

Initiatives of the social partners for the improvement of labour market access for disadvantaged groups (taken from practice)

Discussion Paper

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PART A: The policy debate at European level

A.1 The policy framework and the related debate at European level

The Lisbon strategy to strengthen social cohesion in the European Union and the Nice objectives contain several sub-targets, among these: taking care for the most vulnerable and preventing exclusion. These targets are combined in the revised Lisbon strategy as streamlining of employment policy, social inclusion, pension system, health care, and long-term care. It was emphasised that “making growth and jobs the immediate target goes hand in hand with promoting social or environmental objectives.”¹ The new approach intends to promote effective and mutual interaction between the Lisbon objectives and to improve the assessment of how social policies can contribute to more jobs and growth (“feeding in”) as well as of how the objectives of jobs and growth can serve social cohesion (“feeding out”).² This integrated point of view is the consequence of the multidimensional processes of exclusion and strategies of inclusion.³ This is clearly an area suitable for mutual learning within the Open Method of Coordination (OMC).

Nevertheless this integrated and extensive approach needs more and more sub-strategies, although they will be part of the overall policy. A European consultation process issued by the European Commission in 2006⁴ asked for an active inclusion of the people furthest from labour market. This consultation had two goals as stated in its synthesis report: “Firstly, to review the progress achieved in the context of an enlarged Union towards the aim of fostering labour market access for those who are excluded. Secondly, based upon this review, to launch a public consultation on possible guidelines for action at EU-level, with a view to promoting the active inclusion of people furthest from the labour market.”⁵ This concept is based on three pillars: link to

¹ European Commission (2005), “Working together for growth and jobs: A new start for the Lisbon Strategy”, Communication from the Commission, COM(2005) 24 final.
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2005:0024:FIN:EN:PDF>

² “Feeding in” is about how social protection and social inclusion policies contribute to greater economic growth and more jobs. “Feeding out” is creating an economic environment that supports social policy and its objectives.

³ All documents and information: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/index_en.html

⁴ Concerning a consultation on action at EU level to promote the active inclusion of the people furthest from the labour market, COM(2006)44 final.
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2006:0044:FIN:EN:PDF>

⁵ Public Consultation on Active Inclusion, Synthesis report by the Commission Services.

labour market through job opportunities or vocational training, income support, and better access to services. In October 2007 the Commission submitted to a new consultation process its specific proposals in this field.⁶ Both consultation processes included a specific consultation of social partners about possible initiatives in their field of competence in accordance with the procedure foreseen in Article 138 of the EC Treaty.

Unemployment and exclusion from the labour market in Europe is a long-lasting problem in the European Member States. But some groups are more affected than others: especially people with disabilities, young and elderly, migrants, homeless people, etc. Additionally, having a job is one thing, staying healthy on the job another. And how long people are able to work also depends on their working conditions. So the three targets of the streamlining process of the revised strategy since 2005 come together in several measures and programmes, initiated by the European Commission. The emphasis of this approach is to bring the national stakeholders and those on European level together, because the multidimensional causes of exclusion demand an integrated strand. The above quoted Synthesis Report by the Commission Services of a Public Consultation and Active Inclusion is based on 73 contributions: Member States, European social partners, European level NGOs and organisations, other national and regional public authorities, national social partners, NGOs and organisations, and one private individual. This consultation demonstrates that active inclusion is one of the most important goals of the social policy at European, national, regional, and local level.

The synthesis report of the consultation process started in 2006 summarises: "In general, there is a shared view that more needs to be done at EU level to deal with the still important and common challenges that the EU faces with respect to the active inclusion of those furthest from the labour market. But there are of course differences in the possible way forward." Most of the 73 contributions agree that the OMC in the field of social protection and social inclusion is "an effective tool to share good practice and enhance policies in the active inclusion field." In addition to strengthening minimum income schemes, active inclusion could be achieved via a new ad hoc guideline, specific targets and indicators, Peer Reviews, and further research. The contributions underlined the special responsibility of the social partners – both employers and employees' associations - to participate in the social dialogue in order to support the inclusion of the most marginalised people in the labour market.

The new communication process which started in October 2007 asks for a more holistic approach and underlines again the necessity to integrate all stakeholders including the social partners in a strategy of active inclusion. The Commission summarizes the position and the expectations of the social partners:

"The communication launching the first-stage consultation already stressed the role played by the social partners in many Member States in the design and monitoring of active labour market policies, and in the negotiations on minimum wages. In their response to the Article 138 first-stage consultation, the social partners did not support any legislative options at EU level for active inclusion, but rather favoured a strengthening of the existing Open

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/docs/social_inclusion/2006/active_inclusion/synthesis_en.pdf

⁶ Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Modernising social protection for greater social justice and economic cohesion: taking forward the active inclusion of people furthest from the labour market. COM(2007) 620 final, 17. 10. 2007. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2007:0620:FIN:EN:PDF>

Method of Coordination as well as a more integrated approach. They also made clear that they had a key role to play in improving the availability of jobs for disadvantaged people and in putting in place suitable recruitment procedures, as also shown by recent tripartite agreements.

