



Spain 2007

Multi-regional Operational Programme to combat discrimination (OPCD)

Minutes



On behalf of
European Commission
DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities



Multi-regional Operational Programme to combat discrimination

Spain, 25-26 October 2007

The Peer Review, hosted by the Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Autonomous Region of Andalusia, examined Spain's Multi-regional Operational Programme to Combat Discrimination (OPCD).

Day 1 – morning session

Welcome address and introductions

The Director General of Social Services and Inclusion of the Autonomous region of Andalusia, **Purificación Causapié Lopesino**, welcomed all the Peer Review participants to Spain and wished them a successful meeting.

In his introduction, **Juan Carlos Mato Gómez** of the Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (Directorate General of Social Inclusion) said the Peer Review would be focusing on a programme selected as an example of best practice in the framework of the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAP/Incl) for 2007.

Such best practices are at the core of a question that has taken centre stage over the last few months: how best to regulate the interaction between economic growth, employment and social cohesion, and to translate policy decisions into creating better standards of living.

In 2005 the European Council reshaped the Lisbon Strategy and agreed that economic and employment growth should work towards greater social cohesion. However, uncertainty over the question of which of these strands takes priority has persisted, with a tendency to downgrade the social dimension, and the last Spring Council meeting failed to resolve this dilemma.

In the meantime, the poverty rate in Spain is still growing, and Mr Gómez saw a need for a more comprehensive approach to social inclusion processes. On 17 October the European Commission launched a Communication and consultation¹ for review by Member States, aimed at promoting integrated solutions to poverty and social exclusion to help people furthest away from the labour market. In Spain, this has widespread repercussions. Experience must be used as the basis for orienting public policies in the future.

This comprehensive approach finds practical application in the Operational Programme to Combat Discrimination (OPCD), which is managed by different levels of government and by non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The programme is based on the idea of bringing big NGOs with proven expertise into the management of services for specific target groups.

¹ [Taking forward the active inclusion of people furthest from the labour market:](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/news/2007/oct/active_inclusion_en.pdf)
http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/news/2007/oct/active_inclusion_en.pdf

This is the example that Peer Review participants would be examining over the two days in Córdoba, said Mr Gómez. He expressed the hope that the contributions and suggestions from experts and government representatives would also help the Spanish authorities to make further improvements to the OPCD.

Julia Martinez Cob, head of department in the Administrative Unit for the European Social Fund (UAFSE) in the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, expressed her satisfaction that the European Commission had selected the OPCD as an example of best practice. The programme was co-funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) during the 2000-2006 programming period, and is particularly innovative in the way it involves the social dimension of civil society. It has meant Spanish NGOs developing programmes for social and labour market integration.

The new ESF regulation reinforces the role of NGOs. This example of good practice could be very useful for other countries as well as offering the opportunity for further learning in Spain. She pointed out that the meeting coincided with the development of the new stage of ESF funding for 2007-2013.

Peter Lelie from the European Commission DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities told participants that this was the fifth Peer Review to take place in the 2007 schedule. The Peer Review programme in the field of social inclusion was initiated in 2004, and thus this is its fourth year of operation. At the beginning of each Peer Review, it is useful to remind participants of the objectives, which are:

- facilitating a better understanding of Member States' policies and their impact.
- trying to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of policies, based on the experiences of other Member States.
- facilitating the transfer of key components of policies that have proved to be effective in one context to other relevant contexts. Each country has different circumstances. The Peer Review process is not about carbon copying, but about intelligent or sophisticated copying: seeing which lessons can be learnt and which can be used for improving strategies elsewhere.

The Commission and the Peer Review manager do their best to ensure that the Peer Reviews are useful for participants, explained Mr Lelie, and generally people are quite satisfied, but as long as the social inclusion strategy is not having a sufficient impact on the ground (the implementation gap), we cannot be complacent. . Therefore there are a number of improvements currently being examined:

- We must make sure that we build on lessons learnt in earlier Peer Reviews, and not repeat the same discussions.
- We need to focus more on measuring the results of policies. If we say that a certain policy is a good practice we should be able to substantiate this on the basis of evidence. Ways to measure the impact of policies should feature as a subject of mutual learning in their own right.
- We need more synergies, for example through closer links between the Commission's network of independent experts on social inclusion and the Peer Review programme.
- Better dissemination: we need to make sure the lessons are communicated to a wide audience. In this context, the Peer Review website carries a very large amount of information, but the Commission is also counting on the Peer Review participants to ensure that information is passed on.

- Next year, the results of some of the Peer Reviews that are linked to the strategic priorities of the Social Protection Committee could be discussed in that Committee with all Member States present in order to see whether political conclusions can be drawn.

Mr Lelie told participants that the Commission was counting on them to help improve the Peer Review programme. He invited them to take time to complete the evaluation questionnaire included in the documentation folder.

This Peer Review is about:

- paths to inclusion for people who are far from the labour market;
- the contribution of the European Social Fund to social inclusion;
- the role of NGOs in the management of ESF programmes;
- combating discrimination.

On all these issues there are important new developments at EU level. For example there is the start of the new ESF programming period and the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All.

However, Mr Lelie particularly dwelled on the 'active inclusion' Communication published by the European Commission on 17 October. This communication is about tackling the problems of people far from the labour market. These problems are often multidimensional, including, for example, lack of skills, overindebtedness, homelessness, discrimination, health related problems and disability.

To overcome these obstacles a holistic approach is needed: people need an adequate income, access to an inclusive labour market with good quality jobs, and access to good quality social services.

There will now be a consultation on this communication lasting until February 2008. Next year, in the framework of the OMC, the Commission is aiming to draw up common principles for active inclusion to be rolled out across the EU.

Mr Lelie thanked the Spanish authorities for hosting the Peer Review.

Ana Moreno Rodriguez, social welfare delegate of the city council of Córdoba, welcomed all the participants to the city and hoped they would feel at home during their stay.

She said that the fight against social exclusion must be one of the most important tasks to be undertaken and all levels of government have different responsibilities in the development of integrated policies. Bringing these different levels together is a major challenge, but independent organisations are key agents capable of putting on the table new proposals for improving policies. She expressed her belief in the slogan: "No-one knows more than we do, all together."

