



## France 2006

### Social Inclusion cross cutting policy tools – “Document de politique transversale (DPT)”

### Synthesis Report

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## Executive Summary

### 1. Coordination and partnership in the French social inclusion policies

The comprehensive set of arrangements and instruments for coordination and partnership put in place or promoted by French national government consist of institutional arrangements and a number of instruments.

The institutional arrangements include an inter-ministerial committee, a national council and a monitoring centre, a responsible directorate within a ministry, and departmental commissions for social cohesion. The instruments include a national conference, local forums, regional charters for social cohesion, a localised social data base, 18 Regional Social Observation Platforms and last but not least the Social Inclusion Cross-Functional Policy Document (DPT-Inclusion Sociale).

### 2. The challenges of coordination and partnership

The major challenges for coordination and partnership in the making and implementation of policies could be brought together under three headings: government, governance and the policy process.

#### *Government*

In most European countries social inclusion policies are developed and/or implemented at different government levels: national, regional, municipal and even sub-municipal (neighbourhood or district). In different policy domains there seems to be a need for renewal of these vertical relationships. At all government levels there is also a growing need for horizontal coordination and co-operation. It is important to situate co-ordinating bodies in a central position and/or at a sufficient high level within or even above their own Ministry or department. And one should think about the difference and complementarity between procedures and effective dialogue.

#### *Governance*

The term governance has been used to indicate policy development and implementation activities where government collaborates with non government partners. For those who believe in a dynamic view of power, and who realise that a strong government needs a strong civil society and vice versa, a strong role for other actors may also contribute positively to government.

### *The policy process and involvement*

At least the following issues play an important role in each policy process:

- Comprehensiveness and coherence of the policy process (cycle);
- The involvement of all actors in as much stages of the process as possible;
- The choice of an adequate degree of involvement for each actor (and clarity about this degree);
- Awareness of the tension between coordination activities within government and the possibilities for involvement of non-government actors;
- The use of appropriate methods for involvement;
- The care for the preconditions in terms of time, support, recognition, visibility, public debate and dialogue.

## 3. The European context

Governance is at the heart of European reflection and discussion since a number of years. The subsidiarity principle makes it necessary to reflect about the roles and responsibilities of different government levels. The objectives of the OMC on social inclusion touch a number of issues that are discussed in a wider policy context on European level. These include at least the following: the comprehensiveness of policies, i.e. including all relevant policy domains to tackle a (social) issue; the integrality of the approaches, i.e. problem oriented instead of sectoral; the partnership between different government levels, within contexts of deconcentration and decentralisation; the partnership between government and other partners, i.e. civil society, social partners, NGOs; the involvement and participation of target populations in the policy process.

### *Practice examples from some peer countries*

In Belgium, there is an innovative way to involve different actors in the evaluation and development of social inclusion policies. Ireland has developed an integrated approach for the formulation of Social Inclusion Policies. United Kingdom has effective ways of working together on social inclusion between central and local government. France presents a local partnership example in the field of social inclusion through housing in the agglomeration of Le Havre.

## 4. Relevance for and transferability to other national contexts

Because of its constituting elements and the challenges to meet, the French example is interesting for discussing the issues of government, governance and actor involvement,. But the relevance will mostly be linked to elements of the example and vary according to similarities and differences between countries.

As transferability potential, participants mention the elements they valued most in the French example. This is first of all the DPT Inclusion Sociale. The idea to make the financial efforts for social inclusion visible in a cross sectoral document, linked to the overarching policy priorities of government, is highly valued. Furthermore, participants refer to elements of the French policy that could inspire their own government, such as the CNLE as a kind of stakeholders group for the

NAP/inclusion, the observatory, the local social data base, the use of indicators to support coordination and partnership.

## 5. Conclusions and lessons learnt

The most remarkable aspect of the French example seems to be the totality of the instruments presented and the synergies they produce. Also the fact that the French government makes social inclusion a national priority is to be seen as remarkable. The DPT Inclusion Sociale is a crucial instrument to operationalising this choice. But the challenges for France do not seem to be very different from the challenges in many European countries. However the link between the social and economic sectors, if not missing, is not sufficiently clear.

To improve government and governance, there is a continuous need for methodological reflection about tensions to solve or to live with. A few examples:

- Between structures and dynamics: one could create the most comprehensive structure for co-operation, but without a continuous effort to create and maintain a partnership culture the best structure will fail.
- Between coping with complexity and simplifying existing structures: a lot of energy in policy making goes to overcome structural complexity, without touching existing competencies, territories and power. Is this always the most productive and efficient choice?
- Between change and security: in changing existing structures, also in terms of policy making procedures, one should realise that this causes feelings of insecurity.
- Between slowing down and speeding up: time is an important issue. At the one hand, everybody underlines that the creation of a culture of participation and partnership, as well as real involvement of people experiencing poverty takes time. At the other hand, there is a great sense of urgency both from the side of (political) policy makers and vulnerable people.
- Between leadership and partnership: there is a lot of expectations in terms of possibilities for involvement in the definition of policies, while at the same time people expect government to show strong leadership. In terms of the policy making process, “soft steering” as it is used in the OMC on European level seems to be very useful also in national contexts, more in particular for the relationship between national and local governments, but also for the relation with non-governmental partners. It is about influencing and steering without (formal) power.

It is clear that concentrating the French Peer Review meeting on the process more than on the outcomes of social inclusion policies was a good choice. It responded to a need of at least the participants from the peer countries represented: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom.

## Introduction

The French Peer Review, held in Paris on the 29th and 30th of June 2006, was about coordination and partnership in social inclusion policy making. This was in more than one respect a “different” Peer Review. The General Direction for Social Action (DGAS), responsible for social inclusion policies, chose to present the overall social inclusion policy development institutions and methodologies instead of one “good practice” within that policy. It gave participants a look “into the kitchen” of policy making and stimulated discussions about policy making in their own countries. Secondly, the French partners presented “work in progress” in a rather early stage of implementation, expecting comments and discussions helping to improve the current practice.

### 1. Coordination and partnership in the French social inclusion policies

In the development of the French social inclusion policies two major developments are to be mentioned that influence the efforts in coordination and partnership:

- The changing policy principles in the fight against poverty and social inclusion: from purely monetary policies to the broader concept of social exclusion; from assistance and emergency measures to prevention and social inclusion and from specific procedures to the notion of universal rights.
- He also mentioned the changing financial provisions. France has broken with the tradition of expenditure oriented budgets by drawing up a Programme budget based on a three tier structure: missions correspond to the state's major public policies. Each mission comprises a set of programmes to which means are allocated at ministerial level, and is broken down into actions that together constitute the operational level of implementing the programme.

To realise these developments, major efforts for coordination and partnership building are needed at and between all levels of government, but also between government, civil society and private actors. Because one could hardly say that there is “a” social inclusion policy. There are indeed many social inclusion policies that are complementary, overlapping with even risks of contradiction.

The comprehensive set of arrangements and instruments for coordination and partnership put in place or promoted by French national government could be summarised as follows.<sup>1</sup>

The institutional arrangements consist of:

- The Inter-ministerial Committee to Combat Social Exclusion (CILE) defines and coordinates the government's policy on preventing and combating social exclusion, and monitors its implementation. It is composed of the relevant Ministers and chaired by the Prime Minister. It is supported by a Permanent Committee with representatives of all administrative sectors.
- The National Council for the Fight against Poverty and Social Exclusion (CNLE) is a body for exchange and dialogue between public authorities, NGOs, social partners and experts. It has the role of advisor and initiator.

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<sup>1</sup> Directorate general for social action (2006). *Social inclusion policies – France – 2006: Coordination and partnership*. Paris : Ministry of employment, social cohesion and housing.

- The National Monitoring Centre on Poverty and Social Exclusion (ONPES) collects, analyses and disseminates data concerning precariousness, poverty, social exclusion and their related policies.
- The General Directorate for Social Action (DGAS) prepares laws and regulations, mobilises actors, promotes partnerships, and facilitates inter-ministerial action and coordination.
- The Departmental Commissions for Social Cohesion, to be set up from 2006 onwards. These have to be local coordination bodies to ensure a coherent policy on social inclusion and equal opportunities. They are composed of state and local authority services, social partners, social organisations, NGOs and beneficiaries. They are chaired by the Préfet, representative of national government at local level.

