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Part 1 introduces the European Social Platform and provides an executive summary of the conference report “Change and continuity: social inclusion in an enlarged EU”, Bratislava, 29-30 September 2004. Furthermore it sets the context for the conference by presenting the overall EU initiatives on Social Inclusion.

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EUROPEAN PUBLIC SOCIAL PLATFORM

Background

The EPSP is a network of independent European organisations whose members work in local and regional public authorities whether as politicians, directors or professionals. This Platform was created out of a concern at the absence of a framework for consultation between the European institutions and the local and regional public sector at a European level.

The Platform is therefore designed to ensure that their views, experience and expertise can thereby better contribute to more effective European social policy and practice alongside the Platform of NGOs and the Social Partners.

Aims:

- ◆ To promote the role and contribution of the local and regional public sector to the definition and implementation of EU social policy.
- ◆ To work with the European Commission, European Parliament, the European Council and other inter-governmental agencies and European networks, to ensure social policy proposals reflect the interests and contribution of local and regional authorities in promoting social justice and inclusion.

Objectives:

- ◆ facilitating communication between members of the Platform on social issues
- ◆ promoting the experience and expertise of member organisations
- ◆ developing joint actions
- ◆ seeking a framework for consultation with European Union institutions
- ◆ working with the relevant European organisations which share the interests of the Platform

EPSP consists of the following organizations:

Assembly of European Regions

AER is the political representative organisation of the regions of Europe, which is committed to democracy, solidarity and the development of inter-regional co-operation. AER has 250 regions as members.

Council of European Municipalities and Regions

CEMR is the representative organisation of 44 national associations in 31 countries, bringing together some 100,000 local and regional authorities throughout Europe. CEMR aims at supporting local democracy and making the voice of local/regional government heard by European institutions.

Eurocities

Eurocities is the network of the major cities in Europe, with over 100 members across the EU, the EFTA countries, central and eastern Europe. Its aim is to ensure that the urban agenda is taken into consideration in EU policy developments and to promote the exchange of experience and transfer of knowledge between cities.

European Social Network

The European Social Network, organised by the directors of social services in most European countries, was established to work for a socially just and inclusive Europe, through the promotion of exchanging experience and expertise across countries, sectors and professions.

Quartiers en Crise (European Regeneration Areas Network)

Quartiers en Crise was established in 1989 as a network of European cities to promote an integrated approach to urban regeneration and citizens' participation in that process.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The conference report summarises the input and discussions put forward at the European Public Social Platform conference “*Change and Continuity: social inclusion in an enlarged EU*” which took place in Bratislava on 29th-30th September 2004. The conference was co-organised by QeC-ERAN, member of the European Social Platform as well as the Bratislava Self-Governing Region and was supported by the European Commission as part of the Community Action Programme on social inclusion.

It gathered over 70 representatives from national, regional and local government agencies as well as representatives from NGOs and the voluntary sectors of the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Romania. Additionally, representatives from pan-European networks, international experts and officials from the EU and other Member State institutions attended and contributed to the event.

The conference provided a unique opportunity to bring together key figures involved in the preparations of National Action Plans for social inclusion (NAP) in the five new Member States at a time when these are being assessed and discussed within the European Commission following the signing of the Joint Memoranda on Social Inclusion (JIM) and submission of the E-10 NAPs. The conference allowed for lively and well-aimed discussions and an exchange of views on national policies related to social exclusion and poverty. It brought forward key issues and recommendations for the future.

Main recommendations/conclusions emerging from the conference:

- The new Member States face similar challenges in respect of tackling social exclusion, however, the scale and intensity of the challenges faced are significantly higher,
- Relatedly, there are differences in relation to the priorities identified for EU15. In particular, the issues of housing; availability/accessibility of social and health care services are key priorities identified. In contrast, the issue of early school leavers is not a priority for the new member States,
- The issue of rural social exclusion is also a significant difference,
- local authorities are often the main provider of social services and need to be more involved in the elaboration of NAPs and strategies on social inclusions,
- participation of all relevant bodies must take place in the planning stage of NAPs otherwise the outcome of strategies will be jeopardized,
- need for more developed cooperation between the governmental level and the non-profit sector on creation of social inclusion strategies in form of contractual agreements,
- there is a question about the quality and reliability of data, the issue of Laeken indicators has to be an integral part of the mid-term review of the Lisbon strategy,
 - need to think of indicators in relation to outcome, it is easier to state objectives than targets,
 - need for clearly agreed benchmarks in order to facilitate comparisons and demonstrate progress,
 - need to agree on a common set of indicator by all 25 Member States, general consensus that Laeken indicators need to be complemented by national indicators,
- need for involving people experiencing poverty and to find ways how they can define their poverty and translate them into a meaningful dialogue and development,

- decentralization provides a good framework for a bottom up approach but relies on mutual trust between national and local level and financial resources to be devolved,
- NGOs should receive financial support if they are to provide social services, however it is important that they retain their independence from the government,
- **Information and communication:** There is a need for proper mechanisms to inform and communicate the social inclusion strategies to all levels (national, regional, local, civil society) as well as a need to better involve people experiencing poverty.

Introduction

Social exclusion is about the inability of our society to keep all groups and individuals within reach of what we expect as a society. It is about the tendency to push vulnerable and difficult individuals into the least popular places, furthest away from our common aspirations. It means that some people feel excluded from the mainstream, as though they do not belong.

The maintenance and creation of social cohesion is one of the major challenges facing many regions, cities and towns in the EU. A focus on Social Inclusion as one of the key policy domains therefore reflects the increasing tension that is experienced at a local level in terms of economic competitiveness and social marginalisation. The phenomena of spatial and economic segmentation/segregation are issues that are at the forefront of local, regional, and national and EU policies and strategies.

Whilst it is undeniably the case that many regions, cities /towns have experienced economic dynamism and growth in recent years, however, it is also clear that the fruits of that prosperity have not been equally shared by all groups. Growth has been good for some but not for all. Indeed, throughout many of the most economically successful regions, cities/towns during the past decade, a process of economic marginalisation, social exclusion and physical segregation has taken place.

Without doubt social exclusion is in part connected to developments in the labour market. Modern labour markets are different from those of the post-war boom when jobs were broadly shared between male workers with different skill levels. The result has been a strong polarisation in incomes, employment standards and job security between different groups within the labour market. There has been a decline in manufacturing jobs and a growth in knowledge-intensive professional, managerial and technical jobs with good salaries and conditions which have gone to well qualified, mainly indigenous workers. The expansion in consumer and personal services, on the other hand, has largely drawn on female and ethnic minority workers and provides jobs that are often insecure, part time and poorly paid. Combined with high levels of structural unemployment this has contributed to the growing gap between the highest and lowest levels of household incomes. In many urban areas, lack of employment opportunities has seriously affected the lives of young people. Social changes related to family patterns, ageing and the sub-urbanisation of people and jobs have reinforced the consequences of economic and labour market restructuring.

The creation of a dual labour market has been a major factor in the development of divided European cities. Structural unemployment is no longer confined to traditionally depressed areas. Many potential workers in the most successful cities - young labour market entrants or older workers from displaced industries - lack the skills needed in modern industries. As incomes have become more polarised, social segregation has widened. Households able to command good salaries have experienced improved standards of living while those excluded from the economic mainstream have suffered relatively and absolutely. They have become concentrated in the poorest accommodation in both the public and private housing markets. This process is particularly marked amongst the growing ethnic minority communities in urban Europe who often face discrimination in housing and labour markets as well as problems caused by language barriers.

All these factors have encouraged the development of segregated spaces, including some whose economies have fared well. In many areas, the gap between rich and poor has been aggravated by reductions in support for social housing and other services. In some cities the redevelopment of central areas has forced up land values and rents in the housing market and displaced low-income groups to social housing estates on the periphery. Elsewhere dilapidated rented housing in central areas remains the base for low income groups. The concentration of people with the worst income and employment prospects in areas with low quality housing and poor environmental conditions, often badly served by transport and community facilities, has led to social problems and significant tensions. Such neighbourhoods are effectively locked out of wider economic and social developments and become segregated.

Accumulated experience from Member States has highlighted the difficulties of “turning round” such areas and this in turn has highlighted the need for ensuring greater integration at all levels. Indeed, for much of the last twenty years policies have been dominated by a policy framework which regarded economic behaviour as somehow detached from its social context. Within this policy paradigm city and regeneration policies were essentially seen as redistributive palliatives for treating symptoms in the poorest places, in response to supposed 'market and individual failures'. However, over the past few years a new policy paradigm has emerged which envisages a more positive role for territorial policies and management, whether at national, regional, city or community levels. This policy paradigm has a number of key strands:

- First, there is the recognition of the interconnected nature of social and economic life, and policy.
- Secondly, economic policies which create stocks of unused assets, whether unemployed people or discarded brown-field land, may result in system costs and lost opportunities which reduce the long-term growth potential of an economy.
- Thirdly, policy actions in single sector 'boxes' lead to waste of resources. Modern policy and governance is about making those critical connections.

