

**EUROPEAN ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE ON SOCIAL INCLUSION :
'HALFWAY TO LISBON'
GLASGOW 17TH AND 18TH OCTOBER**

Strand 1

Scribe's report on workshops in strand 1, Inclusive Labour Markets

(After the first plenary session, the workshop was preceded by a short press conference in the workshop venue, in which Margaret Hodge MP and a representative of the Scottish Executive stated that the host city of Glasgow had had serious social problems in previous decades, but now had good practice solutions in place. Employment has risen since the 1990s, with the percentage of lone parents in work rising from 41% in 1997 to 57% now, above the UK average. Inclusion of older employees is now being taken more seriously. Instead of focussing on benefits, the right to work is now the main focus. Employment frees people from dependency on benefits, and a survey in Pollock, Glasgow found that more employment resulted in better physical and mental health. The UK is on target to halve child poverty by 2010 and end it by 2020, thanks to the minimum wage, improved childcare and subsidies for housing, so this challenging target is a realistic one.)

**First workshop, 11:00 – 13:00 on 17th October:
Taking stock: Vulnerable groups and the labour market**

The workshop itself was chaired by Dr Gerry Milligan from Northern Ireland and the Department for Social Policy, social exclusion and disability division. In his introduction, he stated that the two groups needing most support in finding work were lone parents and the disabled, with ethnic groups and migrants also needing support.

Ms Dobrinka Kostova from Bulgaria reported on Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and other Eastern European countries. Eastern Europe faced challenges, but expanding economies there were helping to create a more inclusive labour market. The governments there were working with social partners, such as the European Anti-Poverty Network, to improve skills and create new jobs. Unemployment is too high generally in Europe, and has been rising since the 1990s. Eastern European governments provide incentives for investment in deprived areas, and now have anti-discrimination legislation, such as the

Czech legislation on employment of disabled people. Attempts are being made to change attitudes to employment for old and disabled people, and to integrate Roma minorities by providing training for unemployed Roma. There are now many programmes in place to help disadvantaged groups, but there is not yet enough monitoring, statistics on exclusion, public debate or awareness. 'Social inclusion' is not a well-known concept in Eastern Europe. Eastern Europe is converging with Western Europe, but more implementation of inclusive policies is required. Efforts to include the Roma and a demand-driven approach have achieved some success, but long-term goals and a balance of economic and social policies are needed, as well as an improvement in the general labour market.

Mr Gábor Gombos from Hungary stated that the old idea of physical and mental disability being simply a medical issue was not enough. Helping the disabled with easier access to buildings and clearer language in government publications was not just good for them but for everyone. Hungary has the new 'rights model' in its legislation, but it has not yet been implemented. The implementation deadline for the Hungarian law on wheelchair access has been postponed. Hungary now has anti-discrimination legislation, but it has not yet been used to impose any sanctions. The need for assistance for the lame and blind is obvious, but the needs are not so obvious for those with a mental disability, and 90% of the mentally disabled are unemployed in Hungary and much of the EU. Hungary closed its segregated workshops for the disabled, but there is a lack of incentives to provide employment for them in the mainstream market. Employers would rather pay more tax than employ disabled staff. There is also a legal barrier because guardians of the disabled cannot sign a work contract on their behalf.

Matthias Schulze-Böing from the local authority of Offenbach in Germany and CEMR, the European Council for Municipalities and Regional authorities, said that an inclusive labour market meant access to work for all, even with some compulsion, and no discrimination, not even hidden discrimination. His local authority had seen the need for greater flexibility in the hours when social services and childcare are available. Kindergartens were now open from 7 am to 7 pm instead of just 8 am to noon or 4 pm. This had improved the situation of single mothers, but not to the standard achieved in Scandinavia. The idea of women staying at home with their children is still deeply entrenched in Germany. His authority had introduced all-day schools, instead of schools only open in the morning. Spending had been doubled for the integration of social services with local and national government employment services.

Other contributors pointed out that when the job market improves, the disabled do not always benefit, as was found in Northern Ireland and Hungary. When unemployment rises, they are sometimes the first to lose their jobs, such as global competition taking away their jobs in small factories in Denmark. A few contributors felt that employers

should be compelled to do more, and they sometimes only acted when they were obliged to. Employers were not represented in the workshop to put their case. The Chairman referred to the example of enforced equality in employment for Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland, as a successful model in a somewhat different field. A spokeswoman for the European human rights organisation said that such compulsion had not yet been enforced for Roma in Eastern Europe. There can also be subtle discrimination in Western Europe, where trade unions have power in some situations similar to a closed shop, and may favour local people over ethnic minorities. Other local organisations may also help the native population more than migrants, although this is inevitable in some cases because of a language barrier. The labour market is not helpful in some areas at the moment, either offering few jobs, or a loss of benefits with a move into insecure, low-paid work, which is a disincentive to starting work.

