



openproject

OPEN

promote and support open method of coordination for strengthening social inclusion and social protection

The OPEN Newsletter n.1 - July 2010

This newsletter is dedicated to people who are passionate about the social agenda and those organisations that work to support those facing social exclusion. The aim is to inform you about the outcomes and results of the OPEN project. More information on the seminars and the project, can be found on www.the-open-project.eu

The OPEN project

OPEN - *promote and support open method of coordination for strengthening social inclusion and social protection* - is a two year project which started in February 2009 and will run until January 2011. It is funded under PROGRESS Programme, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunity, aimed at strengthening the EU contribution in support of Member States' commitments and efforts to create more and better jobs and to build a more cohesive society. OPEN contributes to enhance a truly bottom-up approach to policy development, through the promotion of an Open Method of Coordination (OMC) on issues around social protection and social inclusion. This involves the relevant stakeholders at any level, both from the private and public sector. It aims to raise awareness on social exclusion issues by strengthening the dissemination and circulation of information among citizens, people experiencing social exclusion, public and private social actors working in the social field, politicians and decision makers, journalists and the media.

The OPEN Activities

Based on the application of the OMC, the OPEN project foresees a **first round of national thematic seminars** dedicated to awareness raising of citizens and social operators; the creation of **National Task Forces** (TFs) to discuss main issues and propose a development plan to local policy makers; the creation of **Transnational Task Forces** (TTFs) to discuss main social inclusion issues, best practices and possible common solutions; a **second round of seminars dedicated to policy makers**; the definition of the

Implementing Partners:



This project is financed by



OPEN OMC guidelines, a special handbook containing the results of the analysis carried out by the TTFs for each policy; and a **seminar dedicated to media and journalists** to facilitate better relationships when communicating around social issues

Who we are

The OPEN project is tailored on Regional Authorities with a particular competence on social issues. They are involved in the execution of European, National and Regional plans and strategies on social services, health, housing and problems derived from poverty and social exclusion. At the same time, they have the necessary links with the final beneficiaries and target group of the project. OPEN partners represents four countries and four different approaches to social inclusion policies and methods of facing social problems.



Thematic Seminars & Task Forces:

The Italian experience



From July 2009 to March 2010, the Marche Region ran the first round of six seminars dedicated to social inclusion and contextually, six Task Forces dedicated to each of the themes approached. All the seminars open to citizenship, registered a very good success of people's attendance, with engagement of more than 400 people.

Citizens, experts from universities, members of trade unions, stakeholders from public and private sectors



attended to the seminars. Speakers were experts from universities or associated partners. In the last session of each workshop a special time was dedicated to “tell experience” for people who experienced discrimination, social exclusion or disadvantaged social people. Useful debates allowed each seminar where citizens and representative from organizations and NGOs proposed their point of view. The main themes approached were as follows:

- **Job Market:** a space of social inclusion for disadvantaged people
- **New opportunities for older people.** Not self sufficiency in the local and regional public policies
- **Disability:** state of art and new perspectives
- **Children condition:** rights and protection
- **Housing as people primary assets:** the policies for social housing
- **Ethnic Minorities and immigration:** positive actions for tolerance and respect



Following each of the seminars, a Task Force of at least 5 people was created. These groups are made up of experts who drove the discussion on along the key topic areas and helped to provide legislation and policy context for all of the questions debated. Most of the work was developed in the following weeks via email and one to one meetings. It was difficult to bring together all members of the TFs at the same time due to their busy agendas, however they all remained fully committed to the project and longer

term focus of the work. These are the main points arisen from the TFs works:

JOB MARKET for DISADVANTAGED PEOPLE- The TF concentrated on the definition of disadvantaged/vulnerable people and the necessary steps to make the labour market truly inclusive.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR OLDER PEOPLE – The TF underlined that lack of opportunities for Older People derives from the absence of involvement of citizens and associations in the decision and programming phase and because of the responsibilities on the policy for Older People shared among different local authorities. The TF therefore proposed to concentrate the power and responsibility to the regional authority for Social and Health Policies only.

DISABILITY – the Project “Independent Life” to which Marche Region is working, presented some innovative points around giving the right of choice, services more customised to beneficiaries and the right of representation conferred to associations.

