



***Yes to an Active Inclusion based on rights!
Promoting EAPN Principles
on Active Inclusion***

**Report of EAPN seminar on Active
Inclusion held in Paris on 13 June 2008**

by

Hugh FRAZER

Or: EN

EUROPEAN ANTI POVERTY NETWORK
RESEAU EUROPEEN DES ASSOCIATIONS DE LUTTE CONTRE LA PAUVRETE ET L'EXCLUSION
SOCIALE
SQUARE DE MEEUS 18 – 1050 BRUXELLES
TEL: 0032 2 226 58 50 – FAX: 0032 2 226 58 69

Content

SUMMARY	3
1. INTRODUCTION	6
2. OPENING SESSION – SETTING THE SCENE: TOWARDS AN ACTIVE INCLUSION BASED ON RIGHTS	6
3. LESSONS FROM THE GROUND	11
3.1 Adequate Minimum Income	12
3.2 Access to Services	12
3.3 Access to Employment	13
4. DELIVERING AN INTEGRATED APPROACH	14
4.1 Risks versus Potential of Active Inclusion	14
4.2 Developing an Effective Approach on the Ground	16
4.3 Ensuring Strong Principles to Underpin Active Inclusion	17
4.4 Suggestions for the Future Development of Active Inclusion	19
- Annex -	20
EAPN Proposals on Principles on Active Inclusion	20

Acknowledgment

The work of EAPN in this seminar is supported by the European Commission through the PROGRESS programme. 

The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

SUMMARY

The EAPN seminar on Active Inclusion, *Yes to an Active Inclusion based on rights! Promoting EAPN Principles on Active Inclusion*, was held in the Salvation Army offices in Paris on 13th June 2008. This seminar was organised with the support of the European Commission, EAPN France, and the Salvation Army. The seminar had two purposes: to promote and illustrate EAPN's vision of Active Inclusion to policy makers and to build capacity within the network regarding Active Inclusion. Participants included members of EAPN, the French EU Presidency, the European Commission and the ETUC. The workshop drew strongly on the experience of EAPN's members on the ground in order to identify what is needed to tackle poverty and social exclusion. This experience was used to inform the discussion on how to ensure that Active Inclusion becomes an effective tool for overcoming poverty and social exclusion.

Martin Hirsch, French High Commissioner for Active Solidarity, gave the opening address and stressed the great importance that the future French Presidency of the EU attaches to the concept of Active Inclusion. He welcomed the contribution of EAPN to the debate on Active Inclusion and said that this would help to prepare the ground for the adoption during the French Presidency of a set of common principles on Active Inclusion at the European Council meeting in December 2008. He stressed that all three pillars of Active Inclusion (i.e. access to employment, access to services and adequate minimum income) are vital and all three are interrelated. He also emphasised the importance of mobilising all stakeholders in the implementation of Active Inclusion and of ensuring the involvement of people experiencing poverty in the design and assessment of policies. He highlighted the need to address the issue of the working poor and he stressed that inclusive policies are important for everyone as they are socially profitable.

Antonia Carparelli on behalf of the European Commission stressed the potential of Active Inclusion to become a transformative concept and to bring a new impetus to the fight against poverty and social exclusion. She highlighted that, in spite of economic growth and more jobs, since the Lisbon strategy was launched in 2000, little improvement has been made in reducing poverty and social exclusion. She said that this shows that the relation between macro-economic improvement and social cohesion has been too loose. However, she felt that Active Inclusion is a very important development because it will try to strengthen this link. She too stressed that the three strands of Active Inclusion are not alternatives but complementary tools. She also announced that the Commission would propose principles on Active Inclusion in September or October 2008. Once these are adopted by the European Council their implementation will be pursued as part of the Social Open Method of Coordination (OMC). She also stressed that these developments will happen in the context of a new Social Agenda and a Commission Communication on reinforcing the OMC, both of which will be adopted in July 2008.

In the workshops and plenary discussions two perspectives emerged about the concept of Active Inclusion. One view counselled caution about embracing Active Inclusion and was sceptical about the concept as it lacks clarity and focus. However, many participants felt that it is a tool that can be used to promote EAPN's core agenda and to challenge negative developments resulting from untrammelled liberalisation. A general point that was stressed was that if Active Inclusion is to be effective it cannot be seen in isolation from other economic, employment and social policies. It must contribute to

ensuring that these become more supportive of the EU's social dimension and to promoting redistribution and a fair society.

During the day a wide range of points were raised on how to ensure the effective development of Active Inclusion. Some of these were overarching points and some related to the individual strands.

Eight key overarching points stood out.

- First, it is essential that Active Inclusion is developed in a balanced way which recognises the interdependence of the three pillars of minimum income, social services and employment measures. Thus the current tendency of many Member States to focus on employment measures in isolation must be challenged.
- Secondly, Active Inclusion must be built around a respect for people's fundamental rights and their dignity and based on principles of non discrimination.
- Thirdly, there must be a coordinated approach that integrates measures across the three strands so that there are real synergies between them. Coordination also means ensuring that national, regional and local measures are reinforcing.
- Fourthly, the principles of quality, adequacy and accessibility must apply across all three strands.
- Fifthly, the active and ongoing participation of those experiencing poverty and social inclusion in the design, implementation and monitoring of Active Inclusion measures is essential.
- Sixthly, the Active Inclusion process should be linked to the Social OMC process to ensure that there is effective and regular monitoring and reporting of Member States' performance.
- Seventhly, it is important that Active Inclusion focuses on prevention and not just on addressing the consequences of poverty and social exclusion.
- Eighthly, the role of EU Structural Funds in supporting the Active Inclusion agenda and the access of NGOs to those funds must be enhanced.

The importance of developing adequate minimum income schemes as an essential building block to ensure people's integration into society and the labour market was repeatedly stressed. There should be a hierarchy of minimum income, social services and employment. An adequate minimum income should be recognised as a right and should be guaranteed unconditionally. A wide range of suggestions were made for the effective development and implementation of minimum income schemes in ways that would enhance people's empowerment and integration into society and employment.

The critical role played by services of general interest, especially social services, in ensuring people's integration into society and employment was illustrated through a series of case studies. Ensuring that services are affordable and accessible, respect people's dignity, are provided in an integrated and holistic manner, are tailored to people's individual needs and ambitions and are developed in conjunction with the people who use them were recurrent themes.

In terms of employment the importance of activation measures being available to those who are most distant from the labour market, being tailored to their particular situations and creating pathways of progression for people were repeatedly stressed. The need to link employment measures with income support and social services was also a recurrent

theme. There was considerable emphasis on the need to ensure that people are supported into decent work and that once in work they receive continuing support that enables them to progress. Active Inclusion must also address the issue of in work poverty and ensure that income from work is sufficient to lift people out of poverty.

1. INTRODUCTION

The EAPN seminar on Active Inclusion, *Yes to an Active Inclusion based on rights! Promoting EAPN Principles on Active Inclusion* was held in the Salvation Army offices in Paris on 13th June 2008. This seminar was organised with the support of the European Commission, EAPN France, and the Salvation Army. The purpose of the seminar was to promote and illustrate EAPN's vision of Active Inclusion to policy makers and to build capacity within the network regarding Active Inclusion.

The context of the seminar was provided by the European Commission's initiative on Active Inclusion and the intention that in the second semester of 2008, under the French Presidency of the EU and following proposals from the Commission, common principles on Active Inclusion would be endorsed by the European Council in December 2008.

The seminar was attended by some 85 people. They were from EAPN's Social Inclusion, Employment and Structural Funds Working Groups, members of the Executive Committee, members of the Services working group, the French EU Presidency, the European Commission and other invited people from France.

In preparation for the meeting and prior to the seminar EAPN National Networks had responded to a questionnaire on Active Inclusion in their country. Also the EAPN secretariat had prepared a briefing document, [EAPN - European Anti-Poverty Network - EAPN Briefing: Active inclusion - What is at stake?](#). The other key background document for the seminar was *EAPN Proposals on Shadow Principles on Active Inclusion*.

The seminar was divided into four main sessions. First, an opening plenary session with key note addresses from the French EU Presidency and the European Commission and with responses from EAPN and ETUC. Secondly, workshops on implementing the three components of Active Inclusion – adequate minimum income, access to quality social services and inclusion through employment. Thirdly, workshops on lessons for delivering an integrated approach and suggesting how these link to the principles. Finally, a plenary session discussion the draft EAPN Common Principles and drawing out conclusions and making suggestions for the way forward.

