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**Douhomir Minev**

Thematic Expert

# Field social work programmes in neighbourhoods threatened by social exclusion



on behalf of



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## I. INTRODUCTION

The Programme “People in Need: Field social work programmes in neighbourhoods threatened by social exclusion” has a number of particular features, some of which seem very important, especially against the background of EU Roma-related policies. I would like to underline some of them:

- As is pointed out in the paper by the host country expert Ms. Shimikova, it is the first Programme to put into place a system of measures for social integration through field social work with an emphasis on the ethnic minorities in the Czech Republic;
- The Programme combines the emphasis on the ethnic minorities (Roma integration), focuses on distressed areas and involves local partners;
- The Programme presents an example of the interaction between nongovernmental organizations and the government: It is fulfilled by a NGO (People in Need) and has significantly influenced and inspired a governmental programme of support for field social workers which is corroborated by official government documents. The cases in which nongovernmental organizations succeed in influencing governmental policies are comparatively rare;
- The Programme contributes to profound changes in the very essence of social work, thus stimulating the specific development of civil, social and political rights. As a result, the Programme has its interesting contribution to the discussion in the Czech context about the practical impact of the connection between ethnicity and social exclusion (respectively – welfare and ethnic identity).
- Although implicitly, the Programme also focuses on the gender aspects of Roma community – through the work with families in the cases of conflicts and family violation, and the support to one-parent families (mostly women).
- The Programme stimulates development of local social capital.

It is also worth mentioning that the national context in the Czech Republic offers a largely developed institutional frame for the fulfilment of the Programme. The general frame of Roma integration policies is outlined in “The Roma Integration Policy Concept in the Czech Republic”, approved by the Government of the Czech Republic. In the concept it is pointed out that “The Government approaches Roma affairs from three aspects – human rights, national identity (ethnicity), and the broader socio-cultural perspective”.



The first hypothesis of the above is aimed at providing all citizens of the Czech Republic with the opportunity to exercise all individual rights fully and without discrimination, these being the rights guaranteed by the Constitution, the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, and the international conventions on human rights which the Czech Republic has signed.

The second perspective is based on the specific rights of national/ethnic minorities (including the collective rights) as defined in Chapter \_\_\_ of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms and in the Frame Convention on National Minorities Protection. There also exists explicit regulation of these specific rights.

The third perspective – the socio-cultural one – is based on the broader concept of “Roma community”, which differs from the term “Roma national minority”. The governmental concept defines the members of Roma national minority on the grounds of “an active desire to be regarded as members of this minority and to develop the language and culture of the minority”; a member of the Roma community is everyone “who is identified by the majority as a member of this socially and ethnically defined group”.

Along with it, the governmental document underlines that many Roma avoid the affiliation to the national minority, and social exclusion overlaps with the status of majority of the Roma communities. Probably because of that the governmental policy “...generally focuses on social matters (employment, social welfare, and housing) rather than specifically national minority concerns (the development of culture and language, national minority education)”.

This paper is focused on:

1. The links between the Programme and the most relevant fields of the EU Roma-related policies;
2. The possible contributions of the Programme to important spheres of policy formulation, implementation and analysis, namely:
  - the opportunities suggested by the Programme for improving the implementation of Roma-related policies;
  - the opportunities suggested by the Programme for practical implementation of better organization and transformation of social work. The reconstructed social work creates links between social, civil and participatory political rights and supports not only exercising of social rights, but simultaneously - development and exercising of civil rights and participatory political rights.



In this way the Programme suggests specific way of bridging different types of rights and different policies supporting them.

## II. EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EU ROMA-RELATED POLICIES

A study commissioned by DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities of the European Commission on the situation of Roma provides an assessment of the implementation of EU Roma-related policies. The study emphasizes that those new Member States with significant Romani populations did name Roma explicitly as a target group for their social inclusion policies, but only five old Member States named Roma as a target group within their National Action Plans. Moreover, some groups suffering discriminatory treatment as “Gypsies” or similar – such as Travellers in the Republic of Ireland – are not yet fully covered by the ban on discriminatory treatment on grounds of race or ethnic origin.

The conclusion is that in situations in which the needs of a minority have been identified clearly, it is often the case that the level of policy response is inconsistent with the level of assessed need.

The authors of the study also point out that where Roma-specific policies exist, they have yet to demonstrate durable impact. The results are not nearly to the level required under current anti-discrimination and social inclusion policy.

Most of the policies in Central and Eastern Europe remain under-funded, at very preliminary stages of implementation, and often resemble more a menu of desired outcomes than viable and realistic policies. There also appear universally to be significant deficiencies in terms of targets for assessing the success of existing policies; it is difficult to see to what standards policy makers aspire in the implementation of many Roma-related policies.

Consultation with Roma and Roma participation in the design and implementation of policies intended to benefit them is currently very modest, when existing at all, and generally hesitant. Moreover, EU Member States have in some cases adopted measures which eliminated previous gains.

A very powerful force for undermining social inclusion projects targeting Roma is local opposition. Local authorities frequently block implementation of projects aimed at improving the situation of Roma.



Such cases generate serious concern about the capacity of authorities to implement EU policy well, particularly through structural funding.