In particular, the social partners recalled that their work programme for 2006-2008 highlights how they can deal with the issue of disadvantaged groups. They committed themselves to do so *by undertaking to make a joint analysis on the key challenges facing Europe's labour markets, looking at issues such as the integration of disadvantaged people in the labour market, by defining priorities to be included in a framework of actions on employment and by negotiating an autonomous framework agreement on either the integration of disadvantaged groups in the labour market or lifelong learning.*

In the debate following the presentation of the consultation results, it was clearly evident that social partners have a pivotal role in promoting job retention: disadvantaged people, having found a job, may need continued support, e.g. in terms of on-the-job training and lifelong learning opportunities as well as suitable and flexible work arrangements to help marginalised people reconcile work with their efforts in dealing with social disadvantage (such as lack of appropriate accommodation, caring responsibilities and health problems). In other words, the process of social reintegration does not end at the doors of the enterprise.⁷

Following the second consultation and as planned in their joint social dialogue work programme for 2006-2008, the European social partners (European Trade Union Confederation - ETUC, BUSINESSEUROPE, European Centre of Enterprises with Public Participation and of Enterprises of General economic Interest - CEEP and European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises - UEAPME) announced in February 2008 that they would start negotiations on an autonomous agreement on better integration of disadvantaged groups in the labour market. This includes provisions to facilitate access to and progression in the labour market for disadvantaged workers, through a series of curative and preventative measures including lifelong learning. However, the autonomous agreement will probably not focus on people furthest away from the labour market as this challenge requires the involvement of other stakeholders, notably public authorities. Negotiations are bound to be terminated after the summer.

But this cannot be the sole responsibility of the social partners. The two other pillars – income support and access to services – are not in the direct competence of the social partners. The Member States and their different actors and levels have to attend to this. In addition to the responsibility of the social partners, the synthesis report pointed out the necessity of a civil dialogue, of a wider consultation with civil society. And finally, “several respondents highlighted the potential role of EU financial instruments, including the European Social Fund and PROGRESS, to help and promote the rights and access to services needed for the integration of excluded people. However, it was also pointed out that those furthest from the labour market have not significantly benefited from Community programmes such as ESF and EQUAL.”

⁷ COM(2007) 620 final, 17. 10. 2007, page 4.
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2007:0620:FIN:EN:PDF>

The policy at European level for active inclusion of those furthest from the labour market is based on five pillars:

- National strategies to combat social exclusion;
- Social dialogue;
- Civil dialogue;
- Open method of coordination;
- European financial instruments.

A.2 European comparative aspects

In all Member States there exist mostly the same problems of active integration of those furthest from the labour market. But nevertheless, there are differences, too.

1. Employment rates

Year	EU 15	EU 25	AT	ES	IE	SI	FI	UK	NO
1999	62.5	61.9	68.6	53.8	63.3	62.2	66.4	71.0	n.s.
2000	63.4	62.4	68.5	56.3	65.2	62.8	67.2	71.2	77.5
2001	64.0	62.8	68.5	57.8	65.8	63.8	68.1	71.4	77.2
2002	64.2	62.8	68.7	58.5	65.5	63.4	68.1	71.3	76.8
2003	64.4	63.0	68.9	59.8	65.5	62.6	67.7	71.5	75.5
2004	64.8	63.3	67.8	61.1	66.3	65.3	67.6	71.6	75.1
2005	65.4	64.0	68.6	63.3	67.6	66.0	68.4	71.7	74.8
2006	66.2	64.8	70.2	64.8	68.6	66.6	69.3	71.5	75.4

Source: EUROSTAT,

<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&plugin=0&language=de&pcode=em011> (02.05.08)

The employment rate of Austria is above the average of all Member States in the EU and further increased in 2006. The peer countries Norway and the United Kingdom already share an employment rate of over 70% – one target of the guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States!⁸

2. Unemployment rates

Year	EU 15	EU 25	AT	ES	IE	SI	FI	UK	NO
1999	8.5	9.1	3.9	12.5	5.7	7.3	10.2	5.9	3.2
2000	7.7	8.6	3.6	11.1	4.2	6.7	9.8	5.4	3.4
2001	7.2	8.4	3.6	10.3	4.0	6.2	9.1	5.0	3.6
2002	7.6	8.7	4.2	11.1	4.5	6.3	9.1	5.1	3.9
2003	7.9	9.0	4.3	11.1	4.7	6.7	9.0	4.9	4.5
2004	8.0	9.0	4.8	10.6	4.5	6.3	8.8	4.7	4.4
2005	8.1	8.9	5.2	9.2	4.3	6.5	8.4	4.8	4.6
2006	7.7	8.2	4.7	8.5	4.4	6.0	7.7	5.4	3.5

Source: EUROSTAT,

<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&plugin=0&language=de&pcode=em071> (02.05.08)

⁸ Council Decision of 22 July 2003 on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States – 2003/579/EC, in: Official Journal of the European Union, L 197, Volume 46, 5 August 2003.

Austria has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the European Union as well as among the participating peer countries. Norway and Ireland also have low unemployment rates, Spain and Finland higher ones. Spain transgresses the average of the European Union 25. Considering the development in the last years, Austria stays on the same level, comparable with the other countries with low unemployment rates.

3. Unemployment rates of elderly (> 50)

Year	EU 15	EU 25	AT	ES	IE	SI	FI	UK	NO
1999	7.2	n.s.	4.7	9.3	4.3	4.1	8.2	4.5	n.s.
2000	6.6	6.8	6.2	8.9	2.9	6.3	7.7	4.2	1.3
2001	5.6	6.1	4.6	6.3	2.8	3.7	7.6	3.0	1.4
2002	5.7	6.3	5.3	7.2	2.6	3.8	7.2	3.4	1.3
2003	5.9	6.4	5.2	6.7	2.7	3.8	7.3	3.1	1.4
2004	6.3	6.8	4.1	7.1	2.7	4.1	7.2	2.9	1.4
2005	6.0	6.5	3.5	5.9	2.9	3.8	6.6	2.8	1.7
2006	5.8	6.1	3.4	5.8	2.5	3.4	6.3	3.0	1.3

Source: EUROSTAT,

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?_pageid=0,1136184,0_45572595&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL
(02. 05. 08)

Austria reduced the unemployment rate for the elderly in the last years, compared to the year 2000 by nearly 50%. All peer countries reduced their unemployment rates for the elderly in the last years and are below the average rate of EU 25, except Finland.

