

# Developmental Social Policy and new methods of Social Inclusion. The Participation and the role of NGOs

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## Introduction

The European Employment Strategy (EES) has established as basic goals the full employment, the encouragement of quality and the employment productivity, the cohesion support and a better governance, especially through a large involvement of social organisations and consultation that is promoted by the political bodies, the institutional trade unions and the structural groups of NGOs and citizen communities.

In parallel, the European policy on social inclusion is characterized by the intention of a high cohesion level and social protection and the enhancement of cooperation between member states for the fighting against discriminations and exclusion from the labour market<sup>1</sup>. In this framework, the National Action Plans for the Social Inclusion demonstrate the undertaking of a total national social plan, according to the integration guidelines in Greece (inclusive policies). It is the first step for the development of a coherent community of active citizens.

Therefore, the private sector as well as independent bodies like NGOs, volunteer organisations and informal networks of social care participate in this new approach of welfare 'pluralism'.

## 1. Employment and social inclusion in Greece. The role of NGOs

In relation to the better access to educational services, the fight against direct and indirect discrimination that non favourable groups are facing, and the undertaking of measures, (e.g networks that enhance the social cohesion or networks for social offer and fellowship), even the legislative regulations for the solution of problems<sup>2</sup>, are at the heart of the plans for social inclusion in Greece.

It is worth noting that the new policy approach at a specific level cannot be applied in individual actions plans for every user. In this framework, the special support of NGOs is crucial. It should be enriched and connected with the social and work structured environment in which it will introduce or reintroduce each person in order to experience the social terms of validated results of enforcement.

These services are included in a completed planning of special education provision and inclusion actions in labour market for all the known vulnerable groups, or socially excluded groups.

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<sup>1</sup> Amsterdam's Agreement, article 2, 136 vol, 139

<sup>2</sup> National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAPSI)

The achievement of specific goals, like the development of human resources, the individual self-efficiency, the competition and social inclusion are the challenges for the contemporary Greek society. At the same time, the effective evaluation of national policies for the social care are incorporated in a network of provided services, social rights for less favourable groups, rehabilitation of psychological and social health and their application as active policies for employment.

This new social policy creates a new framework for cooperation, that is defined through negotiations, as a contract that includes all the responsible bodies which are able to play a role in its application. An essential requirement for an effective policy is its inclusion in a decentralized system, which is foreseen by the new policies of local development.

The fight against poverty and social exclusion constitute a challenge for the Greek social policy today. With increasing levels of competition and unemployment, the Greek society applies low standards as regards new networks of social protection. These are expected to include a powerful counterbalance against the consequences caused by the crisis in the labour market, the limited public funding for social welfare, the change of family structures and the increase in social exclusion.

### **1.1 Partnerships and networking as a prerequisite for the substantial consultation**

In parallel with the financial and monetary integration and the constitutional reform for the composition of fundamental responsibility for decision-making, the European Union is trying to find ways for a democratic representation of its citizens. The latter is carried out via direct or indirect citizens' participation in local, regional or sectoral bodies. The contribution of the organised society in the framework of consultations includes a field of connection between societies and the member states.

In this direction, civil society agencies concern mainly actions for which civil bodies and NGOs are responsible. It concerns mainly the expression of opinion, participation, support and involvement in public issues, at local or international level. It often exceeds the geographical limits and the limits between political systems.

The partnership expansion, networking and connected approaches in relevance with the representation of organised community in consultation actions are enhanced through the broader goals of National Thematic Networks. The specific role of organised citizens' community in modern democracies is connected closely with the fundamental right of citizens to constitute unions in order to achieve common goals, as defined in the article 12 of the European Charter on Fundamental Rights. The participation in a union provides to citizens an additional possibility of active participation beyond the one provided through political parties.

### **1.2 Developmental Social Policy and Social Capital with the Support of Civil Society**

As it is observed, the new policies support the human resources strategy and the human capital, taking into account the quantitative and mainly the qualitative factors that constitute a developmental social policy. In this way, the function of social cohesion is enhanced in various fields of activities, while the social policy and protection obtain a new dynamic character,

contributing essentially in an increase in developed capabilities in geographical areas with the contribution of individuals that until today do not participate in production.

These initiatives are being combined also with the revision of the Greek Constitution (2001) where the content of social rights is enhanced and the social protection is reinforced. The article 21/6 predicts that individuals of vulnerable groups conserve the right to be informed about the measures that ensure autonomy, professional inclusion, and their participation in the country's social, financial and political life.

In this direction, the review policies for the Social Inclusion are contributing to the improvement of the social and financial situation and to the upgrading of quality of life in vulnerable groups, as well as in limited number of individuals that are living in conditions of social and financial security.

## 2. The Greek experience in relation to the Spanish action plan

### 2.1 The "intermediate sector": consultation and employment structures which operate under the responsibility of NGOs and Civil Society Bodies.