Conclusions of recent assessment of Phare programming on Roma include the observations that:

- Phare programmes clearly demonstrated that existing policies and practices in Central mentioned Eastern Europe were failing Roma. The overall lack of vision and direction means there was no clear underpinning policy direction or commitment.
- As an outcome of EU and other external pressures, issues facing Roma have moved to a position of higher priority. At the same time it has become much more political and partisan, and the operational environment surrounding policy making for Roma integration remains fragile.
- In current systems there is a lack of capacity, understanding and professional expertise to deal effectively with the complex and multi-dimensional nature of the problem. There is a vast gap between the policy level, including proportionality, and operational reality.

Research undertaken for the mentioned study indicates that in a number of areas these conclusions are relevant for Roma policy in many if not all of the Member States.

It could be added that only one European Union Member State (Cyprus) has ratified Protocol 12. The European Social Charter too, however, is underratified and, with several noteworthy exceptions, even those states which have ratified the Revised Charter have not accepted all of its provisions.

### **III. DIRECTIONS IN EU POLICIES**

Review of the components of the EU policies on improving the situation of Roma (see Annex I) allows for the identification of two important directions in these policies: one of them aims at abolishing the discrimination against Roma, while the other one is directed at diminishing poverty and exclusion. The two directions interweave and complete each other. Besides, there are several aspects which form the subject of discussion regarding both the first direction and the ways of combining the two directions. For instance, it can be noted that at national level the member countries show different affinity to the two directions of improving the situation of Roma. Probably, because of its being a comparatively new one, the direction of discrimination control is comparatively less



represented in member countries and runs against more obstacles. The direction aimed at diminishing poverty and exclusion has a comparatively wider application at national level. A typical example of this difference between the two lines is given by the criticism (expressed in the study of the situation of Roma) regarding the National Action Plans (the absence of components specially designed for Roma). Therefore the combination of the two basic lines for improving the situation of Roma deserves special attention.

Policies aiming at control of discrimination are based on several pillars: civil rights legislation, equal opportunity laws and institutionalised policies of affirmative action (also called reverse discrimination) including minority rights. It is well known there are extensive controversies in this field. These controversies are largely influencing anti-discrimination legislation and especially its implementation. Courts are often criticized by Roma rights activists : “courts may not yet be ready to play a leading role in enforcing statutory equality duties” (B. Cohen, 2005, 13). Discussing the problem that the legislation mentioned above is not applied effectively some experts specify that in most countries the attorneys and judges do not have a sufficiently good qualification in the field of legal concepts of discrimination. Owing thereto, in a lot of cases the exclusion, segregation and violence remain unpunished (J. Goldstone, 2005)

Policies aiming at reducing poverty and social exclusion are also subjected to criticism and not only by Roma rights activists. In this way, besides the courts, two other key actors in the process of implementation of Roma-related policies – national governments and local authorities - are identified as “weak points” of the policies’ implementation.

Thus the effectiveness of the structures that have to translate into action the decisions legislated on the highest political level attract strong criticism: the courts; the governments (specifically for the lack of strong enough Roma-related components of the social inclusion policies); local authorities (for the opposition to social inclusion projects targeting Roma).

How to explain these problems? Probably there are many explanations, but two of them (besides the low qualification of attorneys and judges) are mentioned below.

The first one concerns the possibility of appearance of a paradox mentioned by Claude Cahn. “Where groups are despised and subject to discrimination, governments may adopt positive measures on their behalf; but if the governments



concerned are democratic, it is highly unlikely that the public at large will endorse such measures, and hence unlikely that they will be adopted” (Cahn, 2005, 18). From this point of view the adequate response is to establish and expand a rights-based anchor for positive action.

Another possible explanation is related with the links between the social inclusion direction and the other directions for improving the situation of Roma.

In particular, I would like to propose the thesis that the problems in the application of policies do not ensue from the low capacity or the unwillingness of the structures to apply the policies. The said problems are rather an effect of the way in which the two lines in Roma-related policies are connected and interact with each other. It is not the possible competition between the different ethnic groups (minorities and majority); nor the unwillingness suggested by Claude Cahn, of the majority in democratic societies to support the positive measures in favour of minorities. I suggest that in the process of development of the various types of rights, a particular type of interplay is possible between them, and, besides, it is possible for various types of rights to be mutually stimulated in a way which differs from the well-established notions of the relationships between them. In order to present this view, first I will clarify certain aspects of the relationship between the various directions in Roma-related policies, and then I will examine the evolution of the concepts and practice of social work. The objective of the examination of this evolution is to form a notion of the role which the Programme plays both in attenuating the pressures suggested by Claude Cahn, and in linking the various directions in Roma-related policies. More specifically, I will pay particular attention to the role of the Programme in modernizing and extending the traditional social work and the effects caused thereby in the development of rights: social, civil and political participation rights. In this sense, the Programme demonstrates its large importance as a linking mechanism between the two lines in Roma-related policies. From this point of view, the Programme not only facilitates and complements the social work of the traditional structures, but also gives rise to considerable changes in the very essence of social work, thus offering an interesting approach to the development of rights of various types.

