



REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE PEER REVIEW ON ACTIVE INCLUSION

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What is EMIN?

The European Minimum Income Network (EMIN) is an informal Network of organisations and individuals committed to achieve the progressive realisation of the right to adequate, accessible and enabling Minimum Income Schemes. The organisations involved include the relevant public authorities, service providers, social partners, academics, policy makers at different levels, NGOs, and fosters the involvement of people who benefit or could benefit from minimum income support.

EMIN is organised at EU and national levels, in all the Member States of the European Union and also in Iceland, Norway, Macedonia (FYROM) and Serbia.

EMIN is coordinated by the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN). More information on EMIN can be found at www.emin-eu.net

What is this Report?

This report builds on existing research and documentation on Active Inclusion, on the contributions on the situation in their country of national EMIN teams who participated in this peer review, and on the discussions at the peer review on possible ways to improve the delivery of Active Inclusion approaches.

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Executive Summary

The context of the European Minimum Income Network (EMIN 2) Peer Review on active inclusion was set by the recent adoption of the European Pillar of Social Rights and the European Commission's reaffirmation of the validity of the approach set out in the 2008 Recommendation on active inclusion. Presentations on the evolution and implementation of active inclusion measures in Spain, the Netherlands and Denmark together with the presentation of the main findings of a European Social Policy Network (ESPN) report on integrated support for the long-term unemployed in 35 European countries provided much positive information on the contribution being made by active inclusion measures to supporting people excluded from the labour market and from social participation. They also highlighted some weaknesses and aspects of the active inclusion approach that need to be addressed. This picture of the evolution of active inclusion and its strengths and weaknesses was then further deepened in workshop discussions with participants from many different countries highlighting their experience of active inclusion measures. From these inputs and discussions a clear picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the active inclusion approach to date emerged.

The main benefits of a well-designed active inclusion approach that were highlighted in the many inputs were that: it encourages national (and sub-national) authorities to address people's needs in a holistic manner; it promotes increased coordination between different services so that their efforts are mutually reinforcing; it fosters cooperation and partnership between different stakeholders, both state services and NGOs; it encourages a more individualised approach to meeting people's needs and the development of tailor-made supports and plans that lead to a clear pathway to inclusion in employment and/or society; and it leads to increased focus on the most marginalised groups and individuals. The most common weaknesses in current approaches that were highlighted by many participants were that in some countries there is: a lack of clear overall policy frameworks to promote active inclusion; a lack of a clear understanding of what is meant by active inclusion and a confusion of active inclusion with activation; insufficient attention and outreach to some of those individuals and groups who are most excluded; low levels of investment in social services and inadequate training of staff; very inadequate levels of minimum income schemes and often poor coverage of those most in need and too much conditionality; poor quality active labour market measures and insufficient targeting of those most at risk; insufficient coordination and integration of the different services; and a lack of individualised and tailored approaches.

The main conclusions of the peer review were fourfold. First, that the Recommendation on Active Inclusion continues to provide an important framework for tackling poverty and social exclusion in a comprehensive way; secondly, the current implementation of the Recommendation across Europe is very uneven with some countries still lacking a coherent approach; thirdly, there are many positive examples of good practice on which to build; and fourthly, intensifying the active inclusion approach will be critical to achieving the EU's

poverty and social inclusion target and implementing the principles of the EU Pillar of Social Rights. These conclusions led to a series of recommendations for reinforcing implementation of the Recommendation. At EU level these cover the implementation of the EU Pillar of Social Rights, mainstreaming active inclusion in the European Semester, strengthening the ways EU Funds are used to support active inclusion, increasing awareness and understanding of active inclusion, developing methodologies for establishing adequate minimum income, enhancing the exchange of learning and good practice and reinforcing the involvement of civil society organisations. At national level these cover the importance of developing coherent, comprehensive and coordinated policy frameworks, the need to focus on those who cannot work as well as those who can, the importance of improving coordination between agencies at local level and developing single-point-of-contact arrangements for clients, the development of individualised and tailored activation plans, the need to progressively increase the adequacy of minimum income benefits, the need for investment in social services, the necessity to better target individuals and groups at high risk of social exclusion, the importance of making more effective and strategic use of EU Funds, and the prerequisite to involve NGOs in the development, delivery and monitoring of active inclusion measures.

1. Overview of state-of-play on active inclusion of minimum income beneficiaries at European level and purpose of the peer review

Since the European Commission's Recommendation on *The Active Inclusion of People Excluded from the Labour Market* was adopted in October 2008 it has provided the main framework for efforts to ensure that all Member States develop adequate minimum income schemes. The recommendation reiterated the 1992 European Council Recommendation on *Common criteria concerning sufficient resources and social assistance in social protection systems* in emphasising individual's right to resources and social assistance sufficient to lead life of human dignity. However, it went further as it placed the focus on adequate income support in the broader context of an active inclusion approach which combines the three strands of adequate income support, inclusive labour markets and access to quality services. The aim thus became not just to ensure that people of working age who need it have sufficient resources to live life with dignity but, for those who can work their integration into sustainable, quality employment and for those who cannot work their social participation.

The importance of developing an active inclusion approach was subsequently reinforced at European level in 2010 when it was a key theme of the *European Year for Combating Poverty*. Then in 2013 the European Commission's Social Investment Package, which was a major initiative aimed at strengthening the social dimension of the Europe 2020 Strategy, reaffirmed the validity of an active inclusion approach but acknowledged that progress in implementing the 2008 Recommendation on active inclusion at national level had been relatively limited. The active inclusion approach was further reinforced when active inclusion was made a specific priority in the use of EU Funds to promote social inclusion for the period 2014-2020. However, progress on developing comprehensive active inclusion strategies has continued to be very uneven across the EU.