Purificación Causapié Lopesino said the Peer Review meeting was very important to the regional government of Andalucía. She agreed that it is vital for different levels of government to meet together, alongside the non-governmental organisations that help to combat poverty and social exclusion. Despite improvements across society – supported by technological advances – problems of social development still exist, she noted. Our societies tend to be preoccupied with consumption and leisure activities. The OPCD works to reconcile the contradictions of a developed society in which so many groups still experience poverty and social exclusion.

Social imbalances still exist in Andalucia. When we talk about poverty we do not just talk about financial problems, she pointed out, but also about difficulties in getting access to social resources, to health care, and to opportunities to enjoy a full life. Therefore programmes must offer routes into a range of services such as housing, education, health care and employment. "We work on comprehensive policies," she concluded.

The first Andalucia plan for social integration has just come to an end, and work is now underway on the next one. The fight against poverty and social exclusion is a priority. This is not just a task for the social affairs department, but is at the heart of policies such as health and housing. The second regional Constitution – just revised – reinforces these policies. The Constitution reflects the will of regional government to guarantee rights such as a minimum income, and to fight against social exclusion.

Discrimination and exclusion go hand in hand and are thus elements that must be tackled together. One outcome is Andalucia's Law for Social Integration, which is currently under discussion. "We must continue fighting exclusion and poverty through a comprehensive approach, and help people to escape from marginalised situations," she concluded. "Your contributions will be important for the work of different levels of government."

Presentation of the Multi-regional Operational Programme to Combat Discrimination 2000-2006

Julia Martinez Cob said that during 2000-2006, the European Social Fund supported activities in Spain including measures for the integration of women and socially excluded groups into the labour market. Within the different regions of Spain, 19 programmes were carried out, plus national programmes for both Objective 1 (with per capita GDP below 75% of EU average) and Objective 3 regions.

She explained that her presentation would cover the Multi-regional Operational Programme including both Objectives, and focusing on integrating people with problems, and especially women, into the labour market.

The OPCD set three target groups for integration: disabled people, people suffering exclusion, and women. Women have lower activity and occupation rates than men, and are subject to higher levels of precarious work and unemployment. Low activity and high unemployment are also widespread among disabled people. The third target group includes:

- Spanish emigrants returning home, internal migrants and immigrants. Many of these have precarious labour conditions and low levels of education and qualification, as well as being generally rootless;
- Prisoners and former offenders, focusing on retraining and integration;
- The Roma population: one of the most highly excluded groups in Spain. The majority are young, with a high number of school drop-outs, and high rates of illiteracy and participation in the informal economy;
- Ex-drug abusers, long-term unemployed, homeless people and others at particular risk of social exclusion.

The OPCD 2000-2006: 12 implementing bodies

Six public administration bodies at national level:

- the Women's Institute, addressing the needs of women;
- the Institute for Migrations and Social Services (IMSERSO), operating in rehabilitation centres for disabled people;
- the Autonomous Agency of Penitentiary Work and Benefits, which deals with problems relating to inmates and promotes the social integration of prisoners;
- the Directorate-General for Emigration, dealing with returning Spanish migrants;
- the Directorate-General for Immigration, working for both Spanish migrants and foreigners;
- the Directorate-General for Immigrants' Integration.

Six private NGOs with experience of working on employment and social exclusion:

- the ONCE Foundation, with particular expertise in helping people with disabilities;
- the Spanish Red Cross, focusing on social inclusion and employability of the migrant population;
- the Spanish Caritas, addressing people suffering extreme hardship and social exclusion;
- the Roma Secretariat Foundation, promoting social and labour inclusion of Roma people;
- the Diagrama Foundation, with actions for young people subject to judicial confinement;
- the Luis Vives Foundation, which offers support and technical assistance and manages the 'global grant' to third sector entities/NGOs working in this field.

Actions are managed from a thematic and multi-regional perspective. This means that activities are carried out across different regions, establishing a working method that offers opportunities for analysis and diagnosis and creates networking and synergies, involving national government and NGOs.

The priorities in both Objective 1 and 3 regions are in line with those of the ESF, covering the integration of people with special needs into the labour market, the participation of women in the labour market, and technical assistance.

The main outlines promote actions in favour of target groups (integrated pathways into work), in favour of structures and systems (strengthening links between training and employment), and complementary measures. These measures cover, for example, monitoring activities and delivery of services to help women reconcile work and family responsibilities.

Measures and actions

Julia Martinez Cob highlighted some examples of the measures and actions encompassed by Priorities 44/7 (integrating people with special needs into the labour market) and 45/6 (participation of women in the labour market).

Specific goals centre on promoting the insertion into the labour market of women and people with disabilities through personalised pathways, promoting the insertion of people with special needs, and achieving equal opportunities between women and men.

Priority 44/7, measure 1 for people with disabilities involves a number of bodies including IMSERSO and the ONCE Foundation. Actions cover analysis of specific obstacles (for example related to new

technologies), training, and adapting jobs, special counselling programmes, subsidies for self-employment and new employment opportunities.

Measure 2 for people at risk of social exclusion also brings together different entities including the Directorates-General for Immigration and Immigrants' Integration, the Autonomous Agency of Penitentiary Work and Benefits, the Roma Secretariat and Caritas. It works through individualised insertion pathways covering training, professional counselling, mediation services, opportunities for self-employment and subsidies for social inclusion and geographical mobility.

A third measure administered by the Luis Vives Foundation relates to general funding through the global grant, offering subsidies to social entities to help them become more effective, for example through research, training of personnel, networking, quality management, and the development of new technologies. Organisations respond to calls for tender. In 2000-2006, support went to 211 projects involving 147 bodies.

Priority 45/6 undertakes measures to counter the horizontal and vertical segregation of women in the labour force: specifically:

- improving women's employability;
- enhancing women's entrepreneurial abilities;
- fighting segregation and the gender pay gap, and promoting the reconciliation of work and family life.

Actions include setting up women's networks, support for companies that implement positive action plans, awareness-raising campaigns, equal opportunities training, and technical advice for female entrepreneurs.

The third Priority (90) is required by the European Commission and relates to technical support, including the management, control and monitoring of subsidies.

The total cost of the programme amounts to €539 million. The EU contribution is €343 million. Priority 44/7 takes a larger slice of the budget, with 69% of this money allocated to NGOs (across Objective 1 and 3 regions).

In all, the programme has reached more than 2,000,000 people, over one-third of them women. Of these, some 226,000 have received direct help, nearly 60,000 have been trained, and over 100,000 job hirings have taken place.