2. OPENING SESSION – SETTING THE SCENE: TOWARDS AN ACTIVE INCLUSION BASED ON RIGHTS

The first plenary session of the seminar set the political context for the day's discussions and highlighted the potential importance of Active Inclusion in the future development of the European Union's (EU) policies to tackle poverty and social exclusion.

Ludo Horemans, President of EAPN, in his opening remarks, welcomed the initiative of the European Commission in putting forward the concept of Active Inclusion. From the outset he stressed the equal importance of the three pillars of Active Inclusion: employment, social services and income support. He said that, while having a decent job with a decent salary is very important in enabling people to have a decent life with their family, having a decent life involves more than just a job. The potential strength of

the Active Inclusion concept is that it recognises this and goes much further than just focussing on the labour market. He hoped that the seminar would give EAPN members the opportunity to gain a better understanding of what is meant by Active Inclusion and to put more flesh on the bones of this concept. He also said that the day's discussions would help EAPN to identify how best it can contribute to and influence the future development of Active Inclusion.

The French Approach to Active Inclusion

Martin Hirsch, French High Commissioner for Active Solidarity, gave the opening address and stressed the great importance that the future French Presidency of the EU attaches to the concept of Active Inclusion. He said that it is "an absolutely key issue". He also emphasised that it will be very important in the coming months for organisations like EAPN to organise lobbies to ensure that the voice of the most vulnerable is heard by governments, economic actors and the European Commission. This can be very helpful in preparing the ground for the adoption, during the French Presidency, of recommendations for an EU wide strategy on Active Inclusion, including a set of common principles on Active Inclusion.

He situated the debate on Active Inclusion in the context of the struggle against poverty. He stressed that "fighting against poverty means fighting for dignity" and that "dignity means having a real place in society". He acknowledged that governments too often see jobless people as "hopeless cases" and that there is a need to challenge this. He identified three major fears that people involved in the fight against poverty have at this time: first, they fear that social expenditure may be reduced; secondly, they fear that those in greatest difficulty may be prevented from having a decent income; and, thirdly, they fear that policies to tackle poverty may become very imbalanced. They may focus only on the labour market and not address other difficulties that people may face like poor health, lack of skills, poor housing and so on. He rejected such an approach. He asked "how can you bring people back to the labour market if you do not help them sort out their difficulties in the first place?" The value of Active Inclusion is that it aims to sort out all those problems. Thus "all three pillars of Active Inclusion are vital and all three are interrelated".

Martin Hirsch went on to outline the situation in France and said that the Government's goal is to reduce poverty by a third in five years. This is equally important as the government's economic goals. He described initiatives that the government are taking to address the high level of unemployment and high level of working poor. In particular he outlined the new Active Solidarity Income which aims to ensure that whoever takes a job will see an increase in his or her income and so make work pay. He stressed two important elements that are essential for effective action to tackle poverty. The first is to get the assistance of all stakeholders (the state, local authorities, companies and businesses, trade unions and the NGOs fighting for the most vulnerable) and to involve people experiencing poverty in the design through to the assessment of policies. Thus the direct representation of the users is important at all levels, local, regional and national. The second is to establish links between local and national measures and to avoid clashes between the two.

Martin Hirsch concluded by saying that the French Presidency of the EU will encourage the sharing of different experiences of promoting Active Inclusion in different countries. This will help all EU governments to get a sense of ownership of the concept. In October (15th and 16th) the annual Round Table Conference will be held in Marseilles and will

review progress and collect the views of participants such as EAPN. These messages will then be presented to a Ministerial Round Table on 16th October in Marseille. This will promote networking between Ministers on the issue of Active Inclusion. Finally he concluded by stressing that inclusive policies are important for everyone as they are socially profitable. They bring more people onto the labour market, they increase income levels and they ensure an inclusive society.

Nathalie Cuvillier, Secretary General for the new French Agency for Active Solidarity, then described her agency's experience of implementing several of the points made by Martin Hirsch. She highlighted efforts to bring together all stakeholders at local level to set up anti-poverty programmes which would overcome compartmentalisation of services and ensure more efficient use of resources. This is based on making a diagnosis across a territory during which institutional decision makers are faced with users of services so that their voices are heard. She also emphasised the role of acting as an interface between the local and national levels and funnelling up experience at local level to the national level so as to affect how policies are developed. This avoids the risk of top down policies just being imposed on the local level. She stressed that her agency's experience is that Active Inclusion can be a powerful lever to activate a number of inclusion measures such as ensuring that people can retain part of their benefits when moving back to the labour market and recognising the need for support when reintegrating to the labour market. Then the details of the Active Solidarity Income (RSA) which is being experimented with in 34 local departments are detailed. The departments will meet together soon to review progress and the Agency will produce recommendations improvements and recommendations for good practice.

The European Commission's Approach to Active Inclusion

Antonia Carparelli, Head of Unit, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal opportunities, outlined the European Commission's reasons for promoting Active Inclusion. She said that the aim of Active Inclusion is to create "a new impetus in the fight against poverty and social exclusion" and she hoped that it will become a "transformative concept" as it provides both a response to problems that all Member States face and is an approach which can build consensus among a variety of stakeholders. She emphasised that the need for a new impetus is urgent. The Lisbon Strategy, when it was launched in 2000, had envisaged economic growth and social cohesion advancing hand in hand. However, this has not happened. The headline Lisbon indicators on poverty have hardly moved. There has been little change in the number of jobless households. In-work poverty is perhaps going in the wrong direction. The proportion of early school leavers remains static and there has only been a marginal improvement in long-term unemployment. Thus, the relation between macro-economic improvement and social cohesion has been too loose. Active Inclusion is a very important development because it will try to strengthen this link.

Antonia Carparelli went on to identify a number of key lessons that the Commission has learned over the past three years while promoting Active Inclusion. There is a broad consensus of the need to modernise policies to promote social inclusion. Minimum income schemes need to give more attention to adequacy and to coverage while at the same time supporting people to move into work. Employment policies need to respond to the specific needs of people and also to provide ongoing support to people when they move into work so as to avoid revolving doors. Access to quality social services is an essential element in supporting inclusion. The three strands of Active Inclusion are not

alternatives but complementary tools. The EU has an important role to play in ensuring the fundamental rights of EU citizens to social and housing rights. At the same time the Commission respects the principle of subsidiarity and thus will focus on providing flexible guidance to Member States through promoting evidence-based sharing of good practice.

Looking to the future she said that the Commission will propose principles on Active Inclusion in September or October 2008. The Active Inclusion process will then be implemented as part of the Social Open Method of Coordination (OMC). She acknowledged that the principles cannot be binding on Member States. However, she said that the combination of the principles and the OMC process can become a heavyweight force in EU social policy. She noted that in parallel to the developments on Active Inclusion the Commission will also be adopting, on 2nd July, a new Social Agenda and a related package of initiatives, including a Communication on Reinforcing the OMC. She concluded by saying that she is “confident that you will be positively surprised by the level of ambition”.

Responses from EAPN and ETUC

Following the presentations from the French Presidency and the Commission responses were made by EAPN and the European Trade Union Confederation.

Fintan Farrell, Director of EAPN Europe, welcomed the comments from Martin Hirsch and Antonia Carparelli. He said that since 2005 those fighting poverty and social exclusion have had a really hard time. Thus EAPN has great expectations that the forthcoming French Presidency and also the Commission’s new Social Agenda and Communication on strengthening the Social OMC will improve the situation. He reported that he had met with President Barroso the previous evening who had assured him that the new Social Agenda would contain a strong message on the fight against poverty and that the EU’s role as a protector of a high level of social standards would be reinforced. Fintan went on to say that Active Inclusion can be a positive development. However, at present there continues to be a gap between theory and practice. For instance, as recently as the previous day European Employment Week had focussed only on activation and had ignored the important role of minimum income. Minimum income must be a visible part of Active Inclusion. Access to services such as affordable housing must also be part of the package so that people are not left to “choose between heating and eating”. Furthermore, employment policies must meet the needs of those most distant from the labour market and not just cream off the “employable”. He went on to draw attention to EAPN’s draft principles on Active Inclusion (see annex 1) which would be discussed at the seminar. After the seminar EAPN will use them to try and influence and assess the principles that the Commission will propose in September or October and the principles that will be adopted at the December 2008 European Council meeting under the auspices of the French Presidency. He said that it is essential that the principles are about respecting rights, particularly the rights of those who are most disadvantaged. They must respect their human dignity and must promote respect for people’s individual choices. They must guarantee adequate income and access to supporting services as these are a prerequisite to finding employment. Furthermore, support must continue after people have found work so as to help them to keep their jobs and to continue to build their skills and capacity. He also stressed that Active Inclusion must not just emphasise helping people into work but must also support them to play an active part in society. He warned of the current danger of an increase in the working poor and stressed the need to ensure an adequate minimum income for all as a “sound basis for building a decent society”.