A 2016 report by the European Social Policy Network (ESPN)¹ assessing the implementing of the Recommendation on active inclusion concluded that "While there have been some improvements in developing an active inclusion approach, too often this is too narrowly focussed just on employment measures and on increasing conditionality and sanctions. In many countries, there is still not sufficient emphasis on developing an integrated and tailored approach to supporting those receiving benefits and to help them to integrate into society and, as far as is possible, into the labour market". Specifically in relation to minimum income schemes the ESPN report concluded that "Minimum income schemes across Europe play a vital role in alleviating the worst impacts of poverty and social exclusion in many countries. However, in many countries their contribution is still much too limited and progress since 2009 has been disappointing. Often the lack of adequate payments coupled with limited coverage and poor take-up due inter alia to poor administration, inadequate access to

¹ Frazer, H. and Marlier E (2016), *Minimum Income Schemes in Europe: A study of national policies*, European Social Policy Network, Brussels. Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1135&intPageId=3588>

information, excessive bureaucracy and stigmatisation means that they fall very far short of ensuring a decent life for the most vulnerable in society.”

More recently, a 2017 Commission Staff Working Document (SWD) accompanying the launch of the European Pillar of Social Rights reviewed the implementation of the 2008 Recommendation. It concluded that “Overall progress towards implementing the Active Inclusion Recommendation has been mixed. The arrangements governing benefits, labour market policies and services vary substantially.” However the SWD clearly documents the advantages and effectiveness of an active inclusion approach and assesses that “countries with good linkages between the three strands have had better social outcomes in terms of poverty and social exclusion rates.” It stresses that the Recommendation has had an important influence on national policies and concluded that “In many Member States the Active Inclusion Recommendation has acted as a driver for structural reforms and has yielded encouraging results.” The SWD highlighted “significant policy initiatives implemented across the three strands in an attempt to modernise social protection systems, make labour markets more inclusive and broaden access to essential social services.” However, it noted that “This trend was more evident in countries in which the ex-ante conditionality on active inclusion of European ‘structural funds’ – and notably the European Social Fund, – has triggered a move in this direction.” The SWD also highlighted areas where more improvements are needed in many countries, particularly enhancing the administrative capacity of agencies delivering inclusive labour market policies, ensuring the adequacy of income support, addressing the still underdeveloped nature of social services, developing integrated systems for benefits and services at local level, giving a sharper focus on adequate support for the social inclusion of people who cannot work, enhancing cooperation among stakeholders, at local level and beyond, and ensuring the active involvement of all relevant partners. To emphasise the continuing importance that the Commission attaches to promoting active inclusion the SWD also highlighted recent European Union initiatives in line with the active inclusion approach. These included: the Commission *Recommendation on investing in children*; the Council Recommendation on establishing a *Youth Guarantee*, followed by the *Youth Employment Initiative*; the *Council Recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market*; and the way in which the preliminary outline of the *European Pillar of Social Rights* fully reflected the active inclusion approach in several of the 20 principles including the dedicated principle on minimum income. The SWD also emphasises the extent to which active inclusion has been increasingly mainstreamed in the Europe 2020 Strategy and in the use of EU Funding.

From the above it can be seen that the context for the EMIN2 Peer Review on Active Inclusion was a positive if challenging one. The European Commission has strongly reaffirmed the importance of an active inclusion approach. The adoption of the European Pillar of Social Rights has brought a new momentum to efforts to strengthen the social dimension of the EU and it is clear that promoting active inclusion will be central to implementing the Pillar’s principles. However, while there has been progress on active inclusion in many countries

there is still a long way to go to ensure really comprehensive and integrated strategies and within this the achievement of adequate levels of income support to ensure that people can live life in dignity. Thus for EMIN it is clear that the policy environment over the coming period for making progress on ensuring adequate, accessible and enabling Minimum Income schemes is one in which progress on achieving adequate income must be closely linked to the other two strands of active inclusion. Thus the Peer Review provided an opportunity to assess progress on the development of active inclusion approaches in different countries and to make recommendations as to how the implementation of the 2008 Recommendation on active inclusion could be intensified, particularly in the context of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

2. Report back on the information provided by the experts' introductions²

2.1 Overview of support to the long-term unemployed in Europe

Hugh Frazer, adjunct professor, Maynooth University, began the peer review by presenting the European Social Policy Network's (ESPN's) 2016 report on integrated support for the long-term unemployed³ which was based on 35 national reports by ESPN national experts carried out in 2015. He started by stressing how the negative social and economic impacts of unemployment cumulate over time and the costs to the individuals affects, to society and to the economy steadily increase. These costs include poverty & social exclusion, bad health & disability, indebtedness, loss of skills & self-confidence and erosion of human & social capital. It thus follows from this that as obstacles to accessing labour market increase the range and types of supports required increase. He emphasised that the ESPN report has three key themes. First, there is a need for broad range of measures covering adequate income benefits, effective and efficient social services and good quality active labour market programmes. Secondly, there is a need for effective coordination between employment, social assistance and social services authorities as this is vital to ensure a holistic & integrated response. Thirdly, an individualised and tailored approach is necessary to effectively address the many different combinations of problems and challenges of LTU and develop positive pathways towards employment.