CHILDREN CONDITIONS – The focus was given to “alternative care of children”. Some needs have been underlined, i.e.: clear guidelines for the implementation of law, raise awareness about the need to provide appropriate care to minors in order to avoid psychological damages in the future, networking among organisations at all levels, more attention paid by politicians, more attention at EU level (child wellbeing indicator is missing).

SOCIAL HOUSING – The TF underlined that the sector is in a deep crises and some actions are needed: to restructure housing policies, to introduce new instruments, objectives, actions, to increase pro-capite annual expenses for social housing, to reduce construction costs for social housing, to increase rental housing supply.

ETHNIC MINORITIES AND IMMIGRATION – The TF proposed the promotion of a debate to rethink the use of the word “TOLERANCE”. The idea is to point out in another way the meaning of “respect of the other”.

The German experience



The thematic seminars were carried out in Saxony from June to December 2010 with a great response. A total of 246 stakeholders from all associations, organisations and interest representatives active in

Implementing Partners:



This project is financed by





openproject

OPEN

promote and support open method of coordination for strengthening social inclusion and social protection

the social area throughout Saxony and from the neighbouring federal states took up the invitations from the SMS. This first step of the project involved recording the numerous Saxon social projects and initiatives both in the public and private sectors and bringing their stakeholders together at contextual interfaces. Specific results of these efforts were presented in an open seminar form and critical aspects were also discussed with visions for future cooperation prepared. This created the greatest possible transparency across the numerous initiatives, efficiently networking the project sponsors. Improving partnerships with the media were cross issue focal points that should determine joint efforts against specific forms of social exclusion in the future.



Cooperation with the Technische Universität Dresden made possible the scientific classification of the action areas that were worked out. The main content focal points selected within the six issue areas were confirmed by the participants to be the decisive current and future action areas needed to reach a high level in the area of social protection and social inclusion. According to the results of the feedback questionnaires handed out, the participants assessed the seminars to be a useful platform for exchanging experiences, they wanted such discussions to continue and offered active help in preparing further problem solving approaches against poverty and social exclusion.

The British experience



The West Midlands ran its series of the OPEN seminars between October 2009 and January 2010. This phase of the OPEN project has run extremely well and the project seminars were attended by over 300 organisations/individuals from across the West Midlands Region. Most of the seminar participants came from frontline and grassroots organisations.

Seminar format:

Prior to the seminars six taskforces were established to support the development of the seminars. Members of the task forces consisted of experts in the particular seminar focus area and came from a range of organisations representing both policy makers and grassroots organisations such as Government Office for the West Midlands, Association of Youth Clubs, Midland Heart, RegenWM, and the Equality and Human Rights Commission to name a few.

The taskforce members decided to break down each specific seminar topic into 3 workshop areas this was done in order to help facilitate more focused discussions. Participants were given a short policy brief under each topic area prior to attending the seminar and were asked to debate on three areas. (1) What are the Key issues (2) What can be done locally/regionally (3) Key messages for policy makers two prominent speakers who were experts in their field were also identified for each seminar. One to give a policy overview and the second to present on how policy is realised from a grassroots level. This format worked very well for the West Midlands and we found a strong willingness from participants to engage in the OMC process coupled with a real energy in the seminar discussions.

The first seminar was opened by the Chief Executive from West Midlands Leaders Board Olwen Dutton who reflected on West Midlands situation which has gone from being a strong region with an excellent manufacturing base in recent years to now having the highest unemployment of any region in the country. Olwen highlighted the need to develop strategies that work at a grassroots level, the importance of closing the gap between policy and delivery and also the

Implementing Partners:



This project is financed by



For further information please visit www.the-open-project.eu



openproject

OPEN

promote and support open method
of coordination for strengthening
social inclusion and social protection

importance of raising the aspirations of people to help drive the economy forward in the future.