Olivier Marguery, President of EAPN France, said that the initiative on the fight against poverty in France described by Martin Hirsch and his colleagues is just one of a series of reforms introduced by the government over the past year. While EAPN France supports active solidarity as a new tool in the fight against poverty he expressed concerns about the impact on people living in poverty of some of the other reforms such as downsizing the number of civil servants, decentralisation, and the reform of pensions and introduction of budgetary constraints. The impact of globalisation is also evident in reform of the labour code and the increased emphasis on activation and more flexible competition. He expressed concern that the State is increasingly organising competition between state agencies and private actors to provide services. This, together with increased praise for individual success and competition, goes against the world of solidarity. In relation to developing and implementing the three pillars of Active Inclusion he stressed a number of points that should be taken into account. First, it is important to give trust to the target groups (i.e. people experiencing poverty) and listen to them. Thus their involvement in the development of Active Inclusion needs to be made more systematic. Secondly, it is important that people are never set aside and excluded from participation in society just because they are unemployed. Thirdly, implementing Active Inclusion implies the need to develop a new type of job or skill so that there is a global referent person to support people experiencing poverty. Such a referent person should not belong to any institution assuming a function of control. Fourthly, resources will have to be found to ensure that those furthest from the labour market have access to key services such as housing, transport and child care and particular attention will need to be given to groups such as lone parent and people with health difficulties. Fifthly, it will be essential to ensure that there is access for all to employment services and not just for those who are most easily employable. Sixthly, ensuring a decent basic income for all to ensure a decent life is an absolutely sine qua non. Such an income should be an unconditional right, linked to the price index. Seventhly, it is essential to involve people affected in the design of policies. In conclusion he stressed that EAPN seeks to ensure that the dignity of vulnerable people most distant from the labour market is recognised. This means guaranteeing an adequate minimum, providing high quality health and other services and strengthening the voice of vulnerable people in policy making.

Józef Niemiec, Confederal Secretary European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), said that Active Inclusion is a very important issue across Europe. Although Europe has got richer and richer with more jobs nevertheless poverty is still very high on the agenda and is even increasing. This is unacceptable and at present policies to address the issue are not on an equal footing. Thus there is a need for further development of Active Inclusion. However, he warned that this would not be enough. It is necessary to remedy financial and economic policies, especially in relation to the internal market, which create inequalities. There is thus a need to assess the social impact of all policies. He said that the current Slovenian and future French Presidencies of the EU have not shown the high level of ambition that is needed in this area and at present ETUC is disappointed in their efforts. He relied on Martin Hirsch to strengthen the focus on poverty issues during the French Presidency. He also welcomed the intention of the European Commission to strengthen the Social OMC and said that ETUC will examine their proposals. There is also a real need for Member States to commit to achieving ambitious anti-poverty objectives. He said that ETUC is making efforts to work with employers on addressing issues of poverty. There is a need to properly assess challenges at the level of the labour market and to create a conducive public environment for the development of Active Inclusion. Services of General Interest have a key role to play in promoting Active

Inclusion and it is essential that these are adequately resourced – at present there is a problem of a lack of money to fund policies. ETUC hopes to negotiate agreements with employers to create improvements for people who are most vulnerable. He concluded by stressing the need to organise a campaign to do away with the problem of the working poor as “we cannot accept having such massive numbers of working poor”.

Questions and Answers

In response to some questions and comments from the floor the speakers made a number of additional important points.

On the issue of the gap between the rich and poor Martin Hirsch agreed that there is currently a disconnection between the high level of remuneration of top managers and those at the bottom and he expressed interest in the idea of indexing the poverty threshold to the high level of salaries. He asked “what is the point of creating wealth if it is to create poverty?”

Antonia Carparelli said that a main concern of the European Commission is to make it clear that Active Inclusion is not a "Trojan horse" to weaken solidarity policies. If activation policies in some Member States are having an adverse impact on the reduction of poverty and social exclusion, the Commission will not hesitate to highlight the problem. On the other hand, one should not be afraid of efficiency. We need an "efficient justice", based on a sound analysis of the failure of policies to promote greater social inclusion.

On the question of links between trade unions and organisations like EAPN Martin Hirsch said that there is an increased solidarity between those working for the poor and trade unions and a growing recognition that they share the same interests. He felt that working together on Active Inclusion will help to further strengthen cooperation. Józef Niemiec acknowledged that there have sometimes been problems as historically the main focus of trade unions has been to defend workers rights. However, in the current situation a broader approach is needed and now the ETUC is keen to encourage networking with organisations working on poverty issues. He also stressed that the ETUC shares many of the same views on Active Inclusion as EAPN.

3. LESSONS FROM THE GROUND

During the morning three workshops took place focussing on experience on the ground in relation to the three pillars of Active Inclusion: adequate minimum income, access to services and access to employment. Case studies were presented in each workshop by EAPN national networks, each one highlighting a practical approach to the implementation of one of the pillars. On the basis of these presentations a discussion then took place in each workshop drawing out lessons that can be learnt from these experiences for the future development of Active Inclusion.

3.1 Adequate Minimum Income

The workshop on promoting Active Inclusion through adequate minimum income heard presentations from the Austrian network on Austria's new Minimum Income scheme and its limitations, from the Maltese network on the Dawl project, which is training currently unemployed women to disseminate information on water and energy saving techniques to householders and from the European Older People's Platform (AGE). As a result of these presentations and the ensuing discussion the workshop identified a series of key points necessary to ensure adequate and effective minimum income schemes. These were:

- Minimum Income should be on a level where it lifts people out of poverty;
- Minimum Income should be integrative into society and the labour market;
- Minimum Income schemes should be transparent and un-bureaucratic;
- There should be high standards of public administration of Minimum Income schemes;
- Minimum Income should reach out to those furthest from the labour market;
- For recipients of Minimum Income there should be a good service at the employment centres;
- Minimum Income schemes should be combined with activities to empower recipients;
- Minimum Income should lead to employability;
- Society should avoid stigmatizing people on Minimum Income;
- There should be a hierarchy of Minimum Income – Social services – Employment;
- Minimum Income is a fundamental right;
- Minimum Income should be indexed to wages not prices;
- Minimum Income should guarantee that nobody is left behind;
- Minimum Income should make it possible for people to make choices;
- Minimum Income should strengthen social cohesion;
- Minimum Income should be universal and unconditional;
- If there are conditions attached to minimum income schemes, these should be adapted to the individual situation of the Minimum Income recipients;
- Labour market participation should enhance income.

3.2 Access to Services

The workshop on promoting Active Inclusion through access to services heard presentations from the Czech network of an Equal project, *From eight to four*, which examined ways of helping homeless people to reintegrate into society and the employment process, from the Spanish network of an Equal project, *Bembea*, which aims to support immigrant women, particularly those experiencing domestic violence, in their insertion into society and the workplace and from the Belgian network on the work of the *Flanders Energy and Poverty Group*. As a result of these presentations and the ensuing discussion the group identified both a number of obstacles to access to services and some solutions to overcome these obstacles.

The main obstacles that were identified were:

- missing policies - there is a lack of public policies which make it really possible to ensure access to services;

- lack of financing - there is also a lack of resources provided in a consistent manner which allow access to services to be a reality;
- privatisation – the increase in the privatisation of services is an obstacle to providing services which are accessible to all, especially to the poorest;
- fragmentation – the services multiply and are at different territorial levels and this leads to confusion and makes them unknown or inaccessible to beneficiaries;
- no sustainability – the services, particularly those provided by charitable organisations, are provided with difficulty because of the undermining of the structures which support them.

