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## Preface: final *Newsletter* of the present peer review programme

The present *Newsletter* is the final one which is published under the first "Peer Review Programme in the Field of Social Inclusion Policies". This programme, which started at the beginning of 2004, has now come to an end. However, a new wider programme is expected to start at the beginning of 2006. This programme, called "Peer Review and Assessment in Social Inclusion" will include the development of peer reviews on social inclusion as well as the management of the network of independent experts who are reviewing the progress of the implementation of the National Action Plans on Social Inclusion (NAPs/incl.). Until now this network has been managed directly by the responsible unit of the Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities DG. After evaluation of the tenders, the European Commission has already selected a consortium which will implement the new programme and which will also be responsible for the effective dissemination of actions and results to all interested persons and organisations.

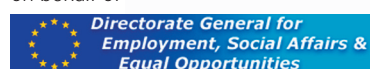
The INBAS/NIZW/European Centre consortium, which assisted the Commission in the implementation of the present programme, wishes to thank all actors who were actively involved in making the programme a successful one. The comments and feedback to the Newsletters and to the website were very stimulating and have been really supportive in shaping our dissemination activities. We sincerely hope that we have served all interested persons and organisations with useful information on specific policies and actions carried out in the social inclusion field in the EU, which were the subject of the peer reviews and the discussions with regard to their transferability to other settings. We are sure that you will continue to be interested in developments in this field,

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on behalf of





which in the end have the principal goal of supporting and helping the most vulnerable people in our society to obtain a better life and a more prosperous future.

We wish all our readers a Merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year.

## Pathways to social integration for people with mental health problems: the establishment of social co-operatives in Greece

Peer review meeting in Athens,  
6–7 October 2005

Greece has created a specific legal status for social co-operatives which have the goal of rehabilitating mentally ill people, as part of its “Psychargos” reform programme in psychiatric care.

The limited liability social co-operatives or “KoiSPEs” in Greece were established as part of the wide-ranging national “Psychargos” programme of mental health reform under article 12 of law 2716 of 1999, with the goal of rehabilitating mentally ill people. To satisfy this purpose in the most effective way, Greece has created a specific legal status for these KoiSPEs.

They have an independent legal and tax status as a business trading with limited liability, and have permission to carry out any economic activity, while at the same time being exempted from corporate taxes except VAT. Supervision of social co-operatives is retained by the Ministry of Health.

KoiSPEs have three categories of members: over 35% must be people suffering from mental illness, mental health professionals should count for fewer than 45% of the members and up to 20% may be other individuals and sponsoring organisations. Each member buys one voting share (typically worth € 175) and may also buy additional non-voting investment shares. The board contains seven members of which two come from the user category. A further important point is that users may earn a wage without losing their bene-fit payments

The intention is to set up one KoiSPE in each mental health sector in the country – 52 in all. Seven have so far been established, of which five are in operation. The largest, based on the hospital on the island of Leros, was founded in 2002, and has 457 members and 54 employees. More recently, smaller KoiSPEs have been set up in the urban environment of Athens that employ between 10 and 30 people. The businesses the KoiSPEs carry on include laundering, catering, baking, cafeteria operation, printing, carpet weaving, gardening, furniture making, paper recycling, car washing and honey production. Taken together, the enterprises have 1,200 members and so far provide jobs for 132 mentally ill people.

The topic proved popular, especially among the new Member States and Accession Countries. The seven peer countries represented at the meeting (the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Latvia, Malta, Poland and Romania) as well as the representatives of three European stakeholder groups, MHE (Mental Health Europe), CEFEC (the confederation of social firms employing mentally ill people), and FEANTSA (representing homelessness organisations) saw a film featuring interviews with users of occupational therapy work-



shops and social co-operatives. The participants at the meeting visited a social co-operative and Sinergeion, the support structure set up under the EQUAL programme to get the first social co-operatives off the ground and to provide ongoing technical assistance to the programme.

One of the key issues that the peer countries discussed was whether a social co-operative can be economically viable as well as an effective therapeutic tool at the same time. This related also to the question what other measures and services are necessary in a reform programme in the mental health sector and to what extent the role of mental health professionals and other workers in social co-operatives needs to change.

Most of the participants, including the European stakeholder organisations, were in full support of the Greek initiative and felt that the creation of options for gainful employment in businesslike environments for people with mental health problems successfully serves empowerment and integration objectives as well as therapeutic purposes. The potential to transfer social co-operatives to other national contexts is strong, though in some cases the requisite legal framework has yet to be created.