In its toolkit for feeding these institutional arrangements, the French government created the following instruments:

- The national conference for preventing and combating social exclusion proposes priority actions to the government. It is organised jointly by CNLE and DGAS. First meeting was in 2004, second in 2006 after 5 local preparatory meetings.
- Local Forums, bringing together small groups of beneficiaries and professionals, are organised to take into account local actors' expertise in measuring the impact of policies and action plans.
- The Regional Charters for Social Cohesion enable the definition of a joint regional strategy to determine the needs of a territory and the actions required. It should lead to local implementation of social cohesion policies and pooling of resources between partners.
- A Localised Social Data Base (BDSL) that gathers many social data on the population and situations of precariousness and exclusion, in one central tool. It enables comparisons between territories and monitoring over time.
- 18 Regional Social Observation Platforms to share social, demographic and economic data between local partners. They feed evaluation work and take part in the public decision making process.
- The Social Inclusion Cross-Functional Policy Document (DPT-Inclusion Sociale)<sup>2</sup> within the framework of the Organic Law on Finance Laws (LOLF). At national level the DPT-Inclusion Sociale is the proof of the political will to co-ordinate all actions, and it can become a means to measure the efforts for social inclusion. The scope is the European social inclusion strategy. It presents the social inclusion programmes and budgets of all relevant ministries, i.e. 27 programmes with 83 objectives (and related indicators), from which 6 are cross cutting objectives with high stakes for the public social inclusion policies requiring a joint inter-ministerial effort.

## 2. The challenges of coordination and partnership

The major challenges for coordination and partnership in the making and implementation of policies could be brought together under three headings: government, governance and the policy process.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ministre de l'emploi, de la cohésion sociale et du logement (2006). *Document de Politique Transversale Inclusion Sociale*. Paris : Ministère de l'Economie, des Finances et de l'Industrie.

<sup>3</sup> Swinnen, H. (2006). *Social inclusion policies: Coordination and partnership. Discussion paper for the Peer Review: Social inclusion cross cutting policy tools – "Document de politique transversale (DPT)" Paris 29-30 June 2006*. Utrecht: Verwey-Jonker Institute.

## **2.1. Government**

In most European countries social inclusion policies are developed and/or implemented at different government levels: national, regional, municipal and even sub-municipal (neighbourhood or district). In different policy domains there seems to be a need for renewal of these vertical relationships. In key words this need comes from:

- New interdependencies;
- The growing complexity of policy structures and the need for better implementation;
- New views on government: voluntarism versus legalism, subsidiarity versus straightforward (unconditional) decentralisation.
- One could observe in all European countries very complex policies and relationships, creating both efficiency and efficacy problems.

Solutions to this problem can be found in:

- More clarity about the existing division of responsibilities between the levels;
- Structural changes to improve the logical distribution of responsibilities and improve the quality of implementation at all levels;
- A generalised decentralisation;
- New forms of subsidiarity, and
- More (voluntary) willingness to cooperate.

At all government levels there is also a growing need for horizontal coordination and co-operation. It is important to situate co-ordinating bodies in a central position and/or at a sufficient high level within or even above their own Ministry or department. And one should think about the difference and complementarity between procedures and effective dialogue.

## **2.2. Governance**

The term governance is used here to indicate policy development and implementation activities where government collaborates with non government partners. Even if one agrees that government has to take the lead in the development of social policy, there can be many different ways of doing so. Government can – and has – to take up different roles, depending on the concrete situation and partners involved. It is important to stress that sharing leadership does not necessarily mean a loss of power. Governance is not a zero sum game. For those who believe in a dynamic view of power, and who realise that a strong government needs a strong civil society and vice versa, a strong role for other actors may also contribute positively to government. The way to deal with partnerships will of course depend on the specific situation, the issue at stake and the (type of) partners to involve. Government has to develop another partnership with professionals, with employers, social partners, beneficiaries, their organisations. But in any case there has to be as much reciprocity as possible in the relationship. Each partner should have the possibility for having real (not necessarily the same) influence on decision making. Otherwise, there is no partnership.

## **2.3. The policy process and involvement**

At least the following issues play an important role in each policy process:

- Comprehensiveness and coherence of the policy process (cycle);
- The involvement of all actors in as much stages of the process as possible;
- The choice of an adequate degree of involvement for each actor (and clarity about this degree);
- Awareness of the tension between coordination activities within government and the possibilities for involvement of non-government actors;

- The use of appropriate methods for involvement;
- The care for the preconditions in terms of time, support, recognition, visibility, public debate and dialogue.

### 3. The European context

Within the OMC for social protection and social inclusion the issue of governance is subject of one overarching objective: “(c) good governance, transparency and the involvement of stakeholders in the design, implementation and monitoring of policy”<sup>4</sup>. Within the framework of social inclusion policies this objective is specified within the strand “eradication of poverty and social exclusion by ensuring: (...) (f) that social inclusion policies are well-coordinated and involve all levels of government and relevant actors, including people experiencing poverty, that they are efficient and effective and mainstreamed into all relevant public policies, including economic, budgetary, education and training policies and structural fund (notably ESF) programmes.”<sup>5</sup>

#### 3.1. Some discussions and developments

Governance is at the heart of European reflection and discussion since a number of years.<sup>6</sup> The subsidiarity principle makes it necessary to reflect about the roles and responsibilities of different government levels. The double movement of Europeanisation and decentralisation changes relationships in a rapid way. Another element of change is due to the different and changing relationships between government bodies and non governmental actors. Their position varies from instruments for the delivery of services to partners in policy development. Also the relationship between public authorities, service deliverers and citizens / users / clients are changing.

The objectives of the OMC on social inclusion touch a number of issues that are discussed in a wider policy context on European level. These include at least the following:

1. The comprehensiveness of policies, i.e. including all relevant policy domains to tackle a (social) issue;
2. The integrity of the approaches, i.e. problem oriented instead of sectoral;
3. The partnership between different government levels, within contexts of deconcentration and decentralisation;
4. The partnership between government and other partners, i.e. civil society, social partners, NGOs;
5. The involvement and participation of target populations in the policy process.

The discussions about these issues at European level are a mirror of - and to - discussions on all other levels of government within Europe. The background for them are developments in the fields of citizenship (participation, personal rights and responsibilities), privatisation (less government), deregulation (other government), and (de)centralisation (local government / subsidiarity).

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<sup>4</sup> European Commission (2005). *Working together, working better: a new framework for the open coordination of social protection and inclusion policies in the European Union*. COM (2005) 706 Final. Brussels : European Commission, p. 5

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem, p. 6

<sup>6</sup> See i.a. European Commission (2001). *European Governance. A White Paper*. COM(2001) 428 final. Brussels: European Commission.

At European level promotion of partnership and participation / involvement of local governments, non-governmental partners and target populations in social inclusion policies are present in a multitude of policy domains, programmes, networks and organisations. If it comes to social inclusion issues, local and regional governments, their networks and programmes are particularly active in this (See e.g. Urbact – RETIS (regions and cities) – Eurocities). However, the distinction between the five aspects as mentioned before is not always clearly present. In all the NAPs Inclusion the issue of involvement of different levels of government and relevant stakeholders is discussed, more or less extensively<sup>7</sup>. Also, most of the independent experts in their reports make critical remarks on one or more aspects of the issue, but there is hardly any systematic approach or review of all different aspects at stake.

### **3.2. Practice examples from some peer countries**

#### **United Kingdom**

*Ways of working together on social inclusion between central and local government.*

Local Government is a key partner in UK's social inclusion strategy. Tools for engagement of local authorities are: The New Deal for Communities, local strategic and social inclusion partnerships (LSP), local public service agreements (PSA) and local area agreements, central - local government accords, and last but not least the National Action Plan Inclusion.

Local government in the UK controls or strongly influences many key levers for inclusion such as: housing and homelessness, education, healthcare services and social services. Strong engagement between central and local government is thus essential to ensure co-ordinated responses to social needs. There is also an important role for devolved and regional government, with different competencies for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

With the New Deal for Communities, UK government responds to the concentration of social exclusion in specific deprived areas. A national 'neighbourhood renewal' strategy was introduced in 1998 with targeted funding for re-construction. 'Floor targets' were set to lever up performance e.g. in health, education and labour market. The development of new partnerships was stimulated.

Local Strategic Partnerships are introduced in most deprived areas in England. In Scotland Social Inclusion Partnerships are comparable structures. They are led by local government and aim to bring together all key actors to develop co-ordinated plans.