The main solutions identified were:

- legislation – a better access to services may happen through legislative reforms facilitating access to services;
- advocacy in favour of improved access to services;
- networking – an effective partnership between the actors leads always to an increased access to services;
- adaptation to the needs of beneficiaries – it is necessary to start from the needs of people and not from the complexity of systems, that would be a way of guaranteeing that services are accessible;
- training – a reinforcement of the training of social workers about existing services and about the real needs of people would also be a way of increasing the accessibility of services.

3.3 Access to Employment

The workshop on promoting Active Inclusion through access to employment heard a presentation from the Irish network which outlined the strengths and weaknesses of a the Irish government's approach to activation and identified key elements of a positive model of activation and from the Danish network of the experiences from a transnational exchange project, *Forum for Holistic Integration (FOHOIN)*, which approached the issue of access to employment through a paradigm shift from treatment to learning. The ensuing discussion led to the identification of principles for Active Inclusion, some challenges and weaknesses, improving links and the role of Structural Funds.

The main principles for Active Inclusion through employment which were identified were:

- involve social NGOs in the initiation, design, governance and delivery of programmes
- establish holistic person-centred pathways to social re-integration;
- ensure adequacy of income, supporting services and quality employment;
- achieve dignity of the person in society and in work;
- promote NGOs/3rd Sector rather than privatised services as advocates and providers of mainstream solutions;
- establish quality standards for NGOs covering issues such as commitment and organisational impact.

The principle challenges and weaknesses that need to be addressed which were identified were:

- the growth of privatised service delivery;

- the need to achieve NGO parity with state agencies in local delivery;
- the need to engage with policy and programme development.

The importance of improving links between access to employment and the services and minimum income pillars of Active Inclusion was stressed:

- promote a holistic individualised, person-centred approach to Active Inclusion involving all three strands and ensure that the transversal values of quality and adequacy are evident in all pillars.

The need to strengthen the role played by EU Structural Funds in promoting access to employment was emphasised. In particular it was stressed that:

- the contribution of the Structural Funds has become increasingly invisible since the “reform” of the Lisbon agenda;
- access of NGOs to Structural Funds needs to be restored;
- Structural Funds must be targeted at supporting quality NGO role, at mainstreaming concepts and at advocacy;
- Structural Funds must be structured and targeted in ways to motivate Member States to invest in positive Active Inclusion.

4. DELIVERING AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

In the afternoon three parallel workshops concentrated on the development of integrated approaches on the ground to promote Active Inclusion in which the three pillars are mutually reinforcing. This raised the question as to whether and how Active Inclusion can lead to successful, integrated, multi-dimensional approaches which support the inclusion of people furthest from the labour market through ensuring adequate income, access to quality employment and access to services.

Each workshop began with a presentation by a network. The UK network examined the issue of Active Inclusion of people with a disability. FEANTSA presented its perspectives on the risks and factors necessary for success for an EU strategy on Active Inclusion. The Dutch network described local partnership project involving a broad range of actors to tackle poverty. As a result of the presentations, the workshop discussions and the ensuing plenary session four types of points emerged: first, some general points about the concept of Active Inclusion and the risks and potential of the concept; secondly, a number of key learning points for a successful approach on the ground; thirdly, some specific suggestions for amendments and additions to the discussion document *EAPN Proposals on Shadow Principles on Active Inclusion* (see Annex 1); and, fourthly, some suggestions for the future promotion and implementation of Active Inclusion.

4.1 Risks versus Potential of Active Inclusion

There were different views amongst participants as to the risks and opportunities associated with Active Inclusion.

Sceptical voices

Several participants raised concerns about the concept of Active Inclusion. They advised that EAPN should be cautious about embracing and promoting it. They warned that there is a risk of being trapped in a process without a clear context and content while other negative policy decisions on the market and economy are being taken that will undermine the positive potential of Active Inclusion. They suggested that it is up to the Commission, as its proponent, to promote it with national governments and that this should not be the task of NGOs.

The sceptics questioned why the idea of Active Inclusion had suddenly appeared on the EU agenda and why it is being implemented so rapidly. Some people wondered whether there is really some hidden agenda behind it. Several participants felt that there is a lack of clarity about the concept, particularly because the term “Active Inclusion” has no very clear meaning in English and even less in other languages. Its objectives are not sufficiently clear and it is not apparent what the real aim of Active Inclusion is. They felt that it reflects an exclusively economic language. Furthermore, it is also not clear if the concept is meant to apply only to people of working age or to everyone. If it is restricted to people of working age then it was pointed out that it would not be a useful instrument to use to ask for a minimum income for older people. Also, if it is restricted to people of working age is it intended to apply to everyone of working age or only those who potentially can access the labour market?

Some felt that Active Inclusion focuses too much just on addressing the consequences of poverty and social exclusion and is insufficiently focussed on their prevention. Others said that the concept fails to address issues such as the redistribution of wealth and resources. There was also a concern about the lack of clarity as to where Active Inclusion fits in with the Social OMC. Some wondered whether it is intended to replace it. Some felt that if it is just focussed on people of working age then there is a risk that the employment pillar will be stressed at the expense of the other two pillars, i.e. minimum income and access to services.

An opportunity to promote EAPN’s agenda

On the other hand other participants did not agree with the pessimistic views some contributors to the discussion and saw Active Inclusion as a useful tactical tool that could be used to advance EAPN’s agenda. They suggested that Active Inclusion can help EAPN to get into a dialogue on the issues that is important like adequate minimum income and ensuring adequate minimum standards for social services. It can be a tool to enable EAPN to engage more centrally in the debate about the internal market. Active Inclusion can be used to make it more difficult to have a completely liberalized market that undermines quality public services for all.

Several people disagreed with the view that the concept of Active Inclusion was being brought in in a rush as the first consultation was launched in 2005. They also felt that the concept is very clear as it has been developed in two Commission Communications. The starting point was the 1992 Commission Communication on minimum income which had been due to be updated but Member States didn’t want a new Communication on minimum income. Therefore the Commission “invented” the concept of “Active Inclusion” so as to nevertheless bring minimum income into discussion as one of the three pillars. They suggested that the current problems in promoting minimum income and effective policies to promote social inclusion don’t lie within the Commission, but rather the problems lie with the Member States’ governments which are mostly right

wing. Thus they argued that NGO's should engage in the promotion of the concept, because it is a way to "force" governments to do something they don't want to do.

The idea of adopting principles for all three strands was seen a good one, particularly if they reflect EAPN's proposals. Thus EAPN should help to influence them and to ensure that they are put into practice. EAPN should also monitor that the government delivers on all three pillars.

4.2 Developing an Effective Approach on the Ground

From the case studies and discussion a number of learning points were highlighted as being necessary to ensure an effective approach on the ground. It was felt that these should then be strongly reflected in EAPN's "Proposals on Shadow Principles on Active Inclusion" (see 4.3 below).

Indivisibility of all 3 strands

Throughout the day it was repeatedly stressed that an effective approach on the ground must involve giving importance to all three strands. They must be seen as being mutually reinforcing and indivisible.

Primacy of adequate minimum income

An important lesson from the ground is that while access to employment and to services are very important, an adequate minimum income is critical. It provides the foundation for people to start looking for work. Securing a minimum income enhances people's opportunities to look for a quality job or to participate in society.

Respect for people's dignity and rights

In developing and implementing Active Inclusion measures it is essential that they are based on respecting people's rights and ensuring that people experiencing poverty and social inclusion are treated with respect for their dignity and are not blamed as if they were in the wrong.

Participation

Effective programmes on the ground are most likely to be developed when there is active participation of those affected by poverty and social exclusion. This participation needs to go beyond just consultation and to real negotiations which have a real impact.

Effective coordination

A key to effective delivery is that arrangements are in place both nationally, regionally and locally to ensure that the supports of all three strands are available to people in a coordinated, holistic and joined-up manner. This means enabling people to establish access to all services through one contact point that is easily accessible to them, and to developing outreach services. Effective coordination also means ensuring that Active Inclusion measures are not seen in isolation but that there are effective links with other policy areas such as economic, fiscal and education policies.

