the development of the Strategy for Social Inclusion, with ongoing preparations taking place in each of the Member States for the second round of National Action Plans for Social Inclusion. It was the first joint conference between EUROCITIES and EAPN and it aimed to raise the visibility of the NAPs Inclusion and to influence the next round. One objective of the conference was to reflect on the experience of the first round of the NAPs Inclusion and to assess the role of local authorities and NGOs in it. However, the main objective was not to look back but to look forward to the second round of the NAPs Inclusion. The conference shared the experience of collaboration by NGOs and local authorities in combating poverty and social exclusion and exchanged experience of local good practice. A main focus of this learning was through presentation of examples of cities' initiatives in the context of the EUROCITIES CASE project – Cities' Actions against Social Exclusion – as well as examples from EAPN contributors.

The conference has provided an opportunity to begin a new exchange of views between local actors and key institutions involved in the NAPs Inclusion process including the European Commission, the European Council, the Committee of the Regions and national and regional authorities. The outcomes of the conference will be used to better inform and better develop the role of the local level in NAPs Inclusion 2. It is anticipated that the key policy recommendations arising from the conference will be taken into account in the second round of the NAPs Inclusion, as well as in the future development of the overall EU Strategy.

Opening remarks

The conference was opened jointly by Councillor Richard Leese, Leader of Manchester City Council and Vice-President of EUROCITIES and Ludo Horemans, President of the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN). Mr Leese and Mr Horemans thanked the European Commission for supporting the event and Commissioner Anna Diamantopoulou for her patronage. They thanked the City of Athens for their kind hospitality in hosting the event and for their joint collaboration and considerable efforts in its organisation.

The delegates were warmly welcomed by Dora Bakogianni, Mayor of Athens, who opened the conference by reminding us that *'the quality of life of citizens is an ethical issue'*. Therefore we have a moral duty to combat poverty and social exclusion. It is not an option. An overview of the European Union Strategy on Social Inclusion was presented by the conference patron, Anna Diamantopoulou, Commissioner for Employment and Social Affairs, who stressed the increased emphasis that the Commission would place on the realisation of the National Action Plans at the local level. Dimitris Thanos, the Greek Deputy Minister for Health and Social Affairs, noted the positive impact that the NAPs Inclusion had already made on Greek social inclusion strategy.

The context for the conference

The conference context was presented by Ms. Diamantopoulou. She reminded participants that poverty is still an urgent challenge and that one in six people in the European Union lives on less than 60% of their national average income.

At the Lisbon Council in 2000, European Union leaders launched the strategy to boost competitiveness and economic growth – to achieve higher employment rates **and** foster social cohesion. Following Lisbon, EU leaders agreed to make a *'decisive impact on poverty by 2010'*. They adopted a Social Inclusion Strategy based on the Open Method of Co-ordination (OMC). This combines common EU-wide objectives, National Action Plans and a European Programme to encourage co-operation in this field. The first National Action Plans were presented in 2001, with the aim of sharing best practice and learning from each other.

Ms. Diamantopoulou emphasised the importance of a partnership of all the actors working together in pursuit of collective benefit from co-operation and mutual support. The new Community Programme supports the process by helping to address knowledge gaps especially in the area of data and comparable indicators.

Ms. Diamantopoulou stated that now the OMC was successfully up and running it was necessary to address some shortcomings of the first round. Delivery on the ground, consultation with local actors and co-operation with regional and local levels are all crucial areas to be addressed in the second round of the NAPs Inclusion. The speaker emphasised that the local level best understands the needs and is best placed for follow-up; *'The Social Inclusion Strategy will only work effectively if they are involved'*. Improving the visibility of the Strategy is vital also to gain the popular and political support necessary to combating social exclusion.

The speaker summarised the expectations concerning Round 2 Plans. They need to be ambitious and forward looking and measurable targets need to be set. All levels must be involved in a coordinated ongoing manner and the exact responsibilities of each level should be indicated clearly. All actors must be involved *'As a rule, not as an exception'*. Ms. Diamantopoulou emphasised that *'Local authorities, NGOs, the Social Partners and those experiencing poverty, or working with those in poverty, must participate fully'*. She recognised the vital work of EAPN and EUROCITIES in this area. Finally, the speaker insisted that despite a less favourable economic climate, Member States must avoid cuts in public spending that might impact on those at risk of poverty. *'We must continue to protect the most vulnerable.'*

Looking to the future, Ms Diamantopoulou referred to developments at European level. She suggested that in the review of the Treaties, following the conclusions on the Convention on the Future of Europe, the social dimension must be given more prominence. She stated that the European Commission would like to see the OMC given a clear basis and legal framework in the Treaty, as well as formal recognition of the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Ms Diamantopoulou noted three challenges: access to employment in an era of 'knowledge-based work'; public pensions for the elderly and women living alone and women's overall vulnerability to poverty - and the consequent importance of gender mainstreaming. Ms Diamantopoulou concluded by stating that the European Commission will ensure that all new policies and programmes will take into account their potential impact on poverty and social exclusion and that the integration of economic, employment and social policies will be reinforced.

Richard Leese introduced his remarks by emphasising EUROCITIES' support for the EU goal of social inclusion. He referred to the commitment that the Member States have made to the

fundamental goal of ‘*making a significant impact on the eradication of poverty and social exclusion*’ in Europe by 2010. He noted the important steps that have been taken to achieve this goal through a European Strategy for Social Inclusion, including the development of National Action Plans for Social Inclusion.

Mr Leese warmly welcomed the recognition of the need to involve the local level in the EU Strategy. He stressed that if the European Union is to succeed in its ambitious goal, it is clear that it cannot do so without the *active involvement* of the local level. It is the local authorities and NGOs whose daily job involves working directly with people experiencing poverty and social exclusion and responding to their needs. He reinforced Ms Diamantopoulou’s insistence that it is only by joint working amongst all levels, European, national, regional and local that an effective impact can be made. If the National Action Plans are to have a real impact on the ground, it is crucial that the major role of local actors is adequately reflected - in the development, implementation and assessment of the plans.

Mr Leese emphasised that the conference provided a unique opportunity to set out how local actors can make the EU Strategy for Social Inclusion work at the local level. EURO CITIES very much welcomed the co-operation with the European Anti-Poverty Network in bringing together local actors – local authorities and NGOs – to address this key question, and he stressed that there was an *enormous potential for impact through joint working* between all actors at all levels.

Ludo Horemans thanked all of the speakers for their opening remarks, which set the positive mood and specific agenda for the conference. He pointed to the advantages for drawing lessons that this conference represented, in bringing together a European network of cities and a European network of NGOs, both engaged and committed to combating poverty and exclusion. In his commentary on the aims of the conference, Mr Horemans stressed the importance of the *opportunity to reflect as well as exchange experience* of work at the local level. Poverty and social exclusion are growing alongside increased wealth. Mr Horemans pointed out that it is at the local level that we can see the consequences of poverty and exclusion in the daily lives of those affected and where we can see clearly the injustice that we must continue to try to eliminate. He argued that *poverty is not primarily the responsibility of the person who is experiencing it; it is a consequence of our choices about the way we organise our societies*.

Mr Horemans noted that despite having amongst the best economic and social systems globally, we continue to produce unemployment, poverty, and consequent welfare benefit dependence. He argued that each level must take its own responsibility and while certain competences are at the European and national level, we cannot use this to avoid our local responsibility. Real changes are often instigated at the local level and local actors must do all in their power to achieve the Lisbon goal of making a decisive impact on poverty by 2010.

Mr Horemans stressed that at the local level, each partner has their own specific role to play and the conference must not lose sight of this important point. Conference participants should identify not only the opportunities but also the problems and limits to partnerships between public and private voluntary and community organisations.

The conference agenda: making the EU Strategy work at the local level

In the first round table session of the conference, Platon Tinios, Greek representative on the Social Protection Committee, reinforced Mr Thanos’s remarks concerning the Greek situation. Greece has a traditional family support structure, but in the changing economic and social environment there is a need to look beyond the family. The Open Method of Co-ordination

(OMC) has encouraged decentralisation and mobilisation of all actors and in Greece the government is looking to mobilise NGOs and the church. However, in remarks that foresaw some important themes of the cases presented at the conference, Mr Tinios reminded participants that it is important to link subsidiarity to the ultimate responsibility of the state. It is important also to show that Europe is about citizens, not only markets and that employment is only one of three foci of social protection – pensions and health as well as work.

Reinforcing the emphasis given by Ms Diamantopoulou and Mr Tinios on the central responsibility of the state to combat poverty and social exclusion, Kent Andersson, Deputy Mayor of the City of Malmö (Chair of EUROCITIES Social Welfare Committee), underlined the major role of local government in this respect. He stressed that it is *in our cities* that the problems of poverty and social exclusion in the European Union are seen and experienced in daily life. Cities are the centres of Europe's economic growth, but at the same time face severe concentrations of poverty and exclusion. It is the public authorities of cities, as the level of government closest to the majority of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion in the EU, that have the responsibility to design and deliver many of the policies and public services needed to promote an inclusive urban society for all. He emphasised that it is therefore *paramount that the EU Strategy and National Action Plans join up with the policy and practice of local authorities to have an effective impact on the ground.*

So what needs to be done to make this happen? Mr Andersson stressed that firstly it was essential that greater efforts are made to raise awareness of the Strategy and the National Action Plans at the local level, but also to improve understanding at the national and EU levels of local priorities, policies and actions. Increased dialogue between the national ministry responsible for the NAP Inclusion and local authorities was therefore needed. He welcomed the meetings taking place in Member States on the second round of NAPs, but stressed that this process needed to enable real consultation, with sufficient time and resources, so that local authorities and other local actors have a direct input into the design of the plans, especially on those aspects where their competencies lie.

Secondly, Mr Andersson emphasised that in order to translate the broad objectives of the EU Strategy into concrete actions on the ground, it is crucial that local actors are not only consulted in the design of the NAPs, but also that *local strategies for social inclusion are developed* and financially supported, including through the Structural Funds. This depended on a *clear framework for joint working between the local and national levels.* He referred to the example of the existing local development partnership agreements in Sweden between the national government and the metropolitan authorities, which have the aim of promoting sustainable growth, more employment opportunities and greater social cohesion. The partnership agreements set out long-term and coordinated measures in order to achieve their objectives, with a clear definition of roles and responsibilities and the allocation of finances to the local level in order to implement agreed measures. The partnership agreement between the Swedish government and the City of Malmö includes locally established objectives, individual action plans for each city district or neighbourhood, as well as well-defined follow-up and assessment plans. Mr Andersson stressed that the success of the partnership is based on trust, co-operation and common objectives between the levels.

How should we approach the task of 'making it work at the local level?' Saskia Richter (EAPN Germany) addressed three questions to the conference participants. For whom should the NAPs Inclusion strategy work? What structures are necessary to make it work? What partners are necessary to make it work?

Work for whom?

'It is not paper that matters, but people'. Ms Richter argued that first and foremost, the NAPs Inclusion strategy must work for people at risk of poverty and people experiencing poverty. If it is to be successful it must improve their living conditions and social contacts.

Second, the strategy must work too for those delivering it – local service organisations and those working at the grassroots. '*It should make their work easier. You should be able to rely on the fact that your care...is backed by an overall policy on combating poverty*'. Such an approach must be multidimensional and integrated and Ms Richter noted the many good examples presented at the conference. However, in her view a sustainable strategy requires more than that. She argued that there is much more work to be done in linking the levels and in involving those experiencing poverty and exclusion or at risk of it, in every stage of the strategy, from design to implementation and follow up.

Third, the strategy should enable planners and organisers to better *prevent* social exclusion. This requires those organising the strategy to have clear concepts of poverty and social exclusion and a clear vision of where they want to be in 2010, by which time the NAPs Inclusion process should have made 'a decisive impact on poverty'. One of the criticisms in the EAPN report of the first round of NAPs Inclusion was that the national reports very often only 'listed and linked' the existing strategy and policy. Ms Richter argued that without real vision and real new resources, it is unlikely that countries will achieve the decisive impact for which the NAPs Inclusion process calls.

Who makes it work?

The fourth Objective of the NAPs Inclusion is 'mobilising all actors'. However, this Objective is broad and so far, it has no targets and no timetable. Ms Richter stated that it needs to be specified concretely and implemented in each country according to national systems. Structures helpful to link the actors at different levels and specifically to assist the collaboration between the local level and NGOs will differ according to the powers of the levels and the constitutional and administrative arrangements.

What structures are necessary to make the strategy work at the local level?

Ms Richter stated that *sustainability* is central to any successful strategy. Local levels need to be working in a well-organised framework, properly resourced. The national level needs to allow sufficient flexibility to enable local adaptation to local circumstances. The European level needs to ensure that the NAPs Inclusion process maximises cross-national learning and supports the development of better institutional and legal frameworks for anti-poverty strategy at European level.

Ms Richter addressed some remarks to the themes of the three conference seminars.

Linking the levels – theme of Seminar A

These levels need to be linked together to maximise synergy. *‘A link has failed where the ‘top’ complains the ‘bottom’ does not know what is expected of them and the ‘bottom’ complains that the top has written a paper strategy that has nothing to do with the real problems.’*

Collaboration between local authorities and NGOs – theme of Seminar B

Subsidiarity is the first key to collaboration that is effective in delivering the strategy as close to the people affected – those experiencing poverty- as is possible. Subsidiarity at the local level means that where the NGO or community has the capacity to deliver a strand of a strategy, then it should do so, in preference to the local authority.

Concrete measures – theme of Seminar C

Ms Richter argued that *without concrete actions, the NAPs Inclusion would remain a paper strategy*. Despite the scope of the four Objectives of the Nice strategy to offer a comprehensive and cross-nationally comparative approach to combating poverty, it will soon cease to be thought about unless there are resources to undertake specific actions that ensure that existing national strategy is strengthened and integrated.

PART 2: MAKING IT WORK AT THE LOCAL LEVEL: THE CASE STUDIES PRESENTED IN THE THREE SEMINARS

This Part summarises and reflects on the fifteen cases presented during the three seminars (A, B and C) and the conclusions made by the three rapporteurs for the seminars. For each seminar, after the speakers' presentations and the rapporteur's concluding comments on the seminar content, there is a further reflective commentary which aims to draw together the lessons of the seminar. In each case it aims to do two things. First, it addresses the issues raised by each seminar chair, in terms of the impact for the next round of the NAPs Inclusion. Second, it draws out the main themes arising in each seminar, which may warrant further development by the local actors themselves.

Seminar A: Linking between local actions to combat poverty and social exclusion and the National Action Plans

Chair: Hugh Frazer, European Commission, DG Employment and Social Affairs
Rapporteur: Riita Särkelä, EAPN Finland

The chair introduced the guidelines for the seminar. Presentations should consider

1. Whether NAPs Inclusion reflect reality of work at local level
2. Examples of existing local action plans
3. How they link to the national and regional level – in development and implementation
4. Added value of local action plans
5. Effectiveness in involving local organisations and people experiencing poverty
6. How the second round of NAPs Inclusion can be improved in terms of linking national and local actions.

The cases presented below show varying degrees of direct or indirect linkage to the specific NAPs Inclusion process, the first round of which is complete in July 2003, when the second round of NAPs Inclusion are presented by national governments.

However, all of the cases show how the sub-national and national levels are linked in the development of anti-poverty strategy. In all countries the situation is complex as there are generally, at the least, national and regional policies for government reform and for economic development or regeneration, which emerged in reaction to the high unemployment and urban disadvantage that were causing increasing concern by the 1990s. Further it is evident that the terrain into which the NAPs Inclusion process is expected to be embedded is complicated both by the degree of centralisation/ decentralisation in countries and the existence of pre-existing national anti-poverty plans or reports, for example in Germany and Ireland. These issues are taken up in the commentary on Seminar A at the end of this section.