4. Employment rates of elderly (55–64 years)

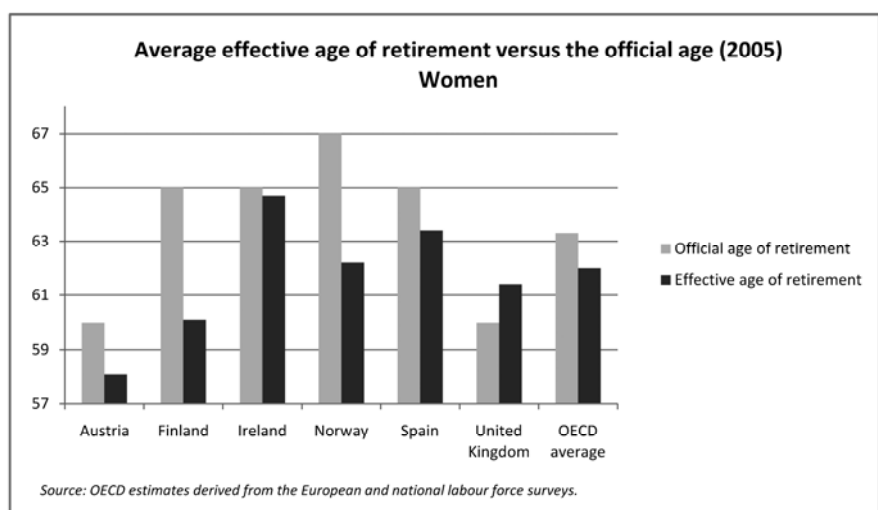
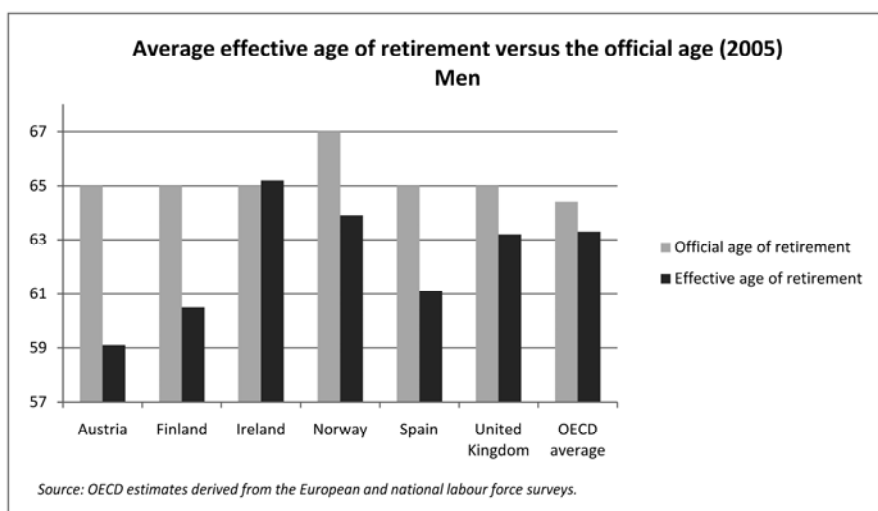
Year	EU 15	EU 25	AT	ES	IE	SI	FI	UK	NO
1999	37.1	36.2	29.7	35.0	43.7	22.0	39.0	49.6	n.s.
2000	37.8	36.6	28.8	37.0	45.3	22.7	41.6	50.7	65.2
2001	38.8	37.5	28.9	39.2	46.8	25.5	45.7	52.2	65.9
2002	40.2	38.7	29.1	39.6	48.0	24.5	47.8	53.4	66.2
2003	41.7	40.3	30.3	40.7	49.0	23.5	49.6	55.4	66.9
2004	42.5	41.0	28.8	41.3	49.5	29.0	50.9	56.2	65.8
2005	44.2	42.6	31.8	43.1	51.6	30.7	52.7	56.9	65.5
2006	45.3	43.7	35.5	44.1	53.1	32.6	54.5	57.4	67.4

Source: EUROSTAT,

<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&plugin=0&language=de&pcode=em014> (02. 05. 08)

On the other side, Austria has the lowest employment rate of elderly people. The line Austria took in the past was early retirement.

5. Average effective age of retirement versus the official age, 2005



In Norway, the official age of retirement is now 67 years, but the effective retirement age for men is 63.9 years, which is 4.5 years below the official limit. Other countries in the EU decided to lift their official retirement limit. In Austria the gap between official and effective retirement age is the largest within the peer countries; in 2005: for men 5.9 years, for women 6.9 years. In Ireland the effective age of retirement for men is even higher than the official one.

6. Activity status of youth by age

After young people have finished their (compulsory) schooldays, they might participate in the different vocational training systems and/or in academic studies. At the age of fifteen, most of all young people are in education. It differs between the single Member States at which age vocational training and/or occupation starts. In the EU-27, in 2006 most of all younger people were in school, vocational training or employment until the age of about twenty, but thereafter is an increase of youth-unemployment. The quota remains on an average of 17%.

Source: Employment Report 2007, Chapter 1, Chart 25, p. 37.