Progression through a tailored approach

The importance of focussing on and respecting the particular needs, aspirations, motivations and dreams of individuals in a flexible manner was stressed. This means developing appropriate tailored packages of supports to assist their progressive

inclusion in jobs and society was stressed. It is important to fit services to people and not people to services.

Prevention as well as problem solving

It is important to deliver services in relation to all three pillars of Active Inclusion that will prevent poverty and social exclusion and not only address people's problems and difficulties after they have arisen.

Promoting quality, adequacy and effective delivery

It is essential to ensure that there are core standards set for all three strands which emphasise coverage, adequacy, accessibility and transparency so as to ensure that service providers are required to meet these.

Recognising that there are not sufficient jobs

An honest approach to promoting Active Inclusion for everyone means recognising that there is not sufficient space in the labour market to include everyone. The labour market cannot absorb everybody who would like to and is able to work.

Supporting Active Inclusion through redistribution

If Active Inclusion is to be effective it must involve redistribution of wealth and resources to create a fair society for everyone. Active Inclusion is about how we live with each other.

Promoting the social economy

Experience on the ground highlights the important role that the social economy plays in providing job opportunities for people which may not be available in the main labour market.

Ensuring effective monitoring and impact assessment

The importance of regular monitoring and evaluation to ensure effective delivery of programmes on the ground was highlighted. Thus putting in place effective arrangements to monitor and report on the actual implementation and impact of Active Inclusion measures was seen as being a key to ensuring effective implementation

4.3 Ensuring Strong Principles to Underpin Active Inclusion

The idea of having a strong set of principles which would underpin the implementation of Active Inclusion received a broad welcome. EAPN's draft proposals (see Annex 1) were seen as providing a good basis for such principles. However, it was suggested that these could be further developed by taking into account the learning points from the workshops as to what is necessary to ensure an effective approach on the ground (see 4.2 above). In addition, a number of specific suggestions for reinforcing them were made.

An important overall suggestion was that EAPN's draft should set out clearly at the beginning a broad definition of Active Inclusion and what it means to have an inclusive society. It should stress the role that Active Inclusion can play in redressing the current situation where the social dimension of the EU has been neglected and which has led to poorer rural and urban working class voters feeling alienated from the EU (as the "no" vote in the Irish referendum on the Lisbon Treaty has shown).

Overall the tone of the paper could be more assertive and less passive, more socially than individually oriented and more focussed on prevention and not just on addressing the consequences of poverty and social exclusion. It should also emphasise the need to establish core minimum standards for the three strands.

Overarching and cross-cutting principles

The overarching principles should assert the importance of a rights-based approach, the indivisibility of fundamental rights and the need to fight against discrimination and racism. They should stress that Active Inclusion should be about ensuring that people have the security that is necessary to enable them to access their rights. It was also suggested that, while recognizing the indivisibility of the three pillars, a positive hierarchy should be established: first income, then services and decent work.

Another key concern was the need to state more clearly how participation could be developed within the concept of Active Inclusion. The principles should emphasize that inclusion starts with letting people participate, but that participation must also lead to positive outcomes.

It was suggested that EAPN's third draft overarching principle (*Respect for individual needs and preferences*) should include the idea of individual aspirations, motivations and dreams.

Principles on Adequate Minimum Income

It was stressed that the principles in relation to the pillar on Adequate Minimum Income (AMI) should stress that AMI is a right and that support should be unconditional. Access to minimum income schemes should be on an individual basis and not be based on a household approach. It was also suggested that the definition of adequacy should be closely linked with participative approach. Thus those experiencing poverty and social exclusion should be involved in defining adequacy.

It was suggested that EAPN's fifth draft principle under AMI (*Making work attractive*) should be moved to the section on decent work.

Principles on decent work and participation fully in society

In the section on decent work the importance of labour market policies respecting people's talents and choices was stressed. Another theme that was emphasized was ensuring the adequacy of income from work. Work must pay and the issue of adequate minimum wages which are above the poverty line should be included. It is also important that the principles on decent work recognize that employment is not only about bread but it is also about how people like to participate in society. Employment is not only an issue for the poor. The whole society should be integrated in the process and there should be more on what participation means.

It was suggest that EAPN's fifth draft principle under decent work (*Sustainable and adapted work respectful of people's needs*) should add references to more legal instruments such as the European charter of social rights.

It was suggested that EAPN's fifth draft principle under quality Services of General Interest (*Accountable, transparent community proximity services*) should stress the need for responsibility at local as well as national levels.

4.4 Suggestions for the Future Development of Active Inclusion

A number of suggestions were made during the discussions on the future promotion of Active Inclusion.

Effective communication and promotion

The concept of Active Inclusion needs to be promoted and explained at all levels so that its comprehensive and integrated nature is understood. Governments have to be persuaded that it is not a cost but a benefit to society. It was suggested that EAPN should develop a communication strategy which would set out very clearly the three main things it wants from Active Inclusion and the three dangers that must be avoided.

Strengthen links to the EU Structural Funds

It was suggested that Active Inclusion could be used as a tactical tool to open up discussion of how the Structural Funds are used and the sort of changes that are needed to support people's inclusion. This could help to challenge the current very narrow view of the labour market and also the current trend to stymie and marginalise NGOs in the use of Structural Funds.

Clarify link to Social OMC

It was suggested that it could be important to clarify the relation between the Active Inclusion process and the Social OMC. In this regard the Social OMC framework and the cycle of Joint Reports and Social Protection and Social Inclusion could provide a regular framework for annual reporting on Member States' performance and for making recommendations for improvements. However, another view was that some confusion could be helpful in allowing more room for manoeuvre and more opportunities for groups like EAPN to push its own agenda on issues like adequate minimum income and to promote what is seen as "good activation".

- Annex -

EAPN Proposals on Principles on Active Inclusion



EAPN Principles on Active Inclusion

September 2008

EAPN Principles on Active Inclusion: An Integrated strategy to deliver fundamental rights

Overarching Principles

- 1) Respect for human dignity
- 2) Freedom from discrimination
- 3) Respect for individual needs and preferences
- 4) Holistic, multidimensional and integrated
- 5) Participatory and inclusive

Principles on Adequate Minimum Income

- 6) Adequacy for a dignified life
- 7) De-coupled from the obligation to take any paid work
- 8) Easily understood, transparent and effective
- 9) Continuous and sustainable
- 10) Making work attractive – a positive balance between adequate income and wages

Principles on decent work and participation fully in society

- 11) Positive social activation based on human rights
- 12) Individualised, tailored and multidimensional
- 13) Supporting life long learning for life and not just work
- 14) Long term support to sustainable, quality employment
- 15) Sustainable and adapted work respectful of people's needs
- 16) Joined up integrated delivery based on partnership

Principles on affordable, quality Services of General Interest, particularly social services

- 17) Respectful of human dignity, security and fundamental rights
- 18) Affordable, accessible and reaching the target group

- 19) Personalised, holistic and sustainable
- 20) Participative and empowering
- 21) Accountable, transparent community proximity services
- 22) Investing in quality employment conditions for social services

Active Inclusion: An integrated strategy based on fundamental human rights

Background: EAPN has contributed to the debate on Active Inclusion through both rounds of the current consultation. The present document focuses specifically on the principles which EAPN affirm must guide the EU's active inclusion approach, if it is to contribute to the delivery of the Common Objectives of the Open Method of Coordination in social protection and social inclusion 2006¹ and to support the overarching objective of social inclusion and the eradication of poverty. The Active Inclusion concept has also been extensively debated within our network, which attaches a lot of attention to this Commission initiative. The present document has been discussed during an EAPN seminar devoted to Active Inclusion in Paris on 13 June 2008, as well as over the summer.

Definition: Active Inclusion is defined by the Commission as “A comprehensive **policy mix** combining three elements (...) (i) a **link to the labour market** through job opportunities or vocational training; (ii) **income support** at a level that is sufficient for people to have a dignified life; and (iii) **better access to services** that may help remove some of the hurdles encountered by some individuals and their families in entering mainstream society, thereby supporting their re-insertion into employment”.²

We support this approach, while demanding that it is clearly driven by a strong ambition for an **inclusive society**, preventing anybody from being left behind, and aiming to rebalance EU policies towards a more social Europe. The principles below are underpinned by this vision.