It is well-known that there exists a certain relationship between discrimination and social exclusion. However, the awareness of the existence of such a relationship does not mean that there is a generally accepted definition of the relationship, or that the said relationship has been consciously designed and



maintained. Undoubtedly, this has its impact upon the analyses and diagnoses, and on the policies, of course. In the report “The Situation of Roma in an Enlarged European Union” the social inclusion policies are pointed out as an extended framework for the development of anti-discrimination policies, however, one can feel the absence of a strict definition of interference between them. Probably, one of the reasons for it consists in the absence of a sufficiently sure concept of social exclusion. However, in spite of the absence of a generally accepted concept, Atkinson shows that whatever the concept is, there are three basic elements present therein. The comparison with the basic components of the discrimination concept shows a considerable difference – more or less, the discrimination concepts have participants present therein: discriminated and discriminating parties (groups), while the social exclusion concepts have no such components. These concepts are mainly related to the individual level and do not contain the notion of excluded and excluding groups, although there are certain attempts at the conceptualization in this direction.

The discrimination mechanisms are widely discussed and seem to be clear. This allows to better construct the political replies to these mechanisms (to formulate adequate policies). The exclusion mechanisms are not a subject of such an intensive discussion. Due to the presence of certain vagueness regarding the mechanisms, difficulties are encountered in the assessment of the policies’ adequacy to the mechanisms of exclusion. In the sphere of applying the two lines in Roma-related policies, there also exist certain differences. The application of the policies toward increasing the rights (individual and group ones) is the subject of serious criticism, mainly directed (as we have already seen) against the basic structures which have to ensure the application of the said policies. As for the policies related to the broader perspective of social inclusion, the debates seem to be focused on the formulation of the policies rather than on the process of their application.

Another detail could emphasize the gap between the social inclusion policies and the anti-discrimination policies. Where the Open Method of Coordination is applied in the field of the social inclusion, only good practices (and no “bad practices”) are used, while, as far as anti-discrimination policies are concerned (at least in the analyses), considerable attention is paid to bad practices (for instance, the study of the situation of the Romany in enlarged Europe). The waiver of using bad practices in the application of \_\_\_ in the field of social inclusion is hard to explain – the elimination of bad practices and the prevention thereof constitutes good practice as well.



These differences create the grounds on which there occurs a gap between the policies of reducing poverty and social exclusion, and the anti-discrimination policies. The result is that it is not sure whether the two types of policies are coordinated, and whether the insufficient efficiency of the social inclusion policies do not give rise to certain effects, which (on their own) turn into objects of impact on the part of the anti-discrimination policies.

Finally, obviously the explanation of the above mentioned situation is related not only with interactions between ethnic groups but with dynamics of their boundaries. Barbara Cohen emphasizes clearly the risk of assimilation and erosion of group membership, generated by the “color blind” approach. Then the alternative approach of the “color blind” one is not only pluralism, but also strengthening the boundaries of the group, strengthening the markers that are specific for the group. In this way a dichotomy is created: assimilation versus strengthening of group’s boundaries (in order to create a ground for pluralism). The question is: whether the dichotomy is not exaggerated? Does strengthening of civil rights and citizenship mean necessarily assimilation of the group, if it is not supplemented with strengthening of the group’s markers and boundaries? How compatible are pluralism on the one hand and ethnically differentiated implementation of social, economic and cultural rights on the other hand? Obviously the most important question is: are there ways to reconcile seemingly opposite views and approaches?

#### **IV. EVOLUTION OF THE SOCIAL WORK: FROM PRODUCTION OF SOCIAL SERVICES TO “PRODUCTION” OF CITIZENSHIP AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

In the recent years considerable changes took place in social services, these changes concerning both the theoretical and practical aspects of field social work.

I will try to delineate in brief the basic changes in the concepts and policies in the field of social work, and the policies regarding Roma in the European Union. The objective of this review consists in showing that the trajectories of the two types of policies intersect in one point, which can be called “social work based on the development of citizenship and political participation”; that the said point is of particular importance to the successful integration of Roma, and this point of intersection is exactly the point of good practice under discus-



sion. Along with it, I will also try to point out some other benefits of this type of practices.

The Programme has several basic features, connected with important tendencies outlined in the recent years:

- changes in the general nature and organization of social services;
- occurrence and development of Roma issue in the policies of the EU and member states;
- adapting the delivery of social services to the specific needs of Roma.
- implementation in a distressed urban area and community oriented.

### *1. The reforms of social work*

Social work is embedded in an economic and political context, which has undergone considerable changes in the recent years, bringing about the respective changes in the social work itself. The economic function of the state has changed – from the former regulative functions to an aspiration for drawing international investments through providing adequate conditions: infrastructure, qualified workforce, etc. The change also involved certain reduction of the regulation and control strategies initiated by political action in favour of de-regulation and promotion of a market based system. On the other hand, since the early 80s, the structural mass unemployment has brought about the occurrence of the social stratum of excluded population, which can be compared with the “underclass” in the USA and UK (Bremer & Gestrung 1997; H-U. Otto & A. Schaarschuch 1999). As a result of mass unemployment, the systems of social protection, which are based on individual contributions and are subject to state regulation, started experiencing chronic financial difficulties.