Some of the highlights/outputs of this phase include:

- 27 good practice submissions
- Linked articles in the local press and specialist magazines
- Engagement of over 300 organisations
- 6 full case study write ups on three web pages
- Participation workshops designed, facilitated and evaluated by children and young people
- Use of grassroots organisations for greater accessibility for participants
- Several internal and external dissemination networks established

The Spanish experience



During January and February, FAMCP created six working groups of the OPEN project and has organised meetings to discuss its contents. The different points of view of the participating Aragonese authorities will be contrasted with the rest of the partners and used to define the OPEN Guide to reinforce the “European Open Method for the Coordination of protection and social inclusion. All the members of the groups are professionals, institutions and authorities involved in the social and labor field. So from the seminar contributions FAMCP were able to extract ideas to improve the knowledge and understanding of the different levels of poverty and social exclusion, in addition to contributing in the design of a European

policy closer to the real interests of social stakeholders. The IMMIGRATION working group took one of the most important conclusions as being a better way to promote the inclusion of immigrants is facilitating the access to the labour market. They pointed out the cultural and linguistic obstacles as aspects with direct effect in the higher rate of unemployment of immigrant people. In addition they denounced the temporality of the immigrants employment and the labour conditions of immigrant women are, generally worse than for men. Concerning SOCIO-SANITARY ATTENTION AND ASSISTANCE FOR ELDERLY PEOPLE, the participants highlighted the increase of the demand of these services due to the longevity of the citizens and the changes in the social model. So during the debate, they insisted that one of the objectives of the EU is to guarantee the access to socio-sanitary services. About the new mechanisms for integration and social inclusion for DISABLED people, the working group stressed the importance of tools, information and communication technologies for new opportunities they can offer to improve the quality of life of this target group. Also the access to the labor market, personal development ensures people will be more complete and independent. The debate about the LABOUR MARKET was focused on the necessity of fighting against the “informal” work, the inconveniences of the worker mobility and the necessity of promoting labour measures for elderly people. The Group working on the Conditions, rights and protection of MINORS highlighted the worrying child poverty rates. They pointed out that an effective policy for underage protection should include a combination of strategies to help both the children and the families. The participants involved in this social sector enhanced the main role that education has in policies oriented to children as it takes a main role by way of compensation of social and economical disadvantages.

Implementing Partners:



This project is financed by



For further information please visit www.the-open-project.eu



openproject

OPEN

promote and support open method
of coordination for strengthening
social inclusion and social protection



The OPEN Transnational Conference in Dresden

Under the motto “Social protection and social inclusion: an open debate” the Transnational Conference on the EU OPEN Project took place in Dresden on 21 April 2010. This whole day event was conceived and prepared as a cross border interim balance with about 100 participants from Spain, Italy, the United Kingdom and Germany – until the volcanic eruption in Iceland and the subsequent complete standstill in air traffic throughout Europe! A transnational conference without transnational guests? “You don’t get very far in social policy using normal means anyway” – these encouraging words of greeting from the Saxon State Minister of Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, Christine Clauß, were taken to be a spur to action by guests, organisers, technical partners, interpreters and the hotel as well. Using video conferencing equipment and parallel simultaneous translations into 4 languages the event nevertheless succeeded in being a constructive exchange of experiences for better integration and participation of groups of people endangered by poverty.

Gerald Rosskogler, Representative of the European Commission in Germany, explained the targets and methods of the EU Programme PROGRESS, which financially supports the implementation of the OPEN Project. In addition to the European Social Fund (ESF), which invests in the implementation of employment and social policy in the individual member states. PROGRESS concentrates on activities with a strong

Implementing Partners:



This project is financed by



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



European dimension: analysing, networking and exchanging information between nations - the cornerstone for further securing the European social model. Karl Bey, Head of the Department “Integration after immigration” in the Saxon Ministry of Social Affairs and Consumer Protections, summarised the results of the Saxon workshop. The regional results of the partner institutions were presented directly to the participants of the Transnational Conference using video conferencing equipment. In the subsequent working groups the 80 experts, people responsible, interest representatives and individual citizens found good solution based approaches through joint dialogue and efficient action strategies for sustainable social policy, even under the more difficult conditions caused by shrinking budgets for social issues.



Upcoming Events on Social Agenda

5/09/2010 - 15/09/2010 Budapest (Hungary)

Contribution of EU funds to the integration of Roma

05/07/2010 - 06/07/2010 Brussels (Belgium)

4th Equality Summit

03/11/2010 - 05/11/2010 Orebro (Sweden)

Eurochild's 7th annual conference: “Brighter futures - Building effective partnerships to end child poverty”

28/10/2010 - 29/10/2010 Antwerp (Belgium)

Active labour market policies for the EU2020-strategy: ways to move forward

14/10/2010 - 15/10/2010 Brussels (Belgium)

COFACE European Family Conference:

12/10/2010 - 20/10/2010 Bucharest (Romania)

Contribution of EU funds to the integration of Roma