The primary overarching principle must be the affirmation of an integrated approach, based on fundamental human rights. This must underline the right of all to a life free of poverty, to social inclusion and active participation as part of a cohesive society, based on solidarity. The language and focus of the Active Inclusion principles need to stress specifically the rights to an:

- adequate income for a dignified life.
- affordable, quality services of general interest, including social services.
- a decent job and to participate fully in society

The strategy should demonstrate visibly and explicitly how these rights are to be activated and guaranteed by the EU and member states.

Overarching Principles.

1. Respect for human dignity

¹ Common Objective

² [European Commission consultation on the promotion of the active inclusion of people furthest from the labour market](#), COM 2006 544 final

The starting point is the respect for human dignity which is enshrined in the EU Treaty and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This must be based on the recognition that all human beings are intrinsically worthy and deserve unconditional respect, regardless of age, gender, social background or ethnic origin, religion or sexual orientation. This respect is owed to every individual by the mere fact that he or she is a "member of the human family" (Universal Declaration of Human Rights) 1948, Preamble). This intrinsic worthiness is widely recognized by international law as the source of human rights. A respect for human dignity means a recognition that people should never be treated solely as means, but as ends in themselves. People should not be instrumentalized nor viewed solely in terms of their economic value. These rights are now made legally binding under the EU Lisbon Treaty through the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, as well as through the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of the Council of Europe, as well as the international covenants drawn up by the United Nations. The right to live a life free of poverty is a key fundamental right.³

The implementation of Active Inclusion, should be inspired by respect, rather than blame and stigmatisation.

2. Freedom from Discrimination

In essence, any denial of fundamental human rights to a dignified life is discrimination. Two European Community Directives, the Racial Equality Directive and the Employment Framework Directive, define a set of principles that offer everyone in the EU a common minimum level of legal protection against discrimination based on a more narrow interpretation of discrimination. The directives prevent people in the European Union from being discriminated against on grounds of race and ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, primarily in the workplace. This comes in addition to the numerous laws adopted in the past 30 years to fight discrimination based on sex and to allow for equal treatment between women and men in the workplace. The current proposal over the extension of these rights to other groups and to access to goods and services is currently being debated. However, more action is needed – namely the commitment to the EU to embed the fundamental right of freedom from discrimination in accessing all human rights, for all groups, in all policies, thus delivering EU and Member State commitments to the International conventions and charters to which they have signed up.

3. Respect for individual needs and preferences

Based on human rights, an effective strategy must focus on people's individual needs but also individual aspirations, motivation and dreams, rather than an instrumentalist approach geared to their use to the economy. It will recognize the specific obstacles to the realization of these individual human rights – particularly the right to an adequate income, quality services geared to their needs and decent employment, underpinned by their right to participate as an equal and respected individual in society. This respect must differentiate between a person's changing needs through the life-course (childhood, youth, adults, older people, those with families) but recognize the very different needs and obstacles faced by specific groups– immigrants (including undocumented migrants); ethnic, black and religious minorities; women; lone parents; those

³ United Nations Declaration of Human Rights.

discriminated against because of religion or sexual orientation; people with disabilities and health difficulties, but also those who suffer long-term unemployment, poverty wages and/or live in poverty.

4. Holistic, multidimensional and integrated

Poverty and social exclusion are multidimensional phenomena. It is not possible to separate a person's needs according to administrative divisions. People need and have a right to - a decent house, a job, access to effective health and education services as well as sufficient income to afford to eat and drink properly, heat and light their homes, provide support for their families and participate fully in a normal social life and with their local communities. This is the particular added value of the Active Inclusion approach. However it will only represent progress if the pillars are viewed as mutually reinforcing and indivisible, and that arrangements are put in place both nationally, regionally and locally to ensure that services are made available in all three strands in a coordinated, holistic and joined-up manner. Otherwise Active inclusion runs the danger of instrumentalizing the poor and social excluded focusing overly on their “*value to the economy*” through strong activation measures, rather than the recognition of human worth. For EAPN, a key pre-requisite is to view the 3 pillars as a triangle, with access to adequate income and quality services at the base, providing the essential pre-conditions for effective activation approaches which support people to get decent employment and to participate more fully in their communities. Without a guaranteed income which can cover basic costs and access to key services like housing, health and education, as well as support services – like child and dependent care, work can often not be a realistic option, without causing great hardship. Providing people with security – based on a predictable income and access to services, will enable people to make long-term plans for the future, including employment.

5. Participatory and Inclusive

The model that the EU is promoting based on the participatory democracy clauses of the Lisbon Treaty as well on the commitments to good governance in the Open Method of Coordination on social protection and social inclusion, continually confirm the importance of active participation of all stakeholders in the governance process. But more emphasis must be given to the recognition that an integrated Active Inclusion approach will only be successful if the people most affected are directly engaged in the process of developing the measures, and particularly in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Such participation should have a real impact. Putting individual rights and needs at the centre means also putting participation and empowerment of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion and the NGO's in which they participate, at the centre of the strategy. Participation, in this sense, is not an “add- on” but an essential part of effective policy development and delivery.

Right to an adequate minimum income for a dignified life

The Principles must focus clearly on the goal of ensuring adequate income for a dignified life and represent significant progress from the 92 Recommendations. EAPN can only underline the crucial role and importance of this commitment in the light of worsening inflation and prices. EAPN agree that the wording of the 92 may remain valid, encompassing the notion of “right” and human dignity, but the problem lies in measurement and implementation, and a broader commitment to participation in society. Stronger instruments are needed if this right is to be made a reality. We insist that while recognizing the indivisibility of the three pillars, a positive hierarchy should be established: income first, then services, then decent work.

Key Principles

6. Adequacy for a dignified life

The definition of adequacy could be drawn from the definition used in the 92 Regulation “*sufficient resources and social assistance to live in a manner compatible with human dignity*”. However a stronger reference is made in the Joint Report on Social Inclusion 2002, which refers to “*an adequate income and resources to live in human dignity ...with sufficient income to lead a life with dignity and to participate in society as full members*”. It is clear that the actual level and measurement through indicators need to be relative, adapted to the circumstances of each member state or even at regional/local level, reflecting the different living standards and aspirations of a “*normal dignified life*”. However, given that the poverty threshold is already a relative indicator – EAPN is of the view that a commitment could be made that the levels set should be at least at the level of the at-risk of poverty threshold (ie 60% of median household income). Access to minimum income should be on an individual basis and not only based on an household approach.

The different needs of household groupings and target groups however, must also be recognized – A specific challenge is to ensure that the specific household needs of people and specific target groups are adequately covered – for example that lone parents have adequate income to cover childcare/transport costs as well as school-related costs including trips/excursions, that migrants have sufficient income to cover cost of language classes/training, that disabled or long-term sick have sufficient to cover adaptations, support services, transport.

Equally important, will be the establishment of an adequate participatory governance process to develop the appropriate levels of adequacy⁴. This process could help to ensure that minimum income levels are regularly up-dated related to the movements of prices and services. Another proposal could be the establishment of an independent index-linked budget standard of adequate income levels linked to the regular assessment -reality check- involving a focus group methodology⁵.

⁴ See approach proposed by the EAPN Ireland Social Standards project www.eapn.ie. The project proposed a detailed process involving regional focus groups involving people experiencing poverty and with reasonable incomes, to establish adequacy in terms of key criteria for sufficient income to cover agreed basic services and products, adapted to the national/regional context (Food, Housing, Basic Utilities, Transport, Education, Health, Clothes, Social and Cultural Life and participation..).

⁵ See EAPN UK Shadow NAP Inclusion Report 2006-8.

7. A social right, de-coupled from the obligation to take any paid work

Increasingly minimum income, where it is available, is linked to the obligation to take any paid work, irrespective of its economic rewards or its social and personal costs. If the right to adequate income is to be sustainable, then it needs to be de-coupled from this obligation to take any paid work and be more respectful of the individual's ability to determine what options are going to improve their life chances. This does not mean that there is no expectation of work, indeed the right to **work** must be underlined, but the right to an **adequate income** should not depend on this. EAPN is strongly of the view that to make the right to adequate income subject to a narrow definition of "*active availability to work*", according the narrowest of "*Make Work Pay*" strategies, is both an attack on human rights and ineffective in terms of supporting people into sustainable work or on the road to inclusion. The starting assumption needs to be that adequate income is a human right and that most people want and have the right to decent work. A more organic, developmental, and indeed optimistic approach about human nature, is likely to be more effective. This has implications for the implementation of services, where so-called one-stop shops often have a contradictory role in supposedly "*supporting and ensuring adequate income*" at the same times as "*sanctioning and reducing benefits*" because of failure to get work. This is only likely to lead to distrust and negative communication between the employment services and the people they are most trying to help, as well as resulting in lower benefits because unjust sanctions are applied.