Key Socio-economic trends

Poverty and exclusion levels are only, at best, marginally better than 10 years ago. Indeed, there are indications that levels are stubborn to reduce and more over the trend is upwards in the first part of this current decade. There are some key socio-economic trends and indicators that reflect this situation and need to be taken into account in contextualising current and future policy options:

- The average unemployment rate for the EU as a whole rose to nearly 9% in 2004, and is projected to rise further.
- In 2004, long-term unemployment affected 4% of the EU labour force (and 39% of the unemployed). Almost two thirds of them had in fact been unemployed for a very long time (at least 24 months). Within the EU, according to 2002 figures, Austria, Denmark, Luxembourg, Netherlands and Sweden have long-term unemployment rates of 1% or below. Long-term unemployment remains high in Greece and Italy, where more than 5% of the labour force is affected. These two Member States, along with Spain, also display the greatest disparity between genders. For the EU as unemployment rates are higher for women than for men, although in Finland, Ireland, Sweden and the UK the opposite applies.
- In the EU as a whole, in 2002, around one in ten individuals aged 18 to 59 years were living in jobless households. This share was highest in Belgium (14%), followed by the United Kingdom (11%). Invariably, women are more likely to live in a jobless household than men. In 2003, the share of children living in jobless households was slightly higher than for prime age adults (9.9%) but variations across countries are more marked, with less than 3% of children living in jobless households in Luxembourg and 17% in the United Kingdom.
- The long-term societal consequences of ageing of the European population are becoming clearer. Today, people aged 65 and over represent 16% of the total population while those below 15 represent 17%. Already by 2010 these shares will be inverted. The most dramatic increase will occur in the number of 'very old' people (aged over 80), which will rise by almost 50% over the next 15 years.
- At the same time, developments in household structures slowly undermine the objective conditions for inter-generational solidarity within the family. There are fewer and later marriages, and also more marital breakdowns. The trend towards smaller households, with more people living alone at all ages, is continuing. There is also a striking rise in the

number of children living with only one adult, and a fall in the number of couples with children. In 2000, 10% of children aged 0-14 years were living with just one adult compared with 6% in 1990. The overwhelming majority of these single parents are women.

- The proportion of individuals living in households where income is below the threshold of 60% of the national equivalised median income is taken as an indicator of relative poverty. Given the conventional nature of the retained threshold, and the fact that having an income below this threshold is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition of being in a state of poverty, this indicator is referred to as a measure of poverty risk. In 2001, 15% of the EU population were classified as being at risk of poverty, corresponding to more than 55 million individuals in the EU. This average value for the EU masks considerable variation across Member States, with the share of the population at risk of poverty ranging from 9% in Sweden to 21% in Ireland.
- The longer the length of time someone has to live on low income the greater the risk of deprivation and exclusion from social, cultural and economic activity and the greater the risk of extreme social isolation. In all countries, half or more of those at risk of poverty in 2001 have been living on low income for an extended period of time, that is, they had an equivalised income below the 60% threshold in the current year and at least two of the preceding three years (i.e., 1998-2000). In Greece and Portugal, where the at-risk-of poverty rate is very high, as many as two out of three of those with an income below the poverty threshold in 2001 have been persistently at risk of poverty. On average in the EU, 9 % of the population have been persistently poor in 2001.
- Women are generally at greater risk of living in a poor household: in 2001, 16% of adult women (aged 16 years or more) had an income below the threshold, against 13% of men in the same age group. This pattern is consistent across all Member States, with the widest differences being recorded in Austria, Finland and the United Kingdom.
- The risk of poverty is comparatively greater for women in specific age groups, in particular for older women (aged 65 years and over: 21% as compared to 16% for men in the same age group for the EU as a whole).
- By household type, the risk of poverty is highest among single parent households (35% for the EU average), most of which are headed by women. In the United Kingdom, the exposure to the poverty risk for single parent households, which represent a relatively high proportion of all households, is particularly high (50%). Also those living in large households with three or more dependent children are particularly exposed to income poverty risk, with Ireland, Italy, Spain and Portugal displaying the highest risk (between 34% and 49%, against a EU average of 27%).
- As a consequence, in most countries children experience levels of income poverty that are higher than those for adults. In 2001, rates of poverty risk for children were of 24% or more in Spain, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and the United Kingdom. Differences in the persistence of child poverty relative to adults are also significant (12% as against 9% for the EU as a whole), which suggests that specific factors shape the risks of poverty faced by children relative to those faced by the entire population.
- At the other extreme of the age scale, people aged 65 years and over suffer from a relatively high risk of poverty as well, especially in Greece, Ireland and Portugal. On the other hand, in Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, the elderly appear to be less affected by the risk of poverty than the total population.
- The lack of basic competences and qualifications is a major barrier to inclusion in society and this is even more the case in an increasingly knowledge-based society and economy. There is thus a growing danger of new cleavages in society being created between those

having access to lifelong learning for employment and adaptability, personal development and active citizenship and those who remain excluded. 2003 LFS data show that around 18% of all 18-24 years old had only lower education (i.e., less than upper secondary qualification) and had not attended education or training in the four weeks preceding the survey. Values ranged from 10% or less in Denmark, Austria, Finland and Sweden to 41% in Portugal. In all countries, young men are more likely to leave the education system with low educational qualifications than young women.

- There is a widespread understanding that poor health is both a cause and a consequence of wider socio-economic difficulties. Accordingly, the overall health status of the population tends to be weaker in lower income groups. The percentage of people claiming their health to be bad or very bad is significantly higher for those in the bottom quintile of the income distribution than for those at the top quintile in the Union as a whole (16% and 7% respectively), as well as in all Member States.

Linked to this, despite the clear political, economic and social benefits of enlargement, the immediate impact in terms of poverty and social exclusion will be to increase levels. A number of features need to be noted:

- Average GDP per head in the new member States is under half the average that existed in the EU15 and only 56% of those of working age are in jobs as against 64% in the EU15.
- The risk of poverty, as measured by relative income, is broadly in line with that of the EU15, while there is a wide variation across new Member States ranging from 8% in the Czech Rep. to 18% in Estonia. However, people living below the at-risk-of-poverty line have much lower income and therefore face much harder living conditions than in the old Member States as the overall level of prosperity is lower. A comparative analysis of the national poverty thresholds helps to illustrate how different levels of economic prosperity impact on the income and living conditions of those worse off. In 2001, a single person living at the 60%-poverty threshold in Germany had 26 € (PPP) for disposal on a daily basis, while the same household in Latvia could dispose of 6 € (PPP), each € buying the same amount of goods and services. Among the new Member States only Cyprus, Slovenia and Malta have monetary values of the 60% thresholds above the lowest level in the EU15, which is observed in Portugal. Thus it is not surprising that deprivation and lack of basic necessities are more widespread in many of the new Member States. Households in the new Member States on average lack twice as many basic household goods as in the EU15. In Estonia it is estimated that in 2002, using a nationally agreed indicator of absolute poverty, some 25% of the population were still living below the absolute poverty line and over a third of children were below this minimal standard of living. It is also not surprising that national average levels of life satisfaction are considerably lower in the new Member States.
- Whereas employment has tended to rise since the mid-1990s in the EU15 countries, in the new Member States of Central and Eastern Europe it has fallen as a result of restructuring and job losses in agriculture and industry. Overall employment rates tend to be lower in the new Member States than in the EU 15. Only Cyprus showed in 2002 an employment rate (68.6%) close to the Lisbon target of 70%, while the Czech Republic (65.7%) and Slovenia (63.4%) were above or close below the EU15 average (64.3%). All the remaining countries were far below the old EU average, with the extreme position being occupied by Poland (51.5%). Employment rates show a great regional diversity in countries such as the Czech Rep., Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Poland and the Slovak Rep.
- Gender gaps in employment rates are found to be relatively smaller in the new Member States (12%) compared to the EU15 countries (17%).
- Employment rates of older workers tend to be much lower than in the EU 15. This is particularly the case with the Slovak Rep. (22.8%), Slovenia (24.5%), Poland (26.1%),

Hungary (26.6%) but also Malta (30.3%). Only Estonia (51.6%) and Cyprus (49.4%) are around the EU target of 50% for the employment rate of older workers.