When social problems connected with unemployment increased, the scope and level of social payments started decreasing, thus becoming inadequate to the problems that had to be coped with. This led to a further decline of popular support for welfare state programmes.

These developments had the general effect of a delegitimation of the state, primarily of welfare state institutions. Welfare state institutions were no longer regarded as facilitators of societal balances and supports for welfare. In this new situation the social redistribution, regulative laws and the extended apparatus for delivery of social services turned out to be obstacles to economic welfare, rather than successful instruments for rendering assistance and for social inclusion of individuals. Since taxes and contributions to the insurance



system are regarded as a burden and an obstacle to economic competitiveness, policies aimed at reducing direct taxes have been implemented.

In this context welfare state institutions and agencies faced the need of improving their effectiveness and providing better targeted services for truly disadvantaged people. Against this background, reform policies were launched for the purpose of increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of state institutions and agencies.

The British and Dutch reforms of public management contributed to having the reforms oriented to the local level. One more circumstance also contributed to this orientation – due to its being unable to finance the services without using unpopular increase of taxes, the state aimed at controlling the increased expenses by transferring the responsibilities for social services to local authorities. In Germany the main purpose of the reform of the 90s also was “to convert municipal administration and social work agencies into “service enterprises”. It is assumed that through “customer demand, based on choice, customer preferences could be adequately met and social service agencies operating in a competitive market environment would perform more efficiently and deliver products of a higher quality” (H-U. Otto & A. Schaarschuch 1999). This “service orientation” of the changes in social work was grounded on the idea that, in this way, there will be achieved better control on expenses, downgrading of scope and control as well as obscuring of real power relations between workers and clients (May, 1997).

Apart from all that, the said changes had their potential for new development, namely, the primacy of the demand-side in the service delivery process. This new development also gave rise to important consequences in the theory and practice of social work.

## *2. Next steps*

The idea of priority of the demand side over the supply side contributed to avoiding the former notion of supply and demand, as well as the notion (related to the first one) of the passive consumption of services on the part of the clients. The subsequent discussion made it possible to re-formulate considerably the relationship between professionals and clients. Some researchers have argued that clients could be regarded not as passive consumers of services, but as productive participants in the service process. As early as 4 decades



ago it was noted that "...the patient is a factor in the production of his or her own good health. The consumer here is a force of production" (Gartner & Riesman, 1974: 79). In the late 90s the idea was further developed: "It is the person as human agent who, by appropriating the professional's work produces his/her own behaviour, own health or education. The professional can only give advice, support, and provide a conducive infrastructure. The productive activity of the professional is secondary to the specific logic of this production process. The professional turns out to be the "co-producer" who in the original meaning serves the client's self-production" (H-U. Otto & A. Schaarschuch, 1999: 43). It is from this point of view that there emerged the clear understanding of the need of empowerment of the client, the latter being already defined as "user". The key point in this empowerment is the transformation of the asymmetric connection between a professional and a client into a symmetric one between a professional and a user. However, the transformation of the client into a user and a co-producer of social services, and the emergence of the symmetric connection between the user and the professional already brings about their recognition as citizens in lieu of the former differentiation between a client and a professional. This transformation opens new prospects of social work, and it also has other important aspects. It promotes and supports the development of active citizenship. However, as J. Habermas points out, the active citizenship in a democratic society can be based only on political participatory rights. From this point of view the changes in social services create conditions for the development of active citizenship, which has its reflexive quality because citizens can actively influence their actual status in a democratic process of self-government.

### *3. Civil structures and social work*

The transformation mentioned above also concerns the organizational aspects of social work. The state agencies providing social services are organized as hierarchically structured bureaucracies, which have been considered and are still considered to be particularly effective structures, capable of turning political decisions into action. There is little possibility for the users to exert influence upon the functioning of the organization, and the common result thereof is "neglecting" the users (Ahrne, 1990). Therefore the consideration of the client and professional as citizens encourages the changes in the very organization of social work. The development of an organizational design became necessary, this design being adequate to the civil status of the participants in the process of producing social services. The involvement of nongovernmental organiza-



tions in the process of producing and delivering social services is an important opportunity for developing a design which is adequate to the civil status of the participants in the process. On the one hand, the nongovernmental organizations have great potential for supporting and developing the civil status of participants. On the other hand, these organizations have potential for holding forums which make it possible for various groups of actors to negotiate and take decisions (H-U. Otto & A. Schaarschuch, 1999: 44).

The activity of nongovernmental organizations in the field of social work has been the subject of numerous discussions. Usually, the delivery of social services on the part of NGO is considered within the context of privatizing the social services provided by the state. The supporters of this process point out the following main advantages: higher effectiveness, more precise orientation of services, etc. Actually, it is of no less importance that the changes in the organizational bases of social work allow for its being democratized as well as for supporting the civil status of the participants in a democratized production of social services. Thus, by way of attenuating the hierarchical structures in service delivery, and by using the opportunity for stimulating the civil status of participants, the democratization of social work contributes to the democratization of society as a whole.

The said dynamic of social work is particularly important where the target group either consists of Roma, or they are dominant therein. The central aspect of democratization of social work is the impact upon both the civil status of the participants and the conditions of political participatory rights. It is here that the trajectory of the development of social work most clearly approximates to the main stream of the EU policies on improving the Roma situation.