8. Easily understood, transparent and effective

A theoretical right to adequate income is not going to challenge poverty and social exclusion. Most Member States have major problems in take-up of existing benefits, due to the opaqueness and complexity of the entangled mesh of different types of income support schemes, and often the stigmatization that goes with this. Any system needs to give priority to simplifying the system, making the process and outcomes transparent and putting a premium on the means to ensure that the strategy is effective at reaching those who need it and takes them out of poverty. In the view of many EAPN networks, universal benefits, such as non-means tested child benefits etc, are often the most successful in reaching those who need them, as it targets the delivery of benefits to the main career – usually the women, and is accessible by all. Links with the tax system, eg negative tax can more productively be used to channel the necessary redistribution.

The right to benefit should be clearly displayed and form the basis of the service- client relationship. Credibility will also be enhanced by adequate, transparent and independent monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the services in delivering adequate income to those who need it and how far they have impacted on poverty.

9. Continuous and sustainable

A major problem for most people in poverty is the unpredictability of income support. This may be due to the implementation of sanctions and other levers, but also because of the realities of a precarious labour market where they may be moving from low-paid, insecure work to benefits and back., often losing in-kind benefits, or waiting for "benefits" to be re-started or to kick in. This leads to untold hardship, debt and discouragement. People in poverty need to be able to plan their

expenditure effectively, and as a consequence – their lives. Otherwise the effort can often appear not worth it. This means that steps should be taken to ensure that no abrupt changes (particularly reductions) are made to their income levels, without sufficient warning. Particular attention has to be made to “transitions” from different types of benefit eg social assistance, to working credit and insurance-based contributory based income replacement schemes to ensure that “traps” are avoided. A bottom-up approach, affirming people’s rights to benefits and based on people’s needs, which analyses real pathways and their consequences together with those affected, would clarify the pitfalls and gaps and help to engender the necessary security for people to plan their lives.

10. Making Work Attractive – a positive hierarchy between adequate income and wages

The main focus of “*make work pay*” has been to use the reduction or sanctioning of benefits as a lever to create an “*incentive*” to accept often low-paid, low-quality jobs. The use of benefits as a “carrot and stick”, is generally de-humanising, causes untold hardships and often counterproductive.⁶ It is unlikely to encourage people to plan and positively approach the search for sustainable work. A more effective approach is to use adequate social income, including minimum income, as a positive tool to guarantee the security needed for activation. Benefits should be used as a positive incentive to face the extra costs and risk when resuming a job after unemployment. The link between adequate income and minimum wage needs to be rights- focused and more effective, creating a progressive hierarchy starting from an adequate minimum income, as defined and measured above, and ensuring that the Minimum Wage is set at a significant level above this. This in the end will be a more successful approach than subsidies to employers or tax credits for low wages, in tackling working poverty and ensuring that work is worthwhile.

Right to decent work and to participate fully in society

The right to work, needs to be reinforced, rather than the obligation in “partnership with people on the poverty line”. A social vision that starts from the assumption that people want to work, to be useful and to contribute to their families and their communities, should inform policies on decent work and support for participation in society. People are only asking that they should be valued and treated with dignity as “human beings” with legitimate needs, hopes fears and aspirations who need support along the road to participating in society.

Key Principles

11. Positive social activation based on human rights⁷

Activation needs to be built on a hopeful vision of people and the society in which we want to live. The focus of activation policies should be to develop a “*pathway*” to social inclusion and to “*full*

⁶ See Reports of People Experiencing Poverty Meeting 2006,7 and 8 and EAPN Book: Voices from the Poverty Line: Jobs and Unemployment in an enlarged EU.

⁷ Most of this section is adapted from the EAPN Positive Activation Criteria paper – October 2006.

*participation in society*⁸ which hopefully can include access to employment but does not only focus on this objective. The aim of activation is social inclusion and professional mobility by empowering people to improve their competencies and skills, physical and mental health, to establish social contacts, improve their feeling of participation and citizenship. Support and accompaniment to social inclusion is emphasized, not obligations. Such an approach to activation is an investment in human, social, psychological and cultural resources, and sees labour market integration as one element to promoting social integration in a wider sense. This approach is urgently needed to counter the current strategies aimed at “*creaming*” applicants who are seen as easiest to place and dividing people into “*those considered apt for work and those not*”. This must be recognized as a deeply divisive and socially unjust policy leading to a new type of segregation and two-tier society, which replaces the old division of “**deserving and undeserving poor**” with “**employable and unemployable**”, discarding people in one moment as being without use to society.

12. Individualised, tailored and multidimensional

The starting point takes the whole person into consideration and acknowledges the diversity of age, experience etc ie ethnic or cultural background, household status, gender, age, disabilities or health status. It analyses the specific barriers they may face to inclusion or to overcome discrimination and provides solutions, particularly in the provision of vital flanking services – like affordable childcare, help with transport, specific training..... The strategy needs to be broad, taking the multi-complexity of problems into consideration and offering tailored, but multidimensional intervention for individual needs and expectations. Such a social activation approach can therefore be the most effective for engaging with the most excluded groups with the most serious problems, who are furthest away from the job market, including alcoholics and drug addicts, people with health or psychological problems, single mothers with little support, immigrants with poor language skills, and to tackle difficulties over income, housing, loneliness, low social skills, communication, language, training qualifications etc.

The social activation approach explicitly recognizes the person’s rights and the necessity to value and respect their contribution and treat them with dignity, as fellow human beings. It builds on the strengths, reinforcing existing competences and helps the person work to overcome weaknesses. Always at the fore must be the determination to respect the person and their sensibilities aiming to design a strategy which reflects their own preferences, wishes and priorities. For example in the case of helping access to childcare - ensuring that people can access good quality, affordable local services and helping to overcome the suspicion and lack of confidence in these services that many people in poverty feel.

13. Supporting life-long learning for life not just work!

The focus of the social activation approach is developmental aiming to improve personal, social and vocational skills and competencies, enabling further social integration as well as steps in to work. This means that vocational training is only seen in the overall continuum of competence and confidence building. The priority is to build confidence, gradually reinforce competences and move

⁸ Joint Report on Social Inclusion 2002

on from a place of security and achievement to more focused vocational training and education. Equally important will be a specific education on rights⁹, particularly in new democracies where awareness of rights is very low, and assumptions about the role of the state in relationship to the individual is constantly evolving. Once in work, skills development is crucial to help particularly relatively unskilled workers progress to better jobs, but needs to reinforce and build on competences which will serve them for future jobs and lives (a broader lifelong learning approach), particularly in the context of flexible working and insecure contracts. Recognition of existing competences is also vital, rather than a rigid focus on formal qualifications, which many excluded people have not been able to acquire. This includes valuing experience and learning gained in informal and non-formal settings eg voluntary work. This type of learning, is also often more effective in supporting people to personal and professional progress.

14. Long-term support to sustainable, quality employment

Work must ensure a route out of poverty and represent a progressive step on the road to greater personal and professional development as well as a pathway to integration in society. This means implementing much stricter criteria of what constitutes a reasonable offer of quality work, related to guaranteeing social standards at EU and national level (ie in relation to working time, security of work, as well as fighting in-work poverty by supporting decent levels of wages, secure contracts, high levels of social protection including for part-time jobs). Adequate minimum wages are vital to guarantee a decent living standard for all. Quality work means providing long-term, continuous support into sustainable employment both in the phases of social participation, accessing work and once in work. The approach needs to be flexible and recognize changing needs as a person builds confidence, or experiences changes/difficulties in their personal or family situation, in their health situation or in the state of their disabilities, or in relation to difficulties over legal restrictions on migration, income difficulties etc as well as in work. The support has to provide security and make a commitment to obtaining sustainable solutions to often structural difficulties of exclusion, which will not be solved by a quick fix/short term solution.