The ESPN report examines the approach across 35 European Countries and its overall assessment is that In many countries: the current response is not adequate to the scale of the problem and indeed often inappropriate; efforts often more focussed on those closer to labour market; the range and extent of policies and programmes in place are generally too limited and too narrowly focussed; considerable investment is needed in improving income benefits, developing effective and accessible social services and increasing the quality of

² The various presentations can be found at: www.emin-eu.net

³ The ESPN report *Integrated support for the long-term unemployed in Europe – a study of national policies* is available at <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1135&intPageId=3588>

activation services and programmes; much more needs to be done to develop coordinated and integrated responses and to ensure personalised support tailored to the needs of the individual. However, in some countries and some regional/local authorities have developed effective systems of support.

Professor Frazer then went on to report the assessment of ESPN national experts on the performance of countries across the three strands of active inclusion: access to benefits, access to social services and access to activation services. In relation to access to benefits only four countries were considered as performing well with fourteen medium and nearly half considered weak. The main issue raised by experts was the inadequacy of benefits. Other key issues highlighted were low coverage, inadequate incentives to take up employment, insufficiently tailoring of benefits to the needs of the long-term unemployed, problems with conditionality and problems over the interface between insurance and assistance benefits. In relation to access to social services just 5 countries received a positive rating with fourteen considered medium and sixteen weak. The two main issues raised were failure to reach most disadvantaged/target LTU and lack of coordination between services. Other issues included limited provision (understaffed/overcrowded), poor quality services and wide geographic variations in provision. In relation to access to activation services six countries rated as performing well with fourteen medium and fifteen weak. Several key issues were highlighted here: the poor quality and range of services; insufficient tailoring of services to the needs of the long-term unemployed; the low coverage & low proportion of long-term unemployed benefiting from services; the failure to target those most at risk among the long-term unemployed; and a lack of coordination between measures and actors. The report however does stress that there are many good examples of effective activation services and he outlined some examples.

Two key issues investigated in some detail in the ESPN report are the effectiveness of coordination between services and the extent and quality of individualised approaches. As regards coordination between services only three countries were rated as performing very well whereas nineteen were medium and thirteen weak. The three key barriers to better coordination identified by ESPN experts were information gaps and lack of common data bases, poor cooperation procedures between agencies and administrative fragmentation & legal barriers. Other barriers included ad hoc/discretionary arrangements and the lack of a clear model for cooperation, the lack of time & resources to coordinate and the lack of one-stop shop approaches. In relation individualised support only three countries were rated as performing very well with twenty three medium and nine weak. The key issues raised here were insufficient tailoring and too narrow (employment activation) focus, a lack of administrative and staffing capacity and the lack or limited availability of support services. From this ESPN experts concluded two things. First, there is a need for both individual action plans focussed on activation and integration contracts addressing health and social problems. Secondly, one-stop shops or single point of contact arrangements can help to improve coordination and individual responses. Again the report highlights that in spite of the many

weaknesses there also many good examples of individualised support that can serve as examples to build on. The various ESPN country reports also highlighted that in ensuring individualised support a very wide range of services are needed ranging through a broad mix of education, training and support services and services focussed on the physical and psychological health needs of individuals and these all need to be delivered through flexible management systems.

The ESPN report contains a wide range of recommendations for improving services for the long-term unemployed. At national level these included: developing integrated active inclusion strategies; increasing the use of individual activation plans and personalised integration contracts; ensuring the adequacy of benefits; enhancing coordination between employment, income support & social services; moving towards one-stop shop/single point of contact approaches; and investing in front-line staff working with the long-term unemployed. At European Union level recommendations included: ensuring EU's Investment Plan supports the long-term unemployed; putting long-term unemployment at the heart of the Europe 2020 Strategy and issuing more Country Specific Recommendations on long-term unemployment; increasing guidance to Member States on modernising social protection; agreeing methodologies (reference budgets) for minimum income levels; encouraging full use of EU Funds to support the long-term unemployed, especially high risk groups such as older workers, persons with disabilities and the Roma. Professor Frazer concluded by stressing the importance of matching supply measures in favour of the long-term unemployed with demand side measures. These should include: greater efforts by employers & governments to create good quality & sustainable jobs accessible to the long-term unemployed; developing progressive tax systems that facilitate movement into employment; and well-designed labour market reforms.

2.2 Spain

Dolores Ruiz Bautista, Deputy Director for Social Programmes, General Directorate of Services for Family and Childhood, Ministry for Health, Social Services and Equality, gave a presentation on developing and implementing the active inclusion approach in Spain. She began by stressing the importance to Spain of the European Framework for developing active inclusion. In particular she highlighted three things: the 2008 Commission Recommendation on Active Inclusion of people excluded from the Labour Market covering three pillars: inclusive labour markets, adequate income support and access to quality enabling services; the 2013 Commission Package on Social Investment for Growth and Cohesion, including the Commission Recommendation on *Investing in children*; and the 2017 European Pillar of Social Rights. She particularly highlighted principle 14 of the Pillar on the right to adequate minimum income benefits and access to enabling goods and services, and incentives to (re) integrate to the labour market, but she also mentioned the principles on the right to active

employment support (Principle 4), the right to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning (Principle 1), the right to flexible arrangements and access to care services (Principle 9) and the right to adequate activation support and adequate unemployment benefits (Principle 13).