The European Women's Lobby approved of the improved childcare in the EU, while the rapporteur Claire Champeix concluded by saying that we should be ambitious in providing childcare, and approved the German model of providing incentives and resources for an integrated approach to employment.

Second workshop, 11:00 – 13:00 on 17th October:

Site visits – Partnership working

Three site visits took up most of the time of this workshop, visiting the following locations:

1. The Full Employment Area initiative in Springburn, a suburb in the north of Glasgow. In order to reach the target of 70% employment, workers had gone out to talk to people in their homes, in parks and pubs. This helped them to identify the needs of individuals, so that appropriate support, such as childcare, could be provided. This had achieved much success with single parents. Work preparation was also provided in the form of work experience and training.
2. The second site visit, the Job Centre Plus was also in Springburn. This area still had high levels of poverty and people on benefits, but these levels were falling. The job centre here provides a computerised self-service facility for jobseekers, and has introduced the 'Pathways to Work' initiative, which aims to provide early support for people losing work due to sickness or disability. The centre provides personal advisors, return to work credits of £40 per week for up to 52 weeks, medical and psychological support, and after-care to help people stay in work.
3. The Rosemount Lifelong Learning Centre in Royston, Glasgow, was the third site visited. This deprived area has had some of the highest unemployment levels in Scotland, but this modern centre had a cheerful, clean and colourful interior, including an IT training centre, a crèche, a meeting room and a cosy 'relaxation room' for more personal or informal conversations. This city-funded community centre mainly helps single mothers, who mostly live in the East and North of Glasgow because of the large amount of council housing available. It provides advice on benefits, housing and on issues such as drug addiction. As well as training in IT, courses in English are provided for asylum seekers, or in specialist skills such as a nail technician course. The centre runs a fruit cooperative, among other projects. People are also encouraged to obtain more qualifications so that they can obtain better jobs afterwards. About 800 people attend the centre in a year, and some people who cannot work, such as asylum seekers, can do voluntary work so they are not inactive.

Michael Richardson from the DWP chaired the brief feedback session after the site visits.

Visitors to the job centre found that 40% of the jobs advertised were part-time, casual or agency work, so that the labour market can be demanding and insecure for many people.

Some support is provided in mental health support schemes, both for people at work, those starting a new job and people having to leave work and return to benefits.

Responding to an observation from the floor that it seemed that employers rarely needed to change, only the individual jobseekers were under pressure to do so, the Chairman pointed out that employers are collaborating with the DWP in providing jobs for the disabled. A local representative stated that in Glasgow, employers are often willing to help. A coordinated approach to employers is also helpful, rather than separate approaches by a variety of different agencies.

**Third workshop, 9:00 – 11:00 on 18th October:
Social services and employment**

Chairman: John Halloran, Director of the European Social Network.

The first presentation was from Tof Thissen, Chairman of DIVOSA, the Dutch Association of Directors of Social Services. In 2004, the Dutch Government introduced the Work and Social Assistance Act, which decentralised funds and responsibility for welfare and employment to local authorities. The local authorities now manage a fixed social assistance budget, which they can spend to help people move from benefits to employment. This is an incentive for local authorities to reduce unemployment and fraudulent benefit claims. Local councils now plan policy and targets with their social services department, sometimes renamed 'Department of Work and Income'.

Both local authorities and private suppliers provide employment services.

Activating people now has priority over providing benefits, which used to lead to dependence and loss of confidence. The aim now is to free and empower people, using their abilities and improving their lives. This requires a change in priorities for social services staff, and this will take time to achieve.

Local authorities must help by creating favourable conditions for reintegration, and they face a challenge to integrate their education, welfare and employment policies. For example, people on benefits can be given priority for jobs for construction and cleaning of municipal buildings, or working in new companies attracted to the area by the council. Young people can be kept in school until they have qualifications, and retraining provided, in partnership with employers, for people made redundant.

Unwaged social productivity, provided by carers, for example, is also valuable.

The government should provide secure long-term budgets to enable long-term planning.

Liny Bruijnzeel, also from DIVOSA, presented a report on the effects of this new Act in its first year. The number of benefit claimants has fallen, and local authorities are pleased to have more responsibility. New claimants are now screened more strictly, checking their tax status, income and assets, sometimes including home visits to see how well off the claimants are. 70% of local authorities have introduced a 'Work first' scheme, in

which benefit claimants must do some basic work before receiving benefits. This helps people to adjust to working, and to find out what work people can do or want to do. It also puts off some claimants, who now go to an employment agency first, especially young people. The authorities can impose obligations or sanctions on claimants. Claimants must also accept any work they are offered, within reason, but single parents with children under five are not pressured to accept employment.

Just over half the Dutch local authorities paid out less in benefits in 2004 than their budget allocation, and could use the surplus for other projects. Some authorities who overspent queried the amount of funding they received from the government. But this gives all the local authorities a strong incentive to be efficient and make savings, which is what the public in Holland want them to do.