- In terms of unemployment there is a startling difference between the situation in the EU 15 and in the new Member States. While in the EU15 the rise in unemployment during the recent economic slowdown remained fairly limited, standing at 8% in November 2003, in the new Member States the unemployment rate in 2003, despite more favourable rates of economic growth, reached 14.3%. As a reflection of substantial economic and labour market restructuring, unemployment rates were particularly high in Estonia (10.1%), Latvia (10.5%), Lithuania (12.7%), Poland (19.2%), and the Slovak Rep (17.4%). They were lowest in Cyprus (4.4%), Hungary (5.8%) and Slovenia (6.5%). Further, in countries like the Czech Rep., Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and the Slovak Rep. the unemployment rate differs greatly across regions and between urban and rural areas. Unemployment rates of women are higher than for men in all new Member States – except in Hungary and Estonia.
- Average long-term unemployment is much higher for new Member States (8%) than in the EU 15 (4%). However, the size of Poland introduces a certain bias in this general picture, as long term unemployment is very high in this country (10.9%). This problem looks quite intractable and constitutes one of the major driving forces of poverty and social exclusion also in the Slovak Rep. (12.1%) and in the Baltic countries, all with rates far higher than the EU average.
- The situation for some ethnic minority groups; children in or leaving institutions; the homeless, mentally ill and people with disabilities is much worse
- The general health conditions in the new Member States are worse than in the EU-15. Life expectancy at birth is significantly lower. For men it ranges from 65 to 72 years (EU-15 73-78) and for women from 76-80 (EU-15 79-83). Death rates from many non communicable diseases remain much higher than in Western Europe and seem to reflect traditionally high levels of smoking and poor dietary intake. In some countries (Poland, Estonia, Latvia) the use and abuse of alcohol is deemed to be an issue of real concern.
- The Joint Inclusion Memorandums(JIMs) illustrate the same multifaceted grounds for poverty and social exclusion such as long-term dependence on low/inadequate income, long-term unemployment, low paid and/or low quality employment or absence of employment record, low level education and training and illiteracy, growing up in a vulnerable family, disability and poor health, living in an area of multiple disadvantage, rough sleeping and homelessness, immigration, ethnicity, racism and discrimination.
- The new Member States face many of the same major structural changes as the EU15 which, while creating new opportunities for jobs and social inclusion, also increase the risks of greater exclusion. The structural changes include:
 - Restructuring of the labour market in response to rapid economic change and globalisation;
 - Rapid growth of the knowledge society and ICT;
 - Ageing populations and higher dependency ratios;
 - Continuing changes in household structures
 - Agricultural restructuring
- There are some factors that play a positive role in respect of meeting these challenges:
 - The strength of their social protection systems (welfare provision and services). Though here it is essential to note the difference between the new Member States (Slovenia, Malta, Cyprus, and the Czech Republic have system comparable to the EU15, however the Baltic States have a less developed welfare state.

- There is a higher level of participation in education (up to upper secondary level) and a lower school drop out rate.
- However, given the much lower levels of income in the new Member States, and the major structural changes outlined above, it is essential to recognise that the new member States face a particular challenge to develop actions which prevent people becoming poor and excluded and thus unable to benefit from or contribute to the increased economic growth that should follow from enlargement.

EU Social Inclusion Initiatives: An Overview

It is important to bear in mind that since the mid 1970`s the EU has been increasingly worried by the persistence and new forms of poverty and social exclusion. The EU Council took its first resolution approving a social action programme to combat poverty in January 1974. This was the origin of the first Poverty Programme (Poverty 1, 1975-80). This was followed by Poverty 2 (1984-89) and Poverty 3 (1989-94) Programmes. In Poverty 1 "Persons beset by poverty" were characterised as "individuals or families whose resources are so small as to exclude them from the minimum acceptable way of life of the Member State in which they live".

Poverty 1, in hindsight, laid down some key elements that are still evident in the present and future policy context. These elements included:

- A multi-dimensional and cumulative perspective in relation to poverty and exclusion.
- New forms of poverty and exclusion arising from the way that the labour market was, or was not working. The new forms of poverty included "low pay, unemployment, precarious employment" and thus a focus on exclusion from the labour market and the conditions of employability;
- Identification of certain specific groups as bearing the brunt of increasing poverty and exclusion .e.g. young people; unskilled workers; immigrants; people with disabilities; single parents
- Institutional approaches to tackling these issues were in some cases part of the problem, rather than a solution

These elements can be found in successive measures during the late 1980`s and early 1990`s e.g.:

- Establishment of the Observatory on National Policies to Combat Social Exclusion (1990)
- Communication from Commission "Towards a Europe of Solidarity"(1992)
- Council Resolution on "Combating Social Exclusion"(1989)
- White Paper on "Growth, Competitiveness and Employment"(1994)

Following the recognition under Articles 136 and 137 EC of the Amsterdam Treaty of combating social exclusion as one of the fields where the Community had an active role in supporting and complementing the activities of Member States, the Lisbon European of March 2000 agreed on the need to take steps to "make a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty by 2010".

It also agreed that Member States should co-ordinate their policies for combating poverty and social exclusion on the basis of an **open method of co-ordination** combining common objectives, National Action Plans and a Community Action programme. In December 2000 the Nice European Council decided to launch the new method in the field of combating poverty and social exclusion and defined a common set of four objectives:

- To facilitate participation in employment and access to resources, rights, goods, and services for all;
- To prevent the risks of exclusion;
- To help the most vulnerable;

- To mobilise all relevant bodies.

National Action Plans for social inclusion (NAPs/inclusion for short) play a key role in the EU process, to the extent that they translate the common objectives into national policies, while taking into account their individual national circumstances and the particular nature of national social protection systems and social policies.

All Member States submitted their first NAPs/inclusion in June 2001. Their preparation provided an opportunity for wide information and consultation of the most concerned stakeholders and to review the bases of the national strategies to fight poverty and social exclusion. It also represented an opportunity to develop a more strategic and integrated approach. Moreover, the information provided in the NAPs/inclusion provided a good basis for the exchange of learning and best practice across the Union.

However, it needs to be noted that this potential has not been very effectively realised in practice. Most significantly, that despite the centrality of the issue of social exclusion in terms of urban policy, the role of cities and regions in the development of National Action plans for Social Inclusion (NAPs) has been ad hoc and somewhat marginal.

Reflecting a wide consensus about the usefulness of the new process and the robustness of the common objectives adopted in Nice, the Council decided in December 2002 to ask Member States to prepare a second round of NAPs/inclusion for July 2003 on the basis of common objectives where just a few substantive changes were introduced:

- (a) An invitation to Member States to include national targets in their NAPs/inclusion (in fulfilment of the conclusions of the Barcelona European Council);
- (b) An emphasis placed on gender differentiation in the analysis of social exclusion and in assessing policy impact;
- (c) The highlighting of the special difficulties facing immigrants as regards their social inclusion.

New member States have been involved in this process, well before the date of formal enlargement. DG EMPL and each of the Acceding Countries agreed in 2002 to initiate a bilateral co-operation process centred on the drafting of Joint Inclusion Memoranda (JIMs) with the aim of identifying the key social challenges in each country, setting out the major policies in place or envisaged and highlighting a few key policy issues for further review. The JIMs were signed jointly by the Commission and each of the 10 acceding countries on 18 December 2003. This process was designed to prepare the accession countries for their full participation in the social inclusion process, which started in mid-2004 with the submission of their first NAPs/inclusion for the period 2004-2006.

Linked to the Open Method of Co-ordination are a series of peer reviews in the field of social inclusion policies. These are focussing on a number of topics:

- Segregation in metropolitan areas;
- Homelessness
- Young People with special needs and the transition from school to work;
- Social Activation
- Citizen's social support networks
- Integration of new migrants
- Money advice
- Reconciliation of work and family life

In line with the Lisbon strategy, the Open Method of Co-ordination on social inclusion should be seen in close connection with other processes contributing to economic growth and greater social cohesion. Particularly relevant for the fulfilment of the goals of the social inclusion process are the

economic and the employment policy co-ordination processes, underpinned respectively by the Broad Economic Policy Guidelines and the European Employment Strategy. The European Employment Strategy (EES) was launched in 1997 and also has a key objective of fostering social cohesion and inclusion. The Joint Employment Report (2003/4) highlights a number of areas for specific attention:

- Entrepreneurship-supporting and developing self employment
- Developing Human Capital
- Promotion of active ageing and raising female participation rates
- Targeting the integration of groups experiencing disadvantage
- Making work pay

As with the social exclusion strategy, the EES requires the production of National Employment Plans. Furthermore, it also incorporates a programme of peer reviews topics covered include:

- Disability Management;
- The gender digital divide ;
- Equal pay
- Access routes to employment for young people at risk of exclusion;
- Ageing workforce;
- Life long learning;
- Women entrepreneurs;
- Vocational education
- Social responsibility of enterprises
- Labour market reform

Also increasingly relevant is the Open Method of Coordination on pensions that was launched in 2002 and the co-operative exchange on health and long-term care for the elderly.