7. Unemployment rates of younger persons (< 25)

Year	EU 15	EU 25	AT	ES	IE	SI	FI	UK	NO
1999	18.2	n.s.	5.9	29.1	8.6	18.5	28.6	12.4	12.3
2000	16.1	18.1	6.3	25.3	6.5	16.4	28.4	12.0	11.1
2001	14.1	17.0	6.0	20.7	6.2	15.7	26.6	10.3	12.2
2002	14.7	17.5	7.2	21.6	7.8	14.8	28.2	10.9	13.0
2003	15.3	17.9	7.5	22.3	8.1	15.3	27.8	11.4	11.9
2004	16.0	18.3	11.0	22.4	8.3	14.0	27.5	10.8	12.8
2005	16.6	18.5	10.3	19.7	8.7	15.9	20.1	13.0	11.5
2006	16.1	17.3	9.1	17.9	8.4	13.9	26.0	13.7	8.7

Source: EUROSTAT,

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?_pageid=0,1136184,0_45572595&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL
(02.05.08)

The development of the unemployment rate for younger persons differs in the peer countries: In three countries – Ireland, United Kingdom and Norway – the rate remained on the same level between 1999 and 2006. In Finland, Slovenia and Spain there was a decrease, but the level was around or even higher than the average of the EU Member States. Even though only Austria's level increased, it still was nearly one third of EU 15 in 1999. In the meantime this percentage had doubled, but with 9.1% in 2006 it remained very low in comparison with EU 15, EU 25, and the peer countries. But nevertheless: There is an increase.

8. Percentage of children living in a household without any employed person

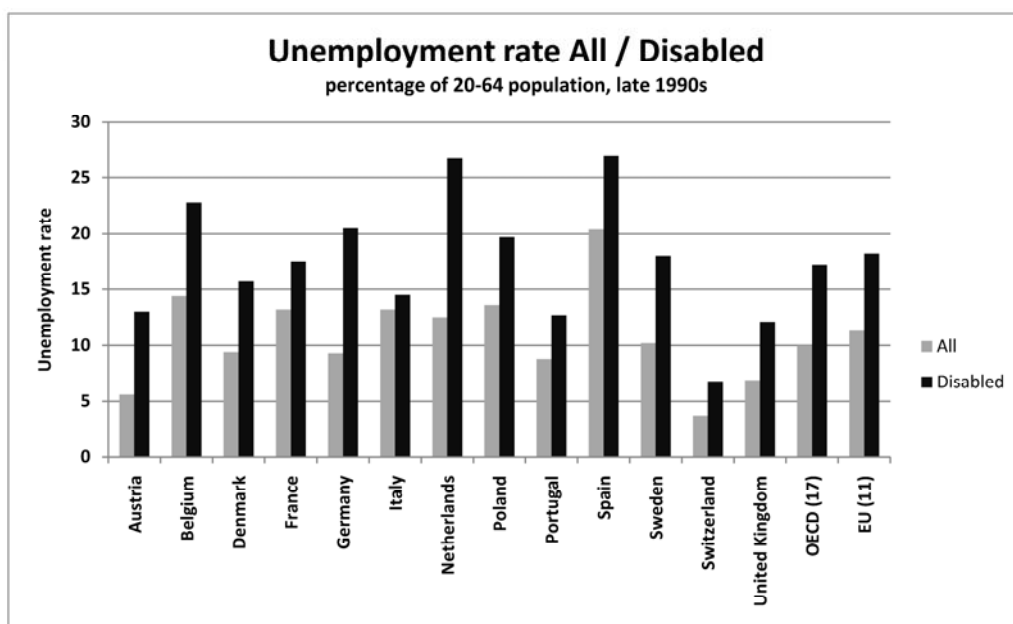
Year	EU 15	EU 25	AT	ES	IE	SI	FI	UK	NO
1999	10.4	n.s.	4.2	7.3	11.7	4.1	n.s.	18.4	n.s.
2000	9.7	n.s.	4.3	6.5	10.2	4.0	n.s.	17.0	n.s.
2001	9.6	9.6	4.1	6.4	10.4	3.8	n.s.	16.9	n.s.
2002	9.8	9.9	4.4	6.6	10.8	3.8	n.s.	17.4	n.s.
2003	9.8	9.8	4.3	6.0	11.8	4.0	5.7	17.0	n.s.
2004	9.8	9.8	5.6	6.3	11.8	3.8	5.7	16.8	n.s.
2005	9.6	9.6	6.3	5.4	12.0	2.7	6.6	16.5	n.s.
2006	9.3	9.5	7.2	5.1	11.3	3.6	4.9	16.2	n.s.

Source: EUROSTAT,

<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&plugin=0&language=de&pcode=sc071> (20. 03. 2008)

Very problematic are living conditions for children in households without anybody who has a working place. Although the percentage of children living in a household without any employed person remained on the same level in the EU 15 and EU 25 and although this rate declined in some review countries there is an increase in Austria.

9. Unemployment rates of people with disabilities (all degrees of disability)



Source: OECD 2003

The unemployment rate of people with disabilities in all peer countries is – except for Spain and Finland – below the quota of EU 15 and EU 25. In Norway and Austria the unemployment rate is the lowest one.

10. Lower employment rate with higher degree of disability – Employment rate of all disabled, percentage of 20–64 population – late 1990s

Country	Percentage
EU 11	40.8
AT	43.4
ES	22.1
UK	38.9
BE	33.5
DK	48.2
FR	47.9
DE	46.1
IT	32.1
NL	39.9
PT	43.9
PL	20.8
SW	52.6
CH	62.2
OECD (19)	43.9

Source: OECD 2003: Transforming Disability into Ability - Policies to promote work and income security for disabled people, p. 35.

To sum up: Austria has a low unemployment rate, especially for the elderly, but the early retirement rate is high. The unemployment rate for the younger has increased, but nevertheless, in comparison with EU average and other peer countries, it is still on a lower level. The same applies to people with disabilities, if one compares the unemployment rate of all with that of the

group of people with a high degree of disability. But the employment rate of this group is on an average position in the Member States. One may presume that also some problems depending on disabilities find one solution in early retirement. All together, there are target groups which are affected by unemployment more than others. These are in particular the elderly, who leave working life earlier than the official age of retirement, some groups of younger people, as well as people with a high degree of disability. These groups are the subject of the Peer Review in Austria and are of high relevance in the peer countries as well.