Three out of four Dutch local authorities also remained within their budget for activation and reintegration of claimants. This is partly due to an emphasis on the easier and less expensive task of helping young people to find work.

However, it will be more difficult to help long-term claimants; 80% of those entitled to social assistance claim it for more than a year. Social services managers expect that about 50% of these can find work each year. Although there's a lack of long-term assistance for this group, due to the one-year budgeting, they are now receiving more attention in the second year since the Act was introduced.

Some local authorities are too small to take responsibility effectively, and many are therefore collaborating in social services with neighbouring authorities.

The third presentation was from the Belgian MP Benoît Drèze, who reported that unemployment had risen from 3 or 4% in French-speaking Belgium to over 20% over the last 30 years, although there is also a black economy or moonlighting. This often means that 80% are overworking, while 20% are inactive and the economy is stagnating. Social enterprises in French-speaking Belgium, now numbering 150, have helped by employing unqualified young people in catering, cleaning and building work, providing training in work, with an effective alternation of practical and theoretical training. This method of valuing the individual and improving their skills has produced full employment in small areas. Responding to questions raised about overcoming prejudice or discrimination against ethnic minorities, Benoît Drèze stated that taking people on for a trial period can help in the integration of minorities.

The Chairman observed that in the UK, the Government is still responsible for employment and benefits, and local authorities for social services, so there was a need for social services to focus more on employability.

Other delegates stated that prevention, i.e. helping people into work sooner, was cheaper and more effective than trying to help them after years on benefits.

An 'inclusive labour market' often meant low-paid jobs, but this was better than no jobs.



Questions were raised about how strict should the screening of claimants be, and to what extent should people be compelled to do work they don't like. The costs and benefits of training schemes and job creation programmes should be assessed. In Germany, long-term assessments of claimants and their careers are being undertaken. Active, local support for claimants as known individuals, as exemplified by both the Dutch and Belgian model, was seen as better than a passive or centralised support system.

At the end of the workshop, some NGOs wanted to present a motion calling for a balance of economic and social policy (instead of focussing mainly on economic prosperity), an open method of coordination (based on the objectives set in Nice), and a linking of social inclusion and structural funds. However, it was not appropriate to take an immediate vote since there was no time for discussion of this motion, because this workshop was about to end.

Strand 2

Strand 2: Children & families

Workshop 1: Taking stock: eliminating child poverty

Chair: Dr Jonathan Bradshaw

Rapporteur: Ninetta Kazantzis

The workshop followed a structure of presentations given by 4 speakers and ended with a half-hour session of questions/answers and observations from delegates.

The first speaker was Dr Petra Hoelscher of the University of Sterling who described the progress made in the development of an index of child well-being based on a set of indicators fed by recent comparable data across EU countries. The index is structured around 4 clusters - children's personal resources, education, family & immediate environment and children's social resources - which can be evaluated to produce a "league table" of the performance of 21 countries, in which the Scandinavian countries featured towards the top of the table whilst the Baltic states performed the least well and brief mention was made of the general reasons for these respective performances. It was pointed out that although comparative information is available to build up a picture of child poverty across Europe, there is no explanation of the linkages between indicators and some questions remain over the quality of the data in terms of date of recording, coverage, etc. The index aroused much discussion from delegates as to the choice and comprehensiveness of the indicators used and Dr Hoelscher pointed out that it was necessary to make use of the existing data available and that the index would be a useful first step in defining future policy.

This was followed by a presentation from Catriona Williams, President of Eurochild, a Brussels-based international non-profit organisation promoting the rights and welfare of children. She spoke of the organisation's work in service delivery, awareness-raising, promotion of an active network and monitoring & assessment of NAPs as part of its goal of empowering young people and moving towards the elimination of social exclusion against children. Reference was made to the Child Poverty Programme and to the assessment of NAPs/incl. 2004 & 2005. Mrs Williams highlighted the rights-based approach and expressed her frustration about the lack of mention of child poverty in the recent draft EU paper as part of the streamlining process and emphasised that such a focus on child poverty must exist in the future.

The third presentation was made by Tara Hopkins of the NSPCC representing the European Children's Network, an organisation set up in 1995 and inspired by the UNCRC, whose vision is that children's rights should be respected, protected and represented at EU level. The main focus of the presentation was on a report currently being produced by the academic Sandy Ruxton under the provisional title "Children's Rights in the EU", building on the "1st steps" report of 1999. In this period of economic, political and social change, now is the right time to develop a vision for children's rights in accordance with the provisions of the UNCRC and to work towards a coherent and comprehensive children's rights policy for which the core recommendations were made. It was remarked that the rejection of the EU constitution represented a stumbling block but it was hoped that working on the emerging political will would help to keep children's rights on the agenda.