A1: Malmö, Sweden

The links between local actions and the Swedish National Action Plan

Kent Andersson, Deputy Mayor of Malmö, and Evert Kroes, Office for Metropolitan Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Sweden

Mr Andersson and Mr Kroes introduced the Swedish context. In common with many other speakers, they confirmed Ludo Horemans' comments about the increasing gaps in income and wealth, housing and education, and developing ethnic discrimination and segregation.

There are three Metropolitan areas in Sweden, in which live one third of the 9 million population. Metropolitan policy developed during the 1990s with the main objective of sustainable regional growth, making the metropolises growth drivers and so creating employment opportunities. A second aim of the policy is to halt social and ethnic discrimination and segregation and to work for equal living conditions for city residents.

In presenting their case, the speakers introduced several issues that have emerged across Member States in relations between national and local levels. These include:

- Political will for change.
- Central control of outcomes through financial arrangements linked to monitoring.
- Contractual relations for the delivery of stronger economic development and improved services for disadvantaged groups and areas.
- New institutional arrangements for horizontal and vertical integration
- Recognition of the importance of participation of target groups in creating sustainable policy outcomes.

Mr Andersson and Mr Kroes stated that an innovative aspect of the Metropolitan initiative in Sweden is the introduction of the Local Development Agreement. The Agreement objectives are to raise employment rates and cut benefit dependency. Other aims are to improve education opportunities for school students and adults, improve health and public safety and increase democratic participation. The Local Action Plan appended to the Agreement provides the situation, analysis and strategies and measures.

Key features are that Agreements stipulate the state responsibilities and the city responsibilities and although long term, the Agreements are *revised annually in dialogue* between local and national government. There is *additional* finance for 1999-2003 for these Agreements of 2.1b Swedish crowns of which 700m is earmarked for education, culture and leisure. The Agreement takes a 'bottom up perspective'. Democratic participation gets 15% of national funding but 24% of local funding. The biggest single expenditure – 1/3 - is for Swedish language teaching.

The speakers stressed that these Agreements are *'not on the cheap'*. The Malmö Agreement covers four districts and the financial agreement match funds central and local spending. There is no reduction in the funding for projects and special measures taken in the districts.

The levels are well linked. The Commission on Metropolitan Areas is the responsible body for co-ordination and development of metropolitan policy. It is a political body and consists of Secretaries of State from seven Ministries. The Commission's main task is to work to provide foundations for growth, development and improved city planning and to co-ordinate important metropolitan policies. The Commission's work includes negotiating with municipalities about the Local Development Agreements, follow up on the agreements, preparing government decisions and reporting to government on the local experience. Although the Agreement is monitored and revised once a year, every six months there is follow up of each measure in relation to objectives, and follow up reports from the municipalities on the results of the measures three to four times a year, when the metropolises receive State funding.

Mr Andersson and Mr Kroes stated that the key lessons of the Metropolitan policy of value to the NAPs Inclusion process are that *'joint funding gives joint responsibility'* and that it is possible to have *'strengthening without controlling'*. Recommendations include linking objectives from different levels, mainstreaming good measures into statutory services and improving co-ordination.

A2: Sachsen-Anhalt and Niedersachsen, Germany

The links between regional actions and the German National Action Plan

Sabine Overkämping, Land Sachsen-Anhalt and Saskia Richter, EAPN Germany

The Swedish example above illustrated the development of a national policy with a responsible body to negotiate between the levels. In presenting the example from Germany, Sabine Overkämping and Saskia Richter specifically focused on their experience of the introduction of the NAPs Inclusion. The speakers indicated what can happen in a federal country, when a policy appears to be imposed from ‘outside’ and from ‘the top’ and how to overcome the problems this creates.

There are three state levels in Germany; each has some responsibilities for certain dimensions of inclusion. The speakers stressed that the importance of linking/ co-ordination is that without it each of the levels may ‘refer claims to the others’ and ‘refuse to fulfil its own responsibilities’.

A complicating factor in the German case, present also in some other Member States (for example, Ireland and the UK) is that the national level had an already existing national report and/or a national strategy, concerning combating poverty and social exclusion. There is a lack of clarity in relations between these national and European reports/ Plans and consequently in institutional arrangements for implementation. This is something to which EAPN’s national and European reports on the NAPs Inclusion have drawn attention. This lack of clarity is something that should be addressed in round two of the NAPs Inclusion.

In the German case, there is a National Report on Poverty and Wealth, with some input from other levels and actors in its preparation, which existed prior to the European level NAPs Inclusion which itself has been taken under the aegis of the National Report process.

The speakers noted that the first round of the NAPs Inclusion rested mainly at the ‘national’ level and did not reflect the reality of work undertaken at local level. However, the importance of the NAPs Inclusion process and in particular Objective 4, in driving national developments is evident in the German case. Ms Richter stated that the NAPs Inclusion process provided the impetus for a grouping of NGOs (from large national organisations to small more local ones) including EAPN and self-help organisations to organise three regional workshops to bring together NGOs and authorities at the three levels. As a result, the federal government established a consultative committee of NGOs and of some regions and federations of municipalities. However, it meets only twice a year and has limited representation from the Länder and regions. Thus, the limitations in the influence of the NGO sector are evident also; while it can lobby, it has no ‘right’ to be listened to. Both the issue of the NAPs Inclusion as a driver for national developments and the strength of various national actors to initiate and follow up developments are taken up in the reflections at the end of this section.

According to the speakers, awareness of the NAPs Inclusion has been raised, but the next steps are concrete actions ‘*only good results for people motivate actors to expand their contribution*’. Lower Saxony is an example of a concerted effort to realise a regional level of the NAPs Inclusion. The speakers referred to the political difficulties at Länder and regional level (above), over the ‘imposition’ of the NAPs Inclusion. Local authorities refused in the beginning to take part for political reasons. However they decided participation was useful in developing content for anti-poverty policy. Now fifteen out of sixteen municipalities in Lower Saxony are involved in a so called ‘social dialogue’.

There is a dialogue between all relevant actors with an independent moderator. The actors have agreed common regional objectives and to start with, they have been concentrating on one

specific issue – access for all to sufficient care at home (there will be new objectives linked to the 2003 Plan). The Ministry stays responsible for the NAPs Inclusion but gets proposals from the participatory dialogue at the sub-national level, as a step to a more bottom up process. There is a strong NGO involvement, which is co-ordinated by a regional association and involvement also of social partners. It is important to note that *'it was crucial to clearly fix the relation between the formal political decision process and the dialogue. The dialogue does not replace political decisions of the local parliament or mayors'*. The NAPs Inclusion is bringing into sharp focus emerging and sometimes difficult relations between what might be termed 'participatory' democracy, as distinct from 'representative' democracy. These issues are much in evidence in the Seminar B presentations later in the Report and are discussed in the commentary at the end of the B section.

Ms Overkämping and Ms Richter concluded by noting that there are key lessons to be drawn from the German example. First, concerning the relationship between European level decisions amongst Member States and the *rights and powers of sub-regional levels*, which must be addressed by linking the levels more effectively to the European decision making process. Second, federal and decentralised and devolved government requires time for co-ordination of the levels. Co-ordination among the Ministries is also necessary because of the range of issues involved. Later comments from other examples will demonstrate again the *importance of time*, not only for the active involvement of the different levels of government, but for the different tempo of people in poverty. Time is a key resource and both EUROCITIES and EAPN have strongly criticised the lack of allowance for it, in European and national arrangements for the first round of the NAPs Inclusion.

Regarding structures for implementing the NAPs Inclusion, the speakers' recommendations from the German experience are to have just one consultative committee, not to split consultation amongst the different actors (as happens in some other countries), regular meetings and regional action plans as a base for the NAPs Inclusion.

A3: Offaly - Ireland

Linking Irish National and Local anti-poverty strategies

Jack Keyes, Offaly County Council

In common with many of the examples presented at the conference, Irish anti-poverty policy developed in the 1990s in the context of rapid economic change and reform of government structures. Ireland has a National Anti-Poverty Strategy, existing before the NAPs Inclusion. The National Anti-Poverty Strategy of 1997 was the springboard for action at local level. Reform of local government established county/ city development boards as partnerships. More recently, Local Anti-Poverty Strategies have been established.

Ireland is a centralised country in comparison to Germany; indeed it is one of the most centralised in the European Union. In federal countries or devolved administrations many speakers have noted that the autonomy of the levels and their guarding of their powers and responsibilities can be an obstacle to getting a national plan implemented at every level (and they noted the importance of time for this to happen). However, in Ireland, the regional level is not well developed. Social welfare, education and health functions are carried out by bodies that are part of the national or regional level rather than the local level and operate outside the remit of local and regional government. Jack Keyes referred to the difficulties resulting in formulating a Local Anti-Poverty Strategy. So, it may be concluded that there is no one governance structure that can be recommended as being the most effective in delivering national anti-poverty strategies whether or not these have a European dimension. This point is followed up in the reflections later in this Report.

Offaly, with a population of 63,000, has established a multi-agency partnership that includes NGOs. The Local Anti-Poverty Strategy has a partnership, an action focus, poverty profiling, capacity building, key themes, target setting, monitoring and evaluation and poverty/ equality proofing. The NAPs Inclusion principles feed in to the local anti-poverty strategy, along with the national poverty plan, the national development plan and output of other institutional arrangements.

A key lesson is that, as for the Swedish example, there are co-ordinating bodies that also act as drivers for the process. In Ireland, these exist at both the national and municipal level. There are now social inclusion units in nine local authorities. Local processes are supported by the Combat Poverty Agency, a national organisation which as one part of its work has facilitated the establishment of a network of local authorities (the Local Anti-Poverty Network). Recently, there has been established a national Social Exclusion Unit. One question this might raise for the European NAPs Inclusion process is how to get the right balance between co-ordination and a terrain that is too crowded? Whatever the case in Ireland it surely raises the question of the role of the NAPs Inclusion. How can it be ensured that the NAPs Inclusion acts as an instrument for policy integration rather than a new layer of bureaucratic paper shuffling? This issue is taken up later in the Report.

Like almost all of the examples offered at the conference, the Irish approach aims for 'bottom up' development of regional and local strategies. This may raise the question of what this means in practice and what is the impact in the different cases. This is something on which more research work could be done. At the local level in Ireland, the 'bottom-up' approach takes place through Task Forces and committees with local and national players. Mr Keyes concluded that local plans and actions work because they can build on existing relationships and can target effectively. However, there are issues of resources, organisational culture and national policy.

Local participation in the Offaly Anti-poverty strategy included 'inputs' from disadvantaged people. However, the speaker noted that there are '*degrees of participation*', so we have to know what kind of participation is ongoing. Like Diane Moras (Antwerp example, Seminar B below), Mr Keyes believed that achieving citizen participation is slow and challenging work.

A4: Barcelona, Spain

Developing a Local Action Plan for social inclusion

Marina Sánchez and Marta Sánchez, City of Barcelona

Spain is an example of a highly regionalised country with autonomous communities. For the 2001 National Action Plan process, Spain elaborated the Plan with previous consultation with the Autonomous Communities (regions) and the Federation of Municipalities. The Regional Plan for Social Inclusion of Catalonia was then elaborated. (In 2003, the region will ask the municipalities and other actors to collaborate on the second round of the NAPs Inclusion).

In 2002, the City Council of Barcelona developed a Municipal Plan for Social Inclusion. *'It is at the local/urban level where socially excluded people are largely concentrated and it is at a territory level where the situations of social exclusion are generated and can also be combated'*.

The key idea of the Plan is to identify *processes of social inclusion rather than exclusion* and generate mechanisms to observe and improve social inclusion processes. The City takes a multifactor and integrated approach and aims to generate new opportunities under criteria of social equity and territorial balance. This enables disadvantaged areas to be identified and targeted for support.

As in many of the examples which are not specifically about employment integration, Barcelona City Council's social policy is implemented through the areas of action of the Personal Social Services sector: education, social services, culture, public health, sports, social promotion and community action. A key feature evident in the Barcelona approach, one that is reflected in many presentations, is the *role of the Social Services as the promoter of opportunities and the facilitator of access to rights*. One of the recommendations arising from this conference Report is that the role of Social Services could be addressed more explicitly in the next round of NAPs Inclusion reports and in the Joint Inclusion Report at the European level.

As in the other presentations, the speakers pointed to the aim of improved public-public and public-private co-operation including enterprises and NGOs and strengthened participation.

Co-ordination of departments and services is through implementation of programmes for target groups and thematic areas. According to the speakers, horizontal integration of policies and services takes place because the City Council Plan for Social Inclusion is integral and cross-sectoral. There is a broad spectrum of relevant actors with an internal municipal consultation process with heads and directors of services. There is also a public – private Working Group on Poverty, which has consultative status on social affairs. This Working Group has been active in the definition of the objectives of the Plan and its final approval.

This local strategy is based on the analysis of baseline data from the Social Observatory of Barcelona. This includes an Observatory for Social Inclusion, which collects data for example concerning target groups. The Social Indicators System (ISDS) structures the data collection.

Barcelona is an example of a highly elaborated city level action plan, with a strong degree of consultation. The methodology comprised: data collection; interviews; meeting with Working Group on Poverty; a conference; meeting with the Working Group to draft the plan, and then production of a final plan. The resulting local strategy has the following priorities:

1. To promote social and citizenship rights.
2. To create and manage networks to reach a more inclusive city.
3. To promote a participative, social and community way to manage differences in access to social rights.
4. Positive action towards people, groups and neighbourhoods with weak access to and use of social rights.

The methodology for Barcelona's Plan for Social Inclusion demonstrates the iterative and apparently consensual approach that appears to emerge with partnership and consultation arrangements. This may be the source of the improved and more sustainable strategies and policy outcomes, which all speakers are convinced is a result of the partnership approach. The reflections at the end of this section consider whether this is the 'added value' of partnership and participation

Local participation in Barcelona is highly structured. There is public and private co-operation in planning and management of services and projects in the framework of the Local Plan for Social Inclusion. There are Social Participation Councils which include representatives of city organisations, experts, political representatives and administrative personnel who propose, revise and follow up social policies and who recommend the nature of involvement of civil society in design and implementation of policies. Examples of Participation Councils include: The Municipal Social Welfare Council; The Advisory Council for the Elderly; The Women's Council of Barcelona, The Council of One Hundred Young People; The Immigration Council and The Council of Gypsy People. Mr Keyes (above) has commented on the 'degrees of participation' and

Ms Moras (below) has commented on the painstaking and long-term work that is necessary to develop the voice of the least advantaged people. Therefore it would be valuable to exchange experience in more detail concerning how these Councils link to grass-roots groups and how they feed into the Poverty Working Group and what is transferable from each country's cultural context. These issues are taken up in the reflections Part later on in this Report.

Riita Särkelä, EAPN Finland. Rapporteur, Seminar A

The rapporteur reflected on the rich and interesting presentations from Sweden, Germany, Ireland and Spain. She prefaced her conclusions with three general remarks:

1. *The impact of the different country contexts and welfare systems.* However, many common issues were raised from these examples as lessons to be learned for the second round of the NAPs Inclusion and they most certainly showed that more attention should be paid to the local level in the next round.
2. *Plenty of work and experience already exists at the local and regional level.* It is a question of making more explicit the link between the NAPs Inclusion process and these levels in the second round. Ms Särkelä stressed that all of the conference participants can and have responsibility to push and support that to happen.
3. *More awareness and information about the Open Method of Co-ordination (OMC) and specifically the National Action Plans, is essential* to make these links between national and local objectives and processes.

The rapporteur went on to review why local actions are needed and the elements necessary to make them successful, before drawing conclusions on how best to link the local to the national level.

