



EURODIACONIA ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2008 ACTIVE INCLUSION RECOMMENDATION

As a partner of the PROGRESS Programme, Eurodiaconia was pleased to be consulted on the implementation of the Active Inclusion Strategy and welcomed that the European Commission is committed to following up the progress made at Member State level.

Eurodiaconia is a dynamic, Europe wide community of organisations founded in the Christian faith and working in the tradition of Diaconia, who are committed to a Europe of solidarity, equality and justice. Currently we have 36 members in 22 countries. Our members are churches, non-statutory welfare organisations and NGOs in Europe rooted in the Christian faith within the traditions of the Reformation as well as in the Anglican and Orthodox traditions. Although we were not able to get feedback from our members in all the Member States, we are convinced that Eurodiaconia has the expertise to offer valuable input into the assessment currently being carried out. We have gathered feedback from the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Sweden.

3.0. Overview of activities

Eurodiaconia has been closely following the active inclusion strategy for several years.

In March 2008 Eurodiaconia responded to the European Commission's consultation on "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" Please see [here](#) to read the response.

In June 2008 Eurodiaconia wrote a letter to the Social Protection Committee in anticipation of their discussions and recommendations to the European Commission on Active Inclusion in which we highlighted some of our key messages drawn from our response to the consultation. Click [here](#) to read the letter.

Then in 2010 we carried out a survey among our membership to gauge their understanding and their initial reflections of the AI strategy. Please see [here](#) to read this initial assessment of the Active Inclusion strategy which we also submitted to the Commission in 2010.



3.1 Integrated comprehensive strategies

Germany: According to our members in Germany, there is not an integrated comprehensive strategy design defining the right mix of the three strands of the active inclusion strategy.

Sweden: Our members find it difficult to know as NGO representatives because there is no summary document available which describes the government's work on the strategy. The three pillars are integrated in different policy areas. Our member is a delegate in a "User delegation" connected to the Ministry for Social Affairs and they haven't been presented anything in this arena.

Denmark: Our members find the active inclusion strategy on the whole good, however in reality the term itself is a little abstract. The term is not used in Denmark, and the debate on Active Inclusion is still in sectoral departments. There is a debate on adequate income, a debate on employment and a debate on services. Therefore the strategy is not integrated. Service users often have to meet several different departments and authorities and service providers. For the most vulnerable groups there are possibilities of mentors to help the guide users through the system. The three pillars are available and used. In general, income is adequate to live a life on a decent level. Services are delivered by municipalities, who are under economic pressure which is expected to influence the quality of services. The service provision is going to be evaluated in the coming months. Criticism is expected because of the economic situation in the municipalities and focus is on the cost of the service. There are many examples of failing services, for instance in the psychiatric system. The use of experts and staff in general is distorted. They often spend a short time with the users and use a big part of their working hours documenting their work.

Czech Republic: The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs launched a National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAPSI) 2008-2010 which contains inclusion strategies on education, employment, and quality of services etc. The Project "NAPSI together" was developed within the Progress programme, and implemented by NGOs and with the participation of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA). The aim was to prepare goals and measures for the new NAPSI for the period 2008-2010. The plans seem to be balanced according to our members. They are based on the Lisbon Strategy and cover social inclusion, retirement, and health and long-term care.

Italy: There is some sort of active inclusion strategy but not in every part of Italy. In some regions there have been actions to help people who have lost their job (training, professional requalification etc). Our member the Diaconia Valdese for example have a service of "starting work" for youth that is carried out in collaboration with the municipality and the Province of Torino) but in other areas, especially in the south there is only income support for the workers who lose their jobs. At the moment the Parliament is discussing the new law on the labour market, about adequate income support, inclusive labour



markets and access to quality services.

Netherlands: Eurodiaconia's member regrets that there is not a comprehensive integrated strategy, but that the main focus is employment whilst limiting social assistance and services for those not in employment. Particularly, efforts from public authorities to support people with disabilities to get into the job market are reduced, which often means that they are in a very precarious situation.

3.1.1 Comprehensive policy design

Germany: According to our members in Germany, they have not seen a comprehensive policy design defining the right mix of the three strands of the active inclusion strategy.

Sweden: In Sweden our members have not seen a comprehensive policy design defining the right mix of the three strands; however they would not know what the "right mix" would look like.

Denmark: The right mix has not been defined but is set politically. The mix divides the political parties in the parliament. The extremes in the political debate are 1) the mix should help to avoid poverty in the country, and 2) the mix should improve employment.

Czech Republic: It has been defined to some extent in the NAPSI, but our members cannot say that it is comprehensive policy design. The current problem of the Czech Republic is the necessary budget cuts. In April 2012 the Czech government announced that they will have to make cuts in all areas of public spending including the social programs.

Netherlands: There is no comprehensive policy design in the Netherlands according to our member there. The Department of Social Affairs' policies approach to the fight against poverty is purely through employment; it does not consider other approaches.

3.1.2 Integrated implementation

Germany: Our members say that in Germany the way of combating poverty is very one-sided with the main focus directed to combating long-term unemployment.