Through Local Public Service Agreements, local government agrees to targets which meet central government objectives. They are financially rewarded or get additional flexibility in spending. Local area agreements build on this approach: LSPs and (regional) Government Offices agree on 3 year outcome targets. In return, area-based funding can be pooled and there will be financial rewards for meeting certain targets.

At the highest level, joint working is supported by the Central / Local Partnership, which brings together Ministers and senior local politicians. At this level, a national framework has been agreed. This includes action to increase skills, tackling child poverty and helping older people to live independently. This framework is supported by specific 'accords', for example, on child poverty.

Finally, the National Action Plan Inclusion focuses on governance in the field of social inclusion. It supports engagement between all levels of government. Local government engaged with the social

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<sup>7</sup> see i.a. the MSI project – [www.europemsi.org](http://www.europemsi.org)

inclusion process at national and EU level through its contribution to the UK NAP. Also a few Local Areas are developing action plans along the NAP model.

## **Belgium**

*Involvement of different actors in the evaluation and development of social inclusion policies.*

Starting point for this “responsive” policy development was the poverty report in 1994 – 1995. This report was built on a lot of qualitative data reflecting experiences of poverty. It was decided to create a national service for combating poverty, social exclusion and precariousness. This service has monitoring and organising dialogue as its central functions. Secondly, an inter-ministerial conference is the steering body for the development of national social inclusion policy. Thirdly, government chose a partnership approach between different levels of government and between public authorities, civil society and private partners for developing concrete actions. Finally, a bi-annual report and the recommendations included in it are the basis for the actualisation of the political agenda. Intensive consultations with semi permanent groups (people experiencing poverty as well as professionals) in specific fields, provincial round tables and political debate in parliament are part of the evaluation and development process. This is a dynamic process that leads to new debates. Currently the issue of “poverty proof” (poverty impact assessment) of public measures, rules and laws is under discussion.

## **Ireland**

*An integrated approach for the formulation of Social Inclusion Policies*

Five approaches are integrated in order to formulate social inclusion policies:

- Social Partnership Agreements
- National Anti Poverty Strategy
- National Action Plan
- National Anti Poverty Networks
- County and City Development Boards

Partnership is key in these approaches. The national level plays a central role in these. First of all, a new national partnership agreement – Towards 2016 - has been negotiated recently between Government, Trade Unions (ICTU), Employers’ organisations (IBEC + CIF), Farming organisations, Community and Voluntary Sector. This ten year framework for social partnership includes economic, social, infrastructural, public and private sector Pay Agreements. It follows a life-cycle approach: children, people of working age, older people and people with disabilities. The themes for the lifecycle framework are education, training and development, employment, employability and incomes, health and social services and housing. In the implementation, the community and voluntary sectors play an important role. The monitoring is done by social partners. In the process towards this agreement, the issue of power and influence came to the fore. Some voluntary organisations left the negotiations (and came back later) because they felt having too less influence and independency. The division of power, the respect for each ones interests and the equality between partners are crucial elements in collaboration between government and non-government partners.

In terms of commitment to partnership, within the framework of democratic accountability, the government recognises the special relationship that encompasses social partnership and commits itself to consulting with the social partners on policy proposals and the design of implementation arrangements.

As to the National Anti Poverty Strategy (the NAPs), the basics are described in the document *Building an Inclusive Society* (February, 2002). The government sets specific targets to reduce poverty and social

exclusion and introduces a Poverty Impact Assessment (Poverty Proofing). The implementation of the NAP is monitored by the Office for Social Inclusion (OSI).

The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (2006-2008) is based upon an extensive consultation organised by Office for Social Inclusion. A call for submission of issues to put into the NAP led to 81 submissions from organisations and individuals (e. g. NGOs, local community groups, local authorities, trade unions). Seven consultation seminars (512 participants from Ministries; State agencies; local authorities; community and voluntary sector and interested members of the public) were held to complete the open consultation.

The National Economic and Social Forum counts representatives of: national parliament, employers, trade unions and farming organisations, community and voluntary sector, government ministries and local government and Independent bodies. It plays a key role in the organisation of the National Social Inclusion Forum at the end of the consultation process and in drawing together all the issues raised during the seminars and at the Forum. Some 250 persons from all stakeholder organisations participate in this Forum each year.

Then there are the National Anti Poverty Networks: ten groups dealing with different aspects of poverty and social exclusion. They co-ordinate the views of people living in poverty and represent their needs. The networks meet together twice annually to exchange information and experiences. They are supported by the Combat Poverty Agency.

Finally, within local government there are County and City Development Boards (CDB) and Social Inclusion Units. Within the CDBs we find i.a. social inclusion measures working groups and community development task groups.

## **France**

*A local partnership example in the field of social inclusion through housing.*

The local context is the agglomeration of Le Havre (258.500 inhabitants), in the department Seine Maritime. Two major players are the City of Le Havre and the social and health directorate (DDASS) of the Department Seine Maritime. The example of housing was chosen because of its importance for social inclusion, and of its complexity and traditional fragmentation in terms of actors involved:

- The State has to take care in an appropriate way of the most deprived people, and is responsible for the implementation of the social cohesion plan and the eradication of unhealthy housing;
- The DDASS, under the authority of the Préfet is responsible for the definition of needs and the planning of sheltered living, and the inclusion of the most vulnerable people;
- The DDE (Infrastructure Directorate of the Department) co-finances the construction of social housing;
- The Department is responsible for social accompaniment linked to housing, for individual financial support in housing, and for housing of mothers and children;
- The Agglomeration is in charge of local housing programming (study of needs for temporary and social housing and repartition of the supply in the perspective of social mixture);
- The municipality intervenes in the attribution of social housing and in the eradication of unhealthy housing; municipal social services are responsible for general social accompaniment;
- Voluntary sector organisations (associations) delivering sheltered living, social residences...;
- Social housing companies producing social housing.

The housing issue could be summarised in three points:

- A poorly adapted supply of temporary housing;

- Too less progress in inclusion processes;
- Absence of collective reflection and common projects between different actors.

Therefore it was suggested to create a **focal point** for the social inclusion through housing (**Pôle d'insertion par le logement**) with all institutions and organisations concerned. The engagement of all partners for this focal point has been formalised in a charter. Its operational form is a platform of all these partners, under the guidance of a co-ordinator, and with the mission to make all professionals working together to:

- Facilitate access to shelter and housing through a better knowledge of managing individual pathways towards autonomous living;
- Evaluate needs in order to adapt the existing and programmed supply;
- Identify the difficulties and report these to the responsible authorities in order to improve the facilities.

What has been achieved?

- The creation of a social urgency service (SAMU social) in 2006 with: a telephone number for homeless people, a day centre, two ambulant teams, nursing beds;
- The effective transformation of centres for sheltered living;
- Relaunching the programme to transform migrant workers homes into social residences;
- Reflection groups about the notion of adapted sustainable housing;
- Taking into account specific target groups such as young people, people with mental handicaps;
- The introduction of a "linking file" (fiche de liaison) facilitating the follow up of target populations between different services.

Some of the keys for the success so far are: the creation in 2005 of a youth service (dispositif jeune) which was a test for the motivation of (mostly the same) actors to co-operate on different related issues; the existence of a co-ordinator mobilising continuously all necessary structures as to avoid the exhaustion of the partnership; the partnership dynamics which still has to prove itself in the long run.

As to the latter, it will certainly depend on factors such as the political determination about the need to develop and adapt the shelter and housing situation to the existing reality. But also important is to make sure that all partners recognise their own interest in the coordination. This will partly result of the existence of continuous collective reflection, confrontation of experiences, common diagnosis and the creation of common tools. Finally, there has to be a "decision making space" seen as legitimate by all actors and capable to develop a locally coherent policy.

## 4. Relevance for and transferability to other national contexts

The French example is interesting for discussing the issues of government, governance and actor involvement, because of its constituting elements and the challenges to meet:

- The policy choices are interesting. Both comprehensiveness and integrality (mainstreaming) are basic for the new French social inclusion policy. Further operationalising the indicators for the chosen objectives will be the first challenge to meet.
- Among the policy tools, the DPT Inclusion Sociale is of particular importance. The "proof of the pudding" is in the budget. But what about other than national budgets?
- As to policy development, France has put in place a number of "ingredients" that could guarantee both a high level political and societal debate and sound methodologies for involvement of all actors. But the challenge is to interlock all these ingredients in a more structural way and still to keep an open dialogue going.