Ms Särkelä gave five reasons why local action plans are needed.

1. The bottom-up perspective is crucial; work needs to be done close to people and their needs.
2. Poverty and social exclusion are multidimensional phenomena - integrated approaches are needed and it can better happen at local level.
3. Participation of all actors is a key element; it can be better guaranteed at local level.
4. There are different local situations and social realities - objectives and measures can be planned on that basis; this gives greater flexibility.
5. More strategic choices can be made – this provides better value for money.

Drawing on the common perspectives of the four presentations, Ms Särkelä then suggested eight important elements for success:

1. *Time* is a key factor; long-term processes and a 'bottom-up' perspective both require time. If we take participation seriously, real participation requires real time - it is a question of building trust.
2. *Knowledge and data* on the local situation/ reality are needed.
3. *Objectives and measures that link different policies* are needed.
4. *Contracts/ agreements that are institutionalised* are needed. These can contain common objectives and clarify the division of labour and resources.
5. *Permanent structures for regular and continuous dialogue and consultation* are needed. It should be recognised that *all actors are important, but not equal* and that the *participation of people living in poverty* is crucial.
6. Local objectives need *continuous evaluation*.

7. *Integration of the process to the political level and to the basic work.* This is what produces concrete results and changes in motivation. If you manage to build/ develop an on-going process, it is not so vulnerable to political changes.
8. *Resources* are critical. Clear funding streams are required and the scope to ‘join up’ funding and ‘join up’ responsibility.

Concerning the specific linking of the local and national, the rapporteur urged three priorities.

1. *The local level should be integrated into preparation of the second round of NAPs Inclusion* and play a role in deciding objectives – this is something all delegates should take action on in their own country.
2. It is important to *link objectives from different levels in the chain.*
3. Co-ordination between different levels is an on-going process; *dialogue should underpin revision of agreements.*

Reflections on Seminar A

Addressing the six questions raised by the seminar chair

The seminar chair raised six questions listed at the beginning of this section of Part 2 and repeated in turn below, the answers to which can assist in drawing lessons for the preparation of future rounds of the NAPs Inclusion.

First, does the NAPs Inclusion reflect the reality of work at local level? In general, the answer is no. Many speakers stressed the limited involvement of the local political level in the first round of the NAPs Inclusion and in many places there was no explicit link between the NAPs Inclusion and local activity. However, the chair’s second question sought examples of local action plans and this seminar presented several. The examples from Offaly and Barcelona are two that show that the European-agreed Objectives of the NAPs Inclusion fed into the construction of local county and city plans. The example from Lower Saxony shows how they influenced a regional plan. However, that example also illustrated the risks of what is perceived to be a ‘top-down’ imposition of the NAPs Inclusion. The German case in general shows how the levels perceive themselves to be different rather than hierarchically organised – and the European NAPs Inclusion process must take this into account.

The third question raised by the chair concerned how the local plans link to the national and regional level – in both development and implementation. All of the examples offered complex mechanisms for both horizontal and vertical ‘connectivity’. Seminar A was intended to focus especially on the vertical linkage. Several of the examples indicated that new mechanisms to link levels had been developed in the context of a more complex economic and social environment and reform of relations between local and central government to achieve better policy outcomes. One example is the Swedish Local Agreement in the framework of the revised Metropolitan policy for the major cities. The context of top-down decisions on reform of local government for greater drive and delivery was clearest in the examples from Sweden (Malmö) and Ireland (Offaly). It was less clear in the federal context of the German example (Lower Saxony) and in the case of Spain (Barcelona), where the autonomous regional level has its own rights and initiative. While the purpose of NAPs Inclusion is to mobilise all actors there must be sufficient flexibility on the means, if the NAPs Inclusion is not to have the unintended consequence of reinforcing the sovereignty of the national level in anti-poverty strategy and policy, regardless of country context.

The fourth question raised by the chair concerned the added value of local action plans. A suite of points came through in all of the seminars: – the local level knows the actors, so there is better

targeting and easier evaluation; the work can build on existing links and networks and the concrete actions make it easier to build participation. All speakers were convinced that this was the route to sustainable policy. The lesson for the NAPs Inclusion is that the NAPs Inclusion will not get out of the filing cabinet without a local dimension.

The fifth issue raised by the chair concerned the effectiveness of the local level in involving local organisations and people experiencing poverty. There certainly were highly elaborated mechanisms, for example in Offaly and Barcelona, for community and voluntary consultation. But as Mr Keyes pointed out, there are many rungs on the ladder from manipulation to citizen power. It is not so clear how the least advantaged people are involved and whether the people in poverty have a right to be listened to that is embedded in any mechanisms for action and follow up as a consequence of consultation. Certainly people at risk of poverty are commonly the targets of action and frequently their opinion is sought as service users, in evaluation of service quality and often in implementation of certain actions. It is not so clear how much involvement they have in policy development or whether there is any longer term feedback mechanism. Most obviously, there is a change in rhetoric and in political acceptance of consultation, but more clearly at the local than at the national level.

The chair's sixth and last question was about how the second round of NAPs Inclusion can be improved in terms of linking the national and local levels. So, the speakers were convinced from their own experience that local partnerships add value to policies to combat poverty and social exclusion, so it is certainly worth taking pains to involve fully the local level at all stages of the NAPs Inclusion. For the local and regional levels to think it worth their while to get involved, these steps will have to be explicit, early and institutionalised. They will have to be resourced and include policy design as well as implementation.

Lessons for the local level

As well as commenting on the chair's six issues for the preparation of the next round of the NAPs Inclusion, it seems worthwhile to draw out some lessons for the local level actors themselves, which have emerged from the Seminar A presentations and the rapporteur's comments. These may perhaps be a basis for further joint work on what constitutes best practice in local partnership arrangements. Two strong themes - legal forms and institutional mechanisms - are discussed below.

1 Agreements governing partner relations – organising clarity in rights and duties

The strongest theme of seminar A (and it comes through in the other seminars), is the use of legal contractual arrangements in organising relationships between the levels. Such legal arrangements seems to have a number of advantages in achieving effective vertical integration. First, since the agreements seem to be entered into voluntarily (at least superficially) they imply consent to a set of rights and duties. Second, they seem to operate also as mechanisms for transparency and accountability. The Swedish example cites as a plus in the Metropolitan Agreements, that the roles and responsibilities of the partners are clearly defined, a point re-emphasised by the rapporteur, who herself has long experience at the local level.

A third point, that the author learned from the Dutch colleagues in the European Commission's initiative, the Poverty 3 programme, is that partnerships have three dimensions, all of which must function well for success. The 'paper' (legal and institutional form) discussed above is just one dimension. The other two that must be there are the 'iron' constraint (finance) and the 'plasticine' (flexibility to grow and change over time). Regarding the 'iron' constraint, the lesson from Seminar A is that Agreements must bring together partners at the different levels, as well as across the stakeholders in the local territory. As the speaker from Rotterdam (Seminar C) pointed

out, 90% of the cash stays at the national level. Finance is the ‘iron’ in the partnership. It is a rigid constraint; it determines how much, concretely, can be attempted, though other factors may determine how much can be achieved. Finance has to get drawn down from the national level. Regarding the ‘plasticine’ dimension, partnerships do and should evolve, but the opportunity to point to what’s on paper is a valuable one; it helps to make clear what and where need revision and who and what level has responsibility. The Agreements provide also a structured process for revising plans in the light of evaluation of their implementation experience.

A further reason for Agreements is to strengthen participation. This comes through more clearly in Seminar B, for example in the Dublin case. It provides at least formal equality for less powerful partners; for the grass-roots community groups, it legitimises their right to be ‘at the table’. Strengthening participation is discussed further in Seminar B.

2 Co-ordinators and drivers - the importance of a dense ‘institutional middle level’

The second theme arising from Seminar A is one also learned in the Poverty 3 programme – the importance of a strong institutional middle level to articulate between the state and disadvantaged (and indeed all) groups and communities.

The lesson from Seminar A is that linking the levels effectively requires specific bodies that co-ordinate and drive strategies, policies and players and their implementation and that allow for the possibility of rolling out good practice to other areas and potentially, mainstreaming in policy and funding. They are the engine of the process, even if people experiencing poverty provide the steering. In their different ways, there are strong examples from Malmö, Offaly and Barcelona. In the specific case of the NAPs Inclusion, Germany shows us the NGOs acting as a driver, but without the resources or remit to fully activate the process. These examples show also the importance of political will in getting a strategy operational on the ground. This is something that the NAPs Inclusion very often lacks at national level and shows that a paper Agreement is by itself insufficient to make an effective strategy.

Seminar B: The experience of collaboration between Local Authorities and NGOs in combating poverty and social exclusion

Chair: John Halloran of the European Social Network

Rapporteur: Robin Hanan of EAPN Ireland

The chair introduced the guidelines for the seminar. The aim is to reflect on the experience of collaboration and partnership and the roles of each in relation to policy development. Issues to be addressed included:

- The experience of collaboration and the challenges and benefits of partnership working.
- The lessons drawn. The differing roles of local authorities and NGOs and the issues to be addressed to improve and build on collaboration.
- Recommendations for involving local authorities and NGOs in the preparation and implementation of NAPs Inclusion. What joint steps can be taken?

The four examples of collaboration presented in Seminar B shed light on the specific and different roles of the various local actors and illustrate several means of identifying the specific needs of vulnerable groups and achieving their rights. The examples demonstrate the weaknesses as well as the strengths of certain actors. They show also how the achievement of access to needed and appropriate services can be got on to the political agenda and political weight can be put behind delivery. The examples raise the question of why normal representative democratic processes did not or could not meet these needs, a point taken up in the reflections at the end of this section.

B1: Antwerp, Belgium

Participation of people in poverty in local politics in Antwerp

Diane Moras, Antwerp Anti-Poverty Network

The origin of the project in 1997 was the launch by the city of a large social fund provided by the Flemish government in order to fight deprivation and improve social life. 20% of this fund was reserved for use by NGOs.

There are five associations organising people who live in poverty in the city. Their aims are to work with the poorest people, and support their organisation and speaking in groups in order to engage in dialogue with the wider society and to propose recommendations to government. The associations had a platform, but were surviving on project funding. In 1997 they got core funding under this project in return for working together and making recommendations to the city and not just to the Flemish government. The aim of the project is to achieve sustainability of policy outcomes. The budget is €450.000 per annum and the Agreement is renewed each year.

The city and the five NGO associations entered an Agreement in which the city financially supports the five organisations in return for the organisation of co-operation between the associations and the local authorities in the task of proposing recommendations to improve the life of local people in poverty. The platform of associations must choose a subject on which to work, gather experience, identify bottlenecks, support a dialogue with partners, services and agencies concerned with the issues, propose recommendations and support a dialogue with policy makers.

The first report was presented in 1999 and led to the foundation of an Anti-Poverty Agency at the municipal level. Its aim is to co-ordinate the city services' responsibilities for the fight against

poverty and to link city services with associations. The Anti-Poverty Agency has the purpose of convincing city services of the necessity to listen, organising meetings between the actors and, crucially *'strengthening signals from the associations'*.

Potential issues include housing, education, employment, social care and assistance, culture and sports, communication between the city and citizens, family support and childcare. Education is an example of a current issue. Bringing the experience of the families into direct contact with those responsible for education and with politicians *'awoke the politicians'*. The speaker stated that the education working group was shocked by the stories of the people in poverty. As a result, a schools project to encourage changes within the schools was supported by the city education department, utilising ESF resources. The associations continue to have a role in the developing plan, providing evaluation and feedback. As a result of the project, there has been a recognition that poverty and exclusion actually exist in schools, a cut in families' school costs, improved communication with parents and an educational programme about poverty that takes place in schools.

The innovative element of this case is the methodology for arriving at proposals to local government. As in the Dublin example presented later in this section, it seems important to move from the personal to the collective voice of disadvantaged people, if they are to get their voice heard. As Ms Moras put it, the associations *'support users through the bureaucratic maze in which their voice is unheard'*. In order to detect the issues that are important, the platform of associations organises the transfer of real life experiences. It is a strongly participatory process and to ensure the fullest participation of the poorest people, there are six working guidelines, which include taking turns to speak and continuing to search for more people to be involved. An important point made by the speaker is that choosing the issues and bringing them forward are just part of the work; achieving results requires follow-up over time. Choosing and working on an issue takes a year. Follow up happens over years. It is *not a get in quick and get out quicker* option.

Ms Moras offered three key lessons about the conditions necessary to organise poor people to engage in political processes. A first key lesson is to start from their experiences. A second is that empowerment takes place during the process and that politicians and public servants have to be engaged all the way along, not only at the end. A third key lesson is that *the tempos of poor people and of politicians differ*. There is a lot of work to be done between associations and poor people *before* real participation can begin. It is a long term process but there need to be visible short term gains because it is only then that an issue can get to 'the political table'. It seems clear that politicians, subject to an electoral cycle, need to see gains that fit that cycle. Other key lessons are to make clear decisions, allow time to give feedback and be prepared to wait for results of the actions.

The speaker identified certain conditions that must be there for effective working – *respect, appropriate language, taking people seriously, no hiding and no alibis and working to overcome past negative experiences*. There must be real engagement of the municipality, real results *and sincerity about limits and about which responsibilities lie elsewhere*.

According to Ms Moras, this case shows that participatory processes provide *'surplus value'* in achieving the goal of social inclusion. Involvement of citizens produces better quality decisions and dialogue *'reduces the distance between politicians and the population'*, thus strengthening representative democracy. Finally, working on measures that work for people living in poverty benefits the whole population – *'services for poor people are poor services'*.

B2: Bologna, Italy

Partnership working through the Prisoners' Information Desk Gisberto Cornia, City of Bologna

Italian prisons are overcrowded and in metropolitan areas in particular, they hold a large number of people who have immigrated to Italy from outside the European Union – around 50% of the prison population. Rehabilitation is restricted by the difficulties in securing work and accommodation.

To bring local government closer to the prison and the prisoners by establishing an information desk inside the prison is seen as a strategy to balance repression and containment with treatment and rehabilitation. It is worth noting that the original proposal for an information service came from a social co-operative for employment integration. The role of the voluntary, community and grassroots in generating ideas is taken up in the comments at the end of the section. The project was established in 1997, co-funded by the region and the municipality. The pilot was judged successful by the region and rolled out to other of the main cities in Emilia-Romagna Region.

The success of the project is built on prior working together. Since 1986 there has been a provincial inter-institutional committee Carcere – città ('Prison-city'). In 1998 there was a reform of the oversight of city prisons and following an agreement between the Ministry of Justice and the Emilia-Romagna Regional Government the committee changed its title and constituent actors. The president is now a representative from the Municipality of Bologna and social services are now represented in the Committee.

The Municipality of Bologna aims to establish early contact with prisoners and to co-operate with the prison administration to optimise resources for initiating social rehabilitation. A precondition for the existence of the Information Desk is a network of local services – family and immigration and social services, health services including the drug addiction service, schools, and trades unions and voluntary associations. The project is based in the Bologna District prison and operates in collaboration with the Consulates of the prisoners' countries of origin.

The aims of the Information Desk are to provide an orientation service on how to access services and to provide a reference point on local services for the service network and not-for-profit agencies, which can use the Desk as a resource. For prisoners, the Desk offers interviews, information and referral services and socio-cultural mediation services, primarily in Arabic and Albanian, but also in four other languages.