Turning to the evolution of active inclusion in Spain Dolores Ruiz Bautista emphasised that there had been a sixteen year period (2001-2016) during which six National Action Plans for Social Inclusion (PNAIN) were drafted. Of these the PNAINs 2008-2010 & 2013-2016 had followed an active inclusion approach focussing on: activating the unemployed with active labour market policies; income support; access to quality services; and a transversal section devoted to specific needs of the most vulnerable groups. The 2013-2016 PNAIN had: 3 main strategic objectives which were social-labour activation, income guarantee and access to adequate and quality services; a specific section focused on vulnerable groups; and 240 actions implemented by a range of public administrations, with an expenditure amounting almost 148 billion euros (147,877,686,745 euros).

She next outlined Spain's approach to the first pillar of active inclusion: inclusive labour markets and emphasised two aspects: the coordination of employment and social services and the annual employment policy plans. In relation to coordination she outlined the role of the Social Inclusion Network (RIS). This thematic network is funded through the European Social Fund and its objectives are improving social and labour market insertion of people further from the labour market and articulating ways of cooperation between public administrations, and with social action NGOs, on social inclusion matters, and specially on active inclusion, the central axis of labour market insertion, as well as the exchange of good practice. She linked the development of the RIS to Country Specific Recommendations Spain had received from the EU between 2014 and 2018. She outlined the wide range of organisations involved on the RIS and outlined its main activities. These included: promoting learning exchange and good practice through working sessions organised by Autonomous Communities; joint training working days providing specialized training aimed at employment and social services workers on their work and coordination in these fields; studies and thematic seminars looking at particular aspects of combating poverty and social exclusion; the establishment of two working groups, the first to improve information systems between employment and social services and the second on linking minimum income to transitions towards employment; the strengthening of RIS's internal and external communication. She then went on to outline the Annual Plan of Employment Policy 2018 which for first time includes the key objectives of the EU Public Employment Services Network to assess their performance. It also includes the strategic objectives, as agreed in the Conference of Presidents on January 2017: promoting action and improvement of the youth employability; fostering employment as main toll for social inclusion and labour insertion of those up 55 and the long term unemployed; boosting a training offer matching the needs of the productive system and of the changing world of work; improving the performance of the Public

Employment Services; and addressing activation policies taking into account their sectorial and local dimensions.

In relation to the second pillar of active inclusion, adequate minimum income, Dolores Ruiz Bautista highlighted the Progress Program's Study and the Minimum Income Annual Reports. In relation to the study *Review of the minimum income schemes in Spain from the perspective of cost-effectiveness*, which was completed in December 2017, she highlighted the three pillars that mark the main challenges: effectiveness, efficiency and cohesion and the findings in relation to each. In terms of ensuring more effective organisation of the system there is a need for simplification and reordering of the system, homogenizing access requirements and improving coordination. In terms of developing a more efficient system there is a need for improvement of approaches and adaptation and in particular improving conditionalities in access to benefits, more activation and greater efficiency in active policies and ensuring complementarity with other aid. In relation to ensuring a cohesive system and improvement in operational functioning, there is a need for improvement of information systems and better analysis, monitoring and evaluation. She then outlined the next steps to implement the findings. These will be: the introduction of a Universal Social Card and a new Unemployment Subsidy merging former subsidies.

On the third pillar of active inclusion, access to public social services, Dolores Ruiz Bautista highlighted efforts to reinforce public social services in giving support to the most vulnerable and increased support to action by NGOs through grants funded by 0.7% of the Income Tax (IRPF). In relation to public social services she highlighted important funding increases in 2017 and 2018 including an increase in funding for the Program for Family Protection and Child Poverty Attention. She also highlighted the use of the Fund of European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD).

2.3 Netherlands

Astrid Dekker, Policy Advisor Zwolle city council and **Crystal Ziel**, poverty adviser at BVNG which advises municipalities in Holland on several topics, gave a joint presentation on developing and implementing the Active Inclusion Approach in Zwolle, a city in the north of Holland with 120,000 inhabitants and with about 10,000 people with low income or on social assistance.

Astrid Dekker stressed that there were two elements to Zwolle's successful social inclusion and anti-poverty policy. First cooperation: there is a high level of responsibility, by public and private partners which makes cooperation possible, there is a shared responsibility. Secondly, there are resources available. The question/goal is how to make the right connection between people or organisations offering money and the ones needing money. The results of this cooperation and shared responsibility have been that the national level (the government)

added €100 million for local governments to develop anti-poverty policies. On the local level social work teams were introduced in 2015. These social work teams offer assistance to households/families in an integrated way. It turned out that lack of income and debts are often related to other problems like childcare, disabilities etc., and attention for ensuring sufficient income has increased due to the introduction of the social work teams. On the individual level there is a lot of charity and enthusiastic involvement, especially in Zwolle.

She stressed that there has been a real investment in working together locally through an anti-poverty Pact which started in 2009. While most of the organisations involved don't have poverty reduction as their core business social inclusion is the business of all and that is why cooperation is so important. There has also been an emphasis on stimulating the participation of private citizens as this is another way to improve social inclusion on the local level. As a result Zwolle not only has a city council, but also a council consisting of people that live in Zwolle. This council advises the city council in a formal way. Their advice is obligatory on all decisions of the council. This formal board, with 15 members, has a lot of contact with people experiencing poverty or social inclusion. Meetings are also organised on specific topics in order to get input from other citizens of Zwolle, for instance on child poverty or participation. Both adults and children are invited. As well as these formal systems of participation there are also more informal systems of participation encouraging people to share their stories and organising discussion groups on how to live on less money.