The final speaker was Matt Davies representing ATD Fourth World, an organisation that is involved, amongst others, in the area of child protection and support. The main theme of the presentation, under the motto "valuing children, valuing family", was on the family being seen as a resource and on the need for the family to be respected. Emphasis was placed on space for dialogue with the stimulation of ideas and pooling of knowledge. Reference was made to two projects in Belgium and UK in which there had been dialogue between those delivering and those receiving the service within the framework of a policy of "thinking together". Delegates raised the issue of a possible clash between the rights of children and those of family but the speaker saw no reason why these rights should be in competition.

In the open discussion, delegates returned to the index of child well-being and the rationale behind its construction, with some delegates questioning whether child poverty could be measurable by a single index. Other issues broached included the disconnection of child poverty from women's poverty, the relative poverty vs. absolute poverty debate, vertical divisions between societies, public understanding of poverty, involvement of families in consultation, difference between poverty and well-being, bringing the well-being element to the fore and the child perspective as of now.

Strand 2: Children & families

Workshop 2: Looking for solutions: Services that break cycles of deprivation

Delegates were offered a choice of three visits to local organisations involved in providing services for children and families at risk of social exclusion.

One group visited the Starting Well Health Demonstration Project for Child and Family Health in Scotland, which has operated since 2000 in two deprived areas of Glasgow -

Gorbals and Govanhill. The project's aim is to improve child health through a programme of activities supporting parents and children. Delegates learned how the project has evolved from Phase 1, which was offering a universal service to vulnerable communities, to Phase 2, which will implement a targeted, multi-disciplinary and multi-agency intervention involving a mix of home-based and centre-based work. Presentations were given on specific aspects of the project including: (i) the PPP ("Positive Parenting Program") whose approach of prevention and early intervention through practical measures reaps benefits in terms of improved child behaviour, improved parenting and improved marital and family relationships as verifiable in the 1,600 families that it has helped; (ii) the perspective of children from Black & Ethnic Minorities many of whom who are isolated due to language barriers and who face a number of obstacles for obtaining high quality public services; (iii) the Health Support Worker role, in which the One Plus organisation plays a key part, drawing from its 20+ years of experience of providing support, in empowering families. Delegates heard that the model is at present just limited to Glasgow but that ties with the EU Social Inclusion process and with the NPAs would be sought in the future.

The second group visited the Castlemilk Estate and heard about "Families First", funded by the Castlemilk Development Agency. This is a service level agreement with Glasgow City Council that is situated in one of the most deprived areas in the city. This city-wide project is primarily involved with those on a low income based on a wide range of eligibility criteria - including those receiving benefits, tax credits, etc. - and with a wide definition of family that includes parents and grandparents. The rationale behind the project is to provide support to mothers to enable them to get back to work and to access childcare services. The five main areas of the project are guidance & monitoring, mentoring, sitter service, pre-market support and a pilot project leading to the attainment of a certificate thus facilitating job entry. Two of the most important aspects are the role of the key worker and the sustainability of the project although its tailor-made approach makes it expensive to run.

The third group made a visit to the Easterhouse estate, one of Glasgow's most deprived areas, and to a centre that offers community services housed in a modern building on the estate. The visit started with a tour of the building in which delegates were able to appreciate the facilities available, including PCs for training and information, as well as the nursery for under 3s and the garden, much appreciated by those accustomed to occupying high-rise accommodation. This was followed by presentations on the services available in the centre, including child care provision funded by Glasgow City Council, a financial advice funded by Children in Need, and a father's group whose activities were explained in a video presentation and by fathers physically present at the centre.

Strand 2: Children & families

Workshop 3: Making a decisive impact: supporting children at risk of social exclusion

Chair: Dr Jonathan Bradshaw

Rapporteur: Ninetta Kazantzis

The workshop followed a structure of presentations given by 6 speakers and ended with a few minutes of questions/answers and observations from delegates.

The session kicked off with a presentation from Lee Ellery representing the Wales-based Rights to Action, a peer-led organisation funded by the Disability Rights Network. The network is the first in the UK but the aim is to roll this out across the UK. The network originated from a Swansea University conference in 2003 in which members wished to carry on the good work of the conference and to create a network of disabled people, which resulted in the creation of RTA. Mr Ellery explained that the network's purpose is to give disabled people in Wales a chance to meet up and talk about the issues affecting them, with local issues campaigned through local organisations and national issues taken to the Welsh Assembly and to Funky Dragon, the Children and Young People's Assembly for Wales. An overview was given of the network's activities and future priorities, and the key issues affecting young disabled people such as education, access, leisure, careers & jobs, health and the need to develop a more positive portrayal of disabled people. The presentation ended with a motto that embodied the general spirit of the workshops if not the whole round table itself: "nothing about us without us".