Sweden: Our members say that the government is working with all three strands but they can't see that it's done in an integrated way.

Denmark: An integrated approach has not yet been implemented in Denmark

Czech Republic: During the last few years there have been different strategies for different target groups focusing on combating poverty and social exclusion. At national level there is a working group for social inclusion consisting of representatives of public authorities,



NGOs, regional authorities and municipalities, the working group meets several times a year.

Netherlands: There is not a strong integrated implementation across the three strands of the active inclusion strategy. The only example of an integrated approach is a recent law to fight household's over-indebtedness. This law adopts an integrated approach to overcome the problem of debts.

3.1.3 Vertical policy coordination

Sweden: The government has started reforms at national level to support migrants, people with physical disabilities and elderly people to enter or remain in the labour market. They also work well at regional and local level to find alternative ways for youth to get into the labour market. For example they have developed trainee programmes in cooperation with companies. The government has also lowered the tax fee for companies that employ youth. Recently they also lowered VAT for restaurants to get the companies to employ more people.

Denmark: policy coordination among local, regional, national (and EU) authorities has not been witnessed by our members.

Czech Republic: Community planning is at municipal level (middle-term plan for development of social services in regions) and there are working groups focused on different target groups. Community planning enables the government to plan the development of social services with a focus on their accessibility for a concrete period of time (usually a 3-year period). To establish new social services and receive financial support from the government, the social service must be in accordance with the regional mid-term development plan and the community plan of the city.

Netherlands: There is a strong decentralisation of responsibility to the local level. Local authorities increasingly have the responsibility of ensuring access to social services and to access the labour market, without enough additional resources

3.1.4 Active participation of relevant actors

Germany, Sweden, and Denmark: our members in these countries were not involved in the development, implementation and evaluation of strategies.

Czech Republic: Our members were not involved directly, but could participate through their membership in EAPN Czech Republic.

Netherlands: Our member informs us that the government does not take into account the input, experience or expertise of civil society in policy making in general.



3.2 Description and assessment of the impact and cost effectiveness of measures introduced under the three strands

3.2.1 Adequate income support

Germany: According to our members, basic needs are not really guaranteed in Germany. The background to the system of “Grundsicherung” (the monetary basic aid / unemployment aid) is a survey on the income and needs of the households with the lowest 15% of income. But not all these needs are transferred to the “Grundsicherung”. There is a difference of 150 – 170 €. Furthermore, the fund for social integration in the “Grundsicherung” was radically minimized in 2011. In particular programs for persons with more serious problems of integration in the common labour market with help for special working conditions ended thereafter.

Sweden: In Sweden they are reforming the social protection system and are focussing on employment. They want to ensure that it is an advantage to work and aim for people to not live on benefits if it is not necessary. However our members say that in Sweden this has led to a more difficult situation for those who are dependent on social benefits.

Denmark: The income support has recently been improved for social beneficiaries to make it possible to live a decent life. The benefits are linked to activation. And there is an incentive to work.

Czech Republic: There is a minimum income and minimum salary guaranteed by the law so it provides some kind of protection to employees and people in need. There is almost no difference between minimum wage and social support to the point where some feel it reduces motivation to work.

The Netherlands: People on low income are taxed at a lower rate.

3.2.2 Inclusive labour markets

Germany:

Human capital: The German vocational training system is not well prepared for the actual and upcoming demands on the labour market. Public funds for vocational training measures have been heavily cut and will be reduced furthermore the next years

Development of active and preventive labour market measures: After the Recommendation on active inclusion in 2008 no significant policy improvements were made in Germany concerning an active labour market policy. Personalised support and training is still underdeveloped and absolutely has to be improved.



Efforts to increase access to employment: The German government mainly relies on deregulation in order to increase employment. Employment subsidies are well-known measures in German labour market policies, especially for supporting the disadvantaged unemployed. Altogether, the German government does not follow a comprehensive strategy in order to promote active inclusion. All three pillars exist but the interconnections between income support, social services, and active labour market policies are to be improved. One of the most important goals should be to strengthen activities to develop an inclusive labour market, among others through supporting the different groups of disadvantaged unemployed.

Sweden: In terms of support for the social economy and sheltered employment, it is not developing in Sweden. The Government has had big plans for supporting the social economy but in reality our members can't see any change for the better.

Denmark: Improved investment in human capital has been decided by the parliament for the unemployed. However there has been no change for other groups. Tailored services are being pursued combining social and employment services often with help of mentors. A new tax law is underway, but it is still undecided if the top rate of tax will be reduced. This would have the biggest effect on employment and increase growing inequality. Probably social economy will come higher on the agenda.

Czech Republic: This area is particularly addressed by ESF projects. There are programmes of active employment policy organised by Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Our members believe that the offer of further education and training policies is quite extensive.

One member mentioned one problem is that many Czechs are not willing to commute to work whereas most migrant workers who come to the Czech Republic are much more flexible. Whereas the social support is very generous for Czech nationals, it is quite the opposite regarding policies for the protection of migrant workers. Migrant workers unfortunately do not enjoy any protection of the Czech government.

