

10 ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT OF

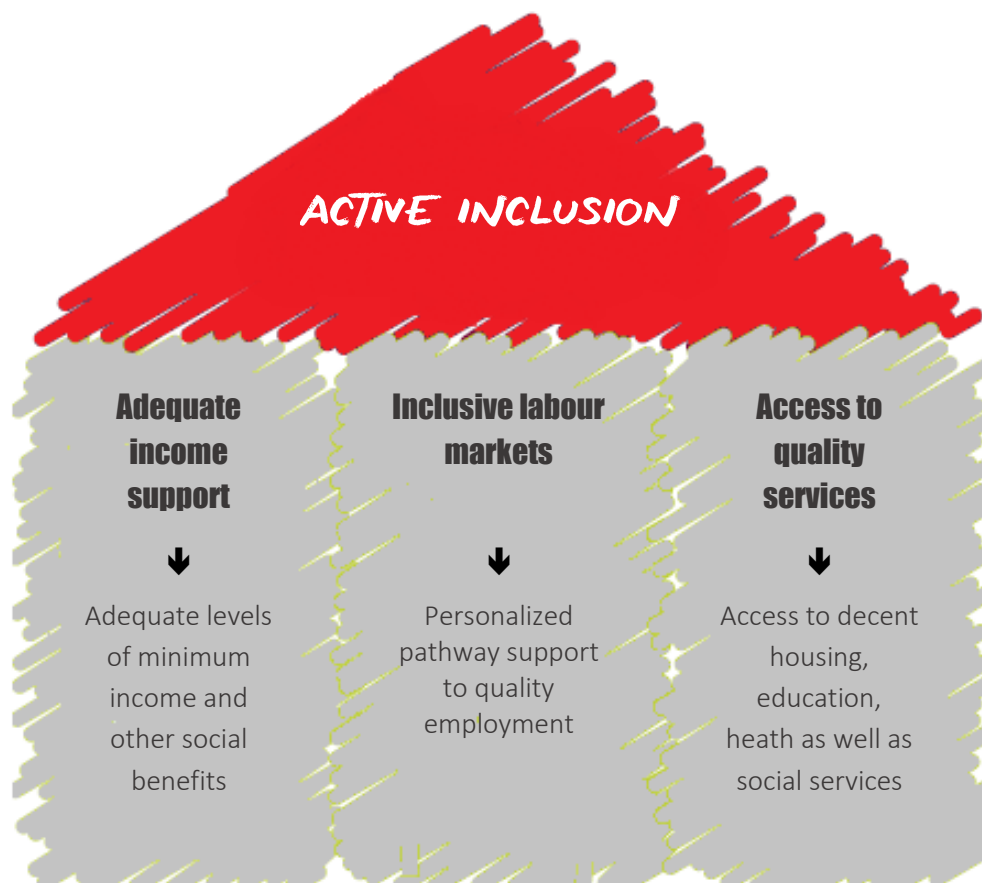
Active Inclusion

what is Active Inclusion?

Active Inclusion is a strategy developed by the European Commission in 2008 and is designed to support people of working age who are experiencing social exclusion to **live a life in dignity** and help them move towards a **decent job** or to get more **confidence** and skills to **participate** more actively in their communities.

The strategy aims to “facilitate the integration into sustainable quality of employment of those who can work and provide resources which are sufficient to live in dignity, together with support for social participation for those who cannot.”¹

The Active Inclusion Strategy has **three elements** which are to be implemented in an **integrated** manner.





In two recent EU progress reports¹ on the implementation of the 2008 Active Inclusion Recommendation², it is evident that little progress has been made in providing an **integrated comprehensive strategy** for active inclusion. As a result, in the 2013 Communication on the Social Investment Package (February 2013) the **European Commission** urges Member States to fully implement the Commission Recommendation on Active Inclusion (2008) without further delay.

But why should governments promote an active inclusion strategy? Is active inclusion actually an effective strategy at all in effectively lifting people out of poverty?

what Active Inclusion is NOT

Active Inclusion is not just about employment!

We see that national governments are responding to Europe's crisis by focusing mainly on trying to get people into/back into employment. Whilst employment is one effective way to lift people out of poverty, having a job is by no means the only way and is certainly not always effective. Poor working conditions, low-quality jobs and in-work poverty are a major threat to a person's wellbeing and increases their risk of poverty and social exclusion. Poverty reduction depends on ensuring access to all to essential rights, benefits and services.

Active Inclusion is not the same as activation

Active labour market policies have a key role to play in supporting disadvantage people into good jobs, but in themselves will not result in people getting decent jobs, without investment in creating new jobs which are accessible to disadvantaged group. Active Inclusion must also provide integrated support for people who cannot work or access decent jobs

The added value of Active Inclusion Strategy comes from an integrated 3-pillar approach!

Increasingly social security and social protection is made conditional on employment status. Increasing conditionality with sanctions on income support/services to force people into poor quality jobs or training, is counter-productive as it increases hardship for the most vulnerable, without guarantees of an exit from poverty through quality jobs. The three pillars of the Active inclusion strategy should carry equal weight in policy design and the strategy must be applied in an integrated and comprehensive way, one without the other will not work!