EU Cohesion Policy also explicitly addresses economic and social inequalities. In particular, several sub-elements have a strong link to the issue of social inclusion:

- Objective Two funding has strongly focussed on urban regeneration.
- ESF funding has targeted support for the development of human resources. Interventions under Objective Three were aimed at integrating young people, the long-term unemployed, and those at risk of exclusion into employment and at promoting equal opportunities. Interventions under Objective Four were focussed on helping workers adapt to industrial change.
- ESF also funds the EQUAL initiative (2000-2006), which is focussed on new innovative approaches to combating inequalities and discrimination on the labour market, giving strong emphasis to trans-national co-operation, partnership and the exchange of experience and good practice.
- The URBAN initiative covers the 44% of the EU population living in cities of over 50,000 people. In the 1994-1999 period support was provided to 118 cities. In the present period, support is being provided to projects in 70 cities. The main focus is on small urban neighbourhoods characterised by high economic and social exclusion.
- Linked to URBAN is the URBACT programme. URBACT has a two-fold mission:
 - To facilitate exchange between cities;
 - To foster capitalisation and the dissemination of knowledge
- The URBACT programme has established networks covering a number of themes:
 - Citizen participation

- Governance of projects
 - Information society
 - Physical regeneration
 - Crime prevention
 - Integrated approach
 - Public –Private partnerships
 - Social Inclusion and Diversity
 - Inclusion of migrants
 - Young people and Inclusion
 - Transport and Environment
 - Training
- INTERREG III (2000-2006) also provides for greater co-operation and exchange of experience between regions.

Finally, it is also relevant to note that the European Entrepreneurship Strategy also incorporates a strong focus on the social economy and in particular women and ethnic minorities and thus relates to the issue of social inclusion. Similarly, the European Life Long Learning Strategy incorporates the need to invest in both social and human capital and also includes a specific focus on supporting the accreditation of informal learning as a way of providing routes for inclusion for groups lacking formal “qualification”.

For the period 2007-2013, the EC has recognised that there is a need to improve the consistency between the policy messages arising from the different co-ordination processes, while avoiding a multiplication of processes with different rules and often overlapping objectives. This has resulted in two very significant developments:

- Firstly the Commission has set out in a proposal aimed at streamlining and simplifying policy co-ordination in the field of social protection based on the Open Method of Co-ordination. This will involve the creation of a streamlined process, on the basis of a common set of objectives encompassing healthcare, pensions and social inclusion, which fit more effectively other policy co-ordination processes, notably the Broad Economic Policy Guidelines and the Employment Strategy, thereby giving more visibility to the social dimension in the implementation of the overall Lisbon strategy. Reporting arrangements will be simplified, with one single strategic report every three years alternating with light updates in the intervening years from 2006 onwards. The Commission has further proposed that a Joint Report on social protection and social inclusion be issued for the first time in 2005, with the aim of analysing major policy developments against the background of recent social and economic trends and forecasts and providing the basis for the delivery of key policy messages to the Spring European Council.
- Secondly, a major re-orientation of Cohesion Policy so that it relates more closely to the Lisbon and Goteborg Agenda’s. This re-orientation has a number of important features:
 - Thematic Concentration around “the three pillars of sustainable development”:
 - Competitiveness(innovation, research, education and accessibility)
 - Employment and Social Inclusion
 - Environment and risk prevention
 - Budgetary Concentration. This will mean:
 - Three funds(ERDF, Cohesion, ESF) in place of the current six
 - These three funds however will operate as a single fund by programme(the key themes)

- Available resources to be more concentrated in relation to need. 78,58% for convergence (less developed regions, less developed countries and regions affected by the statistical effect linked to enlargement). 17,22% for regional competitiveness and employment. 3,94% for cross-border and trans-national co-operation.
- A greater territorial and decentralised approach. In particular, the integration of the urban dimension into territorial specificities with the possibility of sub-delegation to the urban authorities.

CONFERENCE REPORT

“CHANGE AND CONTINUITY: SOCIAL INCLUSION IN AN ENLARGED EU”

Bratislava, 29-30 September 2004

OPENING PLENARY SESSION

Welcome and Introduction:

Lionel Martijn, President of QeC-ERAN and Member of the political board for Charlois, Rotterdam welcomed participants and explained that the conference was organised as part of an activity to raise the issue of social exclusion and poverty in particular with view to the five new Member States: Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia. Representatives from Romania, as an EU accession country, had also been invited to share their experience and to contribute to the event. He thanked the Self-Governing Region of Bratislava for their cooperation with QeC-ERAN in organizing the conference and the European Commission for its support.

L’ubo Roman, Chairman of the Bratislava Self-Governing Region stressed the importance of such an event taking place in Slovakia where terms such as ‘social inclusion’ and ‘poverty reduction’ were until recently unknown in political discussions. He pointed out that Slovakia suffered from a 95 % unemployment rate amongst its Roma population and that other groups affected by poverty included the homeless, addicts, persons with disabilities and pensioners. With regard to the education system, he noted that citizens had access to education but schools were not flexible enough to prepare students for the employment market and to respond to demands of a new working environment, such as for example teaching of new languages or information technologies. Mr Roman hoped that the conference would provide the basis for the creation of a platform of experts and organizations in the field of social inclusion and raise awareness about these issues with the public and relevant authorities.

Guran Peter, Director of the Social Affairs Section of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic noted that Slovakia had seen significant changes in recent years in the economic, political and social sphere which have had a significant impact upon the standard of living of its citizens and the potential to turn Slovakia into a dynamic society meeting the challenges of globalisation. However, Mr Peter pointed out that some groups of society were not able to put up with the pace of change and therefore strategies had to be put forward aimed at protecting these vulnerable groups from social exclusion and poverty. The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family developed the first Joint Inclusion Memorandum (JIM) and National Action Plans on Social inclusion for Slovakia which identified key challenges and policy measures with regard to social exclusion and poverty. It had applied the principle of the Open Method of Coordination in line with the Lisbon strategy and Mr Peter hoped that the conference would provide further space to discuss important issues emerging from the JIMs such as increasing employment and employability, issues of self-employment, and the situation of the Roma community.

Plenary Discussions

The EU Social Inclusion Strategy

Haroon Saad, Director of QeC-ERAN

Mr Saad gave a detailed presentation on the EU Social Inclusion Strategy in order to set the policy context for the conference, to identify key socio-economic trends in relation to Social Inclusion in an enlarged EU and to highlight issues of continuity and change in the enlarged EU.

First of all, Mr Saad pointed out that EU strategies on social inclusion and tackling poverty date back to the 70s and include amongst other the Poverty Programme (1975-1994), the establishment

of an Observatory of National Policies to Combat Social Exclusion (1990), a Council Resolution on “Combating Social Exclusion” 1998 and the Integra Programme (1994-2000). He stressed that social exclusion and poverty are recurring themes in the EU and call for a coherent programme. Whereas one large cause of the problem is the issue of employment, other factors and barriers which prevent parts of society to be included need to be addressed.

Current policy context is based on the Lisbon Agenda which foresees the EU to “become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion” with three main objectives: competitiveness, more and better jobs and social inclusion. There exists a whole raft of policies and initiatives to underpin the social inclusion strategy.

However, Mr Saad expressed his concern at the policy fragmentation, the lack of cohesion between the center and the region and the fact that social policy was running behind economic policy development.

Development in the New Member States – Issues emerging from Joint Inclusion Memoranda
Walter Wolf, European Commission, DG Employment and Social Affairs

Mr Wolf examined the main issues that emerged from the Joint Inclusion Memoranda of the New Member States in their effort to combat poverty and social exclusion. He noted that most new Member States faced serious challenges in the context of transforming their societies and restructuring their economies into market economies. This has led to a sharp fall in the total output, made large numbers of people unemployed and led to a concentration of problems in some regions and rural areas. Furthermore, New Member States face similar key structural changes as the old Member States, such as:

- industrial and agricultural restructuring in response to rapid economic change,
- economic and budgetary convergence,
- rapid growth of the knowledge society and ICT,
- ageing populations, higher dependency rates,
- changes in household structure,
- increased level of immigration .

Given the much lower levels of income in the new Member States as well as the key structural changes, the new Member States face a particular challenge to develop actions which prevent people becoming poor and excluded and thus unable to benefit from or contribute to the increased economic growth that should follow from enlargement. In this regard six particular challenges emerge clearly from the JIM which are common to the new Member States. These are:

1. to increase labour market participation especially for the long term unemployed and groups at high risk of poverty and social exclusion,
2. to improve education and lifelong learning opportunities especially for groups at risk of poverty and social exclusion,
3. to reform social protection systems,
4. to improve quality and enable access to key public services particularly health and social services, transport and adequate housing,
5. to overcome the particularly high levels of exclusion and discrimination experienced by some ethnic groups, especially the Roma, and other groups at high risk,
6. to support families and to protect the rights of children.