There has also been an investment in cooperation at the national level with regular meetings between local government, national government, research institutes, EAPN and professionals. The different partners and citizens (including those experiencing poverty) have been involved in the design and evaluation of policies. All of this has led to an increased sense of urgency. This has been based on three things: first, increased knowledge about the situation; secondly, through applying the knowledge as soon as you can in your service; and, thirdly, increased acceptance of poor people. She concluded by stressing that social inclusion starts with demonstrating the inclusion we already are.

Throughout the joint presentation Crystal Ziel emphasised the effectiveness of the approach to active inclusion in Zwolle from her own experience. She had been isolated for many years and had difficulties in connecting with the world around her. But she said that things are now very different for her thanks to the support she received from social work in Zwolle. She stressed that the policy is that social work actively goes out into the city and helps citizens organize activities in their own neighbourhood. In this way people are actively involved in the area where they live and help to take responsibility for the problems they encounter. Thanks to such social work she said she grew in confidence and got in contact with people that were working in the fight against poverty. Almost three years later she was very active in the fight against poverty and the fight for social inclusion of people with disabilities. Her platform was now a foundation, she had started her own business and wrote an approach for participation of people with disabilities. She got an offer from a company to exploit this idea and also got

an offer to work for the municipality of Zwolle. She chose the latter because Zwolle was interested in her, not despite her experience with PTSD and poverty, but because of it. Zwolle values the insight that only comes with experience and values cooperation. Crystal then drew on her own experience to highlight the active participation of local people and local cooperation to tackle poverty and social exclusion. She said that in Zwolle there are a lot of different organisations that offer holidays for families and individuals that don't have the money to pay for it themselves. The foundation she is still chairwoman of coordinates one the vacations actually offered by the Rotary club in Zwolle. They offer a chalet on a holiday park, and they take care of a full shopping bag with grocery. The charity is not limited to holidays. In Zwolle 2500 Christmas gift are bought, packed and delivered by volunteers. In Holland there is also another December holiday and for that 750 presents are realized together with fun activities for children. When she started the foundation there was a lot of need for second-hand clothing, toys and baby attributes. Now every neighbourhood has its own 'give away' store where donated clothes and items are freely available for people with low income. These are just a few of the many activities initiated by individuals and facilitated by local cooperation in Zwolle. Crystal went on to stress that while in Holland there is increasing consideration for the role that experience experts can have that is often in the area of mental disabilities. Zwolle is one of the few cities where the experience of people living in poverty is so actively used in the development of policy and services.

Crystal ended by stressing that the people around you are all equally valuable. They just have different backgrounds, different opportunities and different perspectives. *"If we wish the "excluded" to become included, we have to start with a fair representation of the target population. Image is everything. And if the whole world thinks less of you, why not live up to their expectations? If the people around you believe you are less of a person because of the chances in live you have, you feel like less of person. We, as society, have often thought less of people in poverty and people with disabilities. With the best of intentions we have represented these groups as reliant, unwilling, of less use to society"*. She stressed that *"if social work Zwolle, if the poverty network, the municipality Zwolle, if Astrid had all thought less of me because my great big gap in my resume and my vulnerability, I wouldn't be the person I am today. Because of the connection, the cooperation and the support I can now choose if people know I understand from experience what poverty is. We are all here because we do not accept poverty and exclusion. We are here to adopt a different approach. Social inclusion starts with demonstrating the inclusion we already are"*.

Following their presentation Jo Bothmer, EAPN Netherlands, then stressed three points about the Dutch approach. First the G40 (i.e. the large municipalities except for the big four) have a task force on poverty and debts. Secondly, there is a long history of participation in the Netherlands. Thirdly, there is a tradition of listening and talking to rather than shouting at each other.

2.4 Denmark

Thomas Mölsted Jørgensen, Ministry of Employment, Denmark outlined the national policy framework relating to active labour market policy and active inclusion in Denmark. He stressed that there is a broad political consensus on the principles for inclusive active measures with a focus on work. The first priority principle is that people should find ordinary employment and then, if this is not possible, they should be given help to search for a job. If that isn't sufficient then the next step should be to provide coaching, and training, next temporary subsidized employment then more training or education, then permanent subsidized employment and finally social activity. Providing these supports is economically prioritised and there is no discussion on the necessity for these expenditures. However there is an ongoing debate on how to get value for money and there are several experiments in search for better schemes and active measures. He outlined the organisation of Danish active labour market policy. Local governments (98 municipalities) are responsible for paying all cash benefits (except IUB), executing local active labour market policy, administering means tested minimum income, social welfare benefit and running active measures linked to receiving benefits. The State level is responsible for legislation and setting minimum requirements, the collection and dissemination of information and promotion of knowledge sharing and monitoring and benchmarking. He then outlined how the state reimburses municipalities for their expenditure. Reimbursement is based on the principle of management by incentives with a link between activation measures and benefits. The level of reimbursement for activation measures varies with for example wage subsidies, job-rotation and mentor schemes being reimbursed 50 per cent, education measures by between 50 and 100 per cent and advice and guidance not at all. Reimbursement for expenditure on benefits is on the basis of a strict connection between duration on benefit and the level of reimbursement and can reduce from 80 to 20 per cent over time. He ended by outlining ALMP reforms that were decided in August 2018. These include: less and more simple requirements on procedures in Jobcenters; the same, few and simple rule requirements in active measure with more freedom for the caseworker to design tailor made offers; and a focus on results by benchmarking each local government