- French government uses a diversity of methods for consultation, coordination and partnership building and it has thought about a number of preconditions. But how to use in a more productive way the double structure of deconcentrated and decentralised government at departmental level? And how to improve the relationship with / the role of the voluntary sector?

The relevance will mostly be linked to elements of the example and vary according to similarities and differences between countries. Some of the similarities are contextual, such as the decentralisation of policies, or the existence of a complex web of policies and delivery mechanisms as a potential barrier to the desired outcome. Some of the differences have to do with the size of the country (no decentralisation in small countries), but can be as well the result of political choice or traditions (degree of autonomy for municipalities or local authorities). But there are similarities and differences that specifically refer to social inclusion policies. Some countries share the view that the OMC and the NAPs have been an opportunity for the development of new strategies for social inclusion. A few countries share with France the choice for a cross-sectoral approach and large strategic objectives, while such an approach is not present at all in other countries. A specific legal framework for social inclusion policies (in the broad sense) as existing in France seems not very common in Europe, although several countries have structures that could be compared with some of the structural arrangements put in place in France. Other differences to be mentioned are the more prominent role of civil society in the organisation of participation in policy development, or the strength of local strategic partnerships.

#### **4.1. Peer Countries**

For each of the peer countries a short impression will be given of inclusion policies, coordination tools and processes and of the remarks made by representatives about relevance and transferability of the French example. This section is essentially based upon papers prepared for the Peer Review meeting by the country representatives.

##### **Austria**

Combating poverty is a great challenge in terms of solidarity. Through horizontal and vertical redistribution, sufficient resources have to be made available to cover social risks. In the interests of combating poverty in a preventive and non-stigmatising way, it is generally accepted in Austria that the whole population – and not only the socially disadvantaged – should be included in the system of social welfare benefits. Even though the main emphasis of welfare policy in Austria is on measures which are aimed at the general population, these measures are supplemented by selective programmes for the groups who are most at risk of social exclusion.

In order to coordinate the work on the National Strategic Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion (2006-2008) both horizontal and vertical a consultation process including two half day meetings of a national platform of all relevant actors was established following similar processes that took place for the preparation of the first and the second NAPsincl.

##### *Institutional arrangements*

The Cabinet gives the Minister of Social Security, Generations and Consumer Protection the task of taking overall responsibility for drawing up the NAPincl. The Minister for Social Security contact colleagues in other ministries, other regional bodies, the social partners, social welfare organisations and other NGOs, in order to document the implementation of the NAPincl in a comprehensive and networked way and to receive inputs. A steering group made up of representatives of the ministries and the Länder was established to coordinate. The activities and plans of the Länder are more comprehensively. The nine

Länder have set out their measures and plans in a newly-created coordination committee. In many areas, figures can now be presented for the whole of Austria.

The multitude of bodies involved in combating poverty requires a high level of readiness to cooperate. An increasing trend towards networked activities has been noticeable in recent years. This development coincides with experiences which have shown that closer and more systematic forms of cooperation facilitate not only a reduction in costs but also more effective service offers. This tendency is also encouraged by the requirement for cooperation in a range of poverty-related EU programmes.

The Territorial Employment Pacts (TEPs) play an important role in the conception of employment policy measures with regard to combating poverty. There are now TEPs in all nine Länder. This makes networked cooperation possible at a regional level between the Länder, the Public Employment Service, the social partners, the Federal Social Welfare Office, local authorities, education authorities and NGOs.

The EQUAL projects, which deal with important problem areas related to poverty, are based on a partnership approach. Rather than individual measures being promoted, the key aspect is the cooperation of the actors in development partnerships. Represented in the partnerships are the social partners, at least three NGOs, the regional level and the public entities (Public Employment Service, Fachhochschulen [new practically-orientated universities], relevant funds) and sometimes companies and educational institutions. The development partnerships are active in the areas of “reintegration of persons with serious difficulties in finding work”, “the integration of people with disabilities”, “combating racism”, “social economy”, “lifelong learning”, “the reduction of gender-specific segregation” and “activities for asylum seekers”.

An example is the partnership “Extended Labour Market – Integration through Work” (IDA), which is run by the headquarters of the Austrian Caritas. Nine institutions (5 Caritas offices, the Vienna Hilfswerk, ÖSB Consulting and the Economic Research Institute WIFO) are implementing the project in 15 modules. The aim is to provide special offers to the homeless, drug abusers, those receiving social assistance benefits and mentally and physically impaired people.

*Cooperation and partnership with other relevant actors (social organisations, self organisations of people experiencing poverty)*

Six national conferences on poverty that have been organised by the Austrian Anti Poverty Network (Die Armutskonferenz./EAPN Austria) bringing together a broad range of relevant actors and having come up important suggestions such as the introduction of a chapter on poverty into the bi-annual national social report have been financially supported by the ministry of social affairs.

To gain better knowledge about the contribution of social organisations active in the fight against poverty and social inclusion the Austrian Anti Poverty Network was contracted by the Ministry of Social Affairs, Generations and Consumer Protection to undertake a research project on the subject in question under supervision of the Vienna University of Economics/Dep. of Social Policy.

To increase the participation of people experiencing poverty the Austrian Anti Poverty Network has been contracted to undertake a pilot project that brings together representatives of various self-organisations and self-help-groups of people experiencing poverty (including single mothers, people with disabilities, migrants, homeless people, people with mental health problems, long term unemployed people).

*Relevance of the French example*

The level and the numbers of coordination mechanisms introduced by the French government are impressive and both on a symbolic as well as concrete policy level show a strong political will to tackle poverty and social exclusion.

The Austrian representatives highlight more in particular:

- The introduction of a clear inter-ministerial strategy (CILE), spelling out through its objectives and actions a range of important measures to improve access to social rights and services;
- The high value of the provision of budget contributions through the Social inclusion DPT cannot be underestimated and goes hand in hand with the challenge to co-establish the necessary structures to assess the impact of the financial commitment to social inclusion;
- Introducing coordination measures on local level is crucial in all countries with federal structures;
- Both the CNLE as well as the national and regional conferences on poverty seem to open the path for new forms of governance, which certainly still is in its early days of development and in need of much broader and deeper public debate all over Europe;
- Improvements in introducing both the principles as well as the necessary bodies and tools for cooperation and partnership cannot be denied, nevertheless there seem to be a need to concretise them through a stronger emphasis on the working structures and methods used.

## Cyprus

### *Social inclusion policy framework*

The Social Welfare Services (SWS) are the coordinating authority with regard to social exclusion/inclusion issues and cooperate with other relevant governmental bodies and actors (NGOs, Local Authorities and Social Partners etc.). A Committee for the implementation and monitoring of the NAP inclusion is established headed by the SWS. Stakeholders raise the need for better coordination and for setting a more appropriate structure along with a clearer mandate. Conflict issues between the main actors as well as the lack of an integrated and functional social network structure are also raised (independent expert reports).

The Council of Ministers of the government of Cyprus recently approved for the introduction of a Medium-Term Budgetary Framework (MTBF) covering the period 2007-2009. The MTBF, originally introduced in other E.U countries can be used as a financial tool for social inclusive measures and also link the medium term targets set at the macro level with the annual budgetary process at micro level within the policy context set by the National Lisbon Strategy Program.

The fiscal policy of Cyprus is based on a two-pillar approach; the National Lisbon Strategy Program, which includes, among others, social inclusive measures and the Convergence Program, which provides for the implementation of the MTBF to secure fiscal sustainability of public finances. The one pillar supplements the other and as a result fiscal sustainability ensures the implementation of social inclusive policy measures.

Notwithstanding, the MTBF sets a concrete and strict fiscal policy framework, allowing for only 2% increase in public consumption expenditure, the increase of social expenditures can increase more and reach 2,5%. This is an explicit commitment of government's policy to achieve sound public finances by maintaining and enhancing social inclusive policy measures.

### *Relevance and transferability*

The existence of an institutional framework enacted by Law in France provides a solid base for the coordination of the actions taken to fight social exclusion. The setting up of a sub-directorate dealing with social exclusion issues and charged among others with the monitoring task shows commitment for the implementation of an integrated approach.

The French Social Inclusion DPT (cross-functional policy document) is an innovative, well-structured policy tool that offers an alternative way for conducting and coordinating governmental departments responsible for the state budget and also promotes inter-departmental and ministerial cooperation, which are

necessary in order to effectively combat social exclusion. Yet another positive aspect of the French DPT is the incentives-oriented policy direction included in it, which is required for the programme managers, thus, leading to an overall improvement of governance.

