



CEMR key points on social inclusion



Conseil des Communes
et Régions d'Europe
Council of European
Municipalities and Regions

European Policy on Social Inclusion

Context

The European Union's competence to legislate in the area of social policy and employment is limited to the areas of equal treatment and non-discrimination, free movement of workers, health and safety at work, labour law and working conditions and the information and consultation of workers.

In other social policy areas, such as social inclusion, the so-called Open Method of Coordination (OMC) is used at European level and Member States co-ordinate their policies by agreeing on common objectives and indicators and setting up national action plans on how to achieve them.

The concept of social inclusion is based on three pillars: 1) adequate income support, 2) inclusive labour markets, 3) and access to quality services around which Member States should design and implement their strategies.

In many Member States local and regional authorities were consulted in establishing these national action plans (NAPs) for the period 2008-2010, but close cooperation from an early stage was often lacking.

CEMR's key points on social inclusion

1. The three pillars approach to active inclusion is very important since it focuses not only on employment-related measures but also recognises the role of public services and the need to ensure sufficient resources for a decent life.
2. The success of the EU social inclusion process depends to a large extent on the ability to ensure the ownership of the process by all relevant stakeholders, including regional and local authorities. Therefore, it is essential to involve the local and regional level in the Open Method of Coordination and to formalise the consultation and participation process at national and European level.
3. The definition of detailed principles and standards should be agreed at local or regional level, taking account of the different social and economic contexts, institutional arrangements and traditions.
4. Social inclusion requires an integrated approach not only in terms of its components (the three pillars), but also with regard to its implementation through a partnership and inclusive implementation process, and should involve all relevant stakeholders, both public and private.
5. In order to have a real impact on the local and regional level, efforts to increase the visibility of the social inclusion process should be stepped up. Visibility could be improved through further awareness-raising activities at local and regional level.
6. Mutual learning is a key aspect of the EU social inclusion process. Those involved in delivering social inclusion at local and regional level, including local and regional authorities, should have greater opportunities to benefit from good practice exchanges and mutual learning activities within the Open Method of Coordination.
7. The financial and economic crisis is having a major impact on the living and working conditions of people. Vulnerable groups are hit hardest, for example third-country migrants and long-term unemployed, but also young people and single parent families, who risk falling into precarious situations.
8. Integration of migrants is an important aspect of social inclusion and local and regional authorities have a crucial role to play in designing and implementing innovative integration policies.

9. New technology and in particular information and communication technology (ICT) can be useful tools to achieve social inclusion. This implies however that the necessary infrastructure is available (i.e. broadband coverage throughout Europe), and the ability of citizens to use the services provided.
10. Specific measures should be provided for different target groups (e.g. elderly people, vulnerable groups) to improve digital literacy and to prevent new forms of exclusion.
11. The use of ICT could enhance democratic participation and even significantly change democratic processes. Especially young people can more easily be motivated to participate by electronic means. Again, it is important to ensure that electronic channels supplement instead of replace traditional means of participation in order to avoid new forms of exclusion.

CEMR's position papers in the field of social inclusion

CEMR Response to the Public Consultation on the active inclusion of people furthest from the labour market (February 2008)

CEMR-EP/EPUSU Joint statement on the active inclusion of those furthest from the labour market (February 2008)

CEMR Response to the Green Paper on migration and mobility: challenges and opportunities for EU education systems (December 2008)

CEMR-EP/EPUSU Joint message to the Spring European Council (March 2009)

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