#### *4. The "big shift" in social work*

Going through the different approaches in the area of social work we can see a shift of focus away from macro-structure towards the individual and his or her preferences. It is also a shift from the path based on hierarchically structured bureaucracies that are regarded as the most effective structure for translating what has been legislated on the political level. Another aspect of this shift is the reconstruction of the relationship between client and professional when both of them adopt the status of citizen. This new type of social work is much 'larger' than the traditional one: it not only provides social services and supports social rights, but it is based on citizenship and stimulates and "pro-



vides” civil rights. This is a social work which produces social services and citizenship simultaneously. Comparing this shift with the implementation of Roma-related policies and legislation we can see that Roma-related policies and specifically their implementation are facing problems related with the main components (courts, national governments, local authorities) of the structure that have to translate into action what has been legislated on the political level. From this point of view perhaps the most important advantage of the Programme is its capacity to overcome these dysfunctions of the “translating” structures that are emphasized by their critics.

##### *5. The Programme in the light of social work dynamics*

It is possible to identify in the Programme most of the features of the modern social work. First of all the Programme provides clear evidence of restructured relationships between client and field social worker. Despite the use of the term “client” in the description of the Programme, in fact there is formally an equal and general relationship between citizen and citizen. The main components of this relationship are: the clear statement that “the protection of the rights of the client is superior to the interests and demands of the cooperating organization; the extensive implementation of consultations with the client; the accent on cooperation and the attempts of the field worker “to empower the client to the highest level possible in order to achieve individually agreed upon steps”; the special cooperation on the order (“The worker and the client works on his own solution so that the client participates as much as possible”). Although “the user is not directly incorporated into the decision making about provided services, there is a strong enough basis for maintaining a relationship between citizens – a signing of contract between social worker and user. Additionally, one of the problems which the worker is dedicated to directly, for a short period of time is citizenship-advice in cases where the client does not have and needs state citizenship in the Czech republic.

Second, most of the services provided within the framework of the Programme are closely related to reducing of discrimination and exclusion and strengthening of human rights. This seems to be true for: legal advising; social advising; mediation, facilitation, activities between the community and organs of state administration and municipalities, schools or other subjects; acting as an intermediary for other services. The accent on the legal education of the Field Worker in the form of seminars as well as their continuous contacts with lawyers are also relevant to the reducing of discrimination. The Programme also provides



a model for intervention that combines well anti-discrimination and social exclusion. The provision of the specific services within the framework of the Programme complements the provision of social services by the state structures. This combination seems to transform the character of the general social work. It really “produces” citizenship and social inclusion simultaneously.

Third, the Programme takes advantage of another achievement of social work developments: it avoids the problems related with the functioning of the structures that have to implement policies, transforming policies into action. This concerns not only the insufficient effectiveness of the structures, but also the possibility to avoid or at least to alleviate a fundamental problem: the lack of possibilities for the service users to gain influence on the functioning of the organization that provides services.

## **V. LINKS WITH EU POLICIES TOWARDS DEPRIVED URBAN AREAS AND LOCAL LEVEL INITIATIVES**

The Programme is also oriented to another stream of EU policies: the policies toward deprived urban areas “as portions of cities or their suburbs in which social, economic and environmental problems are concentrated” (OECD, 1998). The cohesion policy in Europe reports a decrease of income inequalities between the countries, but this tendency is less strongly expressed regarding the inequalities between the regions. EU Commission reports that “cohesion policy needs to be focused on the towns and cities of Europe where an increasing proportion of the people live and which are the location of the most severe problems of social deprivation and exclusion.” In the Second Report on Economic and Social Cohesion, the European Commission states “the urban areas are those where social and economic disparities are most marked and certain districts have high level of poverty and exclusion.... In cities like Hamburg, Toulouse, Naples, Genoa, Glasgow or Edinburgh unemployment rates can vary significantly between districts, being up to ten times higher in the worst affected parts than in the least affected. The same is true of dependency rates.” (Proceedings of the Second European Cohesion Forum, Brussels, 2001,14)

The Programme of the People in Need Foundation is also oriented at “poor” localities, or excluded communities. Life in these localities is miserable and for it citizens hopeless. Field workers cooperate and assist clients in contact with the local community – schools, employees of social services, organs of state



administration and municipalities, the non-profit sector and other individuals. The goal is to mobilize the community, and bring to the locality other activists – volunteers or NGOs, which offer services essential to the locality.

In this way the Programme possesses and implements some of the guidelines for area-based urban regeneration in the European Commission Communication on Sustainable Urban Development in the European Union: a Framework for Action. These include for instance:

- Strong partnerships;
- Integration of different aspects including access to jobs and training opportunities from areas of concentrated exclusion;
- Local capacity building and empowerment of excluded groups;
- A contractual approach with agreed outputs and performance measures.

We can also see some of the methodological principles of “Strengthening the Local Dimension of the European Employment Strategy” Communication: local dimension; integrated approach; bottom-up approach, as well as three basic goals – integration, partnerships and empowerment.