The second speaker was William Stitt representing Who Cares? Scotland, a peer-led organisation working with children and young people with experience of being in care. Drawing from his own personal experiences, Mr Stitt's impassioned presentation focussed on the issues facing children both in care and leaving care. The main issues cited as those which affect children in care are the stigma attached to being in care, the different treatment in school and college and the inconsistency of carers and staff in applying policy, often resulting in these children "slipping through the net". Upon leaving care, children face difficulties such as varying levels of support, inadequate money to stay connected and difficult-to-obtain housing, with the securing of one's own tenancy being highlighted as very important given the unsuitability of long-term residency in hostels and B&Bs although it was stressed that housing appropriate to the individual's circumstances was of paramount importance. The key issue of the presentation was that there are ways to resolve these problems but this must be through dialogue with young people.

The third presentation was given by Professor Robert Walker from the University of Nottingham and the Institute for Fiscal Studies who spoke about the UK Anti-Child Poverty Strategy, which is inspired by the present UK government's drive to eradicate child poverty within a generation and forms part of a broader socio-economic strategy. Professor Walker highlighted the intergenerational transmission of disadvantage and the "scarring effects" of child poverty on the individual, family, community and economy. Aspects such as low income, neighbourhood, education and family all affect child/adult outcomes and therefore form the basis for the strategy which promotes work for those who can, high quality services to break deprivation cycles and support for parents in their parenting role. Through a series of briefly presented charts, the speaker showed that improvements had been made in child poverty rates in the UK but that those out of work were still not able, despite the financial support available, to reach the poverty line. Subsequently, Professor Walker fielded questions from delegates about the success of anti-child poverty policies in Germany, Austria and Scandinavia, two-parent income, housing benefit and children leaving the state care system.

The fourth speaker was Stefan Stoyanov, a policy officer representing Save The Children Bulgaria who gave the South-East Europe perspective of social exclusion affecting children. Mr Stoyanov explained the Bulgarian policy over recent decades of institutionalising children as a first resort measure into Mother & Baby Homes. STC had developed a "Take Me Home" project which sought to provide support for families as part of a wider goal to bring about changes in national practice although the speaker acknowledged that its influence on child welfare reform has been largely unsuccessful to date. STC had successfully lobbied the EU to make changes to the Accession Partnership Agreement so that children's rights and welfare reform would be included in the criteria for admission. As regards STC's aim to reform the child care system in order to reduce the number of institutionalised children, there was a slow improvement, in terms of the number of children placed in institutions on the basis of administrative/court orders, but there are currently no public plans for closure.

The final two speakers were Patricia Prendiville and Kim Leanord Smouter representing the International Gay and Lesbian Association (IGLA). Their presentations focussed on the issues relevant to young people such as exclusion from full and active participation in school, under-performance, absenteeism, early drop-out, depression and suicide, which produce a marginalisation that is carried through into adulthood. Ms Prendiville identified certain factors in school - non-inclusive school culture, inadequate anti-bullying policies, lack of staff training, non-inclusion in curriculum - and called for policy makers and Government officials to consider aspects such as training for all professionals, interconnection, inclusion in NAPs/incl, harmonisation of anti-discrimination legislation, mainstreaming approach to equality and urged for "joined-up" thinking because all



aspects of social inclusion affect young lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people. The presentations ended with a focus on the need to make children visible.

In the concluding observations, delegates emphasised the need for a comprehensive, across-the-board social protection system and referred to the aforementioned slogan of "nothing about us without us" as summing up perfectly the need for involvement of stakeholders within the social inclusion agenda.

Strand 3

Strand 3: Exclusion in later life

Workshop 1: Taking stock: aspects of social exclusion in later life

Chaired by: Syd Ashby, Co-Chair of Age UK
Rapporteur: Michael O'Halloran, Irish Seniors Parliament
Scribe: Lisa Davey

Presentations by:

- Edward Thorpe, Policy Officer, AGE – the European Older People's Platform, Brussels
- Jean-Pierre Bultez, Les Petits Frères des Pauvres (International Federation of Little Brothers of the Poor), France
- Dr Nijole Arbaciauskiene, Elderly Women's Activity Centre, Kaunas, Lithuania

This workshop followed a structure of presentations given by 3 speakers followed by questions/answers and observations from delegates.

The first presentation by Edward Thorpe covered the place of older people in the European Social Inclusion process. He outlined the multi-dimensional nature of social exclusion and the realities facing many older people in Europe and looked at how different elements of the Social Exclusion Action Programme have targeted issues surrounding older people. He summarised the extent to which older people are targeted or not targeted by the objectives and political statements of the European Social Inclusion Process and gave an overview of the way that National Action Plans have included policy commitments of specific concern to older people.

The over-65s are the age group most at risk of monetary poverty according to EU figures, whilst evidence on issues such as living alone, lack of family support, reduced mobility and vulnerability to temperature change highlight the risks faced by many older people.

Some references are made in the introduction to the Common Objectives and the annex of the Common Outline for the drafting of the NAPs to older people as a specific target group and EU-funded Transnational Exchange Projects and a study have looked at issues around older people. However, Mr Thorpe highlighted that rather than building on from these references, older people often disappear from the agenda when political priorities are set e.g. Conclusions of the Employment and Social Affairs Council, March 2005.