At European level the peer review identified a number of dimensions for further work based on the Greek experience. These include the issue of *multi-dimensionality*, for which a holistic interdepartmental approach is required, and of *de-institutionalisation*. Another issue to be looked at is whether people with mental health problems are fully catered for in the NAPs/incl. and in other policy areas (*target group specificity*). Creating a *legislative framework* that supports approaches that

combine therapeutic and economic dimensions, while protecting vulnerable people from exploitation and guaranteeing continuity of care, is clearly needed as well as *business support*, including training for all employees and European networking. Finally the issues of *public awareness raising* and *monitoring, evaluation and research*, including longitudinal studies on how users fare over time, were considered important dimensions for further work on the social integration for people with mental health problems in Europe.

<http://pr-soc-incl.net/nl/053en5.html>

## Peer review on minimum income and institutional arrangements for social integration

Brussels, 7–8 November 2005

The peer review of the Belgian law on Minimum Income and Institutional Arrangements for Social Integration was the final meeting in the 2005 series. It took place in Brussels on 7 and 8 November, hosted by the Belgian Federal Ministry for the Civil Service, Social Integration, Urban Policy and Equal Opportunities. The review looked at the Belgian law establishing the right to social integration (*Droit à l'Intégration Sociale – DIS*), and the way it is implemented through local centres. This peer review was the second one that examined activation measures designed to help socially excluded people to re-establish a place in society or in the labour market. In June 2004 a review of Experiments in Social Activation took place in the Netherlands.



The Belgian law on social integration came into force in October 2002, and builds on earlier legislation of 1974 and 1993, establishing a minimum income entitled the *Minimex* and introducing activation measures. The innovative aspect of the new law is that it recognises social integration and human dignity as a *right* for all citizens. The underlying philosophy is that whereas a minimum income is an important safeguard, it is not enough by itself to guarantee participation in society.

The DIS gives special priority to young people aged 18–25, in order to avoid their falling into an exclusion trap from which they cannot escape. It operates through a tailor-made contract for each client, drawn up in negotiation with a social worker, which carries rights and obligations on both sides. This may lead the individual into employment, but could alternatively involve training, voluntary work, or other activities in the community. Such contracts may also be offered to people over 25 years of age if appropriate.

The measure is put into practice across the country by Belgium's 589 autonomous Public Centres for Social Welfare (PCSW) – known as CPAS in French-speaking communities and OCMW in the Flemish. Evaluation has shown a high level of satisfaction among the users questioned.

Overall, the peer review participants from Austria, Estonia, Hungary, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Romania, together with stakeholder representatives from the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) and the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) found much to impress them in the Belgian approach.

One of the lessons they emphasised most strongly was that social integration means a lot more than merely obtaining employment, and should give equal weight to other aspects of social development. They highlighted the comprehensive and multidimensional nature of the services the CPAS/OCMW offer, providing in many cases – and especially in the bigger cities – a 'one-stop-shop' for support on a wide range of issues such as health, education and training, housing, debt counselling and childcare. They also discussed the broad issue of what comprises a 'suitable job', and concluded that work offered must be appropriate to the individual's abilities and must preserve his or her dignity.

The theme of this peer review will continue to be a subject for debate since the Commission is currently preparing a Communication on active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market.

<http://pr-soc-incl.net/nl/053en6.html>



## New on [www.peer-review-social-inclusion.net](http://www.peer-review-social-inclusion.net)

Two new areas have recently been created in the website of the peer review programme. The section on **Success stories** has been created to make the impact of the Open Method of Co-ordination in general and the Peer Reviews in specific visible. It is based on the impact evaluation of the peer reviews. A few months after each peer review, questionnaires are sent out to the participants to learn about what has happened after the peer review meeting in terms of impact and the stimulation of new ideas. Wherever the response in those questionnaires indicated that there were interesting processes going on, more detailed information was obtained via telephone interviews. The result of this research is what we call a success story and they are displayed as short articles on the website.

The area on **Key Issues** in the field of social inclusion policies starts with basic information about "Integration of ethnic minorities and immigrants". A section about "Access to quality social services" will follow soon.

## Evaluation workshop

The Consortium hosted a very successful evaluation workshop with all peer review managers in 2005, a number of thematic experts and Mr Hugues Feltesse who represented the Commission. The agenda included an animated debate on the transversal issues arising from the themes of the peer reviews in 2004 and 2005 and illustrated the wealth and variety of learning experiences that the peer reviews in the past two years have produced. In addition, the participants formulated a series of recommendations to the Commission for the future of the peer review process with regard to the selection of themes and good practices, the procedures and time schedules, the dissemination of results and suggestions for follow-up activities. The findings of the workshop will be included in the final report which the Consortium will present to the Commission after finalising its work.

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