The organization of conferences at both national and regional level seems a good tool for sharing information and increase awareness on social exclusion. The 17 regional inter-partnership social observation platforms satisfy the criterion of participation and that of exchange data and views. The local forums finally seem to be original tools that could partly respond to the crucial issue of participation of people experiencing social exclusion themselves.

The setting up of a regulatory framework for combating social exclusion could better address issues related to citizen's rights. The need to adopt a more comprehensive and integrated approach in order to address the coordination and participation challenges in particular those related to the monitoring and implementation of the NAPincl is recognized.

Under this framework, the French paradigm is very interesting for Cyprus and it could implement the idea of preparing its own DPT under the coordination of the competent body (Social Welfare Services) and the cooperation at ministerial level for achieving the best possible outcome.

## **Ireland<sup>8</sup>**

Ireland has a centralised political and administrative structure, with ministries having responsibilities for key objectives, outputs and strategies within their areas of competence and as part of the overall programme for government and the National Social Partnership is at the core of this centralised structure. Like the more decentralised approach now taken in France, a particular emphasis is placed on the role that local authorities can play in the implementation of the strategy. Local authorities operate within the broad policy framework for local administration and for the integration of policies for economic, social and cultural development at the local level. The principle services provided by local government are infrastructural, such as housing, roads, transport and safety, planning and environmental issues. However, in recent years there has been a growing realisation of the impact these policy areas have on the living conditions and on the social integration of local communities, consequently, a number of local authorities have established units to specifically address the social impact of their services. So, as in France, there has been a move towards the decentralisation of social policies and a greater involvement of local government in the delivery and implementation of national policies for social inclusion, but it is a process which is only beginning and there is still a long way to go before it makes a significant impact.

In Ireland no specific legislation is in place that would under-pin the national political consensus to 'build an inclusive society'.

A key issue for combating poverty is the allocation of adequate resources, both in terms of finance and qualified, skilled personnel. In Ireland financial resources are still very much centralised and the devolution of responsibilities to lower levels of government are still constrained by priorities set in the State budget. However, a positive development in recent years is the poverty impact assessment of budgetary policy in Ireland.

### *Relevance and transferability*

Ireland could learn from the operation of the various structures introduced in France as part of the decentralisation process, in particular:

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<sup>8</sup> See also the practice example under section 3.2

- CNLE (National Council for the Fight Against Poverty and Social Exclusion) – The idea of a national forum in which the State and ‘other players’ (organisations representing people experiencing poverty and other experts) meet to discuss issues, build consensus and advice government. It will be of interest to learn how this forum functions and to make comparisons with the how the Irish National Economic and Social Forum fulfils a similar role in Ireland.
- ONPES (National Monitoring Centre) – How does this body collect data for analysis (through research or by using national statistical data from CNIS?) and how does its role compare to the Combat Poverty Agency and the Office for Social Inclusion in Ireland?
- Social Inclusion DPT – This approach is of particular interest to Ireland as it introduces a very different structure for the State budget, with an emphasis on identifying and costing the particular financial needs of social inclusion programmes, including the NAP/inclusion. Also the use of performance indicators for the evaluation of spending on social inclusion is of interest in the Irish context.

## Finland

Broad-based policy preparation in the areas of employment and social affairs has a long tradition in Finland. The compilation and preparation of the NAPs against poverty and social exclusion involves several ministries, local authorities, NGO's, social partners and research institutions. There was also a ministerial inter-sectoral social exclusion working group from 1999 to 2003. Nowadays there are several advisory boards in various branches of social policy, enabling broad-based participation by interest groups. The Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and health has also arranged several seminars dealing with the preparation and evaluation of the NAPs and EU cooperation on combating poverty and social exclusion. In the latest evaluation seminar in 2005 the NAPs were considered to have enhanced and strengthened the co-operation between various actors: cross-sectoral co-operation has increased but the cooperation practices should be developed further. Here the French practices could give some new ideas.

There have also been "review events" to discuss the indicators and other statistical data on changes in poverty. The ministry aims to make these events a permanent annual practice. There is also a tradition to organise an annual poverty seminar in the Finnish parliament every spring to discuss the poverty policies, it is organised together with the NGO's and the inter-parliamentary group of poverty.

### *General services and provisions*

In Finland, the starting point for fighting poverty and marginalisation consists of universal service and support systems, which are complemented by targeted measures as necessary. The foundation for the Finnish welfare state was created under steering by means of norms and resources. Thus the comprehensive school, health centre, day care and other such systems could be accomplished in a fairly uniform manner throughout the country. Now, to a greater extent than before, the system is steered by means of information, i.e., framework regulations, recommendations and evaluations. Therefore the practices in social welfare and health care can vary considerably between different municipalities. The new steering instruments of central administration are extensive development programmes, essentially containing the recommendation of best practices and prioritisation in the distribution of funds.

The municipal social service system constitutes the most important component in action against social exclusion in Finland. About one-third of the compulsory welfare budget is state-funded, with the remaining two-thirds coming from the municipalities and the client fees (10 %). State grants to municipalities depend on objective criteria such as unemployment, population structure etc. and municipalities are free to allocate them. It is the municipalities that have the responsibility to ensure welfare, but not necessarily to provide it directly. Complementary welfare, run mostly by the NGOs, is largely funded by the Slot Machine Association (RAY), which holds a monopoly on slot machine gambling licences. The grant-making process

is that NGOs apply, the RAY board of administration makes annually a proposal to the Government of Finland, and the Government makes the final decision.

The models of local and regional action and co-operation that promote local dialogue and partnerships are increasingly recognised in the action against poverty and social exclusion in Finland. The NGO sector complements the public welfare system in developing and providing (often targeted) services for vulnerable groups. The voluntary sector has traditionally had a major pioneering role when it comes to development work of new service concepts and a big deal of current services in public provision have originally developed - tested and piloted by the NGOs. As regards the composition of local partnerships, in Finland the partners include NGOs and local authorities (mostly municipal welfare authorities), and sometimes parishes and users' associations, but rarely trade unions or enterprises.

#### *Government Policy Programmes*

For the first time in the Finnish history, the Government's programme in 1999 contained special goals to combat poverty and social exclusion. Main reason for this was the recession of the early 1990s. The recession also provided a lesson that created a basis for building more cross-sector thinking and co-operation. One example of this approach are the Government Policy Programmes where broad-based inter-sectoral subject matters are specified in order to reach the objectives set by the Government. The policy programmes comprise the measures, projects and appropriations falling within the mandates of various ministries. Each policy programme is run by the ministry whose minister is in charge of the programme and the Prime Minister's Office is responsible for their overall coordination and evaluation. The ministers responsible for the policy programmes are assisted by programme directors and project groups are established for the implementation of the different sub-sectors of the programmes. The funding of the policy programmes comes mainly via the normal ministerial/budgetary funding.

Citizen Participation Policy Programme aims to reinforce the functioning of representative democracy and encourage civil participation. The objective is to improve electoral participation and provide opportunities for active civil participation between elections. The programme places particular emphasis on those groups whose participation and influence have remained low in the past.

The objective of the Employment Policy Programme is to reduce unemployment and prevent social exclusion. The structural reform of public employment services constitutes an important part of the employment policy programme. The aim is to establish some 40 employment service centres by 2006. The long-term unemployed will be provided with personal employability programmes. Apprenticeship training and the joint procurement of employment-oriented adult education will be increased and the planning of vocational education needs improvement.

#### *National Development Projects*

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health has formulated four strategic policy lines up to the year 2015. These policy lines are: promoting health and functional capacity; making work more attractive; reducing poverty and social exclusion; providing efficient services and income security.

The National Health Care Project and the Development Project for Social Services will go on until the end of 2007. Their aim is to secure the availability of social and health services on an equitable basis in the whole country. The National Health Care Project with its added resources has already managed to improve access to services and shorten waiting times to medical operations.

The National Development Project for Social Services aims at reforming the municipal service structures and operations. More effective methods for the provision of services are being sought and the introduction of new working practices and operational models is being promoted. Co-operation between different

authorities at national and local levels is being intensified and closer co-operation between the local authorities, the third sector and private service providers is being promoted.

State subsidies to local government for the operating costs of social welfare and health care will increase by about EUR 400 million over the course of the project. In addition, over EUR 80 million will be granted for municipal development projects during the project.

#### *Relevance and transferability*

First of all, the French framework on coordination and partnership in the area of social inclusion policies is an ambitious and genuine attempt to make a change.