He argued that in the context of the ageing of the population, the specific situation facing older people is likely to become even more important, particularly considering that the proportion of the population aged 80+ is projected to rise from 4% now to 10% by 2050.

Jean-Pierre Bultez highlighted the problems involved in providing a clear definition of poverty and social exclusion. Money is only one factor to be considered; others include how people live, access to services and the subjective approach i.e. the conditions the individual feels s/he lives in. (Elderly women are particularly at risk of living in poverty and the level of poverty increases as they age.) In defining poverty, human dignity and human rights must also be respected, as well as an understanding of local cultures and customs, which may affect an older person's quality of life. M. Bultez noted that traditional family life and the care which is contingent upon this is more prevalent in southern Europe than in northern Europe.

A number of studies have been carried out to determine the expectations of older people. It is important to involve older people in defining objectives and what they wish services and inclusion programmes to focus on. There should be structural indicators, indicators of quality and a participative methodology, implementation and follow-up.

The eastern European perspective was introduced by Dr Nijole Arbaciauskiene. She drew the delegates' attention to the differences that exist, not only between cultures in southern and northern Europe, but also to the issues facing the "new" member countries within the European Union which have undergone a regime change in recent history. She cited the example of Lithuania where older people, who make up 20% of the population, are coming to terms with living under a new system that they were not prepared for and often struggle to understand. They now live on very low pensions and any savings that they had were all but wiped out during the regime change. Not only are they making this adjustment but that they are also having to pay relatively high prices for services (such as health provision, rent, utilities) which previously were free or heavily subsidised. The government has rejected appeals for compensation of loss of pension on the grounds that it does not have sufficient funds. The poverty rate of older people in 2003 was 19.6%, which had increased by 2004 to 21.3%. Those who would wish to make up the shortfall by working part time are faced with the barrier that this cannot be combined with pension income. A further issue in eastern European countries is that older people received good education under their former governments, but they had not been equipped with IT skills which now puts them at a disadvantage if they wish to enter the labour market.

In the open discussion, participants discussed the importance of the social inclusion process in tackling the multi-dimensional nature of social exclusion. It was agreed that income and pension levels were a crucial issue, but that many issues of exclusion could not be dealt with purely in terms of pensions reforms. Given the diversity of systems across the EU, it is not always possible to compare income directly: in some countries there is a relatively low average monetary income, but more free or reduced-price services are made available. It is difficult to calculate the value of these services, particularly as it will depend on the needs of individuals. Non-monetary indicators have to be included to understand levels of poverty and exclusion across the EU. It is clear that the elderly population will increase and preparatory measures must be made. The open method of co-ordination can help in providing a structure for the mobilisation of all actors, including older people themselves at grassroots level to provide policies and services which respond effectively to the needs of older people.

Recommendations

- Older people have a key place in the European Social Inclusion Process – this needs to be recognised explicitly along with the references to children.
- The inclusion of workshops focussing on the issues facing older people was welcomed by the delegates at this Round Table. It was recommended that the discussions should be followed up at the next Round Table under the Finnish Presidency of the EU.
- A Peer Review on policies directly focussed on older people is strongly recommended by the delegates.
- Whilst income in retirement is a crucial aspect of social exclusion, there is a clear need to develop our use and understanding of non-monetary indicators in informing policy-making in order to take into account the multi-dimensional nature of exclusion.

Strand 3: Exclusion in later life

Workshop 2: Looking for solutions, ensuring financial security in retirement

Chaired by: Michel Riquier, CFR (French Pensioners Confederation), France

Rapporteur: Michael O'Halloran, Irish Seniors Parliament

Scribe: Lisa Davey

Presentations by:

- Kari Välimäki, Director-General, Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health
- Henri Lourdelle, European Trade Union Confederation
- Neil Carberry, CBI, UK and UNICE (European Employers' Union)

This workshop followed a structure of presentations given by 3 speakers followed by questions/answers and observations from delegates.

Mr Välimäki began by highlighting statistics and measuring indicators of poverty in Finland, which is regarded as having low levels of poverty. He noted that statistics are not always reliable indicators of the actual situation as these can be manipulated to highlight different situations. For example, in Finland, the government takes owner-occupied homes into account in the equation, whereas the EU only considers income when making its assessment of poverty. Mr Välimäki told the delegates that the Finnish system is under reform and there is now equal treatment of all citizens (men and women) and all are entitled to a national pension, but if a person has a private pension, the level of national pension entitlements could be reduced accordingly.

There is a need for a prevention principle to ensure that people do not fall into poverty, not just reactive measures when poverty or low income is already a reality.

The common retirement age in Finland is 59 years; many older people are not in employment and steps are being taken to actively encourage people to remain in work between the ages of 55 and 64. There is evidence to suggest that with good management, an enjoyable job and friendly colleagues, there is more incentive to stay at work. If these elements are lacking, older workers will take the first opportunity to retire. It is important to improve people's employability as working is the best social protection against poverty.