In conclusion, Julia Martinez Cob said the OPCD represents a great improvement both in terms of management efficiency and impact on target groups. It is the first time that public and private bodies have worked together to manage an operational programme. It is the first operational programme in Spain to focus specifically on fighting discrimination in the labour market, whether arising from physical or psychological circumstances, or the simple fact of being a woman.

It includes all the different actors in this field and has allowed for new networks and partnerships to be set up. And it has raised awareness and encouraged social responsibility in companies that have hired individuals from the programme.

Presentation of the host country expert paper

National expert José Manuel Fresno told the Peer Review that he did not want to repeat the analysis presented in his report (distributed to participants), and would therefore focus on four specific aspects for debate. These comprised:

1. Defining the axes on which the programme is based;
 2. Some elements of the Spanish context that are crucial to this programme;
 3. Results;
 4. Six key aspects.
1. The programme takes a threefold approach based on: the European Structural Funds (SFs), the objective of social inclusion, and the involvement of NGOs.

Structural Funds are for many Member States the most important economic contribution they receive from the EU, and are key to economic and social cohesion. The SF regulations state that the main aim is economic and social cohesion. However, in the application of the SFs, the social cohesion component has not been given the same weight as the economic side. Because these funds cannot be dedicated to everything, the question is how they can best be used to promote better social cohesion and for groups facing specific inclusion problems.

The Lisbon Agenda sets the challenge of eradicating poverty by 2010. Social inclusion is an important element of the European Employment Strategy, to be achieved largely through activation and access to the labour market. Individuals with special problems need support on the pathway or journey towards activation. In other words, a comprehensive approach is needed for people whose social context hampers their progress.

In 1994 the ESF regulations referred to the involvement of other actors (social partners, NGOs, voluntary sector) in delivering objectives. Since 2000, this approach has evolved to strengthen the part NGOs play in planning, management and follow-up. The OPCD marks the development of full participation, rather than just consultation.

2. Spanish context: the multi-regional operational programme accounted for 8% of ESF funding to Spain in 2000-2006. Spain has a high degree of decentralisation, therefore programmes are partly managed by regional governments. Around 3% of ESF spending in Spain is managed by NGOs. This may seem a small amount, but represents a big leap in the Spanish context. Activities are planned with the long-term in mind: for at least seven years and in some cases nine. The fact that managing bodies have been able to rely on this long-term perspective has allowed them to make better use of resources, and has been key to the success of the programme.
3. Results: the good results have come about partly because the context for the programme has been very positive, due to strong growth in the Spanish economy, reducing the differential in comparison to average European incomes, and bringing a big fall in unemployment. In 1994 the unemployment rate was 24%, compared with 8% at present. This has offered more opportunities for people with disabilities, for example, to enter the labour market.

The Spanish labour market has recently been very effective in creating jobs for low skilled

workers, offering opportunities for many more people to become integrated. Since Spain is very decentralised, much power resides in the regions and it is important to understand that nothing can be done without their participation.

Spain has an emerging tertiary sector, with a very active role in the provision of services to the public. The tertiary sector is becoming a significant player in anything to do with policy in this area. The programme has reached more than 2 million people, bringing educational opportunities for 50,000, and access to more than 100,000 jobs. It is important to recognise the organisations' efforts to achieve 'empowerment' for clients.

Impact on policy-making: it is widely recognised that the way the programme was approached has made a wider impact, and brought changes in ways of doing things. For policies to change, expectations must also change, and this programme has managed to alter the social expectations of people with specific difficulties. It has also brought changes in working methods, with new elements such as awareness raising campaigns, personal itineraries, and means of analysis and evaluation.

4. Key aspects:

- a) What value can NGOs add to the management of Structural Funds? Giving NGOs responsibility for managing operational programmes is potentially problematic in that there are not so many of them that have the skills and capacity to do it. Can NGOs create added value? The Spanish experience shows that is possible, but NGOs have their own limits due to the role they play in society. They cooperate around public policies, but are not democratically elected to run them.
- b) What do Structural Funds mean for NGOs? It is important to create a 'social tissue', and this cannot be done without the active involvement of the tertiary sector and NGOs. SFs offer one way of channelling resources to these organisations, but there are limits. For example, NGOs take on risks when they run programmes, and these risks are not merely financial.
- c) Partnership: the programme brings together regional and national levels of government, NGOs, private companies, and media (through awareness-raising campaigns). But partnership also requires leadership, so authorities have an important role to play.
- d) Bottom-up/top-down choice. The programme adopts a bottom-up approach. It is implemented at local level, although coordinated by central government. This combination has advantages, but also presents difficulties. On the plus side there are economies of scale, while at the same time uniform delivery of services can be a problem.
- e) How to combine targeting and mainstreaming? The amount of money for the targeted groups is relatively small. A targeted approach must not be segregational but inclusive – this is a key aspect.
- f) What can be done to make the SFs more targeted on inclusion, especially of people with special needs? What steps are necessary to ensure accountability and benchmarking of actions, as well as guaranteeing that successful OPs are transferred into policy?

Questions and discussions

Peer Review participants asked a number of questions:

- Could the Peer Review system be introduced as a means of mutual learning among members of targeted groups?
- During the time that relationships between organisations at different levels have been reorganised in Spain, have there been feuds over responsibilities? Is there any risk of reverting to the old system?
- How is the programme's impact on Roma people evaluated?
- Why was the approach of working through NGOs chosen? What procedure was used to select the NGOs and was it open to all to apply? What is the attitude of others in the tertiary sector?
- Given that NGOs are contracted long-term (seven years), what happens if the organisations selected turn out to be the wrong ones?
- Social inclusion is already seen by some as a political issue. Is there a danger that involving NGOs will put the state into an 'opposition' role? Do people feel that they will be worse off in the end as a result of globalisation?

José Manuel Fresno said it would be interesting to involve beneficiaries in some way, but that would be a matter for the Commission.

In the 2007-2013 ESF funding period, Spain will have a new operational programme against discrimination. Most of the same NGOs will participate, with similar activities but less money. "But my feeling is that the same way of working will continue, because most of the NGOs will make an effort to continue providing services," he said. Furthermore the systems have now been set up, with structures such as the Migrant Forum and Roma Forum at national level, and partnerships with regional governments and NGOs.