When comparing France and Finland one can see many similar approaches: broad-based participation, cross-sectorality, large strategic objectives and development plans and the importance of multi-dimensional information on social inclusion as a basis for these plans. The biggest differences in the approaches are due to structural facts: in Finland the municipalities have a very strong position in organising welfare services and with a population of only 5.2 million inhabitants, Finland may come along with "lighter" administrative structures than France.

It is evident that the identification of social inclusion goals presupposes a close cross-sectoral co-operation between different actors. The leadership and implementation of co-operation influencing welfare across all sectors must be ensured at all administrative levels. But this is far from being easy and every country needs to approach these issues differently, respecting its own history, traditions and administrative structures.

Practices of truly involving citizens as a part of these partnerships are the most challenging ones. From the Finnish point of view the most interesting areas are local forums, the regional charters and "pooling of resources". How does the outcome of regional charters, local conferences and forums actually influence action at national level and how are budgets concretely linked to the policy tools? And finally, how is the French strategy on social inclusion linked with the Lisbon National Reform Programme?

### **Luxembourg**

The social inclusion policy of Luxembourg is based on the Revenu Minimum Garanti (RMG) law since 1986. The present form of the law (Loi modifiée du 29 avril 1999 portant création d'un droit à un revenu minimum garanti) addresses social inclusion by an approach combining income support with personalised and comprehensive counselling and with individualised activation paths. With regard to the public consultation launched by the Commission's communication of February 2nd, 2006 Luxembourg's approach can be termed as active inclusion.

The article 35 of this law specifies that an Interdepartmental Committee (Comité Interministériel à l'Action Sociale) has to propose to the Government measures that could help to avoid poverty and social exclusion. This committee is composed of representatives of the following departments: Social Security, Family and Integration, Employment, Interior, Equality of chances, Health, Housing and Education.

Next to the Interdepartmental Committee, a "Conseil Supérieur à l'Action Sociale" is in charge of assessing the needs in terms of social actions and to propose ways and means to address them. This Council is composed of the interdepartmental committee, of representatives of trade unions and employers' associations, of representatives of social workers and NGOs, representatives of local social offices, a representative of the "Conseil Economique et Social" and of a representative of a Research Center specialised in social policy.

According to article 36 of the above law, committee and council meetings are prepared by the National Service for Social Action (Service national d'action sociale - SNAS), created in 1986 together with the minimum income scheme RMG. SNAS works as a service of the Ministry of Family and Integration which has a lead role in coordinating Luxembourg's National Action Plans for Social Inclusion (NAP/inclusion).

These Plans have permitted to give a new impulse to inclusion policies, to produce synthetic documents presenting the different actions to reduce poverty and social exclusion and to widen the scope of stakeholders involved.

In response to the Nice objective of mobilising all relevant bodies, 41 NGO's are engaged, together with the relevant ministries, in the NAP/inclusion process by means of a consultative NAP/inclusion-Stakeholder GROUP.

Persons that were or are exposed to poverty or social exclusion have been integrated for the first time in the social inclusion process this year (2006). A national meeting organised by EAPN Luxembourg and supported by the Ministry of Family and Integration has permitted to listen to and take into account demands of persons in need.

Considering the size of the country (450 000 inhabitants), social inclusion policies are mostly developed and implemented at the national level even if some local initiatives exist (in the most important cities). Luxembourg aims at improving the mechanisms steering these policies and the French practice under review appears to offer a way of approaching this challenge.

#### *Relevance and transferability*

Despite some structural differences between France and Luxembourg (no decentralisation, neither "deconcentration" in Luxembourg due to the institutions and the size of the country) there are similarities between both countries.

The structure and the organisation of the inclusion policy as well as partnerships towards and within this policy are very similar. Both countries have a national body of particular relevance to inclusion policies: the "Direction générale de l'action sociale" (DGAS) in France and the "Service national d'action sociale" (SNAS) in Luxembourg. In addition, the « Conseil national des politiques de lutte contre la pauvreté et l'exclusion sociale » (CNLE) in France can be compared to the "Conseil supérieur à l'action sociale" in Luxembourg: the composition and the objectives of these two bodies are very similar.

The most important differences between France and Luxembourg concern the tools that have been developed to monitor and to assist the implementation of the policies. France has developed an « Observatoire national de la pauvreté et de l'exclusion sociale » (ONPES). For the moment, there is no such specific structure in Luxembourg. Studies about poverty and social exclusion are mainly made by a research centre (CEPS/Instead) and the national office of statistics (STATEC).

Two French tools appear as particularly useful. The first one, "Document de politique transversale (DPT)", shows the cross-cutting characteristics of the policies, their objectives and targets and the financial effort to implement them. The second tool is the "Base de données sociales localisées" (BDSL). Luxembourg may want to consider them.

## United Kingdom<sup>9</sup>

Poverty and social exclusion are complex and multi-dimensional problems and it follows that they can only be successfully tackled by means of a wide ranging and multi-faceted strategy. The UK's approach to tackling poverty can be summarised as work for those who can, support for those who cannot. For people of working age who are out of work, the strategy focusses on the return to work, including tackling any barriers to the individual's return to the labour market. Tackling child poverty by helping parents return to work, supporting them in work by, for example, increasing access to childcare and increasing financial support for families is an important part of the strategy. The UK Government also seeks to tackle poverty in later life by improving pension provision and saving for retirement, extending working life and through the pension credit. A focus on vulnerable groups, including disabled people and people from ethnic minorities includes tackling discrimination through equal opportunities legislation and targeted schemes to overcome disadvantage.

Such a strategy must, of necessity, involve a wide range of policies and delivery mechanisms. In addition, by its nature, a successful social inclusion strategy has to engage with – and respond to – the views of people experiencing poverty and grassroots and community organisations. In this regard, the development of the UK's National Action Plans has placed particular emphasis on the fourth of the Nice common objectives in this field – mobilising all relevant bodies. Although the UK Government has made progress in this field, with the vital support of key non-government organisations (NGOs) including EAPN, there is still a considerable 'implementation gap', in particular in relation to the engagement of local and (particularly in England) regional government in the process.

### *Similarities*

It is clear that in France, as in the UK, social exclusion is tackled through a complex web of policies and delivery mechanisms and that there is awareness that this complexity can be a barrier to producing the desired outcomes. The division of responsibility between central, regional and local government appears to be broadly similar in both countries, as is the increasing focus on local solutions and the search for new ways of de-centralising power and decision-making. At a national level in the UK, a recently appointed Social Exclusion Minister and a Cabinet Committee on Social Exclusion, supported by a social exclusion taskforce of officials co-ordinates action. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is responsible for the Government's child poverty strategy and many of the policies and services which tackle poverty in working age and later life. DWP also has responsibility for Opportunity for all - the UK Government's annual poverty report – and the UK's National Action Plan (NAP) on social inclusion.

As in the UK, it appears that in France, the National Action Plan and the open method of coordination are seen as offering new ways of approaching strategic problems in the social inclusion field. Effective links between the UK Government, devolved Governments and local government have been developed in the context of the NAP. This has enabled the UK strategy to respond to local issues and to build on local innovations. The NAP approach is also being followed in developing an anti-poverty strategy in Northern Ireland and in a Welsh local authority. A focus on engagement with civil society and people experiencing poverty has led to a wide engagement with grassroots organisations over the past year through the Get Heard! process.

### *Differences*

Inevitably, there are specific differences in the systems of government in the two countries which are perhaps most obvious at national level. As mentioned above, responsibility in the UK for the social protection and social inclusion strategy is split amongst a number of Departments, whereas there seems

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<sup>9</sup> See also the practice example under section 3.2

to be more of a centralised unit in France. The de-centralised approach in the UK reflects the division of responsibility between 'central' Departments (such as the Cabinet Office) with responsibility for co-ordinating the work of Government and Departments focussed on delivery, such as DWP. In practice, the UK's focus on joined up action across Departments and evidence-based policy development mean that organisational boundaries have less impact on the strategy than might at first sight appear.

On a more practical level, it appears easier in France to create new structures to address the problems of poverty and social exclusion – and there are indications that money may be more readily available to take these matters forward. In the UK, much of the progress that has been made in developing engagement and partnership with civil society and across government had been informal and achieved by 'bending' existing mechanisms and budgets.