A.3 A reference to related previous Peer Reviews

Among previous Peer Reviews at least five had comparable subjects and targets. The Peer Reviews of Austria 2004, Germany 2004, Portugal 2005, Sweden 2006 and Finland 2007 dealt with the integration of groups which need special support for the integration into the labour market: younger people, women, most vulnerable groups with different and several disadvantages, and elderly.⁹ The Portuguese Peer Review looked into activating the potentials on a local level and a mobilisation of all relevant stakeholders. Other reports deal with combining different levels of policy. All stress the necessity of an integrated approach and implementation, making the cooperation of political, social and civil actors necessary.

- "Clearing" (Austria 2004) is a service acting at the critical cut between school and working life. The civil actors visit the schools, especially special schools. Beneficiaries of these services are young persons with disabilities and those with a special need for emotional or social support. One of the targets is the integration into the labour market.
- Insufficient general or private support in order to strengthen the compatibility of family and work is one of the most important obstacles for women to be integrated into labour market (Germany 2004). Examples of good practice demonstrate that local 'alliances for families' and the "Audit" "Work and Family" – voluntary process for the entrepreneurs – are ways to bring together the necessity of more female working force for economic growth and the demand of more – especially young – women to be integrated into the labour market. But nevertheless, these regional or local activities need a civil dialogue for a better atmosphere for the families.
- In Portugal social networks were being formed in 163 municipalities and 700 decentralised projects between 2001 and 2004. These activities are based on the approach of empowerment, including strengthening working skills and personal capacities in order to find a job.
- "Delta", a project located in the region of Gothenburg, deals with the social integration of most excluded people with different and several problems: unemployment, homelessness, illness, low education, poverty, drug abuse, alcoholism, etc. (Sweden 2006). An integrated approach aims at enabling this social group to enter the labour market. Many actors, including the employers, take part in the success of this project.
- Active ageing strategies to strengthen Social Inclusion will more and more become essential for the European societies (Finland 2007). On the one hand, this approach focuses on the question how people can be enabled to stay in work longer: lifelong learning, improvement of

⁹ <http://www.peer-review-social-inclusion.net/>

working conditions, occupational health, and safety. On the other hand, changes in work organisation and career evolution, flexible retirement age, as well as long-term unemployment lead to an earlier end of work life, although older people have much-needed knowledge and skills. Therefore the Finnish active ageing strategies target at combining two aspects of ageing: growing older with work or without working.

Part B: Description of the main elements of the policy

B.1 Background

Austria has an unemployment rate which is lower and an employment rate which is higher than the average of the European Member States. But there are problem groups just as in other countries:

- The integration of *younger people* into the working process is a long lasting problem. In times when even well trained or educated persons have problems being integrated into their profession ('Generation Praktikum (traineeship)'), young people with personal problems are confronted with several obstacles finding their position in working life. In 2005, 6% of young people under 17 lived in a household affected by unemployment.¹⁰ No graduation from school or a low level of education is one of the most important reasons for unemployment.
- *The elderly*. With 30.8%¹¹ the employment rate of persons between 55–64 years in Austria is very low. This does not only affect the people themselves, but also the refinancing of the welfare state. Their health has to be counterbalanced by the official health system, early retirement leads to more costs for the pension system.
- An *ageing society* in combination with a decrease of the population has the need to keep the elderly in the working process. Society depends on their practical knowledge, skills, and their innovative potential.
- *Disability* is not only a medical, physical, or mental problem; it is also a problem of social definition and handling. People with disabilities have their 'normality' just the same as those who are not disabled.¹² They have a right to social integration – within and beyond working life.

The policy to combat social exclusion in Austria takes place in a unique network of social partnership: There is a long lasting tradition and well-developed system of cooperation between the major social and economic interest groups and the government.¹³ The Federal Chamber of

¹⁰ Republic of Austria: National Report on Strategies for Social protection and Social Inclusion p. 4.
http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/strategy_reports_en.htm

¹¹ ÖSB Consulting. Active Ageing. Recherchestudie zu Good Practice im Auftrag des AMS Österreich, Wien 2005; EUROSTAT quota is a little bit higher: 2005: 30,8%, 2006: 35,5%.

¹² Eckhard Rohmann: Zwischen selbstbestimmter sozialer Teilhabe und fürsorglicher Ausgrenzung. Lebenslagen und Lebensbedingungen von Menschen, die wir behindert nennen. In: Ernst-Ulrich Huster u.a. (Hg.): Handbuch Armut und Soziale Ausgrenzung, Wiesbaden 2008, p. 400 ff.

¹³ Social partnership in Austria: http://www.sozialpartner.at/sozialpartner_start.htm, mission statement in English: http://www.sozialpartner.at/sozialpartner/Sozialpartnerschaft_mission_en.pdf

Labour in Austria is regulated by a law; it is a self governed institution of the labour force in Austria with wide competencies. This kind of institution is unique in Europe, because it takes over the function of a chamber for working people for the whole country with a federal structure parallel to the federal structure of Austria. The other partners are comparable to those in other EU Member States.

The initiatives presented in the Peer Review are no governmental measures, but those of the Austrian social partners:

- The Austrian Federation of Trade Unions (ÖGB), about 1.4 Mio. members;¹⁴
- The Federal Chamber of Labour (BAK), a specific official administration, self-governed by all Austrian employees (about 2 Mio. employees);¹⁵
- The Federal Chamber of Economy Austria (WKÖ) self governed official agency for the entrepreneurs (340,000 members);¹⁶
- The Federation of Industry (IV), an employers organisation of the (larger) industry on a voluntary basis (about 2.000 members).¹⁷

B.2 The goals, objectives and target groups of the policy

The National Report on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2006-2008¹⁸ of Austria underlines the strategic approach to the three objectives of the OMC:

1. strengthening social cohesion and facilitating equal chances for everybody by sustainable and lasting social protection and a policy of social inclusion;
2. overlapping of the economic, employment and social policy;
3. cooperation of all stakeholders by formulating goals, by implementing, and by evaluating.