Mr Fresno said he had been working with Roma since 1983, and was convinced that a targeted approach is needed, but not for all Roma, and not permanently. The aim should be to "normalise" people's circumstances. The proportion of socially excluded Roma varies from country to country.

There were clear reasons for choosing the NGOs that operate the programme, either because they are the biggest in Spain and therefore have the capacity to manage activities, or they have specific expertise among target groups or – in the case of the Luis Vives Foundation – in building capacity in the tertiary sector. Of course, other NGOs said 'why not us?' But within the OP, smaller NGOs have started working together to make a contribution.

In addition, the global grant helps to support NGOs. In 2006, 17 seminars were organised, involving more than 1,300 people from 1,000 organisations, on the new round of ESF funding and how NGOs can be involved. Therefore there is a real effort to boost active participation across the sector.

Julia Martinez Cob recalled that in 1994-99, NGOs already had experience of working with EU-funded projects. This showed that they had the capacity to carry out activities on a nationwide basis. Other NGOs that are not directly involved make an indirect contribution through partnership arrangements.

Fintan Farrell, from the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN), said his organisation enthusiastically welcomed the Spanish model as a way of bringing NGOs into the management of projects. He asked for more information about the global grant mechanism.

José Manuel Fresno pointed out that the new OP will not continue the global grant. This is due to a reduction in community funding for Spain. Instead, it has been agreed with ESF administrators that there will be a direct funding strand for research, training, technical support etc.

He admitted that the risk of government taking less responsibility for social welfare was a real one. In a modern society it is difficult to design, implement and monitor social policies without the involvement of civil society. The third sector is becoming an actor not only in planning but in implementation, but nonetheless cannot take ultimate responsibility. Social policy is a question of political commitment, but often the pressure and active participation of the third sector is crucial in making social inclusion a political issue. For example, the rights of Roma people have gained importance on Spain's social agenda because of pressure from Roma groups.

Dr Susana Gende explained that the Spanish Red Cross participates in the construction of policies because it knows the circumstances of excluded people better than the administrative authorities. "We have the methodology and resources to offer personal pathways. We are telling the administrators why things are happening and what needs to be done." Workers feel an obligation to their clients and are committed to their social inclusion.

The involvement of NGOs in the Multi-regional Operational Programme to Combat Discrimination

Representatives from the six participating NGOs presented their activities and results.

ONCE Foundation

Maria Tussy Flores said the Foundation works mainly to promote the social and labour integration of disabled people. In 2000-2006 it operated across Spain, with a budget of around €200 million, 60% coming from Structural Funds.

Its three axes cover

- improving employability: integrated, personalised itineraries for labour insertion, workshops, support for self-employment and social economy placements;
- researching employment conditions: diagnosis of social and labour relations of disabled people, use of new technology to improve quality of life - eg. the website at <http://www.discapnet.es/>;
- awareness-raising activities: publications and online material, actions aimed at public administrations, companies, and society in general.

Results for 2000-August 2007 show 88,061 beneficiaries, 17,350 people received training, and 21,184 were employed.

The foundation operates a network with other NGOs involved in combating social exclusion of at-risk groups, formalised through a Collaboration Agreement covering joint research projects and seminars. The network also seeks to influence policy decisions and legislation at European level. Maria Tussy Flores said that lobbying is important within smaller organisations, as well as setting up links with public agencies, making contacts and finding out about procedures: "the keys that need to be turned".

The foundation aims for continuity in the partnership, through innovative actions focused on countering discrimination. A new information dissemination campaign is planned in the next EU funding period 2007-2013.

Luis Vives Foundation

Carmen Doncel Domínguez presented the two main actions of the Foundation.

- 1) Grants to organisations working on integration into the labour market. From a budget of €17 million, €8 million went to Objective 3 and €9 million to Objective 1 regions. Money was distributed through calls for tender. In 2001 to 2007, 215 projects were approved, involving 147 beneficiaries. These were organised around four themes: training, networking, quality management systems and new technology. Most projects focused on training or a combination of themes.
- 2) Follow-up and improvement of organisations' results. Actions included information (eg. EAPN *Flash* in Spanish), training (17 seminars on the new SF funding period), meetings and workshops, publications (including European handbooks and advice on project management), and joint activities (such as a debate on non-discrimination).

Capacity building in NGOs leads to:

- greater stability, continuity, and less uncertainty;
- more activities;
- extension of the NGO network across the whole territory;
- consolidation and restructuring of services;
- more expert knowledge of specific sectors.

Externally, it means that NGOs become rooted in the field of social policy, filling gaps that would have existed without their participation. NGOs are now both consultants and operating agents, while some are service providers. For example, private companies turn to NGOs when they want to hire staff. Another outcome is the transfer of knowledge throughout the sector.

Caritas

Jorge Nuño Mayer explained that Caritas belongs to the Catholic Church, and has 70 independent diocesan institutions all over Spain. Caritas Employment projects have 400 permanent staff and around 1.000 volunteers. Its main aim is to work for the social inclusion of excluded people. Each office develops activities according to local needs.

Beneficiaries include young single women with children, unemployed women, people with low qualifications and those at severe risk of social exclusion. Experience has shown that even if women suffer more often from poverty, it is they who make the most effort to find a way out. Therefore working with women is more successful. Caritas also targets people over 45, homeless, former drug users, migrants and other at-risk groups.

Its approach is to achieve social and labour integration through personal pathways. This covers information, training, running workshops to develop skills and key abilities, job placement, and advice

on self-employment. It has 30 integration companies (social enterprises) employing people for two to three years before they enter the commercial labour market.

One weakness is the absence of indicators that look beyond the basic number of participants. In 2000-2006, out of 40,000 beneficiaries, 10,000 got jobs. This is, in fact, a great success, but what happened to the other 30,000? How can we show the progress achieved with them? Indicators should take account of multi-dimensional aspects such as quality of life. "We know that employment is key, but it must not be an obsession," said Jorge Nuño Mayer. "There are many people who will never get a job but have a right to dignity." Therefore Caritas also focuses on factors like housing, social services, education, health and social participation.

The OP is a financial tool. Giving employment priority in the inclusion strategy means adapting services to individual and local needs. Networking is key because not all entities, whether public or private, can access all the services a person needs.

Red Cross

Maika Sánchez Martínez said the Red Cross is a humanitarian organisation committed to the most vulnerable people. In the OP it focuses on labour inclusion for immigrants, via its Interlabor@ network, which has three objectives:

- Improving people's employability
- Fighting discrimination in the labour market
- Promoting equal opportunities in employment.