The mechanisms for coordination at local level also seem to be different in France. In the UK, local strategic partnerships (LSPs) have been developed, initially as a means of re-generating deprived neighbourhoods. The intention was that, led by local government, partnerships between key bodies at local level would be able to develop innovative solutions to local problems which drew on synergies between different policies and services. These LSPs, which have now spread to most areas in England, do not have a specific focus on social inclusion but in practice this is a key aspect of their work. Building on LSPs, the government has introduced a number of further initiatives aimed at linking local and national strategies, including Local Area Agreements and the Cities Strategy (in which DWP will work with local government to tackle worklessness).

#### *Relevance and transferability*

For the UK delegation, there appear to be a number of possibilities for transfer of the policy/ strategic approach. These include:

- Learning from the operation of the CNLE: in the UK we are in the process of establishing a Stakeholder Group for the NAP, which builds on the experience of the SPTF but which will engage with officials from across government and is intended to have clearer visibility at Ministerial level. Issues which we need to tackle include establishing the legitimacy of this group in a crowded policy arena, getting "buy in" from senior officials and Ministers and issues relating to the running of the Group.
- The feasibility of a national monitoring centre (or 'observatory') on social inclusion in the UK – and the extent to which other structures in the UK, in particular the social exclusion taskforce and independent research bodies such the Joseph Rowntree Foundation serve the same function.
- The use of indicators in the field of social inclusion is an area of particular interest in the UK – we regularly report on 60 indicators in Opportunity for all – and we have a wide range of targets which are relevant to the field of social inclusion. Discussion of the French approach – and in particular the use of these tools to support coordination and partnership – has potential for transferring good practice.

## **4.2. European Stakeholders Organisation EAPN**

### *Relevance*

The Document de Politique Transversale (DPT) which allows for a structured assessment of the financial commitments by the State to actions aimed at social inclusion, but is also used in screening across 26 programmes covering the competence of different Ministries, clearly addresses the need for mechanisms to guarantee that mainstreaming is actually implemented and monitored. Monitoring how a Member State addresses a specific policy challenge by screening its budgetary commitments to that objective clearly provides a means to:

- Clearly highlight the need to give a political priority to social inclusion in the definition of budgets and programmes;
- Gain a quantitative assessment of budgetary commitments to social inclusion mainstreaming;
- Clearly specify what budgetary commitments are made to the objectives and actions described in the NAP/inclusion;
- Give an insight into how Structural Funds are being used in France to deliver on the objective of social inclusion.

Moreover, in its screening role of other policies, the DPT can

- Clearly influence the priority setting in the National Action Plan on social inclusion;
- Influence the definition of other policies and how they take into account the horizontal objective of promoting social inclusion;
- Since the outcomes of the use of the DPT will be submitted to Parliamentary debate, this will increase opportunities for the National Parliament to be involved in the priority setting of the NAP/inclusion too.

The French practice under review is highly relevant to other EU countries for a number of reasons:

- It overcomes the gap between rhetoric and actual policy formulation since it is attached to the budgetary process
- many countries have one element or the other among those described in the background document (comité interministériel, conseil national, observatoire...), but most are not linked and put into an encompassing strategy as in the case of the French example.
- It has the potential of really addressing some of the cross-cutting issues which lead to social exclusion and poverty and which span across several policy areas and are therefore of the competence of different Ministries.

The policy measure under review has the potential to make the NAP/inclusion “come to life”, setting its objectives at the heart of the overall policy and budgetary setting. Nonetheless, more information about the policy link is needed to assess to what extent this potential can actually become real practice.

It is extremely encouraging to see the three objectives of the Comité Interministériel including the encompassing ‘commitment to reducing poverty’, the need for more knowledge and evaluation and the involvement of people and stakeholders concerned. These three objectives represent a strong message when developing a NAP/inclusion. The structures in place appear to reflect quite clearly how these objectives are implemented in practice. Nonetheless, it is unclear whether these objectives and actions are revised regularly or whether they are supposed to be all-encompassing. In the latter case it would be worth highlighting the need to maintain a focus on access to rights but also access to resources.

#### *Potential transferability*

This is a very new initiative, and there is very little grounds at the moment to assess whether this tool is adequate and can be reproduced elsewhere. Linked to this, the development of indicators, and of monitoring and evaluation processes is still under way. It is therefore a little premature to discuss whether this model is transferable to other countries. The model nonetheless appears to be possibly relevant to both centralised and decentralised Member States.

The culture of bottom-up and top-down policies must be checked carefully: does the model clearly balance the two approaches? In general, the background document, which is quite detailed on the policy challenges that the tools address, on the other hand does not seem to provide a very detailed insight into how the DPT is actually implemented in practice. This could imply less possibility of practical reviewing of the practice in other countries.

### 4.3. Overview of transferability potential and remaining questions

As to the transferability potential, participants mentioned in their initial comments the elements they valued most in the French example. This is first of all the DPT Inclusion Sociale. The idea to make the financial efforts for social inclusion visible in a cross sectoral document, linked to the overarching policy priorities of government, is highly valued. Furthermore, participants refer to elements of the French policy that could inspire their own government, such as the CNLE as a kind of stakeholders group for the NAP/inclusion, the observatory, the local social data base, the use of indicators to support coordination and partnership. One participant particularly values the fact that different bodies and tools are linked and put into an encompassing strategy.

But at the same time, a lot of questions remain among participants about how (well) this set of structural arrangements and tools functions. Some of these questions are a matter of lack of information, such as the composition, structure and working methods of the CNLE (role of other partners, power to call a session). Others are at the same time debating issues, such as:

- The management of the vertical and horizontal coordination and its challenges;
- The balance between bottom-up and top-down policy development;
- What is the influence of the DPT Inclusion Sociale on local coordination and partnerships?
- Is the DPT Inclusion Sociale only a screening or monitoring instrument or could it also be used for policy evaluation and development?
- Is there any feeding in and feeding out from the social inclusion strategy with the Lisbon National Reform Programme?
- What is the link between policy development and political debate (parliament...?)

Particular attention of a number of participants was oriented towards the quality and impact of the participation tools used to involve beneficiaries and local professionals. How to ensure the involvement of the most vulnerable people? What is the timetable for the different consultations? Is there a “culture of participation” and how is it developed?

Finally, participants would like to hear more about and to debate some evaluation issues, more in particular about the costs and benefits of the impressive set of structures, tools and procedures. But also about the link between outcomes of the actual social inclusion policies and future budget decisions. Some of the issues raised in this field by participants are of a more technical character, i.e. about the status of indicators and their link with the Laeken indicators.

## 5. Conclusions and lessons learnt

It is clear that concentrating the French Peer Review meeting on the process more than on the outcomes of social inclusion policies was a good choice. It responded to a need of at least the participants from the peer countries represented: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom. There are two major reasons for putting the policy making process at the heart of discussions. First of all, all countries are struggling with the same issues and difficulties concerning vertical and horizontal relationships within government, concerning partnership with and participation of non-governmental actors, concerning the coherence of the policy cycle. Secondly, in social inclusion policies, the process of involvement in constructing these policies is also a proof of the political commitment to an inclusive society.

The most remarkable aspect of the French example seems to be the totality of the instruments presented and the synergies they produce. This is clearly a way to improve government, including the strengthening of partnership within government bodies. Also the fact that the French government makes social inclusion a national priority is to be seen as remarkable. The DPT Inclusion Sociale is a crucial instrument to operationalising this choice. More in particular the fact that the French government manages to define cross-cutting objectives makes it go beyond a pure inventory of efforts from different Ministries. And the introduction of clear indicators to monitor these objectives makes the whole exercise much stronger. The efforts of the French Social Inclusion team to bring different levels of government together is another point to be mentioned as very positive.

But the challenges for France do not seem to be very different from the challenges in many European countries. The link between the social and economic sectors, if not missing, is not very clear. One issue to mention in this context is the need for reflection and discussion about the meaning and sense of the social cohesion concept. In a practical sense, the missing link between social inclusion and employment policies (and institutions) is a weakness of several NAPs Inclusion. With decentralisation in progress in almost all European countries, the vertical link within government is one of the major challenges. To have a productive relationship between the local and the national levels, an appropriate balance of top down and bottom up activity and mutual influence is of most importance. Although the logic of the policy cycle (identification of needs – development – implementation – evaluation) is widely shared, in practice it seems pretty difficult to really link monitoring of implementation and evaluation in a systematic way to policy development.

More detailed, the conclusions of the French Peer Review could be summarised under four headings: the profile of social inclusion policies; coordination of government; participation, involvement and actorship (governance); the voice of people experiencing poverty.