Ad 1: In the next 10 years Austria intends to cut the poverty rate for families with children by 5%, from 15% at present to 10%. Especially the chances for children and young people with social problems are to become better, in order to break into the line of handing down poverty and social exclusion from one generation to the next.

People with disabilities should be better integrated into the labour market than in the past.

¹⁴ www.oegb.at

¹⁵ www.arbeiterkammer.at

¹⁶ www.wko.at

¹⁷ www.industriellenvereinigung.at

¹⁸ Republic of Austria: National Report on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2006–2008 from Austria, http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/strategy_reports_en.htm

The employment rate has to be increased and the financing of the social protection system to be strengthened. Especially the elderly are to remain longer in working life, not least because the legal age of retirement is to be put up.

Austria will strengthen the prevention in health care. Besides other programmes, the government will support the initiative of the social partners to come to better working conditions.

Ad 2: The National Reform Programme started several initiatives for the better integration of the different fields of national policy. The field of integration into the labour market has priority, especially target groups with social problems.

Ad 3: The National Report on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion (NSRSPS) underlines the participation of all stakeholders in the process of consultation on this report. Next to the institutional cooperation within the federal level there is – part of the federal structure and the legal position of the municipalities – the necessity to take care of the different legal and de facto competencies. And Austria has a long lasting tradition of a corporative structure in the civil society: social partners, NGOs, etc.

B.3 Austrian social partnership for an active inclusion of the people furthest from the labour market

In Austria the social partners have installed programmes to put these goals into a precise form. They take new steps to integrate the target groups into the labour market and to improve working conditions as a precondition for a longer working life in good health. Three programmes are part of a combined strategy to provide better information to the entrepreneurs and to the affected people by an internet platform. Two programmes try to combine information and practical aid for special groups of disadvantaged persons.

I. Three internet based information platforms

(I.a) Work & age¹⁹

Despite the demographical change, work organisation is further more orientated to younger people (young, male, and non-migrant). The policy of early retirement has worked well in the sixties and seventies of the last century, but is not a recipe for the future. There is a need

- to cover the productivity of the elderly,
- to increase the GDP in spite of the demographical change,
- to save and improve the quality of life,
- to maintain Europe's ability of competition,
- to keep the social protection systems stable.

¹⁹ www.arbeitundalter.at

The target group is not the elderly themselves but the employers who employ elderly. These employers are to be enabled to cover the productivity of older people by information on the topic age and work, good practice in the international context, and advice. Altogether, the balance of the generations is to be covered till 2050: The employees are to stay longer in the working place, young people are to be better integrated, there has to be a transfer of knowledge between the generations, and the organisation of the work processes have to take into consideration special needs of employees 45+.

Institutional arrangements and procedures of implementation

Partners are the Federation of Industry (IV), the Austrian Federation of Trade Unions (ÖGB), The Federal Chamber of Economy Austria (BKÖ) and the Chamber of Labour of Vienna (WAK).

The programme has been implemented in six steps and measures:

- research on the topic "work and age";
- dissemination of broad basic knowledge (demographical change, development of the working abilities dependent on age, health etc., employment quotas, discussion of the consequences of underemployment of the target group of elderly);
- virtual advice for entrepreneurs by internet, concrete hints what to do, evaluation, cost-benefit-analysis;
- seminars, conferences for the entrepreneurs;
- public information;
- collection of links to other databases.

The information for the entrepreneurs, for the media, etc. contain the topics demography, elderly on the labour market, elderly at the work place, different working-time schemes, preserving and promoting employee qualification, and health protection at the working places.

(I.b) Work & disability²⁰

The internet portal is designed to reduce the lack of information within the target group of employers.

- Information upon the possibilities to employ people with disabilities
- Disseminate good practice
- How to cover the demand of workers in the future

Institutional arrangements and procedures of implementation

Partners are the Federation of Industry (IV), the Austrian Federation of Trade Unions (ÖGB), The Federal Chamber of Economy Austria (WKÖ), the Federal Chamber of Labour (BAK), the Public Employment Service, the Austrian Social Insurance for Occupational Risks (AUVA), the Main Association of Austrian Social Security Institutions, the Austrian national Council of Disabled

²⁰ www.arbeitundbehinderung.at

Persons, the Federal Social Office (BASB), the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs and Consumer Protection and the Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour.

The programme includes the following steps:

- 60 examples of good practice for different jobs in order to motivate employers to start diversity management,
- information about the benefits of employing disabled persons,
- information about public subsidies and technical aid,
- information about sanctions by not employing people with disabilities,
- information by database,
- information for people with disabilities themselves,
- information about reports, research, etc.

This measure, too, targets to change mind and practice by information, especially by internet and database. The instruments used are examples of good practice and the information about the necessities and opportunities of diversity management.

(I.c) Work & health²¹

To strengthen the resources of health and diminish risks of illness and accidents is the main target of this programme. The target group are the employers. The main aims are:

- improving health conditions in working life
- reducing sick leave,
- avoiding working place accidents.

Institutional arrangements and procedures of implementation

Partners are the Federation of Industry (IV), the Austrian Federation of Trade Unions (ÖGB), the Federal Chamber of Economy Austria (WKÖ) and the Federal Chamber of Labour (BAK). The programme is supported by Pfizer Corporation Austria, the Austrian Social Insurance for Occupational Risks (AUVA) and the Main Association of Austrian Social Security Institutions. Apart from these partners there is a team of advisers.