Ole Kjaergaard, Head of secretariat at the Council of Socially Marginalised People then showed a number of graphs highlighting important trends in in Danish Active Inclusion. He showed that unemployment as a percentage of the active population in Denmark is low by EU standards (under 6% in 2017) and that long-term unemployment as a per cent of the total unemployment (22% in 2017) is also relatively low. The percentage of people at risk of poverty is also relatively low (12% in 2016 according to Eurostat and under 6% in 2015 according to OECD). In relation to long-term trends in the numbers of recipients of social assistance he noted that while these had risen significantly from around 2008/2009 they had begun to

decline again from about 2016. Long-term trends in the percentage of the working population receiving social disability pension while remaining fairly constant between 2006 and 2013 has renewed a steady downward trend since then showing mobility among recipients. The percentage of the working-age population in a flexi-job scheme has increased steadily. However he stressed that the most marginalised people have not fared so well. There has been a steady rise in the overall number of homeless since 2009 and also a slight increase in the number of rough sleepers since 2011. Likewise there has been a fairly steady increase since 2004 in the percent of the total population with income less than 50% of the median, both for those who have been in this situation for one year and for those who have been for three or more years. This is linked to the very low levels of social benefits.

Per Larsen, EAPN Denmark, then made some comments on the active inclusion of the excluded. He noted some key trends in social policy since Denmark became an EU member in 1972. First, all subsidises and securities for the unemployed, ill and disabled have become much lower and shorter. This is especially the case for migrants, youngsters up to 30 years, people with a disability up to 40 year and others excluded from the labour market. Secondly, social policy has become labour market policy. Taking care of the excluded is replaced by economic incentives – lower subsidies, control and distrust. The thinking is that "It has to pay off to work". Rehabilitation is replaced by low paid internship for limited periods. This is an effective system for those who can manage themselves or have supportive others but not for people who are excluded. He went on to stress the importance of work and regulation of the market. We work for money. But work also is the most important source for grown-ups' identity, learning and contribution to the community. It is the access to a dignified life with others. Man is by nature social, contributing to the community and generous. This is why we survive in spite of individualism etc. Thus work includes whereas unemployment excludes. Also the right to work is a human right in UN and EU conventions. Under the social pillar the unemployed have the right to activation and sufficient subsidizes. People with a disability have the right to a decent income and a labour milieu which is adapted to their needs. All of this implies the need for regulation of the market, taxes and the distribution of wealth. Per Larsen then stressed the importance of providing jobs for the excluded. While everybody wants to work and can work, some people need compensations and qualified leadership to assist them. He noted that in Denmark there are some 50,000 flexible or protected individual jobs. There are also some 1,000 jobs in social enterprises such as IT consultants jobs for people with autism and telemarketing jobs for blind and lowly sighted people. He concluded by stressing that the time limit for experiencing exclusion is influenced by economic cycles, the working environment, legislation and tolerance.

3. A summary of main issues discussed during plenary sessions

Four issues were particularly highlighted during the plenary discussions at the peer review: the introduction of the social card in Spain, the role the EU and market pressures had played in the evolution of social policy, the role played by civil society and NGOs in developing active inclusion approaches and the need to better target specific groups.

Spanish Social Card: In relation to the introduction of the Social Card in Spain (see presentation by Dolores Ruiz Bautista) it was stressed that NGOs oppose a social card that is targeted at poor people and consider that any social card should be provided on a universal basis. On the other hand the official view is that a social card will bring information together about all subsidies that are available to people thus allowing officials to see better all the benefits people are entitled to. However, at present in its initial phase the Social Card doesn't allow people to see all the services they are entitled to but this may become possible in the future.

Role of the EU and the Market in the evolution of Social Policy: The implication that the EU had caused a downward trend in Danish social security provisions since Denmark joined in 1972 (see presentation by Per Larsen) was strongly disputed by the Commission (Isabel Maquet) who argued that the pressure to reduce expenditures over time had come from the market and all countries had faced these challenges and had made different decisions. To some extent it was countries who were faced by a growth in dependency (e.g. NO, FI, SE) who drove these trends. Furthermore countries like Sweden and Denmark had regularly argued at the Social Protection Committee against an EU role in social policy and opposed Commission suggestions on setting targets to tackle poverty, emphasising subsidiarity and stressing that they did not have a poverty problem but a labour market exclusion problem.

Role of NGOs: Spanish NGO representatives argued that the role of civil society and NGOs in developing active inclusion measures is often not sufficiently recognised. They play a vital role assisting some six million people and five major NGOs receive significant state funding to develop social inclusion itineraries to help people towards employment.

Better targeting: Several participants stressed the need for better targeting of active inclusion measures at those people and groups who have the greatest difficulty in accessing the labour market. In particular single parents, the Roma and people with a disability were highlighted.

4. Report back on the discussions with the participants during the working groups

A wide-ranging discussion took place during which participants described recent developments in their countries in relation to social inclusion and active inclusion. Out of this discussion several themes emerged.