### **5.1. The *profile* of social inclusion policies**

The impact of social inclusion policies depends on the position that these policies acquire in the hierarchy of public policy development. In this respect, the development of the DPT Inclusion Sociale in France is very important. It offers the opportunity for discussing social exclusion among all relevant Ministries, and to discuss policy planning in this perspective. The DPT also enhances the “political” position of social inclusion policies because of the readiness to submit these to efficiency testing by developing indicators and monitoring these. And the DPT leads to a growing importance of social inclusion policies through an effect of benchmarking. Ministries and departments want their efforts for social inclusion to be visible and compare them with other departments and Ministries. At the long run, the DPT will certainly also allow seeing the trends in policy making.

For the DPT Inclusion Sociale the NAP Inclusion offers both legitimacy and a concrete framework. But, in spite of the national importance given to social inclusion policies in France, the link with the Lisbon strategy, i.e. economic development and employment, doesn't seem to be very clear. The question about feeding in and feeding out remain more or less unanswered. Poverty proofing of all new laws, regulations and measures (see Ireland and Belgium) is one way for both linking social inclusion policy to other sectors and for mainstreaming.

### **5.2. Coordination of government**

An important point of debate in France remains the relationship between national and local government. Some refer to decentralisation in terms of a trauma. Adequate ways for co-operation, steering, bottom-up influencing are not self-evident. The UK example is of great interest in this respect. At the one hand

central government takes the responsibility of choosing priority areas throughout the country and gives (financial and regulatory) incentives to local governments for responding to these priorities. At the other hand there is a lot of autonomy for local governments to develop social inclusion policies and to bring their priorities to the fore through the Central / Local Partnership. In the French context, principles of the OMC are introduced in that the national level defines priority objectives, but counts on the local level to organise the implementation. At national level, the DPT Inclusion Sociale is also giving local governments an example of how to organise cross-sectoral budgeting and develop indicators for monitoring it.

Between different levels of government, but also on each level remains a huge problem of coherence between instruments for promoting social inclusion. But the best way to achieve this coherence seems the way of conviction, “soft steering” and (common) evaluation, as is the case in the European OMC.

The French example shows that the relationship between Ministries can become “sensitive” during the process of evaluation. The local forums (seen as an action of DGAS) showed a clear criticism among local professionals and beneficiaries towards the labour exchange institution ANPE. Finally this led to more engagement in social inclusion issues from the part of the employment department, but not without some difficult discussions.

### **5.3. Participation, involvement, actorship (governance)**

In France a lot of attention goes currently to the development of local and regional co-operation between all relevant actors (to be) involved in social inclusion processes. This aim is to be reached through regional charters, departmental committees and local platforms. There is a lot to be learned from experiences abroad, such as the Local Strategic Partnerships in the UK. Also in Ireland there is a longstanding tradition of collaboration between government and non-government actors. The French local experience from Le Havre showed clearly some of the conditions for success of cross-sectoral co-operation, such as the fact that all partners / actors involved have to recognise the co-operation as being in their own (professional) interest. This asks for a reciprocal relationship between different types of partners. If government sees non-government partners as pure instruments for policy implementation, co-operation will most probably fail to be successful. If, on the contrary, both type of partners see collaboration as a strategy to reach their own (and common) goals in a more effective way, collaboration will certainly be more sustainable.

There is a continuous need for convincing the various actors that they could achieve more together than they could alone. A gradual approach could be the most successful one. In the creation of departmental committees in France the idea of pooling with other services was often not particularly welcome. With a number of charters signed at regional level and a lot more in the pipeline, the strategy was to reach agreement between different players to consult and then agree to pool resources at a later date.

Another point of discussion is the role and place of people experiencing or at risk of poverty in partnerships. It seems not obvious to considering them as actors in social inclusion policies. More often it is seen as important to include the interests of “target groups” in policy development, implementation and evaluation through careful listening and research, rather than include them in the policy process as such. This raises the issue of participatory democracy, representativity and legitimacy. The Belgian example however shows that a more inclusive role for people in a situation of poverty and for their representatives can become a structural part of the social inclusion policy making process.

### **5.4. The voice of people experiencing poverty**

Even if there is no consensus about the necessity of, or good possibilities to involving people experiencing poverty in the policy process, there is consensus that “their voice should be heard”. This is of course a

central concern for the representatives of non-governmental organisations such as EAPN. But also for (local) government representatives and professionals it is of primary importance to have of good qualitative insight in the day to day experience of being poor and/or socially excluded. Looking at the Belgian example, it is clear that it takes some time to convince people experiencing poverty to give “their testimony away”. It is as if they have to give away the last (only) thing they have: their personal feelings about living in a poor situation. The most convincing factor is the responsiveness of government. People need to see that their voice is not altered and that a positive policy response is given to it. And there is the issue of timing. Consultation and involvement of people experiencing poverty needs time. This means that policy makers have to be prepared to slow down the process, while at the same time being under the pressure of people’s urgent problems.

The methodologies used to include beneficiaries in the evaluation of social inclusion policies are to be given much attention. Different from the Belgium approach, also the French practice of local forums, regional and national conferences is an interesting example. It is clear that using active working methods in small groups around concrete situations, and confronting the outcomes of discussions among beneficiaries with those of discussions among professionals, create important “ready to use” information. This information is additional to the outcomes of studies and research about poverty and social exclusion as it is done by national or regional observatories.

The difference between the French and the Belgium approach could be described as trying to know the realities better vs. trying to engage people in policy making.

## **5.5. Lessons learnt**

It is important to underline the complementarity of good government and good governance. They should not become each others alternative, and they each request a specific approach.

The French example of the DPT Inclusion Sociale, but also other examples, show clearly that the “profile” of social inclusion policy in the political hierarchy can be improved by improving the quality of government in this field: more and better coordination, more transparency, clear objectives and indicators, better monitoring and evaluation. But also secondary effects of such improvements count: common reflection and discussion about priorities, benchmarking between government sectors. Part of the improvement of government is better listening to target populations, use studies and research to analyse their situation and needs and respond to these. More importance could be given in several countries to public and political “visibility” of the social inclusion issue, as it is done in France through national conferences and reporting. Open consultation methods (such as in Ireland) in an early stage of planning contribute to this visibility. And so does an instrument as the DPT Inclusion Sociale in creating transparency about the costs and benefits of social (inclusion) policies.

As to governance, it brings non-governmental actors in the game. The political issue of difference between participation and partnership is to be mentioned here. An important step here is to always be as clear as possible about different roles and responsibilities. People (professionals as well as individual citizens) need to know whether they are asked to participate in a programme designed by others, or whether they are considered to be full partners. This point touches the recognition of people experiencing poverty (beneficiaries / target populations) as full actors in social inclusion policy. Because this would mean including them also in the planning of these policies. But this still seems to be a taboo in some countries. To create a “culture of participation and partnership” needs time.

In more operational terms, to improve government and governance, there is a continuous need for methodological reflection about tensions to solve or to live with. A few examples:

- Between structures and dynamics: one could create the most comprehensive structure for co-operation, but without a continuous effort to create and maintain a partnership culture the best structure will fail. To sign a local charter is fine, but there has to be a co-ordinator to make it work, as the local French example showed.
- Between coping with complexity and simplifying existing structures: a lot of energy in policy making goes to overcome structural complexity, without touching existing competencies, territories and power. Is this always the most productive and efficient choice?
- Between change and security: in changing existing structures, also in terms of policy making procedures, one should realise that this causes feelings of insecurity. The Dutch expression “never throw away old shoes before buying new ones” is perhaps not an absolute law, but should lead to some reflection in processes of policy renewal.
- Between slowing down and speeding up: time is an important issue. At the one hand, everybody underlines that the creation of a culture of participation and partnership takes time. Everybody understands also that real involvement of people experiencing poverty needs some slowing down of the policy making process. At the other hand, there is a great sense of urgency both from the side of (political) policy makers and vulnerable people.
- Between leadership and partnership: there is a lot of expectations in terms of possibilities for involvement in the definition of policies, while at the same time people expect government to show strong leadership. This does not necessarily have to be contradictory, but needs new visions on both leadership and partnership. In terms of the policy making process, “soft steering” as it is used in the OMC on European level seems to be very useful also in national contexts, more in particular for the relationship between national and local governments, but also for the relation with non-governmental partners. It is about influencing and steering without (formal) power.

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