



### The OPEN Newsletter no. 3 - December 2010

This newsletter is for people who are passionate about the social agenda and organisations that work to support people facing social exclusion. The aim is to inform you about the outcomes and results of the OPEN project.

This third issue is focused on one of the main OPEN outputs – the identification of OMC Best Practice, and on the 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion.

### OMC GOOD PRACTICE REPORT: ANALYSIS and ASSESSMENT

The identification of four examples of Best Practice at European level was one of the OPEN project’s activities, to further its principles of sharing best practice to foster mutual learning among member states.

Best practice can be defined as the most efficient and effective way of accomplishing a task, based on repeatable procedures that have proven themselves over time and for large numbers of people.

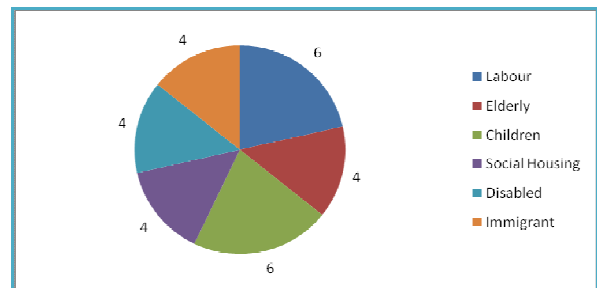
The OPEN partners selected 28 examples of good practices on social protection and social inclusion topics at regional level, out of which four Best Practice examples across the Partners were identified. The responsibility to identify regional good practice was assigned to the Task Forces from each country, who selected at least one example for each topic or covering more than one topic. The result was a collection of 28 examples drawn from the regions that were innovative and successful in applying the OMC locally and that were easily transferable to other contexts. Out of these 28, a total of 22 were selected as relevant to the OMC and coherent with the main topics of the OPEN project.

OPEN partners produced an exhaustive Report dedicated to the analysis of Good Practice and to the methodology used to identify the best examples selected by the Task Forces in each country. **The Good Practice report** is designed for use by local, regional and central authorities and the European Commission

as a guide to help improve OMC practice in assessing its strengths and weaknesses. The exchange of experience is a good source for learning between organisations and for inspiring further development of one’s own work.

The OPEN OMC Best Practice Report is downloadable from [www.the-open-project.eu](http://www.the-open-project.eu).

The following schedule summarizes the thematic coverage of the good practice examples:



### Lessons Learnt

The initial aim of the OPEN project was to select good practice on the application of the OMC on the six topics of the Thematic Seminars at a national and regional level, as the exchange of best practice is one of the activities proposed by the OMC.

The OPEN partners found it difficult to identify good practice carried out at a national level as there are not the necessary tools, such as official indicators, European level definitions the shared use of common indicators. The European Commission’s Peer Review in Social Protection and Social Inclusion work did not provide an appropriate basis for this either.

The OPEN partners agreed, then, on a set of nine principles to evaluate the effective implementation, coherence and relevance of the proposed good practice examples at regional and local levels. These nine criteria are:

- 1) Improvement in services and/or infrastructure;
- 2) Awareness Raising;
- 3) Added value for the local / regional community;
- 4) Skills transfer;
- 5)

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Transferability of the good practice and potential of replication; 6) Clear initial objectives, originality and relevance, innovativeness; 7) Holistic design and inclusive strategies; 8) Monitoring of the impact on beneficiaries and mechanisms of feed back; and 9) Compliance with EU policies and/or guidelines.

Those principles formed the basis of a questionnaire which the partners used to evaluate each example of good practice with each partner assessing the good practice from the other countries. Each partner was supported by the Task Forces coordinators in the evaluation of good practice. The selected examples of good practice were translated into English and presented in a common and shared format in order to have a common basis for evaluation.

An evaluation grid containing the nine evaluation principles was sent to all Task Force coordinators. The Lead Partner collected 76 assessment forms from the partners, from which a final ranking list was produced.

**Four Best Practices** at European level were identified. All of them were proposed by West Midlands Councils, receiving the highest score from all partners.