The above subjects which concern the quality of the criteria for substantial and not only procedural intervention policies and lead to an effective tackling of forms of social discrimination are today in Greece at the centre of the scientific and political debate. Issues like gender equality, immigration policy, dealing with the political refugees' problems as well as with the improvement of their living conditions at reception centres, and also issues of political settlement of problems which disabled people and Roma face, are reinforced by initiatives to the direction of removing the multiple obstacles for the entrance of those groups to the social environment and the provision of equal opportunities for access to the labour market<sup>3</sup>

For those issues and in the process of searching measures which can balance the adverse situations that people and groups experience, specific initiatives with the participation of specific NGOs have been taken on like the reinforcement of the social services sector which is a special field for the activation of the social welfare system. It is about the group of the organized activities of public, private and voluntary bodies, which aim at the improvement or the restoration of people or groups' ability to meet the needs and the prospective of living and social participation

In recent years, a great number of various Organizations-"structures" have been founded, which provide consulting services and support for the entrance to employment. These Organizations, through different methods, aim at supporting the unemployed or members of groups who are subject to discriminations, to organize an active individual strategy, so as to be able to enter the labour market.

These are "structures", supervised by Local Authorities or by Non Governmental Organizations, Offices, which work with the responsibility of union bodies, employer organizations, chambers, Link Offices of Universities and non-profit making enterprises.

<sup>3</sup> Common report of the member states of E.E regarding the common Policy on Social Inclusion (NAPSI). Regarding the applied level see Ministry of Employment and Social Protection: Community Initiation *Equal*, [www.equal.gr](http://www.equal.gr).

These structures are different from each other as to the type, the legal form, the groups to which they apply and the methodology they use. They also target, in their majority, to support people with their orientation within a changeable labour market and with the organization of an active individual policy so as to be able to enter the labour market.

## 2.2 Conditions of foundation and evolution of the “intermediate sector” structures according to the managers of those structures.

For the better approach and diagnosis of the needs and problems which turn up to those bodies, a research<sup>4</sup> was realised, aimed at the study of such Organizations and their function, through the perspective of the subjects that take action inside the Organizations. During the research, 127 interviews as well as a large volume of printed material were gathered. Special purpose of the research was the examination of the structures functioning through a multi-prismatic inspection, which examines the perspectives of the different categories, who are involved in: specifically, the structure's head, the consultants and the “users”.

From each case studies that has been realised, we can observe, in relation to the terms of formation and evolution of the “intermediate sector” structures, the following:

As an important factor for their foundation, the existence of financial frameworks is firstly recognized through a movement of local or social bodies who responded to the assessment of established needs. And even in those few cases, that the creation of Consulting Offices had taken place irrespective of the European Financing, the realization of European Programmes meant the evolution, reinforcement and the widening of those structures.

Another important factor, as it is mentioned, was the recognition, by the Local Authority bodies, of the NGO ability to carry out social policy. The existence of capable executives, who manage to formulate suggestions and take advantage of the financial potentials from European Programs, by having the appropriate information, contributed to the above mentioned elements.

For the establishment of the structures' methodology and functioning, an important role was played by the improvisation and the know-how exchange between executives of different Organizations. Sometimes also, the introduction of examples from overseas was attempted.

Frequent evolutions of the structures are being observed, which mostly depend on the particular Programmes that take on, and on the financed frameworks in which they are placed. The planning of future actions is also dependent on the financed Programmes.

To summarise, we can say that the foundation, the evolution and the future planning of the structures are defined by the rationale of the Programs, which are to be implemented. The maintenance of qualitative upgraded services into a status of financing instability and changes, is of course a difficult venture.

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<sup>4</sup> The research venture can be placed within the wider *Equal* - program with the title E-Quality: “Development of a quality system of consulting services supporting the occupation” targeting on the formation of a framework based on quality characteristics, preconditions, criteria and procedures, through the development and the pilot application of a quality system for the organizations, their services, and their executives that provide a consulting support regarding the equal access of all people and groups to the labour market.

### 2.3 The experience of national thematic networks in the framework of Equal. The aims of national thematic network 'networking and coordination of current and new structures and their co-evolution in one – stop – shop'

The aim of interventions and policies of the Thematic Network for the creation of one- stop - shops in the framework of the Greek Equal C.I. is the continuous improvement of current completed intervention systems, as well as the continuous monitoring of new data and the control of the structures and the systems to the benefit of citizens.

The National Thematic Networks constitute dynamic Workgroups, which with the completion of their results and products, are extending partnerships with organisations that are developing relevant activities and fundamental bodies, in order to attempt the dissemination of information in horizontal level, and also the acknowledgement of innovative practices in decision – making that are contributing to the effectiveness of systems and policies at fundamental level of policy making.