Individuals face obstacles related to their lack of qualifications and social skills, and their gender or age. In addition, newly arrived immigrants are often in a hurry to start earning an income and fail to understand the importance of training and integration. Many have received misleading information about Spain's labour market and society. They find difficulties not only in handling administrative requirements, but also due to prejudices and stereotypes, and employers' poor perceptions of their abilities, as well as precarious working conditions, job segregation and few opportunities for promotion or development.

The Red Cross works not only with the individuals themselves, but also with companies and the public, to raise awareness and understanding.

Client profile (2006):

- 66.53% women
- 68% aged 25-45
- 17% under 25
- 15% over 45
- 10% with no academic qualifications
- 84% unemployed.

Each individual follows a personal pathway moving from professional advice to training, labour insertion, and support to remain in employment.

At the same time, the Impuls@ initiative supports people with special difficulties in setting up their own small businesses. It has so far launched 384 self-employment start-ups.

Overall results for 2000-2006 show 70,171 people received help, 24,928 were trained, 40% obtained work, contacts were made with 5,000 companies, and 9,177 jobs secured. From 2001-2006, the Red Cross cooperated with 218 public administrations and social entities, and some 72,000 people took part in awareness-raising activities.

It is important to have a national approach developed at regional level, taking account of the different needs of specific groups in different regions. The Red Cross has also developed exchange of experiences and multi-regional activities. A variety of mechanisms exist to promote cooperation between national and local levels and foster a bottom-up approach, which reduces the cost of all activities.

Secretariado Gitano Foundation

José Sánchez Serrano said the Foundation aims to promote integration of the Roma population while respecting its cultural identity. There are 700,000 Roma in Spain, 45% of them in Andalusia. The community is in the process of transformation – 40% of the population is under 16.

Roma suffer marked disadvantages on the labour market, due to low levels of qualification as well as discrimination. Unemployment is 5% higher than the rest of the Spanish population. Many work in the informal sector or precarious jobs, and in the event of a downturn in the Spanish economy they will be the first to lose their employment. Levels of discrimination and xenophobia are particularly high in the labour market.

The **Acceder** programme sets out to give Roma access to mainstream training and employment on equal terms, to develop professional qualifications, to raise awareness among society generally and foster active policies towards the Roma community. It provides a direct link between employment providers and Roma, and aims to increase public understanding of the specific problems the community faces, to improve living standards and ensure equal access to public services.

It adopts an integrated approach, and has created observatories to compensate for a lack of data on the situation of Roma people. About 20% of clients are not actually Roma but share similar characteristics. Over 50% are women, who suffer double discrimination in the Roma community.

Launched in 2000, it operates in 46 cities, in partnership with 100 public administrations and over 3,000 companies, as well as other stakeholders. In 2000-2006 it reached 35,304 people, and obtained 26,014 work contracts, over 1,000 of them permanent. The programme helps to change mentalities within the Roma community itself.

NGOs bring added value to the OP in a number of ways. "We are the bodies present in the field. We know how to get these groups involved and motivate them. They trust us," said José Sánchez Serrano. It is important for beneficiaries to take part in the design of services. The Foundation has particular skills and knowledge not found in all NGOs. "We should be involved in the implementation of European programmes when they are aimed at our target group."

Diagrama Foundation

Mayte Alvares Martínez said the Foundation started work in the OP in 2003 and aims to create an effective programme for young people subject to judicial proceedings, working with inmates in the centres it manages across Spain. It has a budget of €15 million from the ESF, European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and nine autonomous regions. Its three lines of action cover:

- integrated insertion itineraries, including training, counselling and monitoring.
- training for professionals, developing new methods and carrying out research studies, plus the development of a virtual campus (www.fundaciondiagrama.es/operativo).
- raising awareness, including training course in companies, and creation of the *Circulo de Empresas Solidarias* (circle of supportive enterprises). Many firms do not know about activities developed by public authorities to promote social integration, and are not conscious of their social responsibility to offer jobs to groups with specific needs.

In 2004-2006 the Foundation helped 1,713 young people and cooperated with 1,119 companies, concluding 196 agreements. More than 1,000 people took part in training courses, and 905 secured work.

NGO statements

European Network Against Racism (ENAR)

Tansy Hutchinson said ENAR monitors the situation on racism across the EU, and this has relevance for transferability. Racism is still prevalent throughout the Member States, as confirmed in ENAR's *Shadow Report 2006*, to be published in November. Therefore the targeting of actions is very necessary. There is a need to link social inclusion and anti-discrimination activities and target the social exclusion of ethnic minorities.

The OPCD addresses both discrimination and social exclusion, and this is very positive. The ENAR's Frame of Reference for good practice points out that participation must be broader than just economic participation. She welcomed the Spanish NGOs' presentations, which showed strong evidence of a holistic approach.

She highlighted the need for more disaggregated data, for example on the specific circumstances of Roma people. The programme's focus on Roma is good, but does it address all other groups suffering discrimination equally effectively? She also queried the approach to those suffering double discrimination: for example, are specific measures for women carried into other target groups such as Roma? Are measures for disabled people applied within ethnic minorities?

She also had questions relating to policy coherence. For example, how does the OPCD link to migration policy, which goes beyond the scope of the programme but is linked to it? New immigrants face many problems. Have the agencies been able to work also on behalf of those without residence documents (*'sans papiers'*), for example? These people also have a right to dignity and to live without poverty.

Finally, she wanted to know more about how the NGOs in the programme were selected. She welcomed the fact the organisations chosen guaranteed a range of coverage of different groups, even if some of them needed support for capacity-building.

European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN)

Fintan Farrell said the EAPN is passionate about the Structural Funds' ability to deliver the social inclusion agenda. It has lobbied the EU on the regulation of the SFs, and specifically on involvement of NGOs. The EAPN website gives access to leaflets on how to put the fight against poverty at the heart of the SFs.

No project is perfect, but there are important elements of this programme that could strengthen the ability of the SFs to deliver the social inclusion and anti-discrimination agendas.

Mutual learning is not confined to European Peer Review meetings but also takes place in the other forms of exchange such as through the work of the European Networks. Spain and the UK and to some extent Ireland have been exceptional in the way they have included NGOs in their Structural Funds programmes, and lately the Czech Republic, Hungary and Malta have also moved in this direction. Thus, some of the learning is already happening, although the contexts are different.