Mr Cornia stated that the innovative aspect of the project is that it is a local authority service delivered in a prison by NGOs and integrated with the prison services. However, it is important to note both that this project required the existence of well developed social services and that it was built on the back of earlier experience of co-operation and co-operative structures. The Information Desk project is embedded in a net of partnership structures – this involves the penal committee mentioned above, which plans, promotes and co-finances the project and a social co-operative 'Società Dolce' and 'Solide', an association of socio-cultural mediators. The speaker emphasised that special attention is given to the co-ordination between local, regional and national levels. As well as a local penal committee there is a regional penal committee and there *'are means of co-operation between the actors at any level and between the levels'*.

The Information Desk is embedded also in broader strategies and actions. It is part of the action programme of Bologna's adult social services, which is involved also in post prison care. It is included in the wider social services co-ordination department's Area Plan as a measure targeted

at preventing social exclusion. The project is part also of the overall programme of activities of Bologna's Services for Social Integration, which is targeted at adults in social hardship.

In terms of participation by the non-statutory sector, there is an Advisory local committee, created and chaired by the municipality, which meets once or twice a year and includes NGO representatives. These representatives also take part in working groups that are responsible for implementing policy guidelines issued by the local penal committee. The service itself is operated by the NGO that won the tender and is monitored by the Adult Social Services and co-ordinated by the manager of the penal implementation unit of the Social Services Co-ordination Department.

There is considerable co-operation with NGOs on a wide range of linked projects. These include a street work project for homeless and drug abuse issues, which holds relationship and yoga sessions which have proved very successful and been taken on by the prison administration directly. A social co-operative assists with home finding, providing a reception structure and financial assistance. Job Grant Stages are begun with prisoners and there is a job orientation facility, supported by the provincial authority.

To maintain and develop support for work with prisoners, there are four information seminars each year targeted at different population groups and four analytical seminars on specific issues in sentence serving. Cultural activities in prison and cultural events are supported also by the municipality.

Mr Cornia stated that the process evaluation indicates a better integration of the actors involved. The Information Desk has improved linkage and mutual understanding between local services and prisoners, including housing, employment, social welfare and consulates of countries of origin of prisoners. The impact evaluation has demonstrated an improvement in counselling services in terms of numbers of users and numbers accessing services. One should draw attention also to the preparation involved in launching this project, resulting in widespread consensus which the speaker argued contributed to its success. The preparation involved intensive work with various local government units and working groups and regular training seminars on the activities of the Information Desk and the meaning of mediation.

B3: Dublin, Ireland

St Teresa's Gardens Environment and Employment Project

Philip O'Connor, Dublin Employment Pact

The project presents a model for social inclusion through community participation. Ireland has experienced high rates of growth and increases in wealth in the last years. However, there is severe polarisation in the city. 40% of Dublin's half million population live in eight Designated Disadvantaged Areas, (although one major aspect of disadvantage – unemployment - has fallen from 30% in the 1980s to 4% today). Mr O'Connor described the project area, located in St Teresa's Gardens. It is a high density municipal complex of 'flats' (apartments). There are 1000 residents of whom 33% are under three years old and most households are headed by women. It has the highest levels of social disadvantage in Dublin. In 2000 unemployment was 60% (but has since fallen) and in 1998 welfare dependency reached 87% (but has since fallen); education levels were low and secondary school absenteeism was high. There was a high incidence of anti-social behaviour relating to drugs, theft, vandalism and joyriding. However, there is as well a strong tradition of community organisation and self-help and the Residents' Association has organised the use of local labour market programmes and instigated initiatives to combat heroin abuse and anti-social behaviour.

The Dublin region contains a regional authority, four local authorities, eleven partnerships and ten 'most disadvantaged' urban areas. Dublin City Council is responsible for political administration, physical infrastructure, housing and community development, but as shown in the earlier Irish example from Offaly, health, social welfare and education are organised under separate regional authorities of national government agencies.

Building on existing partnership structures and activities, in 1999 the Dublin Employment Pact launched an innovative programme with EU funding, to support new approaches to combating social exclusion. The Programme included a call for social economy activities involving local authority contracting of services to community self-management organisations.

St Teresa's Gardens was supported to make a proposal by the Dublin Inner City Partnership and the South West Inner City Community Development Association. The proposal involved creating employment on the basis of service contracts with the City Council for delivery of estate management and environmental development. The Project Committee includes local community groups, employment services, police and others. The Project went through long negotiations and started in 2000. As in many of the examples, there is a formal contractual agreement and new structures have been created. In this case there is an Estate Management Agreement and twenty-six people were employed to carry out work and organise employment training. A Community Forum ensures continuing communication and consultation.

The added value of the project is that the creation of new structures and a contractual relationship with the local authority have established a framework for additional activity. Examples include a 'Back to Education' programme, IT and skills training programmes and a Youth at Risk centre which develops facilities and programmes for children and young people. The Social Economy Programme developed an all-weather football pitch which is supervised by local residents; there is a Senior Citizens' outreach programme and a Job Path club with the Local Employment Service. The speaker referred to the 'years of neglect' suffered by this and other estates. The nature of many of these new services raises the question of why they were not there before, given the local demography. This issue is addressed in the reflections at the end of Section B, in a discussion of participatory democracy.

Mr O' Connor stated that the project has successfully improved the physical environment and developed a strong self organisation that has spun off other activity. There has been a large drop in crime and anti-social behaviour, a fall in unemployment, rise in school attendance and considerable decline in heroin abuse. Community development has been integrated into local area development programmes and *a chain of communication and dialogue with city and statutory agencies* has been established.

The programme is evaluated by the Inner City Partnership and the programme activities are embedded in broader programmes. These include the Employment Action Plan, the National Anti-Poverty Strategy, Dublin City Development Plan, Local Partnership Community Development Plan and programmes tackling educational disadvantage and the National Drugs Task Force strategy. The speaker stated that the project has become a model of inner-city regeneration under community control and the estate self-management and contract relationship with the City Council are being rolled out elsewhere. The City Council involvement in the social economy is now widespread.

This example supports the second of the two lessons for local actors drawn from Seminar A - the importance of the 'institutional middle level' in maximising the potential for transferring good practice. The Estate self-management model has been replicated through the medium of social

inclusion strategy at various levels. Dublin City Development Board has a Social Inclusion Committee, which bases its policies on successful models. The City has a Social Inclusion Strategy and the Monitoring Committee is chaired by the Dublin Inner City Partnership. 'Bottom-up' social inclusion is the driving force for the Local Action Plan on Social Inclusion. Specific structures with a focus on combating poverty and social exclusion exist as well at the national level and these are important both as drivers and funders and also in making the case for mainstreaming.

Mr O'Connor listed some factors important to success: the formal equality of the contractual partnership, integration with mainstream social programmes and Local Action Plans based on community consultation and ratification. But, Mr O'Connor stated that the key lesson of this project is that *'working with organised communities is the **only** vehicle for successful regeneration'*. However, two concerns about the conditions necessary to achieve organised communities are raised by this example and are addressed in the reflections at the end of this section. The first arises from short-term (in this case two year) funding and the second arises from the impact of high population turnover (in this case it was low) such as described by the speakers from Lewisham in Seminar C.

B4: Stockholm, Sweden

Tackling homelessness at the local level in the City of Stockholm – How we set up the Roof over your Head Guarantee Stig Hanno, City of Stockholm

Stockholm has 800,000 residents and 1.7m in the wider region. The City has a decentralised structure with eighteen District Councils each having its own administration. The Districts are responsible for schooling, living cost allowances, social and family care, care of people with disabilities, and care of people addicted to drugs and people who are homeless. There are approximately 1,500 homeless people in the city.

The District is responsible for homelessness if the person previously lived there when not homeless and the Social Services Administration and its special unit are responsible otherwise. The Emergency Social Services Office is the last safety net for a person in need of shelter. It is available until midnight. Four NGOs and one private company offer temporary shelter. The County Council and its hospitals and doctors are responsible for medical and dental care. In 1998, in total twenty-six organisations were involved in services for homeless people.

In December 1998, a new political administration took over the city. The Social Services Administration was commissioned by the Stockholm City Council to appoint a co-ordinator for work with homeless people, to propose a policy for a 'roof over your head guarantee' and to increase and develop different kinds of living arrangements.

Mr Hanno was appointed as co-ordinator, with political backing for the policy and new resources - *'the deputy mayor made it crystal clear that this was a first priority project and there was money available'*. There were two months of consultation and *'we involved and listened to all relevant actors from the beginning of the process'*.

In June 1999 a proposal was adopted by the City Council. Homeless people have a right to a bed if they contact any of the relevant agencies before midnight on any day. However, *'homeless people who are very threatening or violent are not covered by the guarantee (very few)'*. The guarantee has been fulfilled most of the time and always for women. The importance of the guarantee has been:

- In driving policy and resources - more beds and more second stage housing has been provided. This includes housing for ‘triple diagnoses’ people –i.e., those with problems of substance abuse, mental illness, homelessness and exclusion.
- In having a measurable policy – followed up on a daily basis – the partners know how many beds are needed and how much second stage housing.
- In having a bottom up perspective, the partners know what kind of care and support individuals need.
- In having evaluation, the partners know what kind of second stage housing to develop. An NGO offers housing to the people with ‘triple diagnosis’ but other agencies and departments offer care in their areas of expertise and responsibility.

As for many of the cases in this seminar, key lessons are to involve all actors from the beginning and to establish horizontal networks and vertical dialogue (yet these lessons are still not applied to the NAPs Inclusion process in many countries). It is important also to formulate a measurable objective and a ‘crystal clear’ focus on what is best for the target group. *The policy worked because it focused on the needs of homeless people, not on the organisations.* Frequent evaluation both of the working process and the results in relation to the objectives allows for better informed policy development. The speaker stressed that it is important also to respect differences in responsibilities, policies and methods and use them to add value. Flexibility is important to grasp all the knowledge opportunities; as the speaker said, *‘listen and learn’* and *‘keep an open mind’*. Finally, Mr Hanno noted the *importance of additional funding in making the policy real ‘on the ground’ and building confidence in the policy.* NGOs delivering the guarantee received a substantial funding increase.

An important point about this example is that this is not just about emergency accommodation. The guarantee is seen as the first step, not the solution. Mr Hanno stressed that homeless people felt they had a stronger right after the guarantee was introduced and very few ‘chose to stay outside’. The Council checks the streets and people are known by name. With the new guarantee people who are homeless have become more active in demanding a bed, so exercising their rights and achieving a service reaction tailored to their needs. The guarantee is the first step to getting people a variety of assistance from health care to second stage housing. Therefore the guarantee operates to increase contact with a ‘hard to reach’ group and to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery. The reflections at the end of this section take up the idea of a rights-based approach to organising the voice of the least advantaged groups and linking it to service delivery.

Robin Hanan, EAPN Ireland, Rapporteur, Seminar B

The rapporteur reflected on what we need to take account of for projects to be successful. He emphasised that a successful project is one with serious participation by the target groups. Drawing on the four examples from Belgium, Italy, Ireland and Sweden, Mr Hanan identified some common factors, first, in project success and second, in achieving participation by people experiencing poverty and social exclusion.

Seminar B raised many of the same points for project success as did seminar A. Factors that must be taken into account include:

- *Culture of participation* –language, types of meetings, clarity about resources.
- *Realistic time-scales* – aspects include the tempo of the poor; quick decisions; time for feedback
- *Respect and equality.* This means involving all actors. One form of equality is represented by contract arrangements.
- *Bottom up process.* Aspects to consider include - accountability, needs identification, objectives.

- *Clarity of objectives.* This point includes clarity of planning process and clarity about what's possible and about limitations and responsibilities.
- *Realistic and assured resources.*
- *Open and freely available information* in suitable forms.
- *Organised local communities.*
- *Integration of community development into mainstream services.*

Mr Hanan identified five points concerning successful participation of people in poverty and exclusion and collaboration of actors. Given that Mr Hanan stressed that participation of people in poverty is essential to sustainable successful policy, some of these factors listed below overlap with the general factors listed above. The factors are:

1. *A bottom up approach* – this must include identifying needs, managing responses and operating programmes. *Needs should be identified by disadvantaged people themselves and these should drive local authorities and NGOs.* Examples of different ways in which needs were identified came from: Bologna, where the views of ex-prisoners were crucial; Dublin – the organised community voice was crucial; Antwerp – which was building a working participatory democracy and Stockholm, which started with the rights of the homeless people.
2. *Respect for different cultures of participation.* We must all be aware of language, literacy and meeting types. Consultation and empowerment are processes, and therefore take time. But, to keep all actors engaged, there must be visible, tangible, short-term gains for all and time for feedback. *Permanent processes are preferred to short term projects.*
3. There must be *clarity of roles* amongst local authorities, NGOs and vulnerable groups and communities. There must be respect for different competencies and for rules concerning financial control and financial accountability.
4. Equality and respect between partners. *People must define and lead, but it is recognised that power is 'at the top'.* However, it is important to involve all actors from the beginning, to have continuous evaluation and clear contractual relationships. There needs to be sufficient resources for a sustainable relationship. Information is empowering. Finally, people must be trained to take on management and leadership functions.
5. *The process can be as important as the resulting actions.*
6. *Services for poor and excluded people must be integrated into mainstream services.*

Mr Hanan noted finally, that *the visibility of NAPs Inclusion matters to engagement of the various actors* and that it has low (but rising) visibility in many countries.

Reflections on Seminar B

Addressing the three issues raised by the Seminar chair

The seminar chair raised three issues, listed at the beginning of this section and repeated in turn below. In general, the issues concern collaboration between the actors, the role of the different actors and the involvement of the local level in the next round of NAPs Inclusion. The role of the different actors is addressed more thoroughly in the review of Seminar C, below. Seminar A (above) focused more on the vertical links between the levels, so the reflections here about

Seminar B focus more on horizontal linkages and on the added value of participation of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion.

A positive outcome evident from these four examples is that the specific goal of combating poverty and exclusion is emerging from the umbrella of regeneration and wealth creation and becoming an objective in its own right. One lesson we all learned as much as twenty years ago is that a 'rising tide' of economic development does not 'lift all boats'. The NAPs Inclusion can act as a driver for this change of focus.

Further, both seminars A and B indicated the importance of the context of local government reform, often as a consequence of increasing failure to meet the needs of a more diverse and more divided constituency following the increased unemployment and fast pace of change from the 1980s onwards. The local level appears to have been leading the way in what might be called moves to '*multi-level governance*', including, in some cases, some elements of co-decision. This has occurred to meet both an increasingly complex economic and social environment and the consequences of a national agenda for greater plurality in service provision, which has sometimes resulted in fragmentation of response to needs. The NAPs Inclusion Objective 4 is in tune with this agenda and may help to drive it, but at present has no targets and no timetable that could make it a political priority.

The first of the three issues raised by the chair concerned the experience of collaboration and the challenges and benefits of partnership working, the second concerned the lessons drawn for improving collaboration and building on it. These are discussed below.

Horizontal structures for collaboration – what makes them work?

Seminar B reinforced some key lessons drawn in reflections on Seminar A. These concern the existence and development of linking structures and agencies that can operate as policy drivers, progress chasers and 'connectors', helping to guarantee effective policy impact.

In addition there is strong evidence that political will is crucial to getting a project off the ground and sustaining its impact – explicitly so in the example of Stockholm, but equally evident in the other three cases. There is an important lesson here for the NAPs Inclusion – without political will and champions, the NAPs Inclusion will never be realised on the ground. This raises the question of who can be its champions? Given the experience of local authorities and NGOs, together, if they are fully engaged with the NAPs Inclusion, they can play this role, championing a 'bottom up' NAPs Inclusion. It may be that the European Commission will have to back their participation more strongly than heretofore.

Where there is political will, these examples demonstrate the willingness to commit new resources and to strengthen the 'institutional middle level', enhancing co-ordination, and introducing contract relations for policy delivery and creating new agencies with an explicit focus on combating poverty and exclusion.