Name of GP	Thematic covered	Score from IT	Score from ES	Score from DE	Total
Regional Homelessness Strategy UK	Social Housing	40	42	43	125
Activities 4U and summer activities –UK	Children	42	40	43	125
Nishkam Civic Centre UK	Labor Children Elderly Immigrant Disabled	42	40	39	121
Developing Dudley's Housing Strategy for Older People UK	Elderly Social Housing	41	39	41	121

Scoring: IT: Italy, ES: Spain, DE: Germany

**The top four examples of Best Practice:**

**Regional Homelessness Strategy**

This focuses on the Social Housing topic. In 2005, a Regional Homelessness Strategy (RHS) was commissioned in order to review the extent, reasons and patterns of



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homelessness across the West Midlands and to make recommendations for future work. A Regional Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group (RHSIG) was established to monitor progress and ensure that the objectives of the strategy were met. In 2008, a review was carried out of the RHS and the work of the RHSIG, to ensure that they were achieving their goals. It was found that the RHSIG has been extremely successful in promoting partnership work and sharing best practice and intelligence in order to meet their objectives, in that they have:

- Influenced housing investment through the Regional Housing Allocation Strategy 2008/2011 and investment in supported housing
- Set up a successful cross-sectoral regional strategy implementation group that created a forum for change and influence across the region. Established sub-regional partnerships with SMART action plans delivering results at a sub-regional level.
- Created opportunities for testing out new approaches and sharing of best practice
- Supported the development of projects in two sub-regions linking worklessness and homelessness with the, then, Learning and Skills Council's City Partnership programme and Influenced other regions in their development of Regional Homelessness Strategies and structures

As a result, substantial progress was made on many elements set out in the original strategy. The RHSIG was seen as a highly effective and influential body both nationally and within the Region, and was used as a template for other regions in England.

**Lesson learnt:** Best practice is the most effective tool for achieving greater convergence of European social inclusion and protection policies. A well explained and communicated example of best practice can present a simple tool for policy makers and politicians to set out new and alternative solutions for social issues. Best practice can be easily accepted and understood by the beneficiaries. Improving this mechanism for exchanging of experiences at the regional and local level is of fundamental importance



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## OPEN AND THE EU in 2010: WORKING FOR MORE INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES AND ECONOMIES



### 2010 EUROPEAN YEAR for COMBATING POVERTY and SOCIAL EXCLUSION is drawing to a close

The 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social

Exclusion is coming to an end and the official closing ceremony is taking place on the 17 December in Brussels. The event, a highlight of 2010, will include political statements, prizes, key interventions, presentations of national co-funded projects and much more. The Conference will be an opportunity for Member States to highlight one of the national co-funded projects that took place in the framework of the European Year. At the Project session: "Sharing, learning, inspiring" participants will be able to learn more about what happened at national level by visiting the different countries' stands. The projects are diverse in terms of their content and size, ranging from theatre initiatives and conferences, to working with people experiencing poverty and stakeholders, often combining the two.

Throughout 2010 journalists from the participating countries submitted written and audiovisual entries to the European Year Journalist Award. The articles or audiovisual entries cover poverty and social exclusion. The winning national and EU entries can be consulted at the Journalist Award stand at the conference.

### EUROBAROMETER SURVEY: POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION published in December 2010

EU citizens are well aware of the extent of poverty and social exclusion in today's society, and it is a problem they feel needs urgent action. This picture, which had clearly emerged from the 2009 survey, has been validated by the latest results. The two surveys – carried out just before and towards the end of the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion – have contributed to a better understanding of the vulnerability of the poor and

socially excluded and have illustrated some of the consequences.

Survey is available at <http://ec.europa.eu/social>.

### EU 2020 – INTEGRATED GUIDELINES and SOCIAL POLICIES

On 26 March 2010, the European Council agreed to the European Commission's proposal to launch a new strategy for jobs and growth, Europe 2020, based on



enhanced coordination of economic policies, which will focus on the key areas where action is needed to boost Europe's potential for sustainable growth and competitiveness. To that end, the European Council agreed to set EU headline targets, which constitute shared objectives guiding action by the Member states and of the Union. In the light of these targets, Member States have set their national targets. For its part, at EU level, the Commission will work to implement the strategy, notably through its seven 'flagship initiatives', which have been announced in the Europe 2020 Communication. The "Europe 2020 Integrated Guidelines" set out the framework for the Europe 2020 strategy and for reforms at Member State level. To ensure coherence and clarity, the guidelines are limited in number and reflect the European Council conclusions. The guidelines are integrated to ensure that national and EU-level policies contribute fully to achieving the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy. Following them in a synchronised manner will help Member States reap the positive spill-over effects of coordinated structural reforms, particularly within the euro area.