This programme is also an internet based information platform:

- general information about conditions for good health and maintenance of industrial health and safety standards;
- concrete concepts of how to act in the field of good health at the work place;
- questionnaire for the self-improvement of work and health;
- database upon 70 projects as examples of good practice (targets, results, instruments, involved partners, period of time and outlook);
- different awards for enterprises which successfully followed the criteria of quality in this subject: "BGF-Gütesiegel" and a special award from the Ministry of Economy and Labour;
- information about reports etc. by internet.

This measure is a combination of general information, good practice, and awards. Like the other programmes, it depends on active cooperation of the users to get the information and transfer it into the reality of the own enterprise.

The internet sources we had access to do not include information about the financial and human resources of these three projects. Two programmes inform about ESF (European Social Fund)-financed schemes (including the community initiative EQUAL): work & age and work & disability.

²¹ www.arbeitundgesundheit.at

II. Two programmes combining information and practical aid for special groups of disadvantaged persons

(II.a) Service Work and health – advisory service for professional prevention²²

The employment rate of the elderly (55-64) in EU 15 increased from 1990-2004 to 40.9%, in Austria however, there is a decrease from 31.4% to 30.8%. Besides, the figure of chronic illness and early retirement increased. This pattern indicates a need for:

- early advice for people older than 40 with health-handicaps in order to keep them in work;
- early diagnosis, early intervention;
- increase of employment rate of people with health defects;
- rehabilitation.

Institutional arrangements and procedures of implementation

Partners are the Public Employment Service Vienna, Chamber of Labour Vienna (WAK) and the ArbeitnehmerInnen Förderungs Fonds Vienna (WAFF, Vienna Employment Promotion Fund).

The programme works in the following manner:

- implementation of a blanked coverage network of early diagnosis and cooperation;
- the clients are to be sent to the advisory board by all partners (employer, health insurance etc.) who are in contact with the affected person;
- hotline for the entrepreneurs to get advice on how to improve working conditions for older employees;
- each employee in the advisory process gets a case manager;
- those who lost their job or will lose it very soon can get advice for a new profession, a new work place
- occupational medicine and psychology are involved;
- possibility of "health coaching";
- internet database for all;
- all in all: low thresholds for the employers and the employees;
- more sensibility towards the existing "culture of early retirement".

This project continues the advisory activities of the BBRZ (Centre for Vocational Education and Rehabilitation) Austria since 2001. In the period from 01.07.2007-31.12.2007 there was a budget of 285.000 Euro. During this period 600 counselling interviews (with initial-clients), case management with 300 people and 50 advisory activities for entrepreneurs took place.²³

²² www.servicearbeitundgesundheit.at

²³ BBRZ Österreich: Service Arbeit und Gesundheit. Beratungsstelle für berufliche Rehabilitation. Konzept für die Beratungs- und Betreuungseinrichtung. Typoskript o.J.;
BBRZ Österreich: Service Arbeit und Gesundheit 40+. Quartalsbericht 01.04.2007 bis 30.06.2007, Typoskript o.J.

(II.b) Active integration measure: Give youth a chance²⁴

In Austria there are about 1,500-2,000 young long term unemployed who have failed so far be integrated into the labour market.

The major goals are:

- to diminish unemployment of the younger (15-25 years);
- to bring most of the young long term unemployed to work (including social insurance);
- the scheme attends to gender main streaming, but not by means of quotas, but with special advice on compatibility of family and work. The partner is to be involved in the clearing and integrating process.

Target groups are young unemployed people as well as employers. Needed information is provided for employers.

Institutional arrangements and procedures of implementation

This programme is installed by the Federal Chamber of Economy Austria (WKÖ) and the Public Employment Service.

This measure is a combination of practical advice and active practice of inclusion the labour market.

- The young people are selected and invited to a personal counselling interview. The young people have to be motivated. If a young person agrees, a plan is made for the following training, including behaviour and adaptation to the social background of employment.
- Each young person gets a "personal coach". He/she is available the whole measure, whenever it becomes necessary.
- There are partners in each province in Austria, institutions which organize concrete measures for the affected young persons. In each of these institutions – like the "Gesellschaft für Aus- und Weiterbildung GmbH", the "Kärntner Arbeitsstiftung" etc. – there is one person responsible for this task.
- The concrete project goes on for up to 9 months. There are four periods: training in communication and behaviour including basic cultural knowledge; activities to find a working place, practical periods and courses, and last measures to stabilise the working situation.
- The enterprises are provided information about all official subsidies.
- If a placement in work was successful (criteria: the young person remains at least 4 months in the job, two months without "coach"), the partner receives 250 €. During the

²⁴ www.wko.at/jugendchance

nine months a partner receives 150 € per participant, if a measure in the enterprise lasts at least two months.

The first qualification units started in December 2005, adolescents continuously entered into the project until August 31, 2006. The pilot project was finished by July 31, 2007. This programme seems to be successful. The number of young people who failed in all former measures could be significantly reduced, from 1,510 in 2005 to 756 at the end of 2007.²⁵ The project partner underlined that this effect was only possible because the enterprises took on their social responsibility. Due to the success the project was meanwhile prolonged until the end of 2008.

Financing: The first period – from 2005 till 2007 – cost 4.2 Mill. Euro, one third was covered by the Chamber of Economics, two thirds by the Public Employment Service. The Public Employment Service plans to increase the budget up to 4.5 million Euro for the next period.²⁶

B.4 Any intended future adoptions to the policy

There was no information available indicating a possible end of these projects. Three of them implemented an internet portal and databases. This only makes sense if the project will be continued, because the reasons why they have started are still there. The fourth project for integration especially affected young people will continue and the Public Employment Service guarantees the financial means.

All projects are implemented in partnership between the social partners and the official chambers – of Labour and of Economy. And in several parts these programmes are linked to the official policy of the Austrian government. The four projects are linked to the National Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion from Austria, they use the OMC (Open Method of Coordination) especially for gaining information and examples of good practice. The results of these projects will have an influence on the future labour market policy, especially for those who are furthest from the labour market.