These new agencies may have been lobbied for by the voluntary and community sectors. For example, the Anti-Poverty Agency in Antwerp was a spin-off from committing to participatory democracy in the Antwerp project. Thus participation is not only effective at identifying need and getting it on the political agenda but in finding solutions and increasing the effectiveness of delivery. The Anti-Poverty Agency has an explicit function of magnifying the 'signals' from the least advantaged through to the policy makers. It is notable, also that the speakers from Dublin and Bologna both referred to '*chains*' – *of agencies, of dialogue and communication*. The speaker from

Rotterdam, in Seminar C (below), referred to *chains of services*. Just like dendrites in the neurological system, there must be a sequence of structures that transmit signals across gaps.

There must be also something worth transmitting. In response to questions from the delegates, Ms Moras, the speaker from the Antwerp project, argued that *'showing what works'* is the most effective way to get through the levels to the national level. An important lesson from Seminar B is that good ideas are not the prerogative of the national level only, or of the public sector. The Antwerp and Bologna project examples originated with NGO associations. . This reinforces the importance of implementing Objective 4 of the NAPs Inclusion and involving all actors.

An important lesson illustrated positively by the Dublin and Bologna projects is that local initiatives need to be embedded in broader structures and strategies. This is the way to successful linking of the levels and to maximising the opportunities for transferring the lessons and mainstreaming policies.

Further, where novel structures are to be introduced or participatory processes are driving the identification of need, it is evident from these examples that two things are important. First, building on existing co-operative arrangements makes success easier to achieve than in new terrain (Bologna and Dublin). Second, intensive work with all actors before the project is launched helps gain the consent essential for its successful operation (Stockholm, Bologna, and Dublin). These lessons reinforce the rapporteurs' conclusion that time is a key resource and it is unfortunate to find still so much short term funding. It is unlikely that with only two years of funding, the Dublin project could be successful were there not strong existing community groups. Further, without a resourced follow-on strategy, the Newcastle project described in Seminar C below indicated that confounded expectations may leave future initiatives more difficult to launch and gains made can be dissipated. The lesson for the NAPs Inclusion is that although it has a ten year horizon, some of that time has been squandered already.

The added value of participation by people experiencing poverty and exclusion

Commitment to participation is widespread and there are elaborate examples from Antwerp in Seminar B, from Ireland in seminars A and B and from Spain in Seminar A.. However as Mr Keyes from Offaly cautioned, there are degrees of participation and there are differing interpretations of who should be organised and how they should be organised. Establishing and exchanging best practice specifically on models of participation is something on which EUROCITIES and EAPN could collaborate further.

Seminar B shows why better information and practice on participation would be beneficial to the NAPs Inclusion process and to the wider policy process. Politicians in a number of countries have often resisted participatory structures as being insufficiently democratic in the representative sense and even potentially undermining of representative democracy. What seminar B shows first, is that some people with great needs cannot vote – for example prisoners and recent migrants (Bologna). Others have great difficulty in voting - for example people without a home (Stockholm). Other poor and excluded groups and communities may have learned it *'changes nothing'*. All of the examples in all of the seminars refer to the increase in poverty and exclusion alongside increases in wealth in European cities. Representative democracy seems, in the Dublin example, as elsewhere, to have delivered *'years of neglect'* for many communities in poverty – and many would argue also – for vulnerable groups such as those with learning disabilities and mental health problems. The Antwerp example illustrated the *'shock'* and *'awakening'* of politicians confronted by the direct experience of people in poverty. Seminar B examples indicate that

participatory structures have led to better met needs of vulnerable groups and communities. A voice is necessary as well as a vote.

This voice has required support to be heard and to be in a form that can be listened to by the public powers. However, Ms Moras pointed out that getting people experiencing poverty and exclusion involved at the stage of the political priorities and policy design, is a lot more time-consuming and difficult than surveying their opinions on whether the streets are cleaner or the playground works. Participation of the poorest seems to consist of such a role in evaluation, or sometimes in implementation, not so often in policy development. A lesson for the NAPs Inclusion is that realisation of a sustainable anti-poverty strategy will require that the mobilisation of all actors is properly resourced. Further, it is notable that many of the model project examples were at least partially supported by European funds.

A key lesson from Seminar B is that there are at least two ways to get the needs of vulnerable groups and communities closer to the top of the political agenda. The first way is to *provide people a right and a means of enforcing it* – and they will use it – as the Stockholm case shows. Their voice is directly heard as a demand for service provision that must be met.

A second way (and one not mutually exclusive with the first) is through *organisation of the voice* – so that it can be clearly heard through what Ms Moras, the Antwerp speaker called *‘the bureaucratic maze’* and which ‘shocks’ the politicians into wakefulness. Self-organisation of the grass-roots makes the voice distinct. Mr Cornia pointed out that the Bologna project idea was initiated by an association of ex-prisoners. Mr O’Connor, the Dublin speaker, argued, that the *organised voice* of the community is the key to sustainable planning processes and successful concrete change.

These seminar examples demonstrate also that effective dialogue does not just ‘happen’. First, you do not get dialogue without a framework in which it takes place and this takes an investment in time and money. This lesson should be transferred to the national level of the NAPs Inclusion, where few countries have formal structures and a few have ad hoc consultations and informal dialogue, which does not recognise a right to be heard. Second, sometimes, speakers referred to disadvantaged people as *‘hard to reach?’* Do we mean actually *‘hard to hear?’* Or, perhaps, *‘Hard to listen to?’* In some Seminar C examples in the next section, policy consultation was limited or absent, because it was thought to be difficult to get participation of the target groups. However, a commitment to participation means it is for the partnership to find ways in which consultation can take place – there are good examples around of how to consult with children, with people who have a mental disability, with people for whom written language is not most suitable.

Two issues for successful community capacity building are raised by these examples. The first arises from the two year funding of the Dublin example – therefore the project needed to build on existing community associations – what about areas without them? Short-term project funding will not deliver results where there is no constituency to work with – frequently the case where there has been little prior investment in community capacity building. The second issue concerns sustainability in areas of high population turnover such as described by the speakers from Lewisham in Seminar C (below). In the case of the Seminar B example from St Theresa’s Gardens in Dublin, the population was relatively stable, with inter-generation families remaining in the complex. There are more severe problems for capacity building in areas with high turnover – where structures have to be built that are resilient beyond the involvement of certain personalities or specific groups – as part of a wider process of stabilisation.

Finally, the Antwerp speaker indicated the necessity to devote resources to long term follow up and feedback to sustain gains made. Getting on to the political agenda is just the first step.

The overarching lessons of Seminar B for the NAPs Inclusion process concern politics – first, the importance of political will in getting things done. The role of politicians – of representative democracy - cannot be underestimated. Second, the arguments for supporting the revitalisation of local processes through participatory democracy must be made plainly and strongly at all levels – including the local as well as national levels. Some local as well as national authorities see participatory democracy as a threat to representative democracy, but it can be a support to it. Participatory democracy is ethical – it delivers benefits in terms of human dignity and inclusion. It is effective - it provides a means of identifying policy priorities and an impetus to develop agencies and structures that improve policy development and delivery. Ms Moras advised Seminar participants who seek change to *'start from direct experience; the politicians bear it better'*. It is efficient - participatory democracy supports representative democracy: *'it cuts the distance between politicians and population'*.

Seminar C: Sharing experience on local level actions to combat poverty and social exclusion

Chair: Councillor Peter Moore, Member of the Committee of the Regions

Rapporteur: Dr Ali Madanipour, University of Newcastle, UK

The chair introduced the guidelines for the seminar. The aims are, to consider the key elements in examples of local good practice to combat poverty and social exclusion and to identify the transferable lessons and how to feed them into the process of building local strategies for social inclusion. Issues to consider are:

- How do local actions involve multiple agencies and actors? To what extent are the relevant range of local actors involved in design and implementation of local policies and initiatives? How effective is the local partnership?
- How effective are the local actions at involving target groups in design, implementation and evaluation? What should be done to improve the participation of the different groups?
- Are the local actions linked to a wider local strategy to combat poverty and social exclusion? To what extent is there inter-departmental co-operation? What needs to be done to develop a more strategic approach?
- What key recommendations can be made to build a more co-ordinated and integrated local approach to social exclusion?

The focus of the seven projects presented in this section is mainly on work – rather than only on ‘employment’. They demonstrate a wide range of ways in which disadvantaged people can be assisted to access work and the independence and fulfilment that it can bring. They have required building partnerships, lateral thinking about solutions and flexibility about ‘the rules’.

They demonstrate also that not every potential partner nor every structure for co-operation has a useful role – it depends on the historic experience of co-operation and the aims, objectives and target group of each project.

Finally, the projects show that, especially for employment-oriented projects, there is more work to be done in embedding a culture of participation at every stage of projects from conception to evaluation.

These points and others are developed further in the reflections at the end of this section.

C1: Aarhus, Denmark

Bazar Vest: the Oriental Market Place – access to employment for excluded groups

Jesper Eskelund, City of Aarhus

The Oriental Market, Aarhus, Denmark has been developed as a private initiative with public support. It is economically successful, with 50 enterprises housed in the formerly disused building and has been socially successful in integrating different groups.

10.2% of the population of Aarhus are of minority ethnic origin, many of whom live in the 1960s/70s estates in western Aarhus. In January 2000, 50% of the population of west Aarhus were of minority ethnic origin. The media and public debate refers to a ghettoisation of the population and a heavy dependency on welfare benefits. The municipality of Aarhus has set the goal of enhancing possibilities for greater independence and self support for residents.

The shopping centre Bazar Vest is located in a renovated factory behind some social housing estates in west Aarhus which are now the Danish URBAN II area. The goal of the Bazar initiative is to generate jobs and mobility in the population. The idea came from Italy and North Africa as a means of supporting socially threatened citizens. After initial support the aim is for businesses to become independent and self-supporting and to manage the Bazar as a co-operative venture. The shopkeepers are mainly men of Middle Eastern origin.

A theme of many of Seminar C's presentations is the role of the business sector in projects to promote inclusion. In this case a re-development entrepreneur leases the building and Bazar stalls. The municipality rents space and provides training and support for stall-holders.

Positive outcomes of the project include not only employment but family and community integration. Between sixty and eighty people have moved off benefits into self-support and a few have moved on from the Bazar to establish independent businesses. There is evidence of greater inter-generational integration through family participation in the Bazar business and of improved inter-community relations as the Bazar is viewed as a positive development.

The project is an example of open co-ordination in terms of the partnership between the private sector, local authorities, education institutes and the social housing organisation responsible for the estates. The innovative element of the project is that it builds on the origin country culture to help support the better integration of people in their country of destination.

C2: Newcastle, England

HUBS – Help Us Be Successful: partnership working in a community controlled ICT (information and communication technology) project

Leon Maurice, HUBS project manager and Michael Crilly, City of Newcastle

HUBS is a community based publishing project located in the west end of Newcastle. It is addressing exclusion from ICT. It combines information technology training, creative writing and personal support to generate a context driven web-site expressing the interests, views and experience of community representatives and people at risk of exclusion. It takes equipment and training to people and has been successful in encouraging voice and self-expression. The main funding is private with public collaboration.

The project has learned from a Bristol based project working with homeless people, but moved on to the City of Newcastle, to work with a broader remit and a more diverse range of vulnerable groups.

The project utilised existing well-established community networks and 'community champions' who are active community leaders but who needed ICT training. The project also targeted groups outside these networks, for example people with a disability often confined to their homes, newcomers such as asylum seekers and refugees and young people suffering multiple deprivation. The broadening of the target groups was made possible by private sector financial support, which aimed to be complementary to existing services and initiatives.

Like all of the examples presented at the seminar, the project is a multi-agency partnership. The partners include the Northern Rock Foundation (a charitable offshoot of a mutual society for housing finance and savings), Newcastle City Council, Newnet and Keepdate publishing. Reinforcing one of the conclusions of Seminar B, there has been strong local political support for the project.

The project aimed to pass control of the community web-site to community organisations. Second stage aims were to train in creative writing, digital photography and video, all those who showed interest in the technology. There were linked learning opportunities in community radio production and broadcasting.

Mr Maurice and Mr Crilly stated that the first innovative aspect of the case is the majority support from a private organisation, not only financial but conceptual and technical. That the project officer introduced himself as a private sector individual circumvented many of the problems of trust that have arisen between public sector organisations and community groups and which are commented on in many other examples presented at the conference. The private funding source also meant there were no imposed geographical or social boundaries on where funds could be spent, which would have been the case with many public sector funding bodies.

The second innovative aspect was the mentoring role that developed and the flexibility in training delivery, bringing it to people. The speakers believe that the most surprising thing about the impact of the project was that it was not so much the ICT training itself that generated positive feedback but the empowering of people in self expression and self worth. The method of one-to-one training and mentoring and bringing the training to 'wherever the people were at', was very positively received.

There were negative aspects of the project; the first of these was the lack of a clear exit strategy. The project had twelve months of funding with optional six months' regular renewal, dependent on the level of success. The short-term nature of the project and the lack of follow-on opportunities undermined the positive work of the project. It injured the community's raised expectations and created frustration, despite success.

The speakers felt that a second negative aspect was the heavy weight of management board relative to the size of the project. This resulted in unrealistic expectations about output and continued detailed involvement by the Board.

A third issue concerned the one to one support, which was time intensive and therefore limited the number of individuals who could be supported, although those who were supported gained greatly in self-development. The speakers presented the negative aspect of the support as not changing the dependency culture: *'ultimately, the dependency of many individuals involved in the project on the time and support of the project officer began to parallel an underlying dependency culture within excluded communities in Newcastle'*.

It is notable that this project had just one member of staff, which may have magnified this risk. Most NGO led projects would include resources for self-organisation of grass-roots groups, for community and group development and for staff mentoring to prevent 'burn-out'. It is not clear whether this project's funding included resources of this sort and this may be a weakness of funding from private sources: in the focus on outputs the importance of process to them is not well recognised.

C3: Trikala, Greece

The Trikala flower-bouquet centre: training for people with special needs Sotirios Paianas, Local Development Agency of Trikala

Trikala in Thessaly region has a population of about 80,000. It is a rather isolated mountainous area with a weak transport infrastructure, mainly dependent on agriculture, forestry and tourism.

There is a shortage of relevant support structures for people with special needs and a high rate of unemployment.

The flower–bouquet centre is an establishment of the Municipal Enterprises for Social Development. One element of the project is that people with special needs have been successful in establishing and running an enterprise.

The specialised centre for people with special needs (The Employment Support Office of People with Special Needs i.e. E.K.A.M.E.A.T) focuses on people with mobility problems and those with a mental disability. It was founded by the Prefecture In 1997. It has the goals of facilitating access to work and supporting social integration. It is financed partly by European funds (HORIZON) and by two organisations, DEKA and ANENT.

Since 1998, 110 people have taken part in organised activities and more have visited E.K.O.M.E.A.T. Of the 42 people with mobility problems who engaged with the organisation, about 25% have taken up formal training and 25% more have gained employment. One person has started a business. The remainder have taken an active part in social integration activities, including sporting and arts activities, research on access to buildings and presentation of a television programme aimed at combating stereotyping. Adults with speech and hearing disability and people with a chronic illness were also offered training in computer use and information and professional and technical help to alleviate their disability. Of the 25 people with a mental disability, about a third were trained in floriculture, most of whom got jobs in DEKA (the Municipal Enterprise of Social Development) and the remainder took part in a range of craft and other activities.

One innovative aspect of this case is the close collaboration with the Chamber of employers, which led to the development of the Employment Support Office (E.KO.M.E.A.T) which works closely with the business Chamber of Trikala to increase the job prospects of people with special needs. These activities include meetings, information to employers and potential employees, a workshop, letters of support and media work. They also include specific support for individuals with special needs including CV development and advice and support during interviews. During the first three weeks of work, in collaboration with social workers, E.K.O.M.E.A.T offers support in adaptation to the work environment.