He highlighted the role of the Lisbon Strategy, and the concern among social NGOs at how this has developed in recent years. MEPs have defended the social dimension, and five of the last six EU presidencies have made strong statements along the same lines, yet nonetheless the European Commission's paper on *The European Interest* for the EU summit in October 2007 left out the social cohesion element. This is very worrying. The value of the Open Method of Coordination is demonstrated by the connections found in programmes like the OPCD. Lisbon must not be just about growth and jobs, but about growth, jobs and social inclusion.

The EQUAL programme has given rise to a lot of learning and experience. But there is a danger that this is all going to be lost, and we will spend the next 10 years relearning what we already discovered through EQUAL. It is important that the same principles should be included in mainstream funding, and this programme is an example of how this can be done.

Turning to **the role of NGOs**, Fintan Farrell pointed out that the terminology is sometimes not clear, with NGOs, third sector, and (in Ireland) voluntary sector all used to describe these bodies.

He urged the group not to be put off by concerns over the selection of participating NGOs, since the sector could sort that out by itself. Not all NGOs would want to take such a role, and not all would be capable. The scale of services provided by the Spanish programme would bankrupt many of them. Nonetheless there need to be clear criteria and open calls, taking account of organisations' track record and ability to deliver.

For programme like the OPC programme to work, the NGOs involved must be NGOs with very direct links to the people experiencing poverty or exclusion, and not specialist think tanks. They must be NGOs that have the ability to connect and empower. This means that conditions are different from one Member State to another. Technical assistance and capacity building for small NGOs is important because it helps to build up the whole sector.

Fintan Farrell felt the meeting told a very positive story. The OPCD is already having an impact, with some elements being reflected in the way other countries used their Structural Funds. "We hope more Member States will take the risk, as I think it will produce better outcomes," he concluded.

After lunch, the Peer Review participants divided into three groups for site visits to the Spanish Red Cross, Caritas, and the Roma Foundation's Acceder Programme in Córdoba.

Later in the afternoon, they compared first impressions and reactions to what they had learnt.

Malta: Josianne Vella, a social worker engaged with immigrants, noted large similarities between the OPCD and practice in Malta, where the same issues are targeted. She welcomed the 'moral support' provided by seeing her efforts placed in a larger context, amid other countries sharing similar problems. Since she focuses – amongst others – on health issues, she welcomed the OPCD's holistic approach to preparing people for the labour market.

She drew attention to concrete measures such as training for job interviews. "This is something we can take away with us today".

Germany: Rainer Fuchs from the German Embassy's Directorate for Social Affairs concluded that the Red Cross is doing the work of a placement agency, but in a more personalised way, so that people get the real help they would not get elsewhere. He wanted to know what contact exists with employment services themselves and whether these could be strengthened. He had only seen women at the centre, but had the feeling they were receiving valuable support.

Cyprus: Lefkos Vasiliou from the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance said that whereas he had earlier found the description of the OPCD rather theoretical, his visit to the Red Cross had convinced him that it was a genuinely inclusive project.

Maria Tussy Flores visited Caritas and was really impressed. In particular, the workers had told her the NGO gave them opportunities they couldn't find in the public service. This is one of the added values of NGOs. NGOs take a 'haute couture' approach to individuals in contrast to a 'prêt à porter', one-size-fits-all starting point.

She drew the attention of new EU Member States to the fact that what they had witnessed was the result of 20 years of experience in Spain. At the beginning, projects were not so marvellous. She urged them to be confident. Although the SFs are not easy to manage, managed well they can bring considerable results.

Fintan Farrell agreed that large Foundations and NGOs cannot be built up overnight, and there is a risk if they are not rooted at local level. This may require many years of confidence building among the population. However working methods can more easily be transferred.

Bulgaria: Independent expert Georgi Shopov hoped that it would not take 20 years to achieve progress in Bulgaria. The experience of using pre-accession funds, plus the good practice of others, was already helpful.

He visited Caritas and found it a good example of combining a green and social economy, with good cooperation with local authorities. Another positive element is the use of the social enterprises to provide transitional employment, with 80% going on to get jobs in the open market, showing sustainable results.

Cyprus: Independent expert Panayiotis Yiallourous visited the Roma Foundation and found the presence of Roma people among the staff a good sign of integration. The Roma have a feeling of ownership of the programme, demonstrated by cooperation between Roma and Spanish staff.

Slovenia: Katja Panjan from the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, said she was impressed at Caritas by the stories of people who work there temporarily before going on to find a job on the labour market. What were the main problems in setting up the system?

Maika Sánchez Martínez said one of the problems at the outset was the lack of credibility NGOs had compared with other actors like companies and trade unions. It has taken steady, day-to-day work to achieve that recognition in the context where some believed only social services could act effectively.

Jorge Nuño Mayer highlighted three weaknesses:

1. Dilemma between project management and implementation. NGOs like to act, but managing EU funds is very demanding. Therefore workers had to learn the discipline of controlling invoices and accounts.
2. During the 1990s, the cooperation between NGOs was not so advanced. There was mutual mistrust, with each organisation feeling it knew better than the others. It was important to recognise the strengths of other partners.
3. Lack of integration of actions – NGOs were too used to working with small projects.

He explained that through the OP and the EQUAL programme, integration companies were set up to provide jobs for people who cannot get into the main labour market. They were set up as transitional measures, but will in future be governed by a new law currently being approved by the Spanish Parliament.

José Sánchez Serrano referred to mistrust also on the part of local and regional authorities, who initially saw NGOs as in competition for funding they might have hoped to secure. Complementarity was difficult to achieve, and the NGOs had the dual challenge of also proving they were capable of managing the SFs. At the outset, there were fears that several bodies would offer the same services, which would have been a waste of money.

Day 2

Transferability aspects

Workshop reports

Workshop 1

Fintan Farrell remarked first of all that realities differ a lot between Member States. However, all could identify similar groups of vulnerable people and the need to address their problems in every country.

Bulgaria, for example, has the same at-risk groups such as disabled people and Roma. The most important **difference** is that whereas Spain has devoted a specific programme to fighting discrimination, some others work horizontally across all programmes. In Bulgaria there is increasing awareness of discriminatory attitudes among employers and other actors, and of equal rights issues. Another difference between countries is funding sources, varying between the ESF, ERDF and national budgets.

