



MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PRINCIPLES OF ACTIVE INCLUSION: INITIAL REFLECTIONS AMONG MEMBERS OF EURODIACONIA

Summary: On the whole, our members are positive about the principles stated in the 2008 Recommendation on Active Inclusion. The concept of an integrated approach of the three pillars; minimum adequate income, inclusive labour markets and access to quality services, is welcomed by all. While some members felt that this Recommendation was helpful to make Member States take action, many found that it would not be sufficient to ensure the implementation of such principles on national level and that its non-binding nature leaves the Recommendation with limited potential for impact.

Discrepancy between EU's terminology/plans and concrete implementation at national level

- There seems to be a general **lack of awareness** about the Active Inclusion strategy. Some of our members have not heard this term used apart from through Eurodiaconia discussions.
- Eurodiaconia members find that the “European” principles of Active Inclusion are good but do not bring anything new to the existing frameworks at national level. They are sometimes implemented at national level, but rarely so under the label of “active inclusion”. For instance, in France, the Government does not mention the term “active inclusion” but the elements are partly embodied by the RSA (revenu de solidarité active). It appears that in some cases the **Active Inclusion label is not helpful**, even though our members agree that the concept of an integrated approach *is* good.
- “Active Inclusion” is also seen as a “**top down**” **approach with no binding force**. Eurodiaconia members recognise that if Member States do not share the Active Inclusion “vision” then it does not bring anything concrete at national level. Members would like to see more forceful measures to ensure the Member States take coherent action.
- Although the Recommendation states that Member States should make available **ESF for active inclusion**, some members see a restriction being that the work agenda is already fixed until 2013, and therefore there would be no space for moving funds to implement the Active Inclusion strategy.
- **National Strategic Reports are often biased:** positive things are highlighted and problems and challenges are played down. Although the principles are sometimes implemented in part at national level for now, many of our members believe that the **austerity measures will impact on this implementation** as financial resources available will start to diminish and will be harder to access.

Lack of a genuine integrated approach

- Members highlighted a difficulty that comes from the fact that Active Inclusion principles often appear to be **implemented through temporary policies and funding**, on a “project based”





approach. This has two direct negative consequences. First, the policies last as long as the project does, and therefore sometimes only exist for three years and disappear, however successful it may have been. Secondly, it does not bring the holistic approach the Active Inclusion strategy is aiming at. For instance, if money is available for a project on the integration of people with disabilities, this particular category of people will benefit but the labour market will not become more inclusive as such, leaving aside other minorities not prioritized under the project.

- Some of Eurodiaconia members claim that the **economy is a missing link** in the strategy. For example employment opportunities are a missing link in the debate. They hope that this gap might be bridged through the Europe 2020 strategy which seems to offer more possibilities for a holistic approach, looking at “inclusive growth”.

Confusion on the strategy itself

- Some members felt that the Recommendation was **unclear about who is being targeted** in the strategy and felt the need to be more specific about the people we hope to ‘include’ through such a strategy.
- Some members were unsure what Active Inclusion means in reference to flexicurity and to **other social inclusion strategies**; where they are linked and how they relate to each other.
- In some countries, there is a common **misunderstanding that giving people social assistance and encouraging their integration into the labour market are contradictory policies**. There is a need to better communicate that these go hand in hand and are not opposing policies.

Recommendations to the European Commission

- **Looking at inclusion and growth in a broader sense** would enable the strategy to become more concrete, and for instance to link job creation to inclusive labour markets, since if there are no jobs, the labour market is paralyzed whether it is inclusive or not.
- **Better communication and promotion** is needed on what the Active Inclusion strategy is, stressing that this is not a *new* concept per se and to avoid the perception of a top down approach.
- Clarification should be made on the relation of the Active Inclusion strategy to other social inclusion strategies
- More concrete ways to **compel/encourage Member States** to take action to implement the principles should be found.
- Improved and more **concrete methods of monitoring** the implementation should be developed and be factually based.
- An overview by country of Active Inclusion strategies in place (or not) should be developed to facilitate country comparisons and help people to understand the national relevance of an EU strategy.
- Clearer indications on how to use the **ESF** in relation to Active Inclusion should be given to member states.