In order to underpin the development of effective policies it is essential to put in place mechanisms and procedures that will help to coordinate and mainstream anti-poverty action, to mobilise all actors and to ensure the effective implementation of policies. In this regard it is clear from the JIM that the new Member States will need to take more into account the following issues in order to further develop the EU social inclusion policy:

- to coordinate and mainstream policies among all responsible government departments,
- to take more fully into account social inclusion goals in the national budgetary decision making process,
- to develop effective arrangements for supporting and enabling the involvement of Social Partners and NGOs in the development, implementation and monitoring of social inclusion policies,
- to strengthen the statistical database on income and living conditions, especially in relation to those most vulnerable groups not well covered in mainline surveys, and improve the evaluation of policies and programmes,
- to ensure strong links and clear distribution of competences between national, regional and local authorities in order to ensure effective and co-ordinated development and delivery of social inclusion policies.

Case Study: The Roma Community

Stefan Sarkozy, Nadacia Inforoma (Inforoma Foundation)

It is estimated that at least eight million Roma live in Europe today, with the majority, almost six million, living in Central and Eastern Europe. (Romania:2.5 million, Czech Republic: 300.000, Hungary: 6000.000, Poland: 60.000, Slovakia: 520.000, Slovenia 10.000 and Bulgaria 800 000).

Despite many common traditions, the Roma communities today are made up of diverse branches, with many different cultures, dialects and languages between them. As a minority group, they have had difficulties in establishing and defending their basic human rights. Roma communities suffer from social and cultural exclusion in most European countries but the problems of marginalisation are particularly severe in the Central and Eastern parts of Europe, where Roma have suffered in the transition of the countries towards market economies. The problems most commonly faced by Roma populations are racism and discrimination, low levels of education, high unemployment (50-95%), health standards well below those of the mainstream population, and very poor housing conditions.

Mr Sarkozy introduced the work of the InfoRoma Foundation to address some of these issues in particularly in the field of education. The Foundation currently runs a major project on alternative pre-school education for children of the Roma community. Given the fact that most kindergartens in Slovakia have been closed down in recent years, this pre-school education project comes at a crucial time. It addresses the special needs of Roma children such as Slovakian language teaching and preparatory measures to enter the Slovakian school system. It aims to strengthen cultural identity of Roma children and at the same time to involve the children's parents. Furthermore, it provides additional teaching facilities to children entering primary school level and project workers act as a mediator between Roma families and school teachers. The results to date have been very positive and have allowed Roma children to become more self-confident and ambitious and to make friends at school thus assisting them to be socially integrated. However, the project was in need of funding and it was hoped that the government would integrate the training center into the Slovakian school system.

The panel presentations generated lively debates especially around the issue of the Roma community. Mr Sarkozy was asked to provide more practical information on the project. In particular representatives from the Czech Republic were keen to learn more on how the center motivated parents to send their children to school. Mr Sarkozy replied that the project center was mainly benefiting from the trust it had built up over the years with the Roma community and worked closely with parents to involve them in activities and observe teachings at schools.

Mr Wolf was asked to elaborate on the EU's Community Action Programme. He explained that amongst others it was aimed to bring together representatives from civil society and government official to exchange experience and good practice as well as to raise public awareness of the NAPs which he considered to be still very weak.

National Action Programmes in the New Member States – Presentations and Reactions

Representatives from five new Member States (Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia) as well as Romania (EU accession country) gave presentations of their first NAPs on social inclusion. Presentations included information on the preparation process of the NAPs, socio-economic backgrounds of the respective countries, and objectives and strategies undertaken in relation to social inclusion.

The new Member States had adopted the common objectives agreed by the Member States at the Nice European Council in 2000 and based their presentations around the following set of common objectives in the fight against social exclusion and poverty:

- to facilitate participation in the employment market and access by all to the resources, rights, goods and services
- to prevent the risk of exclusion
- to help the most vulnerable
- to mobilize all relevant bodies

Serious challenges faced by the new Member States were high level of unemployment rates, concentration of poverty in rural areas, the situation of ethnic groups such as the Roma as well as children in institution and the homeless.

A summary of the major points highlighted during the presentation follows. Copies of the presentations can be downloaded from the QeC-ERAN secretariat website:

<http://www.qec-eran.org>

Complete texts of the NAPs are available at:

http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/news/2001/jun/napsincl2001_en.html

CZECH REPUBLIC

Zuzana Zajarosova, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

Situation and key trends: In recent years, the Czech economy has seen a revival and the inflation rate is lower than in many EU countries. The average employment rate is 65.4% in 2002. The unemployment rate increased to 8% in 2003; there is high youth and long-term unemployment among the low skilled. Compared with other new Member States, and also with the EU average, the Czech Republic has a low at risk of poverty rate (8%). The unemployed (31%) and single parents (27%) show the highest risk of poverty. In addition the specific needs of disadvantaged groups, such as people with disabilities and the Roma, need to be given particular attention.

Most vulnerable groups:

Roma community, persons with disabilities, children, young adults, older people, homeless people, persons leaving institutions and ex-prisoners.

NAPs preparation/participation process:

Representatives from Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, other ministries, governmental and other institutions, municipalities, NGOs, social partners, experts.

Key strategies:

- linkage of social inclusion strategy to the state economic policy,
- adopting a multi-dimensional approach,
- narrow focus on at risk groups of poverty and social exclusion,
- provide support by means of best services possible by cooperation with non-profit sector and local authorities to provide services corresponding with local needs and other measures.

HUNGARY

Ms Györgyi Vadja, Government Office for Equal Opportunities

Situation and key trends: The key policy issues in Hungary relate a low overall employment rate (56.6% - EU-15: 64.3%), though unemployment remains low at 5.8 %. Inactivity and unemployment have a strong ethnic and regional dimension, in particular as they relate to the Roma population and the disadvantaged regions. The poverty at risk rate is measured at 10% though it is important to note that measurement of income inequalities (according to Laeken indicators) raises several methodological issues in Hungary as there are different ways of collecting data.

Most vulnerable groups:

Roma, people with disabilities, children in poverty, psychiatric patients and addicts, homeless people, the unemployed, large and single families.

NAP preparation/participation process:

Large involvement: partnership with NGOs, external experts, ministries and other organizations, Ministry of Health, Social and Family Affairs, finalized by Commission Against Social Exclusion and decided by Hungarian Government

Strategy

- Promoting employment: employment friendly economic environment, training and lifelong learning, facilitating female employment and reconciliation of work and family life,
- Accessible public services for all: modernizing social provision system, affirmative education, overcoming health disparities, integrative culture and sports,
- Reducing long-term and deep rooted poverty: incentive and targeted social assistance: revision of social law, improving the eligibility criteria, housing,
- Investment in the future: the well-being of children, improving child care services, affirmative, enabling education, fostering of children's rights,
- Mainstreaming the fight against poverty and social exclusion: Coordinated and mainstreamed approach for the Roma, persons with disabilities, equality between men and women.

SLOVENIA

Staso Stikovic, Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs

Situation and key trends: While relatively lower than in the other new Member States, the main cause of poverty and social exclusion in Slovenia is unemployment (6.7%). Over half of the unemployed are long-term unemployed (3.8%). This situation has its roots in low educational attainment, lack of skills and qualifications and consequently low employability. The overall risk at poverty rate is 11.9 %.

Most vulnerable groups:

Certain groups of disabled persons, unemployed young people, children, adolescents with development difficulties, homeless people, Roma, people with low income, persons with addiction and health problems, persons on probation.

NAP preparation/participation process:

Ministries and governmental offices, local authorities, trade unions and employers, NGOs, other service providers

Strategy:

- further development of labour market: training, vocational qualifications, specific employment programmes,
- ensuring appropriate education: quality of education, children with special needs, appropriate policy for enrolment places in schools,
- ensuring suitable housing conditions: introducing system of rent subsidy, municipalities to provide temporary or emergency accommodation, method of non-profit rents,
- reducing regional differences,
- improving the provision of services,
- ensuring income for a decent standard of living: legal provision of minimum wage, less tax burdens especially for persons with low income,

SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Silvia Rybarova, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family

Situation and key trends: In spite of higher economic growth since 2000, the unemployment rate still remains high at an overall rate of 17.4 % (youth unemployment rate of 11.1 % and long-term unemployment rate of 12.1%) and represents a serious social inclusion challenge. The unemployed (especially women), lone parent households, and for the 65+ age group have a particularly high risk of poverty, with an overall risk-of poverty rate at 21%. The Roma minority, which is estimated to be between 6.8% and 7.2% of the population, remains the most endangered group at risk of long-term social exclusion.

Most vulnerable groups

Roma communities, disabled people, migrants, homeless, unemployed, single parent, adults with children, children, young people.