### *1. Examples of other good practices*

The threat of concentration of socially excluded groups in certain neighbourhoods in a number of European cities makes the European Union and many of the national governments in Europe seek new ways for integrating the excluded urban communities as a whole. The European policies on local development show an evolution from focusing on physical infrastructure towards adopting an approach concentrated on economic potential and efforts to promote labour market strategies and to have the private sector engaged. This approach has been deepened through attempts at placing social inclusion in the centre of the integrated urban strategies by way of empowerment and social capital (M. Parkinson, 1998).

The European institutions and national governments reply to these challenges and problems in various ways. As a result of it, there are numerous local experiments. In their National Action Plans, Portugal, Denmark, Sweden, Netherlands, United Kingdom, France and Germany focus on deprived urban areas and neighbourhoods. Depending on the priority problems, the target groups are different: Sweden focuses on immigrants and peripheral social housing; Netherlands on continuously unemployed and ethnic minorities; United Kingdom on



children, poor families and elderly people. An example of an integrated territorial strategy combating social exclusion is the UK National Strategy Action Plan "A new commitment to neighbourhood renewal".

Different local initiatives and projects in many member states could be discussed as relevant to be linked to the Czech programme. For example:

The Ben Johnson Centre, Docklands, London, UK that addresses unemployment problems in a stigmatized urban area. The centre acts as a broker, intermediary between the unemployed, the private sector and the local communities. It offers mentors, job information and training. The centre is reported to adapt to client needs. "Key success elements include identification with and integration into the local community and developing an effective broker role between community, job seekers and the private sector".

The Chance Project in the Spanish Quarter of Naples, Italy is an effort to network a wide variety of forces in order to rescue young people in relational, educational and social difficulties within the targeted territory. The empowerment strategy is aimed at reinforcing the human capital capacities to insure a different future from one the young people would have due to the intergenerational reproduction of factors for social exclusion in families living in extremely difficult socioeconomic conditions (Soto,2004:61). The project stresses the important role of tutors, agreement of contract specifying a personal itinerary involving the family; regular meetings with parents; ceremonies to celebrate achievements; establishment of trust, it advocates mobility and multiple opportunities. Four main conditions are enlisted for the reproduction of the Chance project (Lapeyre, 2004): the existence in the local area of a range of social players who can be mobilized within a broad network of social action; the handling of human resources; group work; and the role of training.

However, as pointed out by the project coordinators the project success was extremely dependent upon many contextual factors, and in particular clear support by other broad policies and initiatives on the ground, relevant political and institutional context, as well as institutional and financial support of the local, regional and national authorities.

Another relevant project seems to be Exit and Success, Can Xatarra, el Raval, Barcelona. The patterns of deprivation include unemployment rate being 50% higher than city average; 25% more than city average with primary education; 47% being ethnic minorities and main groups: Pakistanis, Filipinos, Moroccans



and Ecuadorians; physical degradation; loss of personal and collective identity; family breakdown and high dependency on social services. The programme has been initiated by the City Council and it started with physical renewal while accompanied by many parallel social initiatives on behalf of NGOs. There are 106 NGOs and community groups who have organized themselves to develop joint strategies. "The first type of response has been to design individual pathways or itineraries that provide relevant solutions at an individual rather than purely social level" (Soto, 2004: 81). Methodology includes: street educator, initial contract and motivation; joint analysis of the situation; negotiation of a plan of action; mentors from similar backgrounds and aftercare.

There are traditions in integrated neighbourhood approaches to social problems in some European countries (for example the UK and Holland). Many other examples could be found as well within the framework of the EU Programme on Local Social Capital (through the intermediary structures for example: ADIE, France; RAUL, Ireland; Red Arte 6; Spain) (Harvey, 2003), as well as in the initiatives of social economy (for example, The Neighbourhood Enterprise Reperes, La Source, Orleans, France and the San Fermin Project Association in a District of Madrid) (Spear et al, 2001: 128,208) and many different national initiatives (for example, Travellers project in Ireland). Many of these projects have clear ethnic dimension. It seems that assessments of different projects outline to a high extent consensus on obstacles and constraints encountered.

The most common recommendations from the above projects are:

1. Policy integration and coordination with:
  - Clear targets, budgets, responsibilities and time frames;
  - Strengthening the participation of stakeholders
  - Explicit negotiation of the major differences between stakeholdersBetter policy coordination and synchronization could mutually reinforce and complement each other.
2. Integrated view of economic and social-policy making
3. Empowerment
4. Social capital and local communities development
5. Development of partnerships and networking
6. Better transparency, effective monitoring, social impact assessments and evaluation provisions.

Having in mind these examples we can see that the Programme under review derives many of the basic features of this stream of the EU policies:



1. Focus on distressed areas;
2. Poor and socially excluded are clearly identified and targeted;
3. Although ethnic groups (particularly Roma) are over represented, the Programme is not ethnically selective and as a result the target group is not ethnically homogeneous;
4. There is a clear emphasis on community mobilization and increasing local capital (through networking between formal and informal institutions);
5. Local authorities do not oppose the implementation of the Programme; they collaborate;
6. National authorities (Ministry of Labour) support the Programme;
7. The Programme aims at social inclusion of the target groups from different angles (the Programme has multiple goals; targets a variety of vulnerable groups; provides a variety of services; and developed internal organizational rules and procedures)
8. The Programme supports social mobility. "In a connectionist world, mobility, the ability to move autonomously, not only in geographical space, but also between individuals or in mental spaces, between ideas, is an essential quality of the haves, so that the have-nots are characterized primarily by their immobility (rigidity)." (Boltanski, L. and E Chiapello, 1999: 445);
9. The Programme seems to provide indices for a move from individual EU policy processes to a "streamlined strategy"

## **VI. ELEMENTS OF TRANSFERABILITY**

The following elements of the Programme under review may be of interest for the purpose of transferability.