Specifically, they recommend initiatives for broader partnerships with the aim of disseminating tested and recognisable results by applying plans that are specialised in sectoral and geographical environment, the national and European policy priorities for the equal access of citizens in labour markets. In addition, they are carrying the effective practices and the new know – how for the promotion of equality and exchange of intergovernmental experiences towards the direction of full employment, the advance of quality and production and the enhancement of cohesion in labour market at national and European level.

The sectors of complex policy proposals aim at promoting through a systematic process, the institutional aspects that can take effective measures for the improvement of the beneficiary's situation. The changes in organisation and function that are proposed through the projects of National Actions Plans for Employment and Social Inclusion have the possibility to give an important provision in the response of the social state to the society's needs.

It is noted that the activation of One Stop Shops between bodies in practice exceeds the agreement networking and is not limited in technical possibilities that are offered for communication. Therefore, the opportunity to face effectively, and through united systems of cooperative bodies, the complex and various problems of vulnerable socially groups is given. At the same time, through common specialised aims of projects and the thematic networking, successful applications that fulfil multiple criteria, like innovation, broader dissemination and application, and sustainability are revealed.

According to a group of criteria and with a specific methodology, the proved successful applications of projects are selected, which are included in similar needs situations as good practices. Comprehensiveness and the subject's content constitute the core of good practices and facilitate the transfer of successful practices in complex proposals of policies according to proved needs and priority policies in the above mentioned dimensions. According to this form, the basic structures of selected practices of Action Plans have a common aim.

### 2.3 Example of integrated intervention through networking

Main aim of National Thematic Network for networking and for the coordination of existing and new structures and their co – evolution in one – stop – shop is the research of common actions in EQUAL's plans, an attempt for a broader cooperation through Common Employment Programs between Development Partnerships and NGOs that are accomplishing common aims as well as the definition and promotion of good practices that are coming up by the accomplishment of projects. Good practices may be disseminated horizontally (with the participation of other bodies that are heading towards the same direction) or vertically, with a view to affect policies.

For the development of Unified Contact Points (one – stop – shop services), a necessary prerequisite is the identification of common efforts, aims and actions for the social – financial inclusion of vulnerable groups and the promotion of common thematic priorities (special aims of D.Ps and NGOs), as well as common actions that are aiming at their support.

The experience in Greece around the networking of structures/bodies issues, and mainly for the degree of application in “one stop shop”, is exceptionally limited. On the other hand, the institution of “one stop shop” has included a modern and effective medium for the social- financial inclusion of vulnerable groups in specific countries of the European Union.

“One-stop-shop” is the physical or other type (e.g. electronic) concentration services in a specific area, aiming at the total lifting of all the barriers that are limiting the inclusion of vulnerable groups members in labour market as employees/self – employees, or as business men. In this framework, ‘One-stop-shops’ will have to be in a position to provide, according to the needs of each member of vulnerable teams, consultation services, guidance, welfare services (e.g. accommodation, caring of dependent members, etc) and supportive services for employment or businesses.

In our country, the ‘Citizen’s Service Centres’ and the ‘Promotion Centres in Employment’ could be characterised as quasi ‘One-stop-shops’ in the sense that they provide services for administrative issues and information/services offers and demands for employment, although they do not aim at the total lifting of all barriers that limit the inclusion of vulnerable groups.

Therefore, the aim of the thematic network ‘networking and coordination of existed structures and their co-evolution in one – stop – shop’ is to cover the current gap in the total tackling of vulnerable groups’ problems and to contribute with substantial and multi – level interventions in their inclusion in the labour market and in the society. Apart from enhancing the prospective for a broader application and the horizontal and vertical dissemination of results, networking of structures under this aim includes an important medium for the accomplishment of the final goal. It, thus, contributes to the lifting of geographical barriers, while at the same time it is validated through dissemination of acknowledgement and experience of bodies.

Until now, experience shows that networks of unemployment support can be developed with institutionalised informal or formal co-operations between complementary action and their intervention, in the field of prevention and response to existing problems. Further, the support of ‘Human Networks’ with an advanced electronic system of communication improves their function and enhances their activation.

The complexity and the importance of the problems that the unemployed are facing today demand the development of Support Networks, which can include 'new forms of aggregative action and intervention', where the unemployed participate actively in their inclusion procedures in the labour market as well as in the society.

