



Sweden 2004

**Local development  
agreements as a tool  
to stop segregation  
in vulnerable  
metropolitan areas**

Comment Paper, Portugal





## 1. Relevance of the policy/measure to Portugal:

In a technical level, the described policy make sense in some of Portuguese urban areas, namely in the Metropolitan Areas of Lisbon and Porto, where social problems are localized at some of the most vulnerable quarters. Some National and Community programmes (for example the National Programme for Poverty Alleviation<sup>1</sup>) are already operating in these quarters, but without a link between them and even without a clear link between their several projects and a measure like this could contribute to a more planned and integrated work.

On the other hand, attention must be paid to the fact that in Portugal there are other areas with poverty and social exclusion problems. For instance, we can point out some interior rural deprived areas, corresponding to one or more municipalities, where the above-mentioned programmes also operate, at local level.

So, we think that, among us, a tool like the proposed local development agreements should cover various types of vulnerable areas.

Considering the practice of the National Programme for Poverty Alleviation, which consists of short or middle term projects promoted either by municipalities or by non-profit private institutions, we have to recognize they experience strong difficulties to sustain activities when financing ends, with all the severe consequences on the communities. Thinking that a local agreement practice could, among other aspects, avoid this strong disadvantage, to develop a pilot experience in this field could provide in a short future some solutions to local development sustainability.

1 National Program for Poverty Alleviation was created in 1990, running from Poverty European Program III, with the propose to contribute to end poverty and social exclusion mechanisms, trough cross-sector cooperation - including both public and private organisms – and participation of the inhabitants' and local institutions. Projects financed by this Program work on three main principles:

- Multidimensionality: structural problems' approach in a interdisciplinary perspective;
- Partnership: local institutions involvement and cooperation with Government;
- Participation: working for the inhabitant's involvement in the conception, implementation and evaluation of the projects.

The Projects operate in priority vulnerable areas:

- Urban social quarters with social integration problems, historical deteriorated quarters and social problem areas where large numbers of immigrants live;
- Rural interior deprived areas with aged and isolated populations;
- Coastal areas with high levels of unemployment and uncertain work.

By the moment, there are 139 projects running.



Nevertheless we must say that in a short time we don't see any possibility to implement a global Metropolitan Policy, among other reasons, because the Portuguese municipalities have a large autonomy from the central bodies.

About this subject, maybe it is interesting to mention that the NAPincl 2001-2003 contained two instruments similar to the Swedish model: the urban and rural social development contracts. Significantly, these instruments have never been created and they are not present in the NAPincl 2003-2005.

## **2. Potential transferability of the policy / measure to Portugal:**

At this moment we are working in the conception and regulation of a new national programme, the PROGRIDE - Inclusion and Development Programme that shall replace the National Programme for Poverty Alleviation.

Like the previous Programme, this new Programme will give financing support, from the National Budget, to Projects that continue to depend on local partnerships. Some type of these projects has to be based on a previous work of diagnosis and planning developed in the context of the Social Network Programme<sup>2</sup>, which directs financing from the Social European Fund to the promotion, by Municipalities, of Local Action Committees responsible for making Social Diagnosis and Social Development Plans at the local level. Inclusion and Development Programme intends to reach the poorer territories (both rural and urban ones) as well as the more vulnerable groups.

- 2 Social Network Program was implemented in 2000 at 41 pilot municipalities that had developed some partnership work experience in the context of Poverty Alleviation Projects and Minimum Income implementation processes.

This Program is focused on two main items:

- Development of partnership structures;
- Promotion of local and social development, using participate strategic planning dynamics.

It's purposes are:

- Implementation of participated planning processes;
- Promotion of co-ordinated interventions at municipalities;
- Searching solutions for problems / needs of families and people in mainstreaming poverty and social exclusion;
- Promotion of proper covering in terms of services and equipments in those municipalities;
- Propagation of knowledge about municipalities' realities.

In terms of methodological approach, municipalities prosecute some different implementation phases:

- Constitution of Local Action Committees constituted by local partners belonging to different sectors;
- Social diagnosis;
- Social development plan.

By the moment, Social Network Program is being developed in 176 municipalities.



As we said above, rural or urban social development contracts aren't included in the NAPincl 2003-2005, but we can say that the Portuguese context would probably introduce some relevant differences in the financing conditions concerning the implementation of a measure like LDAs, as in Portugal financing to social policies comes from a part of the National Budget belonging to Social Security and Labor Ministry and not from the Central Government, integrated, as we understood it passes in Sweden.

In respect to the key methods applied by the Swedish tool, we enhance the "management by objectives" and the "long – term work" as the most significant. This practice is not yet fully applied in Portuguese programmes but this important methodology to achieve better results could be implemented in the context of a bottom-up planning system, if not in global national terms, at least related to the projects of the new Portuguese Programme.

### **3. Questions about the policy /measure that are being raised and debated in Portugal:**

About the "cross sector cooperation" as one of the key methods of the Swedish measure presented, we have been working in that same logic, and now with the new Programme, we are looking to find a way to turn that cooperation more effective.

In respect to the "bottom-up approach" we can say that in Portugal the first experiences took place with Projects for Poverty Alleviation (financed by the already referred National Programme), and it's a direction line included in the objective 4 – *To mobilize all intervenients* of our National Plan for Social Inclusion.

In the context of this Plan, some good results have already been obtained, but there is also a large work to do concerning policy making and policy monitoring: the inhabitants' participation and the involvement of both profit and non profit organizations as partners of public institutions.