1. An important feature of the Programme is that it is implemented in a favorable economic and political context. The Czech Republic is among the best performing countries in the EU with a risk of poverty around 10%, together with Sweden, Denmark, Slovenia, Finland and Netherlands. The transition period has not resulted in high increase of inequalities and the country is rather egalitarian. This widens the opportunity to clearly identify the dimensions of social inclusion on which its performance is relatively less satisfactory, to outline poverty pockets and to concentrate on these. The National Action Plan of the Czech Republic (2004-2006) sets out key challenges: to respond to the ongoing structural changes; to support the long-term unemployed in seeking employment; to address the disadvantage in



education for groups at risk of social exclusion, to adapt the social protection and health care systems and to improve access to affordable good quality housing;

2. The Programme seems to be appropriate for cases of high concentrations of excluded people in distressed areas;
3. The Programme is appropriate for cases where the societal environment is characterized by low level of citizenship and underdeveloped social capital;
4. The Programme is also appropriate for cases where clear signs of anti Roma dispositions are identified;
5. The Programme could overcome local authorities' opposition to projects targeted at social exclusion of Roma;
6. The implementation of the Programme is extremely appropriate in cases where social work is reduced mainly to traditional social assistance and local NGOs are weak or missing.



## **ANNEX I MAIN COMPONENTS OF EU POLICIES FOR IMPROVING THE SITUATION OF ROMA**

The situation of Roma in the enlarged EU poses significant challenges. Specifically, the situation of Roma within new Member States is a cause for concern, “given the evidence of racism and discrimination in employment, education and health care provision, failures of the criminal justice systems in cases concerning Roma and episodes of violence against Roma”.

Another reason for addressing the situation of Roma in Central and Eastern Europe is the flight of Roma to Western Europe to claim asylum from persecution. This movement “provided a political imperative in existing Member States to press for improvements in the situation of Roma in Central and Eastern Europe, and for measures to “combat asylum abuse”.

### *1. ANTI-DISCRIMINATION POLICIES AND LEGISLATION*

The most fundamental change in the Union relating to combating discrimination and racism has been the adoption of a series of anti-discrimination directives which are binding on all pre-2004 EU Member States and transposition has also been required of new Member States and accession states. Particularly significant for Roma is Directive 2000/43/EC “implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin” (the “Race Directive”). A recent study on the situation of Roma mentions that “even those countries with traditions of combating racial discrimination through law, frequently had not secured a ban on racial discrimination in all fields of relevance to EU social inclusion policy”.

1.1. The Race Directive introduced legal standards throughout the Union aimed at ending differential treatment based on the arbitrary criteria of race or ethnicity. It provides details as to the scope and content of laws banning racial discrimination, and covers a wide range of areas where discrimination against Roma may take place - employment, training, education, social protection, access to goods and services, and housing. The Race Directive includes, among other provisions, bans on both “direct” and “indirect” discrimination. The Directive also requires that domestic law impose effective, proportionate and dissuasive sanctions for violation of anti-discrimination norms.



Deadlines for transposition of the Race Directive into domestic law were set for 2003 for old Member States and the date of accession for new Member States, and a number of states have adopted comprehensive anti-discrimination laws in efforts to comply.

1.2. The Union has also adopted a Community Action Programme to combat discrimination (2000-2006). The Programme is designed to support and complement the implementation of the Directives through the exchange of information and experience and the dissemination of best practice. The 2004 work programme of the Community Action Programme defined eight priority areas and one of them was specifically targeted at Roma integration into education and employment, and has led to the selection of four Roma-specific transnational partnerships and actions for the preparatory phase in 2004, to be followed by a 2-year implementation period.

## *2. MINORITY RIGHTS REGIME*

Minority rights standards within the Council of Europe system significantly expanded during the 1990s. These standards provided explicit links between anti-discrimination framework and minority rights. Standards also include provisions on positive action. Claude Cahn mentions two legal instruments that are of particular interest: the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

## *3. THE EU SOCIAL INCLUSION POLICY*

The EU social inclusion policy is closely related to the policies that are aiming at improving of the situation of Roma. The social inclusion policy provides a framework and develops priority actions addressed to specific target groups (including minority groups) In 2004, the European Commission launched a Call for Proposals on “National Awareness Raising Actions on Social Inclusion”, aimed particularly at those organisations with an active interest in promoting the implementation of National Action Plans against poverty and social exclusion, and Joint Inclusion Memoranda on social inclusion, including national and local authorities, and NGOs.