A second innovative element is the fortnightly local television programme ‘All the Same, All Different’ which is planned and presented by people with a disability. This is a unique activity in Greece.

C4: Rotterdam, the Netherlands

The participation of excluded groups in local actions

Harrie van Onna, City of Rotterdam

The Rotterdam project ‘Unused Qualities’ concerns self-identified, socially useful paid work for those without a chance in the regular job market. It makes innovative and flexible use of available resources, and has acted as a successful model, now adopted at the national level.

Rotterdam is a port city with a population of 600,000. 45% of the population has at least one parent born outside the Netherlands. The port’s openness to the world economy generates huge ups and downs in unemployment.

The city has a history of regeneration and training and job creation programmes from 1980 onwards. The municipality also provided initiatives concerned with indebtedness and basic social needs provision, e.g. furniture. Since 1998, twelve projects dealt, relatively successfully, with benefit incomes, housing, employment, health, education, equality and diversity and participation.

Combating poverty is primarily a municipal responsibility of the Department of Social Affairs and Employment. The city has 25 years of experience of social inclusion policies. The regional level of government is responsible for transport and spatial planning and environment and the national level is responsible for levels of benefits, taxes and contributions and rents. 90% of tax take is organised at the national level. However, local and central government work together in 'co-government' and the local level has a degree of autonomy in policy development and implementation. The municipal degree of competence in dealing with unemployment and poverty is greater than in most European Union countries. The municipality has control over a large part of the social assistance budget.

Political changes, after 50 years of Labour dominated administration, have made significant changes to the social inclusion activities. Mr van Onna referred to a new 'integrated chain of services' which has been developed and funded by the municipality, delivered mainly by commercial firms. The first stage of support is through the Centres for Work and Income, which are concerned with job finding and reintegration programmes or further education and training. If this fails, the Department of Social Affairs intervenes, preparing individual integration plans, which may result in employment on the open market or in the subsidised sector through the new municipal department Werkstad. It may result also in 'social activation', a 'revolutionary programme' in which people are asked to engage in a socially useful activity and which has so far been used by 10,000 people.

'Unused Qualities' is the name of the project. Mr van Onna argued that this identified its reversal of the stereotypical view that long term unemployed people are 'bundles of shortages'. It arose in the context of research showing that 50% of the Rotterdam unemployed would be unable to qualify for the regular labour market in less than two years, if supported by the existing range of work experience and training and job-creation programmes. 'The municipality recognised that despite "all normal efforts", many of those who followed "the national highway" to work, did not make it to the employment destination'. The municipality decided on experimental intervention. They brought together a range of private organisations concerned with social work, social projects, urban reconstruction and a national institute for social intervention. As highlighted in Seminar B, intensive preparation work is a key to success. In this case, eighteen months of discussion followed and resulted in an informal agreement between public and private not-for-profit organisations to start a joint initiative in social activation. The speaker suggested that the little involvement of business was due to the characteristics of the clients and goals of the project.

The Department had its concerns – about the large costs, about the potential 'social dumping' of the unemployed, about the legal status of the project and its ownership. However, it decided to go ahead with a four-year project funded with €500,000 funding in the first year.

The project, like all Dutch projects has to be politically revalidated every four years when a new municipal council takes office. Partner relations are governed by contracts, funding is from the central government. The Central Bureau articulates relations between the horizontal and vertical levels. The project is continuously monitored and 'research has become the 'de facto think-tank' of the project'.

The speaker listed the key characteristics of the initiative:

- Start from who the client is and what he or she wants, not what official bureaucratic box they fit.
- Develop an action plan with the client which aims to get him or her to be of use, as judged by the direct social environment.
- Private professional workers are the direct contacts with clients; the municipality keeps its distance.
- Part of the public competence is transferred to the private workers. Relations between clients, social workers and the Departments are governed by contracts.

The project was placed under the management of the SBAW (the organisation for 'other work') and clients initially came from their files. Given SBAW expertise, most early placements were in existing voluntary initiatives. The project logo is 'OK' (Onbenutte Kwaliteiten' = Unused Qualities) and there are now OK 'banks' of voluntary vacancies in every neighbourhood, co-ordinated by a city level Central Bureau. At each bank are social workers who counsel and direct clients; to places and activities they choose. Around the banks, networks of voluntary agencies and educational organisations have developed.

The national government has provided a legal basis for the activity. For eighteen months, the municipal Social Affairs Department releases participants from the responsibility to seek a 'regular job'; but pays benefits and expenses and additional costs of training. After this time, the municipality decides whether the client transfers to the regular employment system, or stays within the OK sphere.

Mr van Onna pointed out that the impact on the regular labour market has been small, since *'most clients do not have the capacity to participate in the dynamic new labour market'*. As in the Aarhus, Newcastle and Trikala projects, the biggest impact has been in self respect and social and family integration. Neighbourhoods approve of the increased level of voluntary activity and there appear to be increased levels of social cohesion.

Participation by individuals takes place at the level of implementation and the perspective of the participant is a key feature of the regular evaluation. Policy development, implementation and evaluation are discussed in client advisory councils at the neighbourhood level. There is also a central client council and a council of institutions at the central city level under the presidency of the director of social affairs.

An innovative feature of the project is that the participants stay clients of the social services with all the rights to social support that entails. The project's job is to prevent the long-term unemployed from 'drifting away'.

The project has been running for eight years. Original tensions between the partners have *'faded'*, *'although budgetary struggles continue ritually on a yearly basis'*. One important point made by the speaker is that due to the changing political environment the future is uncertain for this and similar projects. The issues of political support and political change were raised also by the participants in Seminar B. The speakers' opinions varied. While the Antwerp project speaker felt that *'you could never be sure'* about the political climate, the speaker from the Stockholm project thought that very clear focus and publicity (and results) meant it was politically impossible to stop a project.

C5: Glasgow, Scotland

A local modern apprenticeship and lifelong learning programme

John Kane, City of Glasgow

Modern Apprenticeship, Glasgow, has a focus on schools and on integrating vocational training into mainstream secondary education. It addresses skill shortages in the construction industry and is working with private companies for training and employment.

Glasgow is the largest city in Scotland, with a population of 609,000. It has suffered continuous decline in its manufacturing sector and is the poorest city in Scotland, with relatively high rates of unemployment, poor health, low educational attainment and low quality social housing. Social exclusion is seen as the city's biggest problem and tackling it is one of the five key objectives of the City Council.

The City Council leads Glasgow Alliance, a consortium of major agencies concerned with regeneration. The Alliance engages with other agencies including the police and the voluntary sector as well as relating to the vertical level of Scottish government. The Alliance manages the Social Inclusion Partnerships (SIPs) which deal with concentrated areas of disadvantage. National voluntary organisations are engaged through these partnerships. The SIPs are evaluated in a framework containing thirty core indicators.

In 2000, the City Council Building Services Department reacted to a shortage of construction labour by launching a modern apprenticeship scheme targeted at children in their third year of secondary school (who are allowed to undertake part-time vocational education). The project has a range of funding partners including the Scottish Executive and Scottish Enterprise and delivery partners including colleges and local authority departments. Participation by the school pupils does not take place at the design stage, but there are opportunities for feedback on the training.

The two-year part-time vocational training takes place out of school in a Training Centre. It is aimed at developing transferable work readiness skills as well as specific construction industry skills. It also demonstrates trainees' commitment as some of the training takes place in summer schools and evenings. At sixteen years of age, UK children can choose to end their schooling. Those who choose to leave following this scheme have part of the accredited training for work in the construction trades. The training has been carried out at no cost to a future employer but gives the young people from disadvantaged areas a 'head start' when seeking employment. The training is also available to adults. It is partly funded by the European Social Fund, offering opportunities to disadvantaged groups including women and people of minority ethnic origin. It offers places also to people who are long term unemployed, people who have been made redundant and young people who have been cared for by the local authorities. It is planned to offer the programme also to prisoners.

The programme offered 256 places in its first year of operation. There is a low drop-out from the training (14%) and public opinion is positive. It is considered so successful that the City Council has established a Council-wide Corporate Vocational Training Group, which has extended the options available in its second year to 720 places in a wider variety of trades and professions including hospitality, administration, horticulture, leisure management and health and fitness.

The innovative aspect of the project is its integration of vocational training into the mainstream school curriculum. Further, this has led to redesign of construction trade training so that it can be taken on in 'small bites of learning'. This model is to be extended to other trades. All the schools in Glasgow are targeted, but 80% of trainees live in SIPs areas. A sheltered workshop for people

with special needs is being developed so that people are prepared for the mainstream labour market. The products are provided to asylum seekers.

C6: Lewisham, London, England

The experience of setting up a Local Strategic Partnership

Paul Hatfield, London Borough of Lewisham and Sarah Thurman, Hyde Plus Project Development Worker

The Lewisham Strategic Partnership is a single forum that brings together all local agencies to plan and deliver services, with a combined budget of €2bn. The forum is supplemented by four Neighbourhood Management projects, which bring together agencies and local people to deliver and monitor services.

Deptford is situated in the north of Lewisham. One third of the population is under nineteen years old and there are large communities of Black Caribbean and Black African origin resident there and a number of new smaller refugee communities. Deptford is one of the 10% most deprived areas in the UK. 2/3 of adults of working age are dependent on benefits, health is poor, educational achievement is low, housing is poor and there is relatively high crime and anti-social behaviour. A significant proportion of the population is transient, moving on to more prosperous outer London suburbs when they can afford it. However there have been recent rises in property prices and gentrification, which have not improved opportunities for many local people.

The Deptford Neighbourhood Management Centre is pioneering new ways of delivering local services, particularly through improving co-ordination between agencies and making public services more responsive to specific and complex needs of local residents. The project is part of Lewisham's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, which recognises that quality of life also depends on changes in public service delivery.

The project has established a Neighbourhood Panel of representatives of the public services, local residents and community and voluntary sector representatives. There are mechanisms in place for detailed consultation with local residents and for bending mainstream funding to improve targeting of resources to local priorities. The Neighbourhood Panel steers the project and defines the roles and responsibilities of the partners.

The project has undertaken baseline analysis, including a door to door survey, to establish local priorities. These concerned the local environment, facilities for young people and housing repairs. Projects have been established in all of these areas, following the output of working groups of the people concerned.

Rebuilding trust in the public authorities has been a theme of a number of presentations. The speakers stated that the project has improved trust between local communities and public services, by demonstrating that improvements can be made in response to resident priorities. Just as the speaker from Dublin said, this has had the positive spin off, of increased community activity and closer working relationships with service providers. The multi-agency teams that have been established are expected to lead to Neighbourhood Level Agreements.

The innovative element is in the process – joining up work between public departments that deliver services to consultation mechanisms with local residents. Like the Dublin project, the speakers believed this produced a better planning process for what services to deliver and how to deliver them. Another important point made by the speakers concerned the possibility of significant benefits of bringing together the skills of the voluntary sector and the public agencies.

'The agencies have experience in service delivery and the voluntary sector has the understanding, knowledge and skills to target hard to reach communities.'

Besides the horizontal co-ordination, the project is linked vertically to the National Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, which has the function of working with government departments and other public service providers to improve service delivery in the 88 most deprived areas of the UK. These areas are required by government to establish Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs). These are non-statutory bodies that bring together all relevant stakeholders from all sectors. These local partners working through the LSP are expected to take many of the major decisions in their area about priorities and funding.

C7: Karelia, Finland

Acting locally: challenges of inclusion in the Nordic welfare system

Elina Pajula, Chief of Development, Finnish Federation for Social Welfare and Health

North Karelia in Finland is one of the areas faced with the challenges of restructuring the Nordic welfare system. There is social exclusion despite rising economic growth. There is a high unemployment rate (nearly 20%), young and educated people moving south and many municipalities in the situation of not having resources to provide services for the citizens that they are obliged by law to provide. The reaction to this is that there is a need for new approaches, dialogue, partnership and focused work.

The speaker began her presentation with an overview of trends in the Finnish welfare system. According to the results of Sociobarometer 2002 many structures of welfare have been broken apart, and political points of emphasis have changed. There is no unanimous opinion on the development of the welfare state in Finland. The *'national emancipated stage of the welfare state is over'*. The recession of the 1990s has meant cuts and functional difficulties both in the minimum subsistence allowances and in social services. Ms Pajula noted that some researchers have said that the Finnish policy of welfare is like an old wooden house: *"in which there are many attractive details. Yet even a stranger can see that the owner has not had the money – or the will – to keep the house in good shape for many years"*

The Finnish Federation for Social Welfare and Health launched a new project in 1994 that aimed to support networking in the welfare field and create new dialogue between public sector, third sector (NGOs) and citizen's own activities. The project was funded by the Finnish Slot Machine Association, carried out in co-operation with the cities of Joensuu and Oulu and later on, Jyväskylä. There was a national steering committee and a local committee and 'the project group': teams, project leader, researcher, working on bringing together research, training and developmental work. In the project team were representatives of the city involved (public sector) and The Federation (third sector). The projects were carried out differently in each area based on the local factors, needs and people involved. After two years, projects ended up with permanent developmental status and permanent financing from the Finnish Slot Machine Association. This was based on the agreements in each area between each city, the federation and the local association for social welfare. The aims of the agreement are social political:

- To support and develop regional social and health care policy.
- To support regional networks in the social field.
- To support partnership and participation of citizens.
- To support the third sector.
- To support competence in social issues (connected to the work of the recently founded Finnish Centre for Excellence on Social Welfare).

A range of new initiatives were carried out during the project:

1. A Community Resource Centre.

Since 1996, there has been a new model and thinking in Finland, a new structure based on agreement between the Federation, the local associations of Soroppi and the local Red Cross, with the support from the Slot Machine Association and the City of Joensuu. Between 600 and 1000 people visit every week, almost 100 different organizations and groups meet there per year, there are lots of different projects and activities, a popular internet café with free connections and support and training when needed.

The important point about the structure and purpose of the Centre is that it supports participation of people and promotes dialogue between different actors. The speaker said that *'the main philosophy is: not being an umbrella, not helping the excluded: instead being a platform for new ideas and people to meet, not activating anybody: giving resources, opportunities and support to be active in different groups and ways.'*

2. Community houses.

A local association for social welfare and health, as part of an EU-funded EQUAL-project (a joint project administered by the City of Joensuu) works in residential areas with people in Joensuu and Lieksa in upper North Karelia to disseminate the good practices of the Community Resource Centre.

3. Partnership in employment affairs

The partnership has been involved in many networks around these issues. The local association has a project, KATE, helping local NGOs to employ long term unemployed people. The project is successful and needed and is financed by the regional employment agency.

4. Restructuring of welfare services

Work has been done in order to bring different actors together to develop co-operation - not just to reduce and cut welfare services by local authorities.

5. Information society for all

Project Kathy, with five employees, is a three-year project, financed by the Slot Machine Association, which aims to bring the information society to ordinary people. It supports places like the community centre and community houses with training, to support minorities and to support NGOs to understand and use new technology and to enhance the possibilities of people to find and use social services with the help of the Internet.

6. Regional social and welfare policy

This work aims to create co-operation on welfare strategies at regional level. There are social forums that bring together social managers of the regions, working closely together with the new Centre for Excellence on Social Welfare.

Ms Pajula said that the joint developmental work faced some challenges.

- The dialogue between regional and national levels is important and demanding. This is especially so concerning how to produce information about the problems and reality of people in the regions and transform it into the possibility to influence politics and policies.
- The dialogue between different actors at the regional level - networking - is demanding. The speaker said that they wanted to try and avoid 'umbrella' structures and work instead on agreements, open forums, continuous negotiations and dialogue. *'Umbrellas are offered in terms of participation and better governance; often they just create a new kind of control and prevent participation'*.