Those who are intending to rely on a national pension as their only form of income are at risk of falling into poverty. Unpaid periods (caring for elderly and children) during working life are taken into account in the final salary calculation. This policy means that women are disadvantaged as care of elderly parents and children usually falls to them.

Reforms must not only be made in pension provisions, but changes must also be made in employment conditions to ensure workers can work for longer.

When considering provision of services it is important to provide services to all population groups and not to create social conflict by having different systems for different income groups of pensionable age. Clearly some services will be more heavily used by certain groups of people than by others (e.g. health services by those with health problems)

Henri Lourdelle suggested in his presentation that income in retirement should not greatly differ from that when working, meaning that standards of living should not decrease significantly when people retire. He recognised that progress has been made and that there is a need to consider long-term preventative measures to ensure that future pensioners would not become poor.

There are currently differences between the "old" members and the "new" members of the EU where incomes are lower, as are national pension levels. Some member states have introduced a minimum pension, whereas others have not. National pensions should ideally be guaranteed by the state with sustainable funding. If taxes are reduced, we must look at how to maintain levels of contributions. Some countries have private pensions, but it must be recognised that these are vulnerable and are subject to the vagaries of the stock market. Furthermore, private pensions cannot be the answer for the millions of people who, even in a partnership where both individuals are working, already need all of their income to live today rather than allowing the possibility of saving for tomorrow.

M Lourdelle argued that it was illogical for some people to suggest that the pensionable age should be increased when people already find it so difficult to remain in employment up to the existing official retirement ages. He argued that the issue was not about trying to force people to work – there are already millions of people looking for jobs - but about providing quality jobs that they can take up.

Solutions include providing quality employment (not temporary or part-time work where that option is not preferred), removing discrimination between men and women, adapting and improving the working environment, establishing the right to life-long learning with opportunities to train after the age of 50 and ensuring high levels of health and safety at work to remove the possibility of accidents.

In his presentation, Neil Carberry considered the problems of adequate retirement provision stating that many people over-estimate the income they will receive in

retirement. It is not acceptable to have poor pensioners. As the ageing demographic progresses, there will be a greater demand for older workers and this, in turn, will create a need for skills development. Incapacity benefit claims have quadrupled in the UK since 1979, but an early exit from the labour market contributes to poverty, so more help is needed from government in terms of good practice for returnees, those suffering from ill-health, etc.

There is also a need for workers to understand that they have to save for their retirement. More financial education starting at school and continuing in the workplace is necessary to help people understand how this can be achieved. Some people will always rely on state provision and there needs to be a better system over the long term to ensure that people do not fall into poverty. Tax rises are not the only answer; working longer could help the matter or allowing people to combine some pension income with work.

It was noted in the open discussion that there are 25 different systems in Europe and a "state" pension means something different in each country. It was felt that governments use the differences of comparison across the EU as an excuse to avoid tackling the issue and exchanging learning at the European level.

Although it is considered important to provide employment for young people to ensure growth, wages must be set at a reasonable level. Young women are choosing not to have children to avoid the poverty trap their mothers fell into. The demographic consequences of this are far reaching. The informal care provided by women to their children and elderly family members should be included in their pension calculations as vital services are being provided free of charge with no pay-back benefits for the carers.

It was suggested that in an economy dependant upon consumption, it would be damaging to ignore the role of older people and the dangers of allowing income in retirement to be eroded to unacceptable levels.

It was felt by many that projections 50 years into the future are difficult to grasp or be sure of – many things could change in that time. In that context, it is important to note that the older population is growing now and that solutions are needed for today's pensioners and those that will be retiring in the near future to allow them to share in the wealth of their country – the countries that they helped to build.

Recommendations:

- Extending working lives can be important in preventing poverty in old age, but it is important to define this as allowing people to work up to the existing pensionable age. This needs the development of quality work and the provision of training.
- Personal savings can complement income in retirement, but they cannot replace a guaranteed and adequate basic pension. It is extremely difficult if not impossible to save for your own retirement if you are long-term unemployed, a carer, in low-paid work, if you have significant career breaks, etc.
- Whilst we need to prepare for demographic changes we cannot look too far into the future and need also to respond to the needs of pensioners today.

Strand 3: Exclusion in later life

Workshop 3: Making a decisive impact, developing excellent services

Chaired by: Dr Elizabeth Mestheneos, Hellas 50+, Greece

Rapporteur: Michael O'Halloran, Irish Seniors Parliament

Scribe: Lisa Davey

Presentations by:

- Claire Tyler, Director of the Social Exclusion Unit, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, UK
- John England, Deputy Director of Social Services, Leeds, UK

Claire Tyler reported that the UK Social Exclusion Unit was looking at the problem and patterns of exclusion faced by older people and was in the final stages of drafting a report to be published in January 2006. Ms Tyler reported that her Unit had been looking at how to break the cycle of a series of problems, such as low income, poor skills, and to ensure that those with the greatest needs would benefit most from the services available, which is currently not the case. Social exclusion cannot be defined purely as poverty, but also incorporates other issues such as loneliness and living in remote rural and coastal areas where there is a lack of transport and other services.