#### *4. EUROPEAN EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY*

The European Employment Strategy (EES) was launched at the Luxembourg Jobs Summit in 1997. The situation of Roma is not identified in the EES as a specific challenge, but the numbers of Roma, Gypsies and Travellers in Europe, and their very low formal employment rate, mandate that, if EES targets are to be met particular attention should be given to their integration into labour markets. The 2004 Proposal for Recommendations, for the approval of the European Council, do specifically raise the issue of Roma within the labour market, (making recommendations to the Czech Republic and to Slovakia).

#### *5. EU STRUCTURAL FUNDS*

Two components of the EU Structural Funds are directly relevant to Roma populations: the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF). The ERDF may finance a number of activities of interest to Romani populations, including basic infrastructure for Romani settlements, social inclusion measures and lifelong learning facilities. The European Social Fund finances activities aimed at improving involvement in the labour market, including streams on women's participation, lifelong learning, social inclusion, labour adaptability and an active labour market. The Fund has already been used to finance activities of relevance to Roma, Gypsies and Travellers such as the EQUAL Community Initiative. EU programmes – and in particular the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) – are particularly relevant for addressing Romani issues in areas targeted for regional development.

The Cohesion Fund is a complementary instrument designed for Member States whose GDP is less than 90% of the EU average, and in the 2007-2013 period it will cover all 10 new Member States as well as Greece and Portugal, and will finance multi-annual programmes in the fields of transport and the environment.

#### *6. OTHER EU POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES*

The 2004 work programme of the 2003- 2008 Community Action Programme in public health does recognise the possibility of using funds to carry out work in the field of "health determinants", including socio-economic determinants encompassing "minority and migrant populations".



The Directorate General of Education and Culture has issued a number of documents on the subject, including the 1989 Resolution “On School Provision for Gypsy and Traveller Children”.

The new Protocol 12 to the European Convention on Human Rights significantly expands the protections available to individuals under the European Convention on Human Rights.

The European Social Charter provides the basis for significant protections of social and economic rights. The inclusion of a collective complaints mechanism now makes available procedures through which violations of the Charter can be redressed.

There are also a number of policy initiatives of relevance to Roma currently being undertaken by other international organisations. These include the Council of Europe, OSCE, UNDP, and the World Bank.

An example of a working initiative between international policy-making and donor agencies is the project “Roma under the Stability Pact”, which the Commission is funding under the European Initiative for Human Rights, and where it is in cooperation with the Council of Europe and the OSCE. Although limited in scope, and in practical results to date, the initiative has contributed to a higher visibility of Roma issues on the agendas of some governments, donors and inter-governmental organisations. Increased co-operation between donors would have the benefit of pooling of resources, and has the potential of increasing policy coherence. The European Commission takes part in several donor initiatives aimed at co-ordinating the activities related to the improvement of the Roma situation at the European level. The Commission is represented by several DGs at the Informal Contact Group of International Organisation on Roma and Sinti, co-organised by the OSCE, and the EU Presidency also takes an active part within the Steering Committee of the Roma Inclusion Decade (2005 - 2015) political initiative.



## **ANNEX II EU POLICIES TOWARD DEPRIVED URBAN AREAS AND LOCAL LEVEL INITIATIVES.**

The European Commission plays a major role in piloting a number of initiatives through various programmes, such as Local Employment Development Partnerships (LEDA), Territorial Employment Pacts, Leader and Urban.

In 1998 the European Commission published the Communication on Sustainable Urban Development in the European Union: a Framework for Action. The guidelines for area-based urban regeneration in the European Commission communication include:

- Strong partnership to define challenges, strategy, priorities and resource allocation and to implement, monitor and evaluate the strategy. Partnerships should include economic and social partners;
- Linkage of the strategic plan for the area in question to the economic, social and physical network of the wider urban area (vertical integration), including between-neighbourhood partnerships and agents responsible for the social and economic strategy of the wider conurbation;
- Integration of the economic, social, security, environmental and transport aspects including access to jobs and training opportunities from areas of concentrated exclusion (horizontal integration);
- Local capacity building and empowerment of excluded groups;
- A multi-annual and contractual approach with agreed outputs and performance measures.

In 1998 the three-year Programme of the EU for Local Social Capital was published. This Programme is closely connected with the policies of the European Union on providing employment and applying the structural funds. Art. 6 of the regulation of the European Social Fund is a key instrument for this development.

In 2000 the European Commission organized a large consultation process with the participation of the main actors involved in the Territorial Employment Strategies and this brought about the “Strengthening the Local Dimension of the European Employment Strategy” Communication. All initiatives give priority to three basic goals – integration, partnerships and empowerment. The methodological principles are local dimension; integrated approach; bottom-up approach; mutually supportive economic, structural and social policies; financing which is appropriate to local needs.



EU Commission reports that “cohesion policy needs to be focused on the towns and cities of Europe where an increasing proportion of the people live and which are the location of the most severe problems of social deprivation and exclusion.”

In the Second Report on Economic and Social Cohesion, the European Commission states “the urban areas are those where social and economic disparities are most marked and certain districts have high level of poverty and exclusion.... In cities like Hamburg, Toulouse, Naples, Genoa, Glasgow or Edinburgh unemployment rates can vary significantly between districts, being up to ten times higher in the worst affected parts than in the least affected. The same is true of dependency rates.” (Proceedings of the Second European Cohesion Forum, Brussels, 2001,14)

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