### Guidelines N°10 Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty

Member States' efforts to reduce poverty should be aimed at promoting full participation in society and the economy and extending employment opportunities, making full use of the European Social Fund. Efforts should also concentrate on ensuring equal opportunities, including through access to affordable, sustainable and high quality services and

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public services (including online services, in line with guideline 4) and, in particular, health care. Member States should put in place effective anti-discrimination measures. Equally, to fight social exclusion, empower people and promote labour market participation, social protection systems, lifelong learning and active inclusion policies should be enhanced to create opportunities at different stages of people's lives and shield them from the risk of exclusion. Social security and pension systems must be modernized to ensure that they can be fully deployed to ensure adequate income support and access to healthcare — thus providing social cohesion — whilst at the same time remaining financially sustainable. Benefit systems should focus on ensuring income security during transitions and reducing poverty, in particular among groups most at risk from social exclusion, such as one-parent families, minorities, people with disabilities, children and young people, elderly women and men, legal migrants and the homeless. Member States should also actively promote the social economy and social innovation in support of the most vulnerable.

*The EU headline target, on the basis of which Member States will set their national targets, is to reduce by 25% the number of Europeans living below the national poverty lines, lifting over 20 million people out of poverty.*

## EU 2020 – PRIORITIES AND FLAGSHIP INITIATIVES FOR INCLUSIVE GROWTH

**Inclusive growth** – a high-employment economy delivering economic, social and territorial cohesion - Inclusive growth means:

- raising Europe's employment rate – more and better jobs, especially for women, young people and older workers;
- helping people of all ages anticipate and manage change through investment in skills & training;
- modernizing labour markets and welfare systems;

- ensuring the benefits of growth reach all parts of the EU;

Europe has identified new engines to boost growth and jobs. These areas are addressed by 7 flagship initiatives. Within each initiative, both the EU and national authorities have to coordinate their efforts so they are mutually reinforcing. Most of these initiatives have been presented by the Commission in 2010.

## EU 2020 – FOCUS on European platform against poverty and social exclusion

As one of the seven flagship initiatives of the EU's Europe 2020 strategy, the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion communication sets out actions to bolster work at all levels to reach the EU headline poverty reduction target. It is complementary and strongly linked to the other flagships which focus on raising employment and improving education and skills. Member States must take the lead in fighting against social exclusion and poverty.

### WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

More than 80 million people (1 in 6) in the EU are at risk of poverty, including 20 million children and 8% of the working population. The most vulnerable have been the hardest hit by the current financial crisis. In one of the richest regions in the world, this state of affairs is unacceptable.

The EU is proposing action to achieve a specific target agreed this year for the first time ever: to lift 20 million people out of poverty and social exclusion by 2020.

### WHAT EXACTLY WILL CHANGE?

Action will be taken to improve access to the labour market, social protection, essential services (e.g. healthcare, housing) and education.

EU funds will be better used to support social inclusion and combat discrimination.

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Fresh impetus will be given to social innovations, and social policy reforms will be tested and assessed to improve their effectiveness.

New partnerships between the public and the private sector will be supported and the potential of the social economy will be harnessed.

EU countries will better coordinate their policies and an annual convention will allow all stakeholders to take stock of progress towards achieving the target.

#### WHO WILL BENEFIT AND HOW?

- People currently living in poverty – in particular those most at risk: women, migrants, Roma and ethnic minorities, people with a disability – should see their living conditions improved.
- All Europeans would benefit from living in more cohesive societies, where economic growth is smart, sustainable and inclusive.

#### WHY DOES ACTION HAVE TO BE TAKEN BY THE EU?

The Platform against poverty and social exclusion is a key element in the EU's 2020 strategy.

Although combating poverty is primarily the responsibility of national governments, the EU can play a coordinating role, as all member countries are facing similar challenges.

The EU can help to develop and spread more effective and innovative methods and instruments.

The Platform will support voluntary policy coordination and mutual learning, as well as providing EU-wide rules and funding.

#### THE ROLE OF OMC

Since 2000, the European Union has provided, through the **Open Method of Coordination (OMC)**, a framework for national strategy development as well as for policy coordination between EU countries on issues relating to poverty and social exclusion.

Follow us in the **next OPEN newsletter** to discover what the OMC is and how it promotes the active inclusion in the society and the labour market of the most vulnerable groups!



#### OPEN AGENDA

**OPEN FINAL EVENTS** – Ancona 26<sup>th</sup> January 2011  
**Publication of OMC Guidelines** – January 2011  
**4<sup>th</sup> Newsletter** – January 2010

#### EU AGENDA

**European Consensus Conference on Homelessness** – Brussels 09/12/2010 - 10/12/2010  
**Closing event 2010 European Year** – Brussels 16-17/12/2010  
**European Day of People with Disabilities Conference** – Brussels 02/12/2010

#### Contacts:

If you wish to contact us, you can use the link below:

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EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities DG  
Social Protection and Integration Unit, Social Policy Aspects of Migration, Streamlining of Social Policies



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