Limited active inclusion policy frameworks but some positive trends

Many participants did not consider that the concept of active inclusion is explicitly used to a great extent in policy frameworks in their country. For instance, the Hungarian participant highlighted that while there is an employment substitute benefit the focus on active inclusion is very weak and it is essentially a type of workfare. Furthermore it doesn't very often lead to permanent employment, especially in the countryside where work is non-existent and other problems like lack of housing limit people's ability to move to where there is work. The Lithuanian participants stressed that active inclusion is not used in legislation, or in policy, or in public discourse. However, several participants (including the Lithuanian) highlighted some positive developments that that can be interpreted as being broadly in an active inclusion direction. For instance:

- in **Cyprus** the introduction in 2014 of a Guaranteed Minimum Income has been important and it is often used to top up low wages. There is close link between the GMI benefit and encouraging work and with social services. People unable to work are assessed by a medical board and if able to work then are subject to active labour market programmes. If a person is not moving into employment, social services assess why this is the case. However, it is generally much more difficult for GMI recipients to enter the labour market. The State often has to subsidise their employment and employers often exploit them with low wages. A key problem is the absence of a minimum wage;
- Estonia is in the middle of many changes which take time and many are in a positive direction. For instance: regional policy is changing; there is free public transport; there are increased supports and pressure for people with disabilities to enter the labour market with strict medical examinations but not so many enterprises will employ them; medical care is rather good; there is an increase in maternity leave; increased access to kindergartens;
- in **Greece** there is increased emphasis on a holistic approach and while not exactly an active inclusion strategy many structural reforms and active inclusion type policies have been implemented. The humanitarian crisis program, the development of a GMI scheme, the provision of free services, the development of personalised job plans, the promotion of second chance education opportunities, especially for the Roma, the allocation of 15% of public jobs to people with a disability, the doubling of the budget for social protection since 2015, yearly increases in the minimum wage area all important developments. All

beneficiaries of GMI have to be assisted to get a personalised job plan and if they do not accept the plan then they are excluded from GMI;

- in **Ireland** a new National Action Plan for Social Inclusion is due and it is hoped that this will emphasise an active inclusion approach. The emphasis to date has been on targeting particular groups such as young mothers and people with disabilities and there are more training schemes for the unemployed. However, the two big issues at present are the housing crisis and the increase in the working poor with many people in part-time and precarious jobs. In spite of some improvements overall there is still a lack of sufficient affordable child-care and this is a major barrier, especially for lone parents, to moving into good quality employment. Overall there is still not a sufficient whole-of-government approach and the main emphasis is on aggressive labour market activation measures;
- in **Italy** there has been much more focus on minimum income in recent years and also on developing pathways towards jobs that recognise that poverty is not always caused by economic factors but by lack of opportunities and chances. Thus efforts are being made to combine minimum income support, education and training, psychological support and special support to families with children. However, there is still very weak governance arrangements and there is a need for agreements between stakeholders at territorial level to work on active inclusion;
- in **Lithuania** there has been significant progress on establishing what is an adequate income through the use of reference budgets and calculating minimum needs and indexing minimum income. Also a long-term unemployed person who gets employment can (on a means tested basis but with some income disregarded) continue to receive benefits for a further twelve months thus easing the transition into work. However, there are still very strict rules for receiving minimum income and so not everyone who needs it receives it. Also there has been little progress in developing inclusive labour market measures and the main supports are provided through NGOs but these are quite uneven. There is also a big lack of social services and the development of social skills;
- in **Spain** NGOs play a key role in supporting the long-term unemployed and receive significant state funding to develop social inclusion itineraries to assist people into employment. While often not clearly recognised at the formal level they in effect provide complementary support to the beneficiaries of minimum income

Varied understanding of active inclusion

In many countries the feedback from participants suggested that there is often a rather narrow understanding of active inclusion in their countries with it most commonly being understood as activation measures and being applied only to those able to work. For instance, in **Hungary**, while in theory there is an active inclusion strategy, in practice it doesn't exist as the focus is all on activation and workfare measures. In the **Czech Republic** although unemployment is low there is much emphasis on labour market activation with increased pressure on those registered as unemployed to be active and this pressure is increased

through a decrease in benefits. However key barriers to accessing employment such as the lack of child care and the lack of social housing, or over-indebtedness are not being sufficiently addressed. In **the Netherlands** there is often a split between social inclusion and active inclusion and a lot of confusion about the different terms. There is huge need for NGOs and local authorities to work closer together and have a dialogue on how to improve services. Also there is a new tendency to count people who are sick as long-term unemployed which they are not.

Coordination and integration of services

The importance of ensuring coordination and integration of services was emphasised by many participants, though in many countries it remains to be achieved. It was recognised that coordination and integration of services can happen in many different ways. For instance:

- In **Lithuania** it is problematic that labour market measures are not connected as there are different authorities responsible and there is currently no coordination or integrated approach. However, there is an ambition to move to a more coordinated, one-stop-shop type approach and a pilot is being developed which will be followed up next year;
- In **Greece** an important initiative has been the development of 240 community centres as one-stop-shops where people can come and connect to services to help them meet their needs. As well as receiving the Social Solidarity Income recipients can come in contact with other services. Although the level of benefit is not enough and services are often understaffed overall this seems a very important development. An evaluation of the first two years of these centres is due in January 2019;
- the **Slovenian** participants expressed some doubts about the value of a “one-stop shop” approach as they had found other forms of cooperation worked better. The social services and employment services are obliged by laws to cooperate closely. If a local Employment Office discovers that a client is temporarily unemployable, then a committee is set up, consisting of at least three members: employment counsellor, social worker and rehabilitation counsellor. Centre for Social Work that is closest to the client is given charge of the process. The committee meets twice a year to review the client’s progress and needs, and the client is followed, directed and treated individually. Only when the personal problems are solved, is the unemployed person directed to the active labour market programmes. In other words, it is a consecutive process and there is no need for services to be physically in the same building;
- in **Spain** there is a peculiar lack of coordination of services at state level however, there is coordination inside regions.

Individualised support

The importance of an individualised and differentiated approach was stressed by many participants. This means recognising that for some people the route to inclusion in the labour

market can need more time. It also means that there is a need for a range of services that relate to the complexity of people's situations. It was evident from participants' inputs that the extent to which the long-term unemployed receive individualised support tailored to their needs varies significantly across countries. While in **Greece**, with the development of personalised job plans has been positive there is still a need to reinforce the personalised approach.