Fintan Farrell raised the problem of targeting: not everyone in specific groups is equally vulnerable: eg. some immigrants are highly qualified. People in disadvantaged groups are often engaged in the

informal economy, and this is a further challenge. Everyone shared the desire for an inclusive labour market, and an active approach to individuals.

Transferability

He highlighted widely agreed elements:

1. The need for special efforts to facilitate inclusion, and the design of specific programmes;
2. Every country faces the challenge of getting from policy design to implementation. The Spanish model demonstrates one way of doing this;
3. Methods: individual pathways to integration; the social economy and what it can deliver; awareness raising; tackling discrimination; a bottom-up approach.

Some Member States are looking to adapt employment agencies to provide a 'one-stop-shop' for people with multiple problems (creating one-stop-shops was one of Greece's EQUAL programme initiatives, for example), but a question mark hangs over to what extent these agencies are capable of delivering a programme such as the delivered through the OPCD.

Others also hope to develop a more integrated approach. In countries where social services and employment services do the same thing but separately, there is a need for a better and more comprehensive response. Participants praised the active approach, promoting self-reliance - particularly among Roma, who need extra support to overcome past experiences of discrimination and disadvantage. In small countries like Cyprus, an individual approach that removes bureaucratic procedures would be popular, and switching to a bottom-up formula would encourage people to organise activities themselves.

The Spanish example links local, autonomous regional and national levels and connects in turn with EU processes. This is very interesting from both an organisational and technical point of view for countries with similarly devolved structures such as Germany, where the main responsibilities in this field rest largely with municipalities or Länder (regions). The OPCD is a very good example of enhanced cooperation, with useful lessons for others.

NGOs play very different roles in different countries. In Germany, for example, the welfare state is designed to be delivered by NGOs. There are five big organisations, running hospitals, kindergartens, and social services, funded by the municipalities and Länder. In countries where there is already a long history of working with NGOs it is not easy to overhaul existing practice but the innovative approaches of the OPCD could reinvigorate the way such NGOs work. In Germany, cooperation works at national level, in that federal officials decide on policy and then issue calls for tender, but there is no provision for consultation at other levels and NGOs are not partners in policy development. Fintan Farrell noted that the five NGOs mentioned are members of the EAPN, and he understood they would in fact be very eager for a greater involvement in policy-making.

Greece, on the other hand, has no established tradition of NGO action, and although many new organisations are being launched, 80% of them focus on citizens' rights issues rather than social policy.

In many countries NGOs would be able to perform the same role as in Spain, but not all. Questions arise about management capacity and trust. What is the correct level of involvement – planning, follow-up, monitoring or actual management? He said that clearly there is work to be done in many countries with regard to legislation and operating framework. It is important to involve NGOs in defining these measures as they should not merely be imposed from outside.

Fintan Farrell believed there is more capacity in the NGO sector than people imagine, and seeing what they deliver in Spain should build trust among Peer Review participants.

Other questions related to:

- Democracy and accountability: what kind of measures are needed to ensure transparency?
- Once Operational Programmes are agreed, how can further learning be put to use?
- Importance of impact assessment and indicators. People were impressed by the statistics from the Spanish programme, but there is a need for longer-term indicators to evaluate outcomes fully.

Workshop 2

Reporting on the debates of the second workshop, **Tansy Hutchinson** said the workshop had also discussed the different situations of different peer countries regarding size, economic conditions etc., and especially the conditions of particularly disadvantaged people. However, everybody accepted the need for a programme to address the needs of these groups. The presentation of examples from the various peer countries also highlighted similarities.

Transferability

The issue of **NGO capacity** emerged as a key theme. It is clear that in different countries NGOs have different roles and differing levels of competence. The methodology of the Spanish programme was seen as widely relevant and potentially transferable, but there was concern about the contribution of NGOs and the measures needed in some countries to increase their capacities. In Slovenia, for example, the national legal framework creates a disincentive for NGOs to take on such tasks. Participants placed emphasis, therefore, on the inspiration to be drawn and lessons to be learnt.

What can governments do to build NGO capacity? What is the correct role of the state and state institutions, and what measures are required to ensure that vulnerable groups' needs are met while at the same time not allowing governments to escape their ultimate responsibility for social welfare? The Nordic model may be a good example in this regard.

The second key transferable theme was the use of **individual pathways**.

She raised the question of whether the OPCD is more relevant to urban settings, although some elements could be transferred to rural areas. Other questions discussed were the holistic approach, the scale of the OPCD, and the problems of gaps between policies and implementation in some countries.

Tapio Kuure, independent expert from Finland, added that in spite of the historical fact that the relations between civil society (NGO's) and the state authorities are different in various countries in the EU, there is a pressure for more similarities between the countries. The strategically most important political documents in the EU (Lisbon Strategy and White Paper on European Governance) and practices like the Open Method of Coordination and structural conversation are the most visible elements of that pressure. Without doubt the role of NGOs will strengthen in the future of the EU, both regarding policy measures as well as governance. The NGO's new role in Spain during 2000-2006 is an important sign of the changing relations between public authorities and civil society.

Relevance and key learning elements for peer countries and stakeholder representatives

Network expert Elizabeth Villagómez started by asking how the specific characteristics of the OPCD could be translated into lessons.

NGOs: should individual states aim to build up their NGO sectors or not? One of the obstacles is that NGOs have to learn to be very professional in managing large amounts of money.

Volume: numbers are relevant. Spain used to have high unemployment, which meant that groups with complex problems were lost in the provision of general services. When growth is strong and unemployment falls, it is easier to create opportunities for these people.

Sustainability: what steps are needed to make sure that people stay in the labour market?

The selection of types of training: should countries be aiming to produce carpenters or IT specialists?

Common elements

- All countries identified similar groups of socially excluded people;
- Measures to link the different agents and service providers: public employment services, NGOs, etc.
- The development of individual pathways to employment is gaining ground as a common methodology across the EU.

Discussion

Tansy Hutchinson queried the visibility of the anti-discrimination element. She was disappointed that measures to tackle discrimination in the labour market were not as strong as they could be. On the other hand, the programme makes a real effort to counter the inequalities resulting from discrimination. ENAR recognises and appreciates the fact that the OPCD responds to the particular needs of different groups rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all approach. Measures must be holistic, targeted, and participatory, and this has been taken on board.