NAP preparation/participation process:

Representatives from ministries, Office of the SR Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities, statistical office of the SR, associations of municipalities, research and academic institutions, NGOs.

Strategy:

- Supporting the employment and employability of groups with an increased risk of social exclusion
- Avoiding exclusion through supporting labour force adaptability and mobility: life long learning, support affordable public rental apartments, improved child care services
- Guaranteeing essential resources for a decent life
- Facilitating access to all services such as health, housing, education, transport etc.
- Creating conditions for supporting family solidarity and preventing the social exclusion of vulnerable groups
- Supporting social inclusion of the most vulnerable groups and ensuring a comprehensive approach to solving the exclusion of Roma communities.

POLAND

Olga Soszynska, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family

Situation and Key Trends: Poland has the lowest employment rate in EU: 51.2 % (in 2003) and poverty is closely linked to unemployment. In 2001, 15% of people lived below the poverty line. In 2002, the unemployment rate reached 19.2% of which 41.7% young unemployed and 11 % long term unemployed. The high share of employment in agriculture confirms that major economic restructuring is required. Average educational attainment is still low. Urban – rural divide in education is especially problematic. The number of disabled persons is very high in Poland and they face a difficult situation on the labour market. Among ethnic and national minorities, the Roma are most affected by social problems. The poverty level increases with the size of families.

Most vulnerable groups:

Young people, older workers, low educated, women, families with three or more children, children, the unemployed.

NAP preparation/participation process:

Task force for the NAPs included representatives from ministries, social partners, NGOs, municipalities, international organizations.

Strategies:

Social policy to focus on the following areas:

- Education: in particular in rural areas and disabled persons, improving quality, vocational training, setting up of career centers, extending life-long learning,
- Economic poverty: the extremely poor, creation of center for homeless people, addicts etc.
- Labour market: long-term unemployed youth, disabled,
- Ensuring adequate access to quality service especially healthcare: women and children, but also whole society,
- Others: affordable housing, social workers, community support, citizens activities.

ROMANIA

Ileana Neamtu, Anti-Poverty Commission and Promotion of Social Inclusion

Situation and key trends: Though the unemployment rate is relatively low at 6.6 %, the overall risk at poverty rate is 25.1 % (8.6% at risk of severe poverty). There are striking regional disparities with rural poverty (38%) much higher compared to urban poverty (13.8 %). Among the most affected by poverty and most vulnerable groups of social exclusion are the Roma community (76.8%), families with three children + (56.8 %), the uneducated (55.7%), and youth (31.9%). Ms Neamtu noted that there was a problem with the methodology for measuring poverty which needed to be addressed.

With view to Romania's future accession to the EU, a Governmental Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Commission (CASPI) was set up in 2002 to assist with the elaboration of the Joint Inclusion Memorandum. CASPI role is to lead open debate on anti-poverty and social exclusion measures, to provide a framework in which other bodies can coordinate and focus their anti-poverty measures, to monitor the overall impact of anti-poverty and social inclusion strategy and to establish partnerships with institutions and other interested bodies.

The process of writing the Romanian NAP involved 2 rounds of consultation at government level with social partners and experts from the academia. The following key priorities were identified in addressing social exclusion:

- to remove extreme poverty (lack of income, homelessness),
- to decrease poverty for active population through rising employment,
- to address pension systems disparities,
- to improve access to basic public social services: health, education, social assistance, employment,
- to fully address the issues of street children and abandoned children in institutions,
- to improve the living standard of the Roma community,
- to implement new national social assistance system.

MAIN POINTS EMERGING FORM THE NAP PRESENTATIONS:

The role of local government in the preparation and implementation of NAPs

It was observed that local governments had only been weakly involved in the elaboration of most NAPs. Given that local authorities were the main provider of social services, their lack of involvement in the strategies might badly effect the overall implementation of NAPs. Representatives from various ministries admitted that local and regional authorities should be more included in the elaboration of future NAPs, however in most cases delivery and responsibility remained within the ministries. Ms Neamtu explained that in Romania local authorities had been actively involved in setting local priorities. In Slovenia there was a focus on developing partnerships between the center, local authorities and the business communities but there remained the problem of how to finance social inclusion measures on the local level.

Financial commitments/NGOs

Presentations revealed that there was no firm commitment to allocate additional funding contributing to the social inclusion strategies. Some countries such as for example Hungary provided financial support to NGOs carrying out social services and had introduced tax supports however this was not considered sufficient.

Need for the exchange of good practice

Participants were keen to find out more on specific measures to be undertaken in order to tackle poverty, this showed a clear demand for future exchange of best practice in order to increase efficiency and better targeted initiatives.

Reliability of indicators to measure poverty

Discussions centered a lot around the issue of the Laeken indicators. Opinions were expressed that some of these indicators were not reflecting reality and were either unreliable or at times simply not available.

Gender

It was noted that there were no gender specific measures in some of the NAP presentations.

WORKSHOPS

Following NAP country presentations participants split into two workshops.

Workshop I, Participation and Partnership/ Communication and Information

This workshop looked at the issue of participation and partnership with regard to the social inclusion strategy and at the same time analysed methods of communication and information. The workshop was chaired by John Halloran, General Secretary of the European Social Network.

The first speaker, **Peter Juul** from the Ministry of Social Affairs, Denmark shared Denmark's experience of participation and partnership in the NAP process. In contrast to Denmark's first NAP the present NAP has seen a far greater involvement of all relevant actors, particularly voluntary organisations, in its preparation stage. The NAP is based on the following key issues:

- **Mutual Responsibility:** The Danish governments recognises that there are still people at risk of poverty and underlines its responsibility towards these most disadvantaged groups. The government has made agreements with various authorities to determine how local and regional authorities can make an improved effort. These efforts are backed by governmental funding (200 mill. Euros).
- **Focus on the local and regional level:** A great part of the initiatives in the action plan are to be realized by the regional and local authorities with NGO's playing an important role. Although public authorities are responsible for social matters the voluntary sector can

supplement the public activities and can make important contributions to the work targeted at the groups most at risk. To accommodate the wish for improved user participation the Minister for Social Affairs in 2002 set up the Council for Socially Disadvantaged People which is independent of the Ministry and ensures that their interests are considered.

- **Involvement of all actors and organisation of the work on the action plan:** The Ministry of Social Affairs has coordinated the preparation of the Action Plan during which all actors such as partners, representatives of the regional and local authorities and interest groups have been given the opportunity to make inputs to the action plan and therefore they all have a share in the responsibility for the Action Plan.
- **Monitoring and implementing the National Action Plan:** No formal mechanism has been implemented for the Action Plan. But it is assumed that all interested players, including the Danish parliament, will focus their attention on whether the government complies with its legislation and action plans in the area.

Ilja Hradecky, from *Nadeje*, a voluntary organisation that works with homeless people, talked about his organisation's experience in partnership and participation during the NAP preparation process in the Czech republic. He underlined the importance of raising awareness on social exclusion issues such as homelessness and was pleased that this had been addressed during the preparation of the JIMs and NAPs.

Mr Hradecky gave a brief description of the type of projects Nadeje carries out in order to support homeless people. As concerns the issue of participation and partnership, Mr Hradecky explained that NGOs had been invited to present their comments and suggestions to the NAPs of which some were incorporated into the final version. His organisation cooperated with other organisations representing the homeless and exchanged experiences and good practise, and thus created a concerted effort to prepare for the NAPs. As NGOS and the voluntary sector have become provider of social services their involvement in the NAP process has been crucial. An interesting development has been the creation of national association of inspectors to check on the quality of services provided. Also monitoring systems have been devised but are at an early stage yet.

Mr Hradecky stressed that NAPs are not only the concern of the national level but give civil society an important role in the implementation of the activities. However there was a lack of financial commitment from the authorities to finance implementation of strategies.

Luca Koltai described a pilot project managed by the Equal Opportunity Office of the Municipality of Budapest. The project aims to develop cooperation and partnership mechanisms between six districts of Budapest and relevant experts to address issues of social exclusion particularly with view to the long term unemployed and to develop a market orientated employment strategy for this group. The pilot project is carried out in a context of sectoral dividedness (such as lack of cooperation, autonomy of sectors) as well as territorial dividedness (23 local district authorities).

It is hoped that the project will result in lasting partnerships between the various institutions and that a professional knowledge base will be created. So far, co-operational agreements have been set up between the district authorities, experts and interest groups/NGOs which resulted in inter-district employment policy workshops. It is foreseen to extend this type of activities in the future. There have been positive reactions from project participants as the system of partnership allowed districts authorities to avoid duplication and to become more efficient and cost-effective in their work.

Information and Communication Systems

Elizabeth Villagomez, from the Estudion Economicos y Sociales and NAP expert for Spain highlighted the importance of communication and information with regard to the NAPs. She stressed that the local level needed to have information on these strategies in order to:

- a) better inform and assist the beneficiaries,
- b) to prepare better analysis of the most needy,
- c) to determine financing.