- Finally, the speaker noted the challenges of providing welfare to people through projects: *‘The “project world” is quite a new phenomenon in Finland and new methods of mainstreaming and good practices are needed’.*

Ali Madanipour, Newcastle University, Rapporteur, Seminar C

Dr Madanipour summarised the projects’ descriptions and their main aims and objectives. He went on to draw some thematic conclusions from the presentations.

The rapporteur noted that in all cases there were multiple and multi-level agencies and collaboration. Dialogue, education and partnership were the means to improve collaboration, both horizontally and between the territorial levels of government.

The rapporteur noted first, that it seems an advantage to bring together as broad a range of actors as possible. However, in the reflections at the end of this section, the question is raised of whether every local actor is a ‘relevant’ partner. For example, the Rotterdam case suggests that profit-making businesses are sometimes not interested or not relevant. Further, are all partners committed to being ‘real’ active partners? Are some ‘partners’ just the ‘dignified part of the constitution?’ If so, how important are they to the effectiveness of the partnership?

Second, Dr Madanipour noted that it was mainly as users that people at risk of exclusion were involved, rather than in developing strategy and action in partnership with other actors. However, he suggested that it is difficult to get beyond the *‘usual suspects’*. The rapporteur noted that the Lewisham speakers stressed that *trust requires long term involvement* rather than short-term projects, but as the speaker from Newcastle pointed out, it is important to reach *motivated individuals*. One way to do this is demonstrated by Aarhus, which draws on the cultural traditions of the excluded groups. One might add that all of these examples in their different ways show that *it is necessary to build capacity at local level not just draw it down*. Otherwise, people will become demotivated and burned out and the project will end up with ‘the usual suspects’ – a point taken up in the reflections below.

Third, as indicated in seminars A and B, new institutional arrangements are often needed – Seminar C offered examples from Trikala, Rotterdam, North Karelia, Glasgow and Lewisham. The rapporteur indicated that from the examples presented it seems better to avoid umbrella groups and focus on working platforms based on mutual agreement (North Karelia) and to identify a clear focus to any project and link it to strategy (Newcastle).

A fourth important point identified by the rapporteur is that *innovation requires exploration of the possibility of flexibility in apparently fixed arrangements* as Glasgow found for education and Rotterdam for employment and the risks in innovation should not be feared (Glasgow).

Reflections on Seminar C

Addressing the six questions raised by the seminar chair

This seminar had the largest number of cases presented – seven, from Aarhus, Glasgow, Lewisham, Newcastle, North Karelia, Rotterdam and Trikala. The aims of this seminar were first, to identify the range of partners involved and the key transferable elements of effective partnership and local action. Second, the seminar aimed to identify projects’ effectiveness at

involving the target groups. The third aim was to identify the links to wider local strategy to combat poverty and exclusion and how to get better co-ordination.

Who were the partners and what were their different roles?

Concerning partnership, as Dr Madanipour noted, all of the examples have multi-agency, multi level partnerships. It varies somewhat who is involved and how formal in the legal sense are the partnership arrangements. However, all of the examples presented in Seminar C involved public powers, usually city, sometimes regional, plus private not-for-profit organisations, almost always in formal partnerships and involving contractual arrangements.

Private for-profit firms were less directly involved in many cases. There were businesses involved as site-owner and developer in the case of Aarhus, as collaborator in developing job placements in the case of Trikala and as potential training delivery partners in Glasgow. Private business was sometimes a partner in broader regeneration partnerships to which local and anti-poverty projects were linked – as in Glasgow, where the broader Glasgow Alliance involves entrepreneurs. However, as the Rotterdam speaker pointed out, private businesses were not present where there was no obvious gain for the 'bottom line'. The one example of majority private involvement of any sort arose in the case of the smaller Newcastle project where a foundation originating from the ownership of a mutuality saving and loan institution was a major funder and provider of technical support. Although the private sector is increasingly involved in local social inclusion partnerships, and in particular in wider urban regeneration strategies, there are particular challenges in developing the effective participation of the private sector. Limited involvement by for-profit firms is the same situation found a decade ago in the European Commission's 'Poverty 3' Programme. Despite the rapid advance in publicity for corporate social responsibility, it seems that in corporate practice 'planning gain' and 'cause related marketing' are more evident than stakeholder commitments to disadvantaged groups and communities.

Local authorities are generally the lead partners in the examples presented here. They are most likely to be the major funders, or major funding route and budget holder, especially where projects are larger in scale. This is the case in Glasgow, North Karelia, Rotterdam, Aarhus, Trikala and Lewisham. Where political will is required or political change has led to a change in strategy, the local authority tends to be the lead partner and not only financially.

Ms Pajula referred to the restructuring of the Finnish welfare state and she highlighted the learning curve for cities and states new to 'the project world'. The increasing political commitment to 'plurality' in service delivery has more and more engaged the services of the not-for-profit sector. However, the voluntary sector and the community sector are rarely lead partners. The main other role for the voluntary sector that was identified by the municipalities, is in organising and connecting with 'hard to reach' groups. However, as Dr Madanipour noted, grass-roots people themselves are most often involved in an advisory role, as users, to improve service planning and delivery.

A clear lesson for the NAPs Inclusion is that local authorities are the organising and integrating factor in the development and delivery of local anti-poverty and anti-exclusion strategy. Their relative exclusion from the first round of the NAPs Inclusion is a major weakness in the NAPs Inclusion. It is evident also that NGOs and community groups are essential partners in getting the strategy right and in making sure that it reaches the target groups. The speakers from Lewisham and North Karelia emphasised the synergy in bringing together local authorities with experience of service delivery and NGOs with experience of working with people in poverty and

exclusion. Both the sub-national authorities and the voluntary and community sector must have a guaranteed place in any meaningful NAPs Inclusion process.

How were the target groups involved?

A key lesson for getting any participation at all is *that there must be trust amongst the actors*. The speakers emphasised that trust, between the public powers and poor communities and vulnerable groups, once lost, is costly to rebuild – on all sides, but that it has been lost in many places. The first stage of many of the projects was to rebuild the trust that is essential for the movement from entrenched positions, the willingness to be flexible and to take some risks, that underpins better long term collaboration. The Newcastle project had felt its support from the private sector was an advantage in this respect. However, the speaker indicated also how soon that advantage can be weakened by the same experience as communities have had with the public powers: raised expectations, lack of follow-up, lack of follow-on resources

The second, rather disappointing, conclusion, is that where target groups are considered to be particularly vulnerable – for example children or long term unemployed people or people with mental disability or illness, it does not seem that sufficient efforts are made to engage their participation in policy development. Where they are involved in collaboration, these examples suggest this usually happens in the evaluation of service delivery, where individuals may be consulted either in surveys or through advisory councils, but not often as organised partner groups. However, the Lewisham local Neighbourhood Management initiative has a steering committee that includes community groups as well as a range of other actors.

The reflections on Seminar B have addressed the added value of participatory democracy, so that is not pursued again here. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile remarking that there seems to be some mainstreaming of consultation, if not often full participation, into mainline service provision. However, more could be learned about how to embed this and do it well in all local service provision, taking the principle beyond advisory user councils, to build models of participatory democracy that would engage in negotiations over local resources and local priorities.

The NAPs Inclusion could act as a driver for learning lessons about participatory democracy, by guaranteeing a voice for people experiencing poverty and exclusion, at national and local level.

The NAPs Inclusion could become a much more innovative process if it introduced a resourced guarantee of a right to participate and a right to be heard for local and regional authorities, NGOs, community groups and the most severely disadvantaged people. It could act as a model for a ‘stakeholder Plan’ to combat poverty and social exclusion, enabling lessons to be learned and transferred beyond those currently available. If truly introduced, this could provide a major learning opportunity for the European Social Model.

Economic integration and social valuation of disadvantaged people: what are the lessons for anti-poverty strategy?

Target groups in the Seminar C examples included long term unemployed people, people with certain disabilities, poor children and poor communities, especially those with significant proportions of people of minority ethnic origin, particularly recent migrants. It is evident from the examples presented in Seminar C, that whatever the aspirations of the projects – many of those in the target groups have limited likelihood of ‘success’ in the formal labour market. The speaker from Newcastle referred to a ‘parallel dependency’, Rotterdam pointed to the limited effects on the formal labour market, Aarhus and Trikala referred to the few who had gone on to wholly self-financing employment or business. It seems that many amongst the vulnerable groups have capacities that are valued more in the social sector or in social life, but the economic market

does not value them at the price of a living wage. Speakers from Lewisham, Glasgow and North Karelia referred to the improvements in service planning and delivery. Speakers from Aarhus, Rotterdam, Trikala and Newcastle all referred variously to greater self-respect and self-worth, greater family and social integration, greater respect from the rest of society as positive social integration benefits. So, the target groups have benefited, but so has the wider society, gaining from better services, a better and safer environment, reduced future social and intervention costs and a richer cultural environment.

The lesson from these examples for the NAPs Inclusion concerns the limitations of the strategic focus of most of the first round NAPs Inclusion on *'work first'*. EAPN's report on the first round of the NAPs Inclusion criticised the over-emphasis on the first part of Objective 1, (access to employment) and the too little regard to access for all to resources, rights, goods and services. A key lesson about the *'work first'*, work-focused anti-poverty strategy is that it will have little impact on some of the poorest and most vulnerable people if success is measured in terms of getting people off benefits into unsubsidised waged employment. The Glasgow example indicates the potential value of early intervention before the labour market. However, it will be a few years yet before it is possible to evaluate the labour market impact for the least advantaged and the extent of any displacement effects. Construction labour 'shortages' are cyclical and sometimes industry 'shortages' reflect below market pay offers rather than skills shortages only. The Glasgow project is a self-selecting initiative for which demand is currently greater than the number of places; one would like more information about whether and how much 'creaming' of better potential trainees goes on. The Aarhus project shows the limits as well as the benefits of the entrepreneurial approach as a means of economic, rather than social, integration. A minority of people moved on beyond the supported environment of the Bazar. This is not surprising. Everywhere in the world, the majority of small businesses fail. They are not a means to integrate whole communities, as opposed to particular individuals. The 'dynamic market' referred to by the speaker from Rotterdam appears to reject the most disadvantaged people and there is a limit to how far people can adapt to the market. Governments and their anti-poverty strategies must face up to adapting the market to human needs.

Links to wider local strategies

One interesting feature that in the context of the NAPs Inclusion requires more work, is the extent of the explicit linkage to wider strategies. Only Lewisham explicitly stated that the Neighbourhood Management initiative was part of a national (regeneration) initiative for the most deprived areas and that a national driver was present in the form of the national Neighbourhood Renewal Unit. Nevertheless, most of the projects were embedded at least in city wide or regional initiatives. Often, a degree of autonomy meant that the city was the initiating level. In the case of the Glasgow and Rotterdam projects, both of them had become role models at national government level, to be 'rolled out' elsewhere.

It is likely that some of the other projects presented in Seminar C are linked in some way to national anti-poverty strategies and frameworks, although this was not made explicit due to the focus of the presentations. For example, there is in Scotland a Social Inclusion Strategy. It is likely that this is the reason why social inclusion is one of Glasgow's five key city priorities. Nevertheless, these examples suggest more could be done to link city level projects explicitly into a framework of regional and national anti-poverty strategy, though examples from the other seminars – such as Ireland, Sweden and Germany, show that this does happen elsewhere.

Finally though, note that the rapporteur indicated that a degree of flexibility is necessary to allow a response to local priorities. This was the case, for example, in Karelia and in Trikala and was noted in some of the other examples, such as Malmö (Seminar A). We have seen too, that in

many cases, ideas have come from the 'bottom-up'. Therefore, in seeking better and more explicit links between local, regional and national strategy, it is as well not to draw the reins too tight. The presentation from Sachsen-Anhalt and Niedersachsen illustrated the point that if sub-national levels see something as a top down imposition, they will just resist engagement with it. Greater support for ideas of *multi-level governance* may be part of the solution. This is not just about overcoming fragmentation through multiple levels of governance. It is certainly not just a case of the national level 'passing the buck' for unpopular decisions or inadequate resources to another level. It is about participation in all stages of policy and gaining active consent to being governed - without which there can be no sustainable anti poverty strategy. The NAPs Inclusion fourth Objective represents recognition of these arguments. It should be taken seriously.

Overall, what can one conclude from the content of the presentations?

First, in terms of the context we can draw several conclusions. Politically, there seems to be greater recognition of the interdependence of the economic and social dimensions of the European Union environment. There is greater acknowledgement of the advantages of the European Social Model, not only in securing social peace and greater equity, but in creating the quality of environment that is good for growth and development. The Convention on the Future of Europe and the OMC provide a window of opportunity for civil society to achieve an enhanced and formally recognised role as a European actor. The OMC and in particular the fourth objective of the NAPs Inclusion are providing a stimulus to practical engagement of the actors with each other to develop more comprehensive, co-ordinated and strategic approaches to combating poverty and exclusion.

Second, countries differ in the powers that are held centrally and those that are decentralised. In some countries it would not be correct to refer to 'devolved' powers, as the regions and national state may be seen as different but equal in their purpose and powers. Further, the extent and nature of the powers of local municipalities differ in each country. These differences between countries must be properly recognised and addressed as the NAPs Inclusion process matures or it will not develop 'on the ground' in some countries.

Third, joint working at the local and regional level by NGOs and public authorities adds value at the local level in achieving successful anti-poverty policy. As a number of speakers emphasised, at a local level the actors know the stakeholders, can reach the groups in need, can focus on practice and can evaluate the impact of specific and precisely defined policies and actions. Some NGOs have had to 'push' their way in to partnerships. But, many others have found that due to developing ideologies concerning the plural delivery of services, but also capped municipal and regional budgets, that they are being 'pulled' into 'NGO shaped holes' in service delivery. These situations constitute an opportunity for innovation and effectiveness in service development and delivery close to users, but also a threat to universality and accountability, which must be addressed.

Fourth, joint working and a bottom up approach are not a substitute for spending sufficient resources to deal with the scale and depth of poverty and social exclusion. The successful initiatives described at the conference all had dedicated new money and other resources. Further, partnership working and especially participatory democracy require resources for capacity building if they are to be real processes and not paper exercises. These resources are not just an extra cost, an extra layer of structures and administration; they should be seen as an investment in creating networked, integrated and inclusive communities, which to return to the comments of Mr Tinios, are the foundation for societies that can grow wealth. Distribution and growth are intimately connected.

Fifth, changes in the quality of life of disadvantaged communities require that their organised voice is listened to and this requires the right to be heard. There are clear 'rules of engagement' for the effective participation of people with direct experience of poverty and exclusion. Successful examples were offered from Antwerp, Rotterdam, Dublin, Copenhagen, Stockholm and Barcelona amongst others. We should learn from successful examples and disseminate this knowledge through the networks. There is still a job to be done, especially in convincing national governments to invest in participatory democracy as a route to inclusion. Governments want success, but they have a tendency to want it easy and cheap, which this is not, but nonetheless critical to inclusion.

Implications for the second Round of National Action Plans

Following the seminars, Ms Duffy made some suggestions about how issues arising at the conference could be allocated to the six specific chapters of the second round reports of NAPs Inclusion. Thus: -

Chapter 1 concerns data on the problem of poverty and exclusion. This should recognise the differing needs and priorities in different regions. Where suitable data are absent, there should be a firm and resourced commitment to developing good sources in a reasonable timeframe.