José Sánchez Serrano pointed out that Roma people are distanced from standard employment services in Spain, which fail to take account of their specific needs because they are geared to aid the broader population. Nonetheless the Roma Foundation also registers Roma with these agencies because otherwise they remain a hidden population. The Foundation's priority is to make them visible. "We cooperate a lot with public employment services, but they don't reach the people we reach," he explained.

Maria Tussy Flores said there is no attempt to substitute for public employment services, but rather to establish an additional, value-added, personalised relationship. The ONCE Foundation also enrolls people with public services so that they can benefit from training etc.

Jorge Nuño Mayer explained that when people hear "no, no, no," from public agencies they turn to Caritas, because the organisation gives them the dignity they deserve. Social inclusion is not only about getting a job – which is the sole objective of employment services – but also covers health,

housing etc. NGOs can offer specific services such as getting dental treatment for drug addicts or childcare for single parents.

Further debate focused on the need for services to be adapted to the rhythm of the individual, not the institution. Public services are neither bad nor good *per se*, but cannot meet the needs for example of illiterate Roma children. Participants welcomed the complementary role of NGOs, but there was also concern about public responsibility. **Dolores Ruiz Bautista** from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs explained that the launch of Spain's Integrated Employment Services programme in 1998-99 opened opportunities for grants to organisations of vulnerable groups for training etc. and this extended to NGOs. However this has to be in addition to state services. The employment law of 2003 sets full employment as the main goal for regional employment offices, in partnership with other actors such as private companies.

José Manuel Fresno specified that public responsibility lies in :

- Planning and regulation – but not all public authorities fulfil their role;
- Implementation – can be shared on the basis of who is most efficient, but there is a danger if this becomes competitive;
- Monitoring – NGOs can support and contribute to monitoring.

Closing remarks

Ana Maria Nogueira from the DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities / ESF Coordination Unit of the European Commission focused her intervention on a few relevant issues raised during the two days. She reassured participants that lessons from the Peer Reviews are as important to the Member States as they are to the Commission, and that much of the improvements in some Community regulations resulted from this mutual learning process.

It is necessary to ensure that the action of the ESF is consistent with the policies provided for under the European Employment Strategy and to concentrate ESF support on the implementation of the guidelines and recommendations under the Strategy.

Responding to the participants who expressed some frustration on the time consumed with the "red tape" imposed by auditing requirements, she reminded NGOs of the need to keep on top of their paperwork. In this regard, capacity building is an important issue which is covered in the current programming round (2007-2013) and can contribute to NGO increased and improved participation in the implementation of ESF activities.

Spain should not be regarded as the model for everything, realities are different and need different approaches, for instance in what concerns the procedure for the NGO selection the Commission encourages Member States to do it preferably through tendering – "It is important to know how providers are chosen," she declared.

Referring to the principle of partnership for the 2007-2013 programming period, she reminded the participants that NGO (like other stakeholders) should be involved at every programming stage – setting-up, follow-up and evaluation. For instance, Member States are responsible for nominating the members of Monitoring Committees, which have clear tasks and must include NGO and/or social partner representatives.

She pointed out that lessons can be put to good use, since actions can be changed if they do not work out as foreseen. Actors just have to inform the Commission what they are changing and why. The Commission is most interested in results and impacts. It is not going to examine the details of every project, but on the other hand it is not enough just to list the number of people taking part. If project organisers are dissatisfied with their results it is a sign that they must take action to improve them.

Responding to the Peer Review participants who expressed disappointment about the EQUAL programme coming to an end, she said everyone was sorry, but it was a pilot project and it is not possible to continue experimenting indefinitely. The unit responsible for EQUAL has organised seminars on the mainstreaming of the EQUAL principles into the new ESF programmes, and has set up a platform for transferring materials and disseminate information.

For 2007-2013 Member States have so far earmarked for the social inclusion priority (category 71) about 11% of ESF spending. This amount is likely to be lower than in reality, since actions targeting the socially excluded (or in danger of becoming so) or people at disadvantage can be implemented under any of the priorities of the ESF (access to employment, human capital, etc.); in due time, concrete data will be retrieved from national reports.

Furthermore, article 10 of the ESF regulation makes as an obligation to Member States to include in their annual and final reports where appropriate for instance information on the implementation of actions to increase participation/integration in employment of minorities, migrants and other disadvantaged groups, including people with disabilities.

“There are certain key target groups and we have to know how their needs are being met.”

She also drew attention to the new ESF website:

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/esf/index_en.htm

Juan Carlos Mato Gómez said Europe is going through a period of employment creation, but there are some sections of the population who are left on the margins of society. Spain has moved from huge unemployment rates to manageable ones, but one outcome is that employment policies have been tailored to a context that no longer exists. The target was full employment, but despite the drop in unemployment that objective has not been reached. Employment policies have to be refocused on people with particular difficulties that keep them from the labour market.

EQUAL has generated a huge flow of experience. The Commission, together with Member States, funded the programme and must now transfer that good practice.

Social integration cannot be separated from conditions in the labour market. But the state must have an active role and cannot leave market forces alone to regulate the jobs market. The minimum wage is an important issue, because it must be worthwhile for people to work. The aim must be to create good, well-paid jobs. A holistic vision is another essential element of the strategy.

The Integration law to be passed by the Parliament will provide for coordination between public services and NGOs in creating individual pathways. In a context in which public administrations take their own commitments seriously, NGOs can contribute to improving people's living standards, for example through innovation. Civil society is very good at finding new solutions.

He thanked the NGOs, the participants and the European Commission. The Commission has a crucial leadership role, and without it economic policies would break down. The Spanish authorities respect its independence, "even when we complain".

The Peer Review participants congratulated **Juan Carlos Mato Gómez** on his appointment that day as General Director of Spain's social inclusion programme.

Juan Cornejo Salamanca, from Andalusia's Directorate General of Social Services and Inclusion, said problems of social exclusion still exist in both rural areas and cities in Andalusia. The new Integration law provides new tools and measures in areas such as housing which should promote social inclusion in the region. Andalusia is an important region with many inhabitants, and the authorities are very interested in the new approaches being proposed by the Commission in the new funding period. EU programmes have had a very positive impact in the region. Implementing new initiatives and good practices is key, and NGOs should be involved in the fight against social exclusion. He hoped the example of the programme under review would be valuable for people in their own countries.

"We need to ensure greater success in social inclusion so that all citizens have an equal right to all the opportunities open to them," he concluded.