She gave an overview of the Spanish NAP and pointed out that although Spain had the biggest economic growth it was lagging behind in social expenditure and suffered from inequality of income distribution, gender differences and regional disparities. Local administration were mainly financed through property taxes which resulted in a inflated property market and added to the circle of poverty and social exclusion as affordable housing was becoming a real issue. Ms Villagomez stressed that, at least in Spain, the regional level was getting more competencies so that the notion of national strategy was no longer valid. This created a situation whereby social services were implemented by the local level, but competencies remained within the regional level and local authorities had to ask and rely on regional authorities. She asked new Member States to keep this in mind and to ensure proper mechanisms for decentralisation, for financing activities as well as ensuring that information properly fed through to the local level. There was a need for social workers on the local level to document information and to pass this on to the relevant authorities otherwise it would be difficult to analyse and evaluate the NAPs.

Issues emerging from the workshop:

- Participation must be right there in the planning stage otherwise the outcome of strategies will be jeopardized. There is a need for more developed cooperation between the governmental level and the non-profit and public sector on creation of social inclusion strategies which could take the form of contractual agreements,
- Managers of local services need to be involved in the NAPs process,
- There is a need to exchange good practice on how to involve local players in the NAPs,
- The issue of decentralization provides a good framework for a bottom up approach but relies on mutual trust between national and local level as well as on financial resources to be devolved,
- NGOs should receive financial support if they are to provide social services however it is important that they retain their independence from the government,
- **Information and communication:** There is a need for proper mechanisms to inform and communicate the social inclusion strategies to all levels (national, regional, local, civil society) as well as a need to involve people experiencing poverty.

Workshop II, Indicators and Targets

This workshop looked at the issue of indicators and targets. The workshop was chaired by Haroon Saad, Director of QeC-ERAN.

Elaine Squires, from the Department of Work and Pension, UK gave a presentation on developing social indicators and targets in the UK. Four points were identified that make good indicators: 1) relevancy to government's strategy, 2) relation to the 'outcomes' the government wants to achieve rather than the processes, 3) based on publicly available and statistically robust data (National Statistics guidelines) and 4) unambiguous interpretation.

In the UK Government's annual report "Opportunity for all", indicators were developed with view to capturing many different aspects of poverty and social exclusion as well as being consistent across Government with other indicators. Indicators are reviewed annually and include associated targets.

As concerns setting targets, good targets need to be ambitious and stretching, they need to involve those responsible for delivering outcome and need to integrate evidence, analysis and best practise. There should be a strong emphasis on outcome targets an target setting should also include a number of floor targets such as minimum standard, deprived groups or areas, narrowing gaps, etc.

Ms Squires also gave a practical example on how to involve the target group in the development of indicators. In developing the national indicators for child poverty the Ministry contracted with NGOs working with children, who then held workshops with young people to discuss their views of poverty and what it meant; the outcomes of these workshops were presented to a group of experts who then translated these into 8 indicators for measuring child poverty. From this experience and other experiences, the lessons learnt are:

- fewer is better: the number of targets in the UK plan decreased from 250 to 110 with an increased focus on highest priorities,
- be realistic: targets are now supported by rigorous performance information,
- be clear: accountability and transparency increased.

As concerns lessons learnt for the future especially in terms of indicators:

- Laeken indicators provide important trans-national comparisons, however it has been difficult to reach agreement on common indicators, there is a need to look at range of indicators to explain positions of MS and there are significant data problems for the next few years,
- There is still need for a range of national data: national data can be more up-to-date, it provides more detail, it addresses UK priorities and it covers existing UK targets.

Stanka Intihar, from the Statistical Office of Slovenia highlighted methodological issues for accounting the discrepancies between E-15 and E-10. She gave the background to the 18 Laeken indicators of social exclusion and poverty which cover four dimensions:

1. **Monetary poverty indicators:** at risk of poverty rate, inequality of income distribution, persistent risk of poverty rate by gender, relative at risk of poverty gap, at risk of poverty before social transfers etc.
2. **employment:** regional cohesion, long term unemployment rate, person living in jobless households, long term unemployment share, very long term unemployment share
3. **health:** life expectancy at birth, self-defined health status by income level,
4. **education:** early school leavers no in education or training, person with low education attainment.

She pointed out that Slovenia did not manage to calculate some of the indicators as data sources available in Slovenia did either not allow for certain calculations or did not cover required fields for example the self-defined health status by income level. As concerns the methodology of monetary poverty indicators she defined the following weaknesses:

- HBS (Household Budget Survey) not the best source: no longitudinal indicators, no non-monetary, subjective indicators, no regional data,
- Data between Member States not fully comparable (same methodology but difference sources: ECHP, HBS, other 'best' national sources),
- Only one dimension of poverty: level of living in the country.

For the future, EU_SILC will provide a new data source for indicators of monetary poverty, there will be the same data source for all EU Member States, the panel survey will allow calculations of

longitudinal indicators and new variables will allow the calculation of non-monetary and subjective poverty indicators.

Variables of social exclusion in EU_SILC will include:

- **housing and non-housing related arrears:** arrears on mortgage or rent payments, arrears on utility bills, arrears on hire purchase instalments of other loan payments,
- **non-monetary housing deprivation indicators:** capacity to afford paying for one week annual holiday away from home, capacity to afford a meal with meat every second day, capacity to face unexpected financial expenses, ability to make ends meet, etc.
- **physical and social environment:** problems with dwelling, noise from neighbours or street, pollution, crime or vandalism in the area,
- **health.**

Sian Jones from the Wales European Center discussed experiences from the Gender Indicators Project. She explained that the rationale for the project was a lack of Gender Mainstreaming in indicators and a need to understand the links between gender/race and age as well as to understand real priorities of women in poverty. Gender social roles mean different experience of social exclusion. Poor women are the primary carers so they are more likely to be unemployed and inactive, they are concentrated in lower paid, low quality jobs and often have unequal access to family income/decision making.

The aim of the project which is funded by the EC Community Assistance Programme, is to develop specific gender indicators. The project is run in partnership with universities, research institutes and NGOs from Spain, Italy, Hungary, France, Belgium and Sweden.

The following actions and outcomes are foreseen within the framework of the project in each of the respective partner countries:

- evaluate indicators in respective NAP
- set up National/Regional Task Forces
- participative fieldwork: 3 target groups (immigrant women, young low-educated women, single mothers)
- design indicators relating to the target group
- evaluate and test
- dissemination/mainstreaming of approach, indicators through Task Force

Experiences from the Belgian partner highlighted key themes in relation to the project:

- Importance of re-visiting objectives and priorities,
- Indicators measure strategies: indicators refer to problems but not rights,
- Mainstreaming gender to ensure all areas consider through lens of different social roles of women,
- Need to understand the links/differences: gender/race/age,
- Real commitment to participative involvement: design of policy priorities, indicators, evaluation,
- Recognition of multi-faceted faces of social exclusion;
- Need to focus on central problem for poor families.

Issues emerging from the workshop:

- the issue of indicators has to be an integral part of the mid-term review of the Lisbon strategy,

- need to think of indicators in relation to outcome, it is easier to state objectives than targets,
- need for clearly agreed benchmarks in order to facilitate comparisons and demonstrate progress,
- Laeken indicator: before enlargement agreement on indicators was difficult to reach amongst the EU-15, and within the EU-25 this will prove even more difficult. However there is a general consensus that Laeken indicators need to be complemented by national indicators,
- need for involving people experiencing poverty, there is a need to find ways how these people can define their poverty leading to a meaningful dialogue and development of local indicators,
- there is a question about the quality and reliability of data, at times there is an unwillingness to provide information, particularly at household level.

CLOSING SESSION: Launch Of European Social Inclusion Platform

Mr Saad thanked participants for the interesting contributions to the debates and explained that the key messages emerging from this conference would be put forward to the Third European Round Table on Poverty and Social Exclusion which will take place in Rotterdam on the 18th October 2004.

Furthermore he stressed the importance of keeping the momentum of the debates on social inclusion and invited participants to join the European Social Inclusion Platform (ESIP). Quartiers en Crise-European Regeneration Areas Network (QeC-ERAN) is an established network of areas experiencing high levels social and economic exclusion. As such QeC-ERAN has been active in addressing issues of social inclusion and wishes to share its experience and work with other organisations and key individuals in order to more effectively impact on the EU policy process.

The European Social Inclusion Platform (ESIP) will bring together TWO categories of members:

- Organisations representing local, regional government, other service providers as well as Ngo's active in this field;
- Key actors involved at national, regional, and local levels who are connected to the development, implementation and monitoring of National Action Plans; Regional Action Plans or Local Action Plans to address social exclusion.