Overall strengths and weaknesses of an active inclusion approach

Overall, from the discussions at the workshop, it was clear that participants consider that the main benefits of an active inclusion approach are:

- it encourages national (and sub-national) authorities to address people's needs in a holistic manner;
- it promotes increased coordination between different services so that their efforts are mutually reinforcing;
- it fosters cooperation and partnership between different stakeholders, both state services and NGOs;
- it encourages a more individualised approach to meeting people's needs and the development of tailor-made supports and plans that lead to a clear pathway to inclusion in employment and/or society; and
- it leads to increased focus on the most marginalised groups and individuals.

Participants considered that the main weaknesses of many existing approaches to active inclusion are:

- a lack of clear overall policy frameworks to promote active inclusion;
- a lack of a clear understanding of what is meant by active inclusion and a confusion of active inclusion with activation;
- insufficient attention and outreach to some of those individuals and groups who are most excluded;
- low levels of investment in social services and inadequate training of staff;
- very inadequate levels of minimum income schemes and often poor coverage of those most in need and too much conditionality;
- poor quality active labour market measures and insufficient targeting of those most at risk;
- insufficient coordination and integration of the different services;
- a lack of individualised and tailored approaches.

5. Presentation of the conclusions and recommendations of the peer review

5.1 Conclusions

Four overall conclusions were reached by the peer review:

- **first**, that the European Commission's active inclusion recommendation continues to provide an important framework and approach for developing effective responses to poverty and social exclusion and supporting the progressive integration of those of working age who are excluded into society and/or the labour market;
- **secondly**, the implementation of active inclusion approaches is very uneven across the EU and while some countries have made good progress too many countries still lack a coherent policy framework and tend to confuse active inclusion with (or narrow it down to) activation measures;
- **thirdly**, there are many positive examples of active inclusion approaches making a significant and positive impact on people's lives and these provide good models that others can build on; and
- **fourthly**, further developing and intensifying active inclusion approaches will be critical to achieving the EU's 2020 targets in relation to employment and the reduction of poverty or social exclusion and to implementing the EU Pillar of Social Rights.

5.2 Recommendations

EU level

1. The European Commission should put the promotion of active inclusion approaches and the implementation of the Active Inclusion Recommendation at the heart of the implementation of the EU Pillar of Social Rights.
2. As part of the Europe 2020 process and the European Semester the European Commission and the Social Protection Committee should closely monitor the development of active inclusion frameworks by Member States and their implementation. The Commission should report on progress in their country reports and develop Country Specific Recommendations to countries lagging behind.
3. The European Commission should ensure that promoting active inclusion is a key a priority in the next Multiannual Financial Framework.
4. The Commission should develop clear guidelines for the use of EU Funds to support active inclusion measures so as to ensure that they are part of an overall strategic, coordinated and integrated approach and that EU Funds lever additional funding by national (or sub-national) authorities. The guidelines should stress the importance of particularly targeting

active inclusion measures at the most at risk groups such as lone parents, older workers, persons with disabilities, people from a migrant background and the Roma.

5. The Commission should invest in fostering a wider understanding of what an active inclusion approach means through documenting and highlighting good practice and organising regular exchanges and peer reviews. This should lead to more explicit guidance to Member States on implementing the Active Inclusion Recommendation.
6. The Commission in conjunction with the Social Protection Committee should further develop work on reference budgets and build consensus on methodologies to be employed by Member States to ensure adequate levels of minimum income. They should regularly monitor progress in this regard in each Member State.
7. The Commission and Social Protection Committee should develop guidelines on good practice in involving civil society organisations, especially NGOs, in the development, implementation and monitoring of active inclusion measures, highlight good practice in this regard and monitor progress on a regular basis.

National level

8. Countries that still have not developed coherent, comprehensive and coordinated overall policy frameworks aimed at developing, delivering and monitoring active inclusion approaches for people of working age should do so.
9. In developing active inclusion programmes attention should be given to developing adequate support for those who cannot work as well as for those who have potential for integration in to the labour market.
10. In delivering active inclusion programmes countries should give a high priority to ensuring effective coordination and cooperation arrangements between employment, income support and social services at local level and to facilitating ease of contact for clients through single-point-of-contact arrangements. In many cases this will require investing in administrative capacity.
11. Increased use should be made of individual activation plans and personalised integration contracts that are tailored to the particular needs of people who are excluded from society and/or the labour market.
12. Countries with low and inadequate levels of minimum income support should put in place a methodology for establishing an adequate minimum income and establish an annual procedure for updating levels of payment.
13. Countries with limited availability of social services or with poor quality social services should invest in improving these services and in particular should invest in the front-line staff who are working with people who are excluded.
14. National (and sub-national) authorities responsible for developing active inclusion measures should prioritise recipients of minimum income benefits and should clearly identify and target those individuals and specific groups at particularly high risk of social

exclusion such as the long-term unemployed, lone parents, older workers, people with a disability, the Roma, people from a migrant background and the homeless.

15. In using EU Funds to promote social inclusion Member States should prioritise support for comprehensive and coordinate active inclusion approaches. They should avoid once-off or isolated measures that are not integrated into an overall three pillar active inclusion approach. They should also use EU Funds to enhance administrative capacity to deliver active inclusion programmes and to train front-line staff.
16. NGOs should be given a key role in the development, delivery and monitoring of active inclusion measures.

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