Once in work, strategies also need to be in place to ensure progression and transition to better, employment and on maintaining people in decent work. This means focusing on groups that are most vulnerable to losing their jobs through redundancy or restructuring, or are in precarious, insecure or temporary employment. A more progressive and less punitive approach must also be employed to support people currently working in the informal labour market, which often offers the only realistic possibility of a decent income to specific excluded groups which takes them out of poverty – particularly migrants, ethnic minorities and lone mothers.

15. Sustainable and adapted work respectful of people's needs

Decently paid work can be a vital support to people who have been excluded for a long period and is a key tool for social inclusion and building cohesive society. It can give people new confidence, social relationships, skills and competences, as well as a vitally important beneficial financial return. However for many people returning to work after a long period of unemployment or with

⁹ European Commission assessment of the JIMs 2004.

specific difficulties – eg long term sickness, mental illness or disabilities – specific adaptations to the working environment and conditions are necessary if work is to be sustainable. This has to be done through agreement with the person concerned. Equally for parents, particularly women as the main carers – a supportive environment to help them develop work-life balance through flexible working, childcare support is vital. This however should not be viewed as a cost to employers or the state but as an investment in the future - a key element to preventing unemployment and further social exclusion.

More investment must also be made to counter discrimination and promote diversity. Major barriers exist for key groups to equal access and progress to decent jobs due to discrimination – on the grounds of age, gender, ethnic or cultural status, relation or sexual orientation. Governments should be ensuring implementation of current and new EU legal instruments in this field, but it cannot stop there. Strategies must be drawn up with social partners to focus on the specific difficulties that each of these groups face in both accessing the workplace and progressing within the labour market and the joint development of pro-active strategies. The creation of decent jobs which can meet the real needs of those furthest from the labour market requires the involvement and commitment of communities, as well as more responsible and ethical responses from Companies... Social economy and social enterprises, as mainly non-for profit organizations, with predominantly social objectives are a clear tool for inclusion, as long as they are adequately supported and resourced.

16. Joined up integrated delivery based on partnership

The most effective strategies to promote sustainable inclusive labour markets and promote social participation will involve wide ranging networking with all relevant actors at local level. This must clearly include the traditional actors on the labour market – employers/agencies/trade unions as well as employment/training and education services. However, real joined up and effective support for people experiencing poverty will ensure the involvement of health care services, social services, housing sector, local communities as well as the person themselves and their families and social network. An integrated plan and approach involving joined up planning and delivery is essential.

Right to affordable, quality Services of General Interest, particularly social services.

EAPN highlights the need to focus on the right to access of all Services of General Interest, and that the key principles of Universal Service Obligations should be honoured and implemented – particularly affordable, continuous, quality universal services. We however highlight the special role of Social and Health Services, in supporting the social inclusion of people experiencing poverty. For SGI, particularly network industries (energy, water, transport) as basic utilities, the main need is to ensure that the Universal Service Obligations are respected, recognizing the serious impact that particularly affordability/ and equal access can have on fundamental rights to a decent standard of living. These concerns are likely to become more serious in the light of rising food and

energy prices. For personalized social and health services, the personalized relationship and asymmetrical relationship where most users are not in an equal relationship with the provider raises the need for a more exacting set of principles.

17. Respectful of personal human dignity, security and fundamental rights

All Services of General Interest need to be delivered in such a way that the person is treated with respect and their right to access equal services honoured. They should reflect the rights outlined in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the European Convention of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, as well as in the European Social Charter. In particular they should respect user's preferences and be provided without discrimination on grounds of age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, race, religious belief and social origin. Their right to a safe and secure environment, is a further key need, particularly in relation to care services provided to children, disabled and older people. People's rights to such services also need to be made publicly known. This is particularly an issue in some New Member States. Confidentiality should be respected and an independent complaints procedure adopted which is easily understandable and usable by ordinary people themselves.

In the case of personal social and health services, a more personalized, on-going systematic relationship would be expected to be established between the provider and user, which builds a vital personal relationship based on respect.

18. Affordable, accessible and reaching the target group

Quality services need to fulfill their social objectives, as specified in the Universal Service Obligations. However, the expansion of the internal market and the impact of the current EU framework competition and state aids, as well as increased pressure to reduce public deficits and spending on social protection is leading to increased privatization of services, and reduced or lower quality services. Unless the Universal Service Obligations are carefully monitored, these services run the risk of substantially reducing the access of people on low incomes or socially excluded groups, who do not fulfill the criteria and where the provision to such groups is unprofitable. A key group that is in danger of exclusion from services is migrants, particularly undocumented migrants and asylum seekers.. A key principle of quality must therefore be that the services reach all the intended target audience, particularly those in most need – and that any obstacles of price, or geographical or physical access are identified and removed. A clearer definition must be given to what is affordable and for whom. For example in the provision of childcare for low- income single parents who wish to return to work or education, high costs and inaccessibility – ie too far away from the home or workplace, create an insuperable barrier to returning to work.

In terms of some basic services like Energy, some countries have calculated what is considered to be affordable energy prices, drawing on a definition of Energy Poverty where by it is judged unaffordable when people have to spend more than 10% of disposable income to heat and light a home to an acceptable level. (UK). Failure to ensure accessibility and affordability will restrict the users of the service and will undermine any quality framework whose main objective is quality services to promote social inclusion.

19. Personalized, holistic and sustainable

People experiencing poverty want to be treated as human beings with individual needs. This can only be achieved through a strong commitment to personalized services which create a pact between the user and the provider and which make a commitment to on-going, long-term support. The user has the right to decide on the specific elements of the services provided and to curtail them when they wish. The services need to reflect their changing needs – either because of changing personal circumstances – geographical, health, disability, or through the life course. The services also need to take a holistic approach and deal with the whole person. This means a multidimensional approach which looks at the interrelationship between different needs and sets up an integrated response – eg looking at housing, employment, training, childcare and health support needs.. This requires that the service is planned and coordinated together with other services, in an integrated, team approach.

20. Participative and empowering

In all Services of General Interest, the user needs to be actively involved in the development and delivery of the service, ensuring that real on-going and changing needs are met. In for example Energy Services – it is vital that people on low incomes who are currently in danger of losing services because they cannot afford them or are too much in debt, are actively consulted on the development and impact of the services, to ensure that providers are able to meet their Universal Service Obligations. The regulating bodies both at national and EU level, should see the participation of low-income users as a key element to ensuring effective delivery. In terms of Social Services of General Interest, the on-going personalized relationship, fundamental to the providing support, requires a more structured on-going involvement. Personal social services should include as a key objective the achievement of autonomy and the empowerment of the user which can involve the development of the user to the position of a volunteer in the same service. This implies that the service should actively support the person to participate in the services and the community, and acquire increasing confidence and power through their own self representation and action. It also implies the development of an active participative governance structure in the management of the service – involving users as a group able to represent for themselves their demands and needs for the better delivery of the services.

21. Accountable, transparent community proximity services

Key social services like housing, personalized care and social services cannot be developed separately from the community in which they serve. The objective must be to promote more socially cohesive communities through a bottom-up community development approach which aims to engage the communities in the development and delivery of new and existing services. In reality this means an active partnership approach, involving all key actors, including users – existing, prospective or currently excluded users, local authorities, tenant's associations, employers and trade unions in an active community management approach. The management of all Services of General Interest, must also be carried out in an open and transparent fashion, with clearly defined and known guidelines and methods of operating, and the rights of the users to information,

complaint and engagement in the delivery of services directly stipulated. In terms of social services, accountability is owed to the individuals that use the service, but also to the local community who funds the service and expects its needs to be served.. Access to records and data is particularly crucial, for example as to the operating mechanisms, costs, profits – effectiveness and efficiency in delivering services. Regular monitoring and evaluation should be done, not only by the users/providers/workers and board but by independent assessment and a community board, and should ensure a qualitative as well as a quantitative assessment of outcomes, taking on board the views. The responsibility for delivering and monitoring such services lies at both local and national level..

22. Investing in quality employment conditions for social services

In many community organizations, the line between paid and unpaid staff is a narrow one. A constant feature, however, is the low value placed on the “caring” work, primarily done, as it is by women and often migrant workers. Whilst up-skilling, and increasing lifelong learning and training for all workers and helpers is vital, more needs to be done to value existing competences and to invest in quality employment conditions and wages for these services as essential supports for the future of a socially cohesive society.