Active Inclusion is not a magic formula that will eradicate poverty and social exclusion and does not substitute a comprehensive overarching strategy to combat poverty and social exclusion. However, it is a key tool that if implemented successfully, can provide an integrated, multidimensional and holistic approach to combating poverty and social exclusion that can really make a difference!

¹ Staff working document: Follow-up on the implementation by the Member States of the 2008 European Commission recommendation on active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market -- Towards a social investment approach

² Assessment of the implementation of the European Commission Recommendation on active inclusion: A study of national policies, Network of Independent Experts on Social Inclusion 2012

10 ARGUMENTS to support Active Inclusion

1. Active Inclusion is an essential instrument to **reduce poverty and help meet poverty reduction targets of Europe 2020**, namely reducing the number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion by 20 million by 2020 through an integrated approach that supports access to quality jobs, services and income support. The countries that have most employed this approach have done best in the crisis.
2. Active Inclusion is a key part of a **Social Investment approach**, investing in people so that they can participate both socially and economically. People are kept closer to the labour market and prevented from being driven into greater poverty and exclusion. Research shows that the **cost of exclusion** in the long term is greater than the cost of inclusion in the short term.
3. The **social impact of the crisis** demonstrates the devastating impact of austerity measures prioritising cuts in public expenditure through reducing benefits and public services. This has contributed to increasing poverty and social exclusion to 124.5 million people (24.8 %), a rise of over 6 million since 2008. Prioritising integrated active inclusion approaches will actively reduce this impact.
4. Access to an **adequate income is a fundamental right** and is essential to **help people back into work**. If people are struggling to meet their basic needs it makes it more difficult to be in a position to look for work. Adequate minimum income schemes give vulnerable people the long-term security they need to engage in pathways to employment, greater social participation or other routes to inclusion.
5. Adequate **minimum income** schemes act as an **automatic stabiliser and social floor for the economy**. In the current economic crisis, they not only prevent hardship for those without jobs, but provide an essential floor to consumer spending and, as an automatic stabiliser, support a sustainable economy.
6. With an **adequate minimum income as part of an active inclusion approach** poverty can be prevented/alleviated as one of the key social determinants of ill-health; enabling **people to stay healthier which also reduces the long-term social and economic costs**.
7. Whilst decent work can provide an important route out of poverty, **it cannot replace the right to a dignified life**, regardless of people's employment situation. The Commission's Recommendation³ confirms "the individual's basic **right to resources and social assistance** sufficient to lead a life that is compatible with human dignity."
8. Active inclusion involves the **provision of key services which are essential to supporting active social and economic inclusion**. This includes social assistance services, employment and training services, housing support and social housing, childcare, long-term care services and health services. **Cutting or reducing access to services** seen in recent austerity measures reduces people's rights and their ability to have a full life and to engage in their community and in accessing and staying in work.
9. Active Inclusion provides a **solution to the vital issue of high youth unemployment**, and the soaring number of young people not in employment of education (**NEETs**)⁴ in Europe. If we don't actively include Europe's youth urgently, we risk a lost generation many of whom currently feel hopeless and disillusioned about their future. With such high youth unemployment, this has to go beyond a concern to get young people into jobs, to youth inclusion.
10. Active inclusion is most effective when it **promotes empowerment, the right to participation and helps people have a say** over the policies and practices that affect them. The Active Inclusion approach also confirms people's **right to information and an appeals process** to get redress. This ensures that people who experience poverty and social exclusion get a chance to get fair and effective support.

³ [Council Recommendation 92/441/EEC of 24 June 1992 on common criteria concerning sufficient resources and social assistance in social protection systems](#)

⁴ A **NEET** is a young person who is "Not in Education, Employment, or Training". Read [more information on 'NEETs'](#)

National governments:

what obligation or responsibility do they have to implement the active inclusion strategy?

- ✓ The right for **human dignity** is enshrined in the EU treaty, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and is now made legally binding under the Lisbon Treaty through the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. This should lead to policy approaches that see people as more than just economic units. Poverty represents a violation of human rights.
- ✓ All **Member States** endorsed the Recommendation in 2008 and have therefore made a political commitment to implementing the strategy nationally⁵
- ✓ The **Lisbon Treaty** gives the EU a key role to play in supporting and complementing the activities of Member States in how they integrate people who

are currently excluded from the labour market: Active Inclusion is an example of where the EU can play a role

- ✓ The **European Parliament** supported Active Inclusion through the report and resolution MEPs approved in May 2009.
- ✓ The European Commission in its Active Inclusion Recommendation gives a clear role to **Structural Funds** in delivering active inclusion: "Guarantee the relevant resources and benefits under the social protection arrangements; use the provisions and resources of the Structural Funds, in particular the European Social Fund, to support active inclusion measures.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON EAPN'S PERSPECTIVE ON ACTIVE INCLUSION

⇒ See:

[Active Inclusion: Making it Happen \(EAPN 2011\)](#)

⇒ Contact:

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The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect the position of the European Commission.

⁵ [Council Conclusions on common active inclusion principles to combat poverty more effectively](#)