Specifically, the interventions in this direction with the support of NGOs enhance

- The modernization of current consultation structures of employment and the development of new services with the networking and extended partnership and the better dissemination of good practices,
- The introduction of a fundamental framework for the total tackling of problems of the vulnerable groups, as well as the training of employment consultants in new subjects that enhance the logic of complete interventions structures,
- The development of supportive structures, qualitative provision service level and mechanisms for the detection of the needs for the equal access to basic social goods and rights, that facilitate the access to the labour market and the continuous consultation and support for the development of social and professional skills in relevance with the needs that are revealed by the new forms of organised work and the management of the diversity.
- The connection of local development with the needs of employment in socially vulnerable groups and the inclusion of local bodies, NGOs and social partners in all support stages, starting by the planning stage until the final implementation stage and the broader application of successful practices,
- The understanding, management and advance of political differences, the preparation of immigrants and national minorities in order to include factors of their inclusion, principles dynamics, public and private services and employees, development and the awareness strategies, that include personnel training in all levels.
- Individual training frames and social inclusion and understanding of inclusion strategy in labour market with individuals of many difficulties, the development of factors dynamic that are facing effectively the social exclusion and the poverty and promote innovative methods,
- The adaptation of improved methods for the right evaluation of learning, understanding and skills of individuals, the organisation of exchanges in policies that are applied and promote the mutual learning, in relevance with the National Actions Plans of members states and the possibility of vocational training during the whole life with the application of equal opportunities in all stages of vocational training.

#### 2.4 Emergence of thematic priorities within the framework of the national network

The thematic priorities are defined in combination with the specific DPs, Social Partners and NGOs which they advance and follow. The equation of different partners in common points of thematic priorities facilitates, in primary stage, the widening for the development of cooperation forms between partners on a common subject. In a second stage, the search of common but also, complementary interventions becomes useful in order to deal with specific problems, which are pointed out by the cooperative body.

### Thematic priorities of 21 DPs, Social Partners and NGOs Indicative number of action plans

Thematic priorities	Indicative number of action plans
Promotion of practices against discriminations within workplace	4
Empowerment of the authorities', training bodies' and enterprises' ability to handle diversity.	2
New approaches on allotment of training	4
Individual plans about training and integration into society and labour market.	5
Alternative forms of employment and work set up.	5
Integrated strategies for the integration of people with multiple disadvantages.	5
New approaches on orientation and consulting/development	9
Modernization of the existent or/ and creation of new employment services.	8
Confirmation and certification of the skills, abilities, preceding training and individual needs.	5
Peripheral approaches	4
Preparation for employment in special work posts/ professions, profile of new work posts	5
Modernization of the existent or/ and creation of enterprise's new support structures	6
One stop shop	8
Fighting of discriminations in labour market (sex etc.)	3
Empowerment	5

### Closing results – Difficulties in transferring the Spanish model – Steps to form networks and establish partnerships

Many of the bodies of the civil society as well as many NGOs participate actively in social policy actions in Greece in the last years. However, their participation is maintained at a complementary and voluntary level, through developmental partnerships, without playing a particularly important role in strategic planning projects and in the management of interventions to the benefit of vulnerable groups. To a large extent, this is due to their limited organizational abilities, the understaffing of their services but also to the fact that they have yet to claim in a reliable and responsible way a leading role in the exercise of a new social policy. These problems make, thus, difficult the direct transferability of the Spanish model to the Greek reality.

Nevertheless, the establishment of a partnership among agencies and NGOs is a very critical and indispensable procedure, so as to create the necessary conditions for the possibility to undertake a similar big common project, as in the case of Spain. Greece has demonstrated and continues to demonstrate positive initiatives towards this direction, especially in the framework of C.I. Equal and specifically within the National Thematic Networks which promote co-operation and

partnership in a networking environment with a view to tackle in a better and more effective way the problems of vulnerable groups.

Specifically :

Although not covering the whole thematic area of European Thematic Networking, the thematic networking 'networking and coordination of existed structures and their co-evolution in one – stop – shops' has direct relationship with the sub – subject 'modernizing existing or development new employment services', that concerns a great degree of Development Partnerships of pylon 1 (employment), like with sub – subject 'Need for coordination/specialisation between support agencies', that is discussed in the framework of European Thematic Networking for pylon 2 (enterprising)

The above mentioned attempt aims at contributing to the elimination of a series of barriers, in order to improve the situation of individuals that face difficulties in the inclusion or re – inclusion in the labour market and those that face racism and xenophobia in life or the work environment. Secondly, to certify new ways for the lifting of basic barriers that do not allow the promotion of businesses between vulnerable social groups, in less development areas, in order to be able to create sustainable enterprises through suitable tools and services provision.

This aim includes the first step in the detection procedure of good practices and the possibilities of a broader application and it is a prerequisite for the promotion of thematic priorities, which in combination with strategic attempts for employment could include the development basis of net workings.

With the detection and analysis of relevant same types of actions of Developmental Partnerships and NGOs, the prerequisites were created for the promotion of broader actions plans that are accomplished in common programs and work timetables. In this direction, the participants are cooperating in the framework of a new networking action environment with common character and aim.

In addition, the development of common action plans that constitute the National Networks include an important step for the definition and promotion of good practices, but also, for the broader application of the latter through the added value created by the networking cooperation of DPs and NGO bodies.