²⁵ http://portal.wko.at/wk/format_listewk?SbID=1808&TId=3&BrID=0&DstD=0&AngId=1

²⁶ It is presumed that this period also covers two years.

Part C: The results so far:

C.1 The quantitative results of the policy so far, in relation to the baseline situation and to the goals and targets

Only the last two programmes – *Service Work and Health* and *Give youth a chance* – provide information concerning quantitative results. There are firstly figures about advisory measures, case management and advisory measures for the entrepreneurs. Secondly, the number of excluded young people could be halved.²⁷ The scheme “work and health” at least has a special quantitative method to measure its efficiency by assigned awards. However we don’t know how many enterprises have been awarded, but this question could possibly be answered by the stakeholders of this initiatives. We presume that there are many causes why the unemployment rates in Austria in general and even of those people furthest from the labour market are lower than in other Member States. But how efficient these concrete measures are for the people furthest from the labour market can only be reported for the last project, tackling unemployment of a special group of young persons.

C.2 An evaluation of the delivery system of the policy

All measures in the Peer Review are included in the main objectives of Austrian inclusion policy but mostly handled by the social partners and the other players inside the corporate system of Austria. There are several official and unofficial links between these stakeholders and the official policy. We think a precise evaluation is not possible, at least not on the basis of the information available. But we presume that the results correspond with the inclusion policy of Austria. The results of all high employment and low unemployment quotas underline this – except for the low employment rate of the elderly.

The Austrian system of cooperation and social partnership continues because it is the mutual target of all partners and because it leads to – in comparison to other Member States – good results.

C.3 An assessment of the obstacles and constraints encountered, and an indication of the factors determining success

The main issues of the Austrian inclusion policy are given by the federal and the corporate system. Each social system including the special kind of social and civil dialogue has advantages and disadvantages:

- The advantage of the Austrian system is that those parts of the policy which are in the mainstream and are accepted by the relevant social and civil partners will be implemented, but one has to find a compromise. And each compromise is a temporary solution till the next compromise has to be negotiated.

²⁷ See reference 22.

- The disadvantage of this system could be that some social interests, especially weak persons and social groups, are outside of this mainstream and this permanent process of negotiation and finding a compromise. Some parts of the social reality and some proposals and arguments, which are outside of the mainstream – especially regarding the labour market strand – perhaps, might be excluded from this process. We could not prove this for concrete groups (e.g. homeless people, some groups of migrants, people affected by long term poverty, drug abusers etc.). However, the reports from the Austrian independent non-governmental expert²⁸, from NGOs, the churches etc. reflect some of these aspects.²⁹

Part D: The policy debate in the host country

Summing up: The long tradition of social partnership in Austria, especially the force of the employees, organised not only by the trade unions but in the Chamber of Labour, and the relationship between the different Chambers too (e.g. The Federal Chamber of Economy), gives more equal opportunities to find a compromise in the practical policy – on the one hand. But to be successful it needs a compromise between these social partners. Because both sides are aware of the social and economic necessities of the other side neither of them claims unrealistic demands.

In Austria there is a permanent discussion about the main problems of employment, unemployment, early retirement, good health, etc.: stakeholders on different levels in the federal state raise an issue, launch a debate or promote an idea – others react, bring another idea – till a new compromise is established.

Part E: Key issues for debate at the Peer Review meeting

Key issues for the debate at the Peer Review:

- The Austrian system of social inclusion is combined with a corporate structure of the relationship between the social partners, the official Chambers and public policy. This structure must be explained and it must be discussed, for which social situations and problems this kind of policy is efficient and which interests perhaps have been cut. In Germany there is a discussion about those who have weak social interests and little possibilities to force their needs. Who has the advocacy in this case – the churches, NGOs, local initiatives?
- Which role do the social partners play in social inclusion and social dialogue in relation to the labour market? Are there other important actors in this field? What is your experience?
- What framework conditions (e.g. labour law, expenses on active labour market policy) are considered to be important for the access of disadvantaged groups to the labour market in the peer countries?

²⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/expert_reports_en.htm

²⁹ <http://www.armutskonferenz.at/armutskonferenz-startseite.htm>

- The high early retirement figures led to reforms in the Austrian pension system. But nevertheless, the employment rate for the 55–64 year old persons remains very low. Which measures on the political and the social level will take place to change this low employment rate? If not successful, what will be the consequences for the pension system and the personal pensions in the future? Do we really need the labour force of these persons, according to the growth of productivity and migration – legally and illegally? These are questions all Member States are affected by.
- How can the quantitative and qualitative efficiency of the three internet based programmes be evaluated? How do the entrepreneurs and the persons affected notice that there are these portals and information? The Austrian examples of internet based information are examples of good practice for the entrepreneurs. But the European Commission and several researches show that there is a digital divide in the society.³⁰ We presume that especially among most people affected by unemployment we have several dimensions of exclusion. Among these, there is a lack of knowledge and propriety of computer, internet, etc.
- These projects do not differentiate between male and female problems although Austria takes part in the gender mainstreaming approach of the EU. Health, work conditions, unemployment, etc. have causes in and consequences for the gender aspect. The social status has effects in this context, too. It is surprising that people with a migration background are not mentioned at all in the programme. The social field of employment or unemployment becomes more and more complex. But this is a problem that applies to all Member States.
- How can we transfer the Austrian experiences and programmes into other Member States? What is interesting for the European Union on the whole? The peer countries will phrase their expectations and critical questions.

³⁰ Ursula Henke, Hildegard Mogge-Grotjahn und Ernst-Ulrich Huster: E-exclusion oder E-inclusion?, in Huster u.a. (Hg.) aaO. (am angegebenen Ort), p. 470 ff.

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