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

Stakeholder Comment,
EAPN





Part 1 A brief assessment of the possible relevance of the policy/measure

Social segregation in big cities is a big problem in many European countries. The experiences in combating it in Sweden are very important learning opportunity for other Member-states. For EAPN equal opportunities for all is a very important starting-point. Everyone should have opportunity of realisation of their rights. Spatial segregation has biggest effects to the least resourced and the most vulnerable groups. The holistic, long-term approach and the very strong political commitment are very convincing and the results of the policy seem to be good in many sense.

An aspect which is identified clearly in the goals of the project, but less clearly indicated in the actions and outcomes of the project is the 'integration' of inhabitants born outside of Sweden. This is a crucial issue for most large urban areas in EU countries and learning in this regard could provide valuable information for policy development and implementation across the EU. However the documentation provided does not develop this theme sufficiently but the Swedish experience could give pointers as to what works and what doesn't work.

Strong social protection system is the basis in the fight against poverty and social exclusion. In this context the general housing policies (does it encourage social mix? Does it ensure that not only houses are available but also the necessary services?) will also have a determining affect. The special policies/ measures have an added value after that. The social protection model, Scandinavian model, with universal rights, equal opportunities, access to services for all and the strong public responsibility, are the basis for the success of the Metropolitan policies against spatial social segregation. The Swedish example is very important also because it seems to be successful in building bridge between the national and local level actions. It is the element which is very much lacking also in the second round of the NAPs Inclusion.

The effectiveness of the local level is in involving local organisations and people experiencing poverty. It is not so clear how the least advantaged people are involved and whether the people in poverty have a right to be listened. Certainly people at risk of poverty are commonly the targets of action and frequently their opinion is sought as service users, in evaluation of service quality and often in implementation of certain actions. It is not so clear how much



involvement they have in policy development or whether there is any longer term feedback mechanism.

Agreements governing partner relations and organising clarity in rights and duties of actors seems to work well. The use of legal contractual arrangements in organising relationships between the levels seems to have a number of advantages in effective vertical integration. The agreements are a set of rights and duties. They seem to operate also as mechanisms for transparency and accountability. In the Swedish example, in the Metropolitan Agreements the roles and responsibilities of the partners are clearly defined. The agreements provide also a structured process for revising plans in the light of evaluation of their implementation experience.

This example shows also the importance of political will in getting a strategy operational on the ground. This is something that the EU Inclusion strategy and the NAPs Inclusion which are a central part of the strategy very often lacks at EU and national level. The strong political commitment can be seen also in allocation of resources for a long-term which is what is needed for this type of approach.

Part 2 Potential transferability

The impact of the different country contexts and welfare systems needs to be taken into account. Countries differ in the powers that are held centrally and those that are decentralised. The extent and nature of the powers of local municipalities differ in each country. These differences between countries must be properly recognised and addressed when analysing the potential transferability.

EAPN emphasises here again the role of the strong overall social protection systems and housing policies as a crucial starting point. This means the demand of strengthening the social protection systems and the role and responsibilities of public authorities in all the member-states and also good partnerships with all the actors.

The well developed structures, including the local development agreements outlining clear responsibilities and duties of the different actors involved, the clear financial commitments, the commitment and structures for evaluation and the long term approach taken offer learning which is potentially transferable.



While the documentation provided is not so clear on this aspect the Swedish example should provide important information about how to improve the 'integration' of, people born outside of the country or from minority ethnic groups in society. This should provide information about how to develop successful inter-cultural approaches and how to ensure that 'integration' is not a negation of cultural diversity.

Part 3 Important questions about the policy/measure that are being raised by EAPN

Joint working at the local and regional level by NGOs and public authorities adds value at the local level in achieving successful anti-poverty policy. At a local level the actors know the stakeholders, can reach the groups in need, can focus on practice and can evaluate the impact of specific and precisely defined policies and actions. Joint working and a bottom up approach are not a substitute for spending sufficient resources to deal with the scale and depth of poverty and social exclusion. Partnership working and especially participatory democracy require resources for capacity building if they are to be real processes and not paper exercises. These resources are not just an extra cost, an extra layer of structures and administration; they should be seen as an investment in creating networked, integrated and inclusive communities. Distribution and growth are intimately connected. The resources required for intervention are not a cost – they are an investment. There is a strong link between social integration and economic integration. Governments must provide adequate time and resources and a structure for engagement between the levels.

Changes in the quality of life of disadvantaged communities require that their organised voice is listened to and this requires the right to be heard. The implementation of the bottom-up perspective and participation of the inhabitants is the orientation which is very much lacking in the report. The more detailed information of good working methods should be useful for other countries. True participation is a process and needs building trust between different groups and actors. A particular challenge is to develop the collective capacity of people living in disadvantaged areas to engage in a social analysis of their situation which would enable them to input into the strategic and objective setting aspects of such initiatives and not only to participate in the social aspects of the



project as is indicated in the preparatory report. Analysis of good practices in this area are really needed. True participation is not an easy task while it is a question of cultural change, building a culture of participation.

EAPN finds it important to build on the work, plans and experience already existing at local and regional levels. Different local situations, good analysis, multifaceted data, also tacit knowledge are needed.

EAPN wants to emphasise very strongly that effective fight against poverty and social exclusion is not only investing on individuals, but on community. The infrastructures must change. We want to raise the question, has this happened enough so far in the Metropolitan policies, while there is a reported tendency that people, whose resources and capacities have become stronger, tend to move out of the area. While we note the effective investment in schooling, particularly pre-schooling and compulsory schooling we question whether enough emphasis has been placed on access to clubs, sporting facilities, associations, churches and faith communities and community events which are so important in order to build social networks.

In the report, there is a critical comment that the participation of people in meetings (10%) is small and smaller than to cultural activities. It can also be seen as a good result, recognising and given importance to the input of the people who do turn up for 'planning' meetings is one way to ensure that these people and the groups they represent will be taken more seriously by the rest of the people living in the area. It is a challenge to work collectively for a long time to improve the skills of people. NGOs can help in that process. The participation could also need new types of models to work with and in particular EAPN draws attention to the need for models that allows the inhabitants of disadvantage areas to develop their skills to engage in their own collective social analysis based on their lived experience which would allow them to become involved in the discussion about the theoretical framework; aims and objectives of policies such as the Metropolitan policy.

EAPN is also very interested by the inter-cultural elements of this project. The anti-discrimination approach seems to be lacking. EAPN wants to raise a question, how to really do intercultural work?