Chapter 2 concerns the evaluation of NAPs Inclusion 1. This should recognise clearly the inadequate participation at every stage in the process by sub-national authorities, NGOs and people with direct experience of poverty. It should evaluate the impact of this gap in consultation and participation on the processes and initiatives of the NAPs Inclusion.

Chapter 3 concerns strategy. In terms of process, this chapter should recognise the need for better mobilisation, including better visibility. It should commit to a formal structure and process, properly resourced, to enable the effective participation of all actors. This chapter should commit to elaborating Plans locally and to support for the development of local plans.

In terms of drawing lessons from Plan activities, the NAPs Inclusion should commit to mainstreaming of local good practice.

Chapter 4 concerns policies. The conference was not especially focused on specific policy content. However, the experience of the projects presented at the conference indicates that the NAPs Inclusion should commit to policy priorities that reflect the results of grass roots participation in all stages of the NAPs Inclusion process, from development through implementation and monitoring. The limitations of the 'work first' approach in preventing poverty amongst the most vulnerable groups is evident from the presentations. This should be taken into account in preparation of the next round of the NAPs Inclusion.

Chapter 5 concerns institutional arrangements. This chapter should clarify the powers and responsibilities of each sphere of government and of all other actors, in combating poverty and exclusion and in particular in the development and implementation of the Plans.

Chapter 6 concerns best practice. This chapter should include actions led by actors other than central government and in certain countries it could be possible to include examples presented at the conference.

PART 3: LEARNING FROM THE CONFERENCE: KEY POINTS RAISED

Principles and values

The moral obligation to combat poverty and exclusion

The first and most important point is that made by the Mayor of Athens – the quality of life of citizens is an ethical issue. Commissioner Diamantopoulou emphasised that the European Social Model has an ethical dimension. The State and public authorities at all levels have a responsibility to combat poverty and social exclusion. The NAPs Inclusion contribute to fulfilling our duty to combat poverty and social exclusion and achieving a better quality of life for poor and disadvantaged people.

The resources required for intervention are not a cost – they are an investment. At the local level, several of the conference seminar speakers illustrated the link between social inclusion and local economic development. At the national level, Mr Tinios pointed out that social inclusion supports sustainable growth.

A right to high and equal social standards for all

One of the central themes of the seminars was the struggle for poor, vulnerable and excluded people to realise their social rights and access services which more advantaged people take for granted and can buy individually if necessary.

Flexibility in institutional arrangements should not be confused with flexibility in standards and rights. The seminars emphasised the importance of investment in quality public services for *all* as fundamental to promoting greater social inclusion and cohesion. The seminars showed the importance of a guarantee to a service in enabling disadvantaged people to exercise their rights. They also illustrated the need for effective delivery of services at the local level, where they can best be adapted to the needs of less advantaged groups to ensure equal access.

Making the EU Strategy work at the local level

The EU Strategy for Social Inclusion is an important basis for concerted and coordinated action at all levels – local, national and European – towards the prevention and eradication of poverty, exclusion and inequalities in the European Union.

The NAPs Inclusion have the potential to act as an important driver for change and policy integration. However, as emphasised by several speakers, for this to happen the NAPs Inclusion must become a stakeholder process, in which local actors have clear roles and responsibilities, from policy design to implementation, evaluation and follow-up.

1. Mobilisation of local stakeholders

Responsibility for many areas of social inclusion policy lies with local and regional government. As a result of the restructuring of welfare and the decentralisation of service provision, the organisation of service delivery is closer to the local level with the involvement of private and not-for-profit actors as well as local authorities. Therefore the

implementation of any anti-poverty strategy, including the NAPs Inclusion, requires the mobilisation of local actors.

If local actors are to be willingly engaged, then national governments must provide *adequate time and resources and a clear structure for engagement* between the levels in the NAPs Inclusion process. Governments should commit to *a mobilisation strategy and the means to implement it*, which gives a strong role to the local level at all stages. However, mobilisation structures need to be nationally adapted; they must have sufficient flexibility to deal with the differing governance relations referred to earlier.

2. Linking local, national and EU strategies

It is clear that the relationship between the European agreed NAPs Inclusion and existing national strategies must be clarified, if only to prevent actors already over-stretched from duplicating efforts. Where there is not an existing anti-poverty strategy, the NAPs Inclusion can provide a framework. Where there is an existing national report or strategy, the EU Objectives for social inclusion could be used to reinforce the goals, framework and priorities of the national approach. The NAPs Inclusion objectives and existing anti-poverty reports and plans and institutional processes around them, need to be better articulated. Further, each Member State should ensure that the proposed structures and resources are adapted to recognise the division of responsibilities and powers in their countries.

Local actors have a clear role to play in delivering the objectives of the NAPs Inclusion. However, *there needs to be a clear link between the NAPs Inclusion and local priorities, policy and practice if a real impact on the ground is to be achieved.* The speakers from Malmö emphasised that in the Swedish context Local Development Partnership Agreements had played a key role in enabling an effective framework for cooperation between the national and local level, involving the setting of objectives, targets and measures, the definition of clear roles and responsibilities and the allocation of resources to the local level to implement agreed measures.

The conference seminars also showed that the NAPs Inclusion could act as a driver for a reconfiguration of relations between the government levels. It should result in stronger institutional arrangements for ‘vertical’ participation and partnership and more explicit links between local, regional and national strategy to combat poverty and exclusion.

The next round of NAPs Inclusion should therefore expand on the institutional arrangements, such as Partnership Agreements, against poverty and social exclusion, explicitly related to the four EU Objectives of the NAPs Inclusion and the country-specific structure of governance concerned. *The Plans should show how these arrangements ensure well-linked coordination with local anti-poverty strategy.*

3. The added value of ‘bottom up’ partnership structures

The conference discussions emphasised that taking a ‘bottom-up’ approach does not guarantee success - but not taking it guarantees failure. Action at the local level to combat poverty and social exclusion must involve all local stakeholders – local authorities, NGOs, private businesses – but most importantly it must be grounded in the local communities. The synergy in bringing together the responsibilities and skills of the different actors is key in developing innovative ideas and solutions, and in developing actions that have a lasting effect. Local authorities have a leading role to play in developing and coordinating local partnerships with all key actors and in ensuring

all local resources are pooled through a more strategic approach to combating poverty and social exclusion.

4. Best practice in building successful partnerships to combat poverty and exclusion

The lessons from the seminars are that successful anti-poverty partnerships have the following characteristics:

- Take a bottom up approach.
- Build on existing partnerships.
- Undertake intense preparation work to spread knowledge, understanding and support of and for the aims of the partnership.
- Have a specific anti-poverty and exclusion focus rather than a wider remit.
- Deploy contractual relations between the partners and actors – with clear roles and responsibilities.
- Focus clearly on the outcome for the target groups.
- Have sufficient resources including those necessary for capacity building, for adequate support to front-line staff and for visibility.

Barriers to successful partnership include:

- Over-management of small projects by big boards.
- Lack of an exit strategy and follow on initiatives.
- Lack of political support.
- Short term funding – particularly where partners have not worked together already.

The next NAPs Inclusion should learn from the experiences of successful partnership working at the local level, where the engagement of a wide range of stakeholders is taking place in developing anti-poverty action. The plans should commit the stakeholders at all levels to building and improving partnerships to combat poverty and social exclusion according to the best practice indicated in this report and to spreading this best practice at all levels and amongst all actors.

5. The added value of participation of people with experience of poverty

The experience of the seminars is that participation of people at risk of poverty and people in poverty comes in many forms – engagement as members of working groups on poverty, election or appointment to participation councils, partnership boards and other structures. The seminars indicated that much of the participation so far is ‘user’ focused and does not often engage people in strategy and policy development – one reason could be the tempo at which grass roots groups and participatory groups want and are able to work. They must seek repeated validation and mandate.

Well-conducted participation helps to build the trust which several speakers stressed was crucial to progress and when lost was difficult and time consuming to rebuild. Participation supports representative democracy by making the democratic representatives less remote from people in their communities.

Speakers gave a number of reasons why participation adds value – one speaker from Dublin argued that it was the only key to sustainable planning outcomes. Speakers suggested also that new institutional arrangements for dialogue with local authorities hugely improved planning and service delivery.

Effectively linking the NAPs Inclusion to the local level has the potential to ensure that disadvantaged people are able to participate. The NAPs Inclusion could become a much more innovative process if they ensured a resourced guarantee of a right to participate and a right to be heard. If truly introduced, this could provide a major learning opportunity for the European Social Model.

6. Achieving political support for the NAPs Inclusion and the involvement of the local level

Many of the successful examples presented at the conference stressed the importance of political will and political support in getting projects off the ground and in rolling out successful projects across cities and regions. This is not only a lesson for local anti-poverty strategy: the NAPs Inclusion need national, as well as local, political support if their objectives are to be realised. If the European Commission supported *greater visibility and a more open and public process* for the NAPs Inclusion, then there would be a natural increase in demand for involvement, from all levels. Cooperation with networks of local government and social NGOs is key in raising the profile of the NAPs Inclusion at national and local level.

To get a higher political priority and acceptance for their engagement and influence on the NAPs Inclusion, the local actors - local government, NGOs and community organisations - need to work together to shift the dialogue towards the local level. Cooperation between the local actors through their networks at the local, national and European level is essential in order to push the local agenda at national and European level, and to ensure the ongoing development of an effective social inclusion strategy at all levels.

PART 4: CONCLUSIONS AND FINAL DECLARATION

A draft final declaration was prepared in advance of the conference by **EUROCITIES** and **EAPN** and presented at the conference for discussion. The text below has incorporated the points that emerged in the debate at the conference and was subsequently agreed by the Executives of both organisations. This final Declaration represents the main conclusions drawn from the conference with regards to the future direction of the EU social inclusion strategy and in particular in relation to the second set of National Action Plans on Inclusion.

EUROCITIES and **EAPN** acknowledge the importance of the steps taken by the European Council of Lisbon in March 2000, when the Heads of States and Governments agreed to "make a decisive impact on poverty by 2010" through adopting an EU strategy for social inclusion based on an Open Method of Coordination (OMC) combining common objectives, National Action Plans and a European programme to encourage cooperation in this field. **EUROCITIES** and **EAPN** also welcome efforts made by Member States to translate the challenges set at European level into concrete terms by developing and implementing National Action Plans on social inclusion.

EUROCITIES, as a network representing the local authorities of over 100 major cities across the EU, EFTA countries, Central and Eastern Europe, and the **European Anti-Poverty Network**, which brings together national, regional and local networks of non-governmental organisations and European Organisations working with and for people experiencing poverty and social exclusion in the EU, have come together to evaluate the extent to which the EU strategy for social inclusion translates into concrete actions at the local level, involving local authorities and NGOs as major players in working towards the important goal of making a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty and social exclusion by 2010. This event comes at a key moment in the development of the Strategy. The EU Member States are currently developing a second National Action Plan on social inclusion to cover the period July 2003-July 2005. From the experience of the first round of National Action Plans, it is clear that much more needs to be done to effectively involve the local level directly in the process in order to develop integrated national and local action plans which could effectively translate at the local level the objectives of the overall EU strategy.

EUROCITIES and **EAPN** are concerned about the growing levels of poverty, exclusion and inequalities in the European Union. In light of the development of new National Action Plans, the evaluation of the first round of Plans, the debate on the Future of Europe and the enlargement of the European Union, **EUROCITIES** and **EAPN** call on decision makers at local, national and European level to ensure that the agreed objectives for the European Union Social Inclusion Strategy are the basis for concerted actions at all levels to eradicate poverty and exclusion in the European Union. The strategy should translate into effective policy and practice at all levels guaranteeing that:

- Actions are developed and implemented that will **make a positive difference to the lives of the millions of people who are living in the European Union and that are carrying the burden of the failure of our society to eradicate poverty and exclusion.**
- The design, funding and practice of all policy measures including economic, employment and social policy measures at the local, national and European level are oriented towards **the access by all to resources, rights, goods and services.**

- **Social inclusion is mainstreamed** across all policy areas at local, national and European level in order to effectively address the multidimensional nature of poverty and social exclusion.
- Increased efforts are made at all levels to ensure that there is **a greater awareness and understanding of the strategy** among all relevant actors and the general public and that particular efforts are made to engage elected political representatives with the strategy.
- **Budgetary commitments** are made at the local, national and European level to allow for the effective implementation of the measures included in local and national plans and that the contribution of Structural Funds, in particular the European Social Fund (including the Urban and Equal initiatives) provides effective support for local and regional initiatives addressing poverty and exclusion.

While acknowledging and respecting the specificities and competences of each different level in the fight against poverty and social exclusion, EAPN and EUROCITIES urge authorities/ministries, politicians at the corresponding level and European institutions to take action to ensure that:

At the local level

- Local Action Plans on social inclusion are developed or strengthened by the local public authorities, involving other relevant actors including NGOs. Where appropriate, regional action plans would also be developed.
- Objective 4 of the EU strategy on the mobilization of all relevant actors, including NGOs, is effectively translated into practice at the local level, in the development, implementation and assessment of local policies to fight poverty and social exclusion.
- People experiencing poverty and their organisations are involved in the framing, implementing and evaluating of actions at the local level
- Local authorities and other local actors including NGOs allocate time and resources to engage with national and European level strategies to promote social inclusion.

At the National level

- The National Action Plans on social inclusion provide for a clear articulation of policy formulation and delivery between the national, regional and local levels. An integrated and coordinated approach between all levels, with the effective involvement of local actors in the design of the National Action Plans, including in the definition of targets, is fundamental if the plans are to have an effective impact on the lives of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion.
- A bottom-up approach is prioritized, which supports the work already being implemented at the local level by local authorities and NGOs in combating social exclusion and which takes this into account when designing the National Action Plan.
- A clear consultation structure is developed for directly involving local authorities and NGOs in the design of the National Action Plans, taking into account the need for sufficient time,

procedures and resources for the local level to have a real input. This includes the organisation of consultation meetings with the participation of the ministry/ies responsible for the Plan, local authority representatives (including elected members, policy makers and Social Service Directors) and NGOs, that enable local actors to have a direct input into the design of the Plan.

- The use of Partnership Agreements between the national and local authorities is considered, as a means for providing a clear framework for the development of integrated national and local action plans for social inclusion in line with the objectives of the European strategy. These agreements would enable the joint setting of objectives, targets, and measures, as well as the definition of roles and responsibilities of the different actors involved and the allocation of resources to implement agreed measures.
- Objective 4 is effectively implemented by supporting capacity building initiatives at the local level. It is important to recognise that the involvement of local actors, both in the design of the national and local strategies for social inclusion, takes time, the building of trust between the various actors and resources.

At the European level

- Local actions to fight poverty and social exclusion are monitored and highlighted. The Peer Review process should address specific measures relating to the governance of the Plans, including the ownership and direct involvement of the local level in the European strategy.
- The implementation of Objective 4 of the EU Strategy, and specifically the involvement of the local level in the National Action Plans, is effectively monitored and evaluated by the European Commission in its assessment of the plans and the overall Strategy.
- In the overall strategy components, local authorities and NGOs are called upon to provide input on the development of indicators and on the evaluation of the effectiveness of the strategy
- The local dimension of the fight against social exclusion is adequately addressed in the accession negotiations and in particular in the development of the Joint Inclusion Memoranda in the candidate countries to the EU.

EAPN and EUROCITIES will contribute to achieving these outcomes through:

- continuing to be actively engaged with all the aspects of the strategy, including their development, monitoring and implementation;
- sharing experiences gained through their members;
- working jointly to strengthen and complement their actions in the fight against poverty and social exclusion;
- engagement with other relevant actors;
- the promotion of awareness at the local level of the strategy and the National Action Plans;
- raising awareness of the concerns mentioned above with contacts in the candidate countries.

APPENDIX: PARTICIPANTS LIST

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