The government provides many legal regulations that regulate the working environment such as health care for employees, non-discrimination, and other labour law rules. Some organisations struggle to comply with all the rules and feel that they handicap the labour market. They believe that fewer rules would be more beneficial for all.

Italy: our members are aware that some resources, especially from the EU are used for training those furthest from the labour market. In Italy the government is not investing enough in job training and as a result of recent crisis policy they have cut investment in employment services. They have reduced actions to develop tailored, personalised, responsive services and support involving early identification of needs, job-search assistance, guidance and training, and motivation to seek a job actively. There are some



national actions in the field of the promoting financial inclusion and microloans but it is the church who especially works in this field helping the State.

The Netherlands: Cuts have been made for allowances for people with disabilities. There has been a reform of the employment law to introduce a wage dispensation for employers to pay for a part of the wage of people with disabilities with a top up by the local authority but it results in a low wage and not enough employers are willing to take on people with disabilities.

3.2.3 Access to quality services

Germany: as far as territorial accessibility is concerned there is a public transport network which is part of the system of services of general interest. But the more you are in the countryside the fewer busses or trains available. Concerning the territorial accessibility of general practitioners in the countryside the German government has implemented a new law (Gesundheitsversorgungsgesetz) which should motivate GPs working in the countryside where there is low infrastructure. Physical accessibility is realized due to some laws in the context of construction.

Quality of services is realized by special laws for example regarding working conditions (working time, holidays, special rules for dangerous professions). In terms of investment in human capital there is a right to training on the job, but again the German vocational training system is not well prepared for the actual and upcoming demands on the labour market. All these quality elements enumerated here are foreseen by the German “Diakonie Siegel”, the quality system used by quite a lot of diaconal institutions. At least these institutions fulfil the principle of quality as the active inclusion strategy foresees it.

Denmark: There have been measures to ensure access to quality services. However our members believe that services will probably be a battlefield in the coming years between price and quality. It seems the government has chosen to take an open debate with the public on services and the leading principles in the Nordic welfare system. More services will become less prioritised. The question is: will this go so far that you have to pay for education and health?

Czech Republic: There is a law on social services which includes demands on quality of social services (based on National Quality Standards). National Quality Standards put emphasis on user involvement in improving their situation. Social services are provided in connection with service users’ needs and with community needs. These needs are specified within community planning process and within mid-term development plans of regions. In the Czech context, some members say that the higher is the competition, the better the quality of the services. However while the quality of some services is better in bigger cities, others are better in rural areas. So there is no general geographical rule. The Czech government is very happy to provide monitoring. Every small business is under so much scrutiny and control that it is hard for many to survive.



The availability and accessibility of services differ in diverse regions of the country.

The Netherlands: There have been measures to prevent homelessness, to help people not to fall into over-indebtedness, to help young people living in low-income households to participate in society and help young people in difficulty to get help on time.

3.3 Financial Resources

Germany: The active inclusion strategy has no special position in the German budget. As innovative projects can be funded by the ESF, active inclusion strategies have most probably been funded by the structural funds.

Denmark: Our members say that no national or EU budget has been allocated or used for the development of an active inclusion strategy.

Czech Republic: There isn't a clear or transparent system of financing for the development of new social services. Most new social services are in the first phase supported by ESF or the municipality. The law on social services doesn't contain a legal claim on financial support from the government which creates uncertainty and no possibility to plan strategically. However the government has made use of EU funds such as ESF and ERDF. But Like almost all European countries, the Czech government needs to watch its spending more closely than in the previous years.

Italy: National funds are not currently invested in an active inclusion strategy. Up until now, investment in preventing unemployment and support for boosting employment were insufficient and now, in a period of public spending cuts, funds are shrinking further. EU funds are being used for social inclusion programmes this but it is not enough.

3.4 Monitoring and evaluation

Germany: As far as our members know, there is no monitoring being carried out yet in Germany as the comprehensive character of the strategy isn't yet implemented.

Denmark and the Czech Republic: as far as our members know there is no monitoring of the active inclusion strategy implementation.

The Netherlands: There is an ongoing long-term research work in order to monitor the impact of active inclusion policies, but our member did not have more details about it.

3.5 Recommendations



Germany: according to our members, the German policy makers should first acknowledge the active inclusion strategy as something important; they should focus at the comprehensive and integrated character of the strategy.

Czech Republic:

According to our members,

- There should be support for active communication of the active inclusion strategy at different levels (national, regional, local / public authorities, NGOs, service users).
- Development of a communication strategy on the Europe 2020 Strategy at different levels.
- Create a clear financial system for the social services sector
- Ensure that community planning and mid-term development plans in regions correspond with real needs of citizens and the social services in concrete areas.

The Netherlands: Eurodiaconia member in the Netherlands recommends:

- For a better integrated approach to active inclusion policies:
 - Focus on prevention
 - Support to outreach work to help people to be informed about their rights and potential options.
- Regarding the employment strand of the strategy:
 - support for job coaching