2005 will mark the beginning of the mid-term review of the Lisbon Strategy. There is a need to ensure that the voice of regional and local government, other service providers and the Ngo sector is more effectively heard in this important process and furthermore plays a more strategic and significant role in the period 2005-2010. Therefore the objectives of the European Social Inclusion Platform are as follows:

- To create a mechanism for the regular exchange of experience and information;
- To create synergy between members in order to facilitate transnational working in EU programmes;
- To establish effective links with the European Commission and European Parliament in order to influence policy development;
- To create a basis for the development and exchange of good practice in relation to tackling social exclusion.

Membership is open to the categories of organisations and individuals outlined above. Registration forms can be downloaded at the QeC-ERAN website: <http://www.qec-eran.org>

EUROPEAN PUBLIC SOCIAL PLATFORM

“CHANGE AND CONTINUITY: SOCIAL INCLUSION IN AN ENLARGED EU”

BRATISLAVA, 29-30/9/2004

VENUE **Hotel Tatra**
Nám. 1.mája č.5 , 811 06 Bratislava 1, SR
tel +421 2 5927 2111, +421 2 5927 2123
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Wednesday 29 September 2004

12.00-16.00 Arrival and Registration of Delegates

16.00 Welcome & Introduction

Seminar Chairperson

Lionel Martijn

Member of the political board for Charlois, Rotterdam and
President of QeC-ERAN

- **Mr. Miroslav Beblavy**, State Secretary of the Ministry of Labour
Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic
- **Mr. L'ubo Roman**, Chairman of the Bratislava Self-Governing
Region

16.30 Setting the Context

- The EU Social Inclusion Strategy
- **Dr. Haroon Saad**, Director of QeC-ERAN, Brussels
- Developments in New Member States – Issues emerging from Joint
Inclusion Memorandums (JIM's)
- **Mr. Walter Wolf**, Employment and Social Affairs Directorate-
General

18.30 Case Study: The Roma Community

- **Mr. Stefan Sarkozy**, Nadacia Inforoma

19.30 Finish of Session

20.00 Dinner

Thursday 30 September 2004

9.00 NAP's in New Member States – Presentations and Reactions

- Czech Republic
Ms. Zuzana Zajarosova, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
- Hungary
Ms. Györgyi Vajda, Government Office for Equal Opportunities
- Romania
Ms. Ileana Neamtu, Anti-Poverty Commission and Promotion of
Social Inclusion

10.45 Tea/Coffee

- Slovenia
Mr. Saso Stikovic, Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs
- Poland
Ms. Olga Soszyńska, Ministry of Social Policy
- Slovak Republic
Ms. Silvia Rybarova, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family

13.00 Lunch

14.15 Lessons from Previous Experience – Workshops

Information and Communication Systems

Workshop Chairperson

Luba Pavlovová
Regional Development Agency Senec

Rapporteur

Isabella Haaf
QeC-ERAN

- **Ms. Elizabeth Villagómez**
Almenara, Estudion Económicos y Sociales, Spain

Participation and Partnership

Workshop Chairperson

Mr. John Halloran
Secretary of European Social Network

Rapporteur

Rachel Buchanan
CEMR

- **Mr. Peter Juul**
Ministry of Social Affairs, Denmark
- **Mr. Ilja Hradecky**
Nadeje, Czech Republic
- **Ms. Luca Koltai**
Equal Opportunity Office of the Municipality of Budapest, Hungary

Indicators and Targets

Workshop Chairperson

Dr. Haroon Saad
Director of QeC-ERAN

Rapporteur

Meliina Rätty
QeC-ERAN

- **Ms. Elaine Squires**
Department of Work and Pension, United Kingdom
- **Ms. Sian Jones**
Senior Policy Officer in the Wales European Centre
- **Ms. Stanka Intihar**
Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia

16.00 Tea/Coffee

16.30 Feedback from Workshops

17.00 Issues Emerging and Proposals for follow-up action

17.30 Finish of Seminar

19.00 Dinner at Grobský Dvor – a typical folk restaurant known for local specialities

List of Participants

Family Name	Name	Country	Organisation
Stegeman	Ingrid	Belgium	EuroHealthNet
Frederik	André	Belgium	QeC-ERAN
Jones	Sian	Belgium	Wales European Centre
Wauters	Eric	Belgium	ESN - Verenigig van Vlaamse OCMW-Secretarissen (VVOS)
Wolf	Walter	Belgium	European Commission, Employment and Social Affairs
Germanos	Athos	Cyprus	CEMR - Union of Cyprus Municipalities
Czeslaw	Walek	Czech	Office of the Council for Roma Community Affairs
Hradecky	Ilja	Czech	Nadeje
Kaprálová	Libuše	Czech	City of Prague
Zajarošová	Zuzana	Czech	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
Kotynková	Magdalena	Czech	University of Economics, Prague
Hacaperkova	Dana	Czech	ESN - Department of Social Policy
Kepkova	Michaela	Czech	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
Zelenkova	Hana	Czech	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
Filipova	Klara	Czech	CEMR - Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic
Jaburkova	Milena	Czech	CEMR - Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic
Juul	Peter	Denmark	Ministry of Social Affairs
Goudet	Gilles	France	QeC-ERAN
Perdreau	Alain	France	QeC-ERAN
Martijn	Lionel	Holland	QeC-ERAN
Torba	Judit	Hungary	City of Budapest, Mayor's Deputy Office for Health and Social Policy
Koltai	Luca	Hungary	City of Budapest, Equal Opportunity Office
Rácz	Andrea	Hungary	ESN - National Institute for Family and Social Policy
Hamza	Zsófia	Hungary	Ministry of Employmen and Labour
Ulicska	Zoltán	Hungary	Ministry of Employment and Labour
Bujdosó	Judit	Hungary	Alliance of Social Professionals
Balogh	Emese	Hungary	ESN - National Institute for Family and Socila Policy
Vajda	Györgyi	Hungary	Government Office for Equal Opportunities
Denti	Giorgio	Italy	QeC-ERAN - City of Venice
Ciganska	Ilze	Latvia	CEMR - Union of Local and Regional Governments of Latvia
Gosk	Ilona	Poland	Foundation for Social and Economic Iniatives
Kozłowski	Zbigniew	Poland	Starogard
Soszyńska	Olga	Poland	Ministry of Social Policy
Biederman	Victoria	Poland	Ministry of Social Policy
Sadowska	Barbara	Poland	Barka Foundation for Mutual Help
Tomaszewska	Monika	Poland	Gdansk City Council, Social Policy and Health Protection Committee
Radu	Marieta	Romania	The Casa Ioana Association
Ileana	Neamtu	Romania	Romanian Goverment, Anti-Poverty Commission and Promotion of Social Inclusion
Seghedi	Toma	Romania	Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family

Family Name	Name	Country	Organisation
Dreptate	Radu	Romania	Bistrita City Hall
Gorbe-Brita	Ladislau	Romania	Arad, Council of Arad
Lubrani	Osnat	Slovak Republic	UNIFEM Regional Office for CEE
Rybarova	Silvia	Slovak Republic	Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family
Guran	Peter	Slovak Republic	Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family
Kusá	Zuzana	Slovak Republic	Institute for Sociology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences
Šarkózy	Štefan	Slovak Republic	Nadácia InfoRoma
Pavlovová	Luba	Slovak Republic	Regional Development Agency Senec
Klimáčková	Anna	Slovak Republic	Národné centrum pre rovnosť žien a mužov
Globanová	Elena	Slovak Republic	Regional Development Agency Senec
Karovičová	Viera	Slovak Republic	Magistrat hlavného Mesta SR
Adam	Josef	Slovak Republic	The Office of Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region
Melišová	Zuzana	Slovak Republic	Social Development Fund
Repková	Kvetoslava	Slovak Republic	Centre for Work and Family Studies
Vasilová	Zdena	Slovak Republic	Centrum vzdelávania Ministerstva práce soc. Vecí a rodiny
Pekarčíková	Klara	Slovak Republic	Magistrat hlavného Mesta SR
Lovásiková	Eva	Slovak Republic	Regional Development Agency Senec
Kvapilova	Erika	Slovak Republic	University of Economics Bratislava
Intihar	Stanka	Slovenia	Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia
Stikovic	Saso	Slovenia	Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs
Kvas	Suzi	Slovenia	Javni Zavod Socio
Villagomez	Elizabeth	Spain	Almanera, Estudios Economicos y sociales s.l.
Halloran	John	UK	ESN
Squires	Elaine	UK	Department for Work and Pensions
Buchanan	Rachel	UK	CEMR Secretariat
Cawley	James	UK	ESN - Vale of Glamorgan Council
Haaf	Isabella	Belgium	QeC-ERAN
Saad	Saad	Belgium	QeC-ERAN
Räty	Meliina	Belgium	QeC-ERAN