An important starting point is to involve older people in defining what would make a difference in their lives since different groups of older people have different aspirations.

A "map of loneliness" had been drawn up in which a typical profile was found. A lonely person could typically be described as being over 80, living alone in rented housing, in poor physical and mental health, having transport issues and having lost many social contacts when their partner died (such as visits by health-care providers).

Bringing an end to poverty is a worthy aim, but it does not go far enough. Older people should be offered a reasonable quality of life. An example of providing social relationships is the operation of a "time bank" whereby everyone barter their time for services they can offer. No value other than the number of hours is put on the services ensuring that all have equal value. This scheme has shown that interdependence on other members of society was more important than independence or dependence.

There is a need to integrate services offered by the various providers more effectively. In many cases, services are designed to suit the provider and not the user; services need to promote user involvement and provide choice. Three-year local targets and priorities are established under local area agreements providing a "single conversation"

between government at all levels and providers. In the UK, there is a scheme called “A sure start for older people” which aims to co-ordinate support to allow a seamless entry to the scheme at whatever point the user enters the system.

In his presentation, John England focused on the findings of the European Transnational Exchange Project SEEM – Services for Elders from Ethnic Minorities. The project brought together partner cities throughout Europe in Lille, Dortmund, Gothenburg, the province of Ghent and Bucharest, led by Leeds to give a deep insight into practical issues and workable solutions.

Older people in this group face a high risk of exclusion arising from inequalities in income, health and housing. In the light of the increase of immigrant communities in all countries throughout Europe, there are issues of cultural and ethnic diversity which need to be handled sensitively to ensure that older people in these groups are not marginalised by the society they live in.

Mr England emphasised the importance of the principles of good practice when setting up services. These include: setting objectives; identifying performance indicators; consulting and involving people from minority groups; communication and information dissemination, service delivery; and sustainability.

The needs of ethnic minority groups are diverse and it is important to understand this diversity as the responses may differ. Developing a policy framework for the integration of older people from ethnic minorities is also important and promoting active citizenship within these communities is paramount. Working with the voluntary sector builds capacity and barriers are broken down if frontline workers are drawn from specific ethnic communities as there is a particularly valuable appreciation of cultural, religious and social matters. Social exclusion does not, however, just mean being lonely or living in an isolated area, it includes homelessness, sickness and other causes of detachment from society.

In the open forum discussion the participants agreed that the issue of services in terms of their availability, quality and accessibility was crucial to preventing social exclusion. It was recognised that there is a variation in services across the EU, but all agreed that all countries want to deliver excellent services, even though theory and practice are not always seamlessly integrated. It was important to take a “top-down” and “bottom-up” approach, involving providers and users at every level to ensure the service is appropriate.

The private sector plays different roles in the provision of different services in different countries. It is not possible to set out what is the best system at European level, but it

was felt that the public authorities have a clear responsibility for overseeing the system and ensuring that the necessary services were provided. The private sector by itself would not guarantee services to the most vulnerable. It was noted however that there is no legal requirement to provide social services whereas health services must be provided.

The importance of preventative services must not be overlooked; services could be rendered both more effective and more cost efficient by not being based so much simply on crisis intervention.

There was discussion on the pros and cons of systems which provide funding to individuals who can then 'shop around' for the services that they need – this is intended to empower older people with choice and control, allowing them to structure their own care needs. This seemed to be a question on which there was much difference of opinion depending on personal belief and national customs, although there was agreement that service users needed to be involved in defining their service needs.

Voluntary organisations may be better placed to build up a relationship of mutual trust with older people. This is not always the case for state-provided services. In the UK, it was noted that many in the over 65 age group are actively supporting older people and sometimes these carers are in need support themselves.

Recommendations

- Services are crucial in tackling the multi-dimensional nature of social exclusion.
- The objectives of quality/excellence; accessibility; and sustainability (as set out in the planning for the OMC on health and long-term care) can be supported.
- The principle of early intervention and preventative services should be highlighted in the context of health and long-term care.
- It is also crucial that services are user-centred if we are to guarantee quality and the consultation and participation of older people themselves in defining needs and delivering services should be an accepted principle in arriving at this.

Strand 4

Ethnic Minorities Issues Workshop 1

Taking Stock: Key factors in social exclusion of people from Ethnic Minorities

Chair: Adam Tyson, Head of Social Inclusion Unit, European Commission

Rapporteur: Prof Naina Patel OBE, Director of Policy Research Institute on Ageing and Ethnicity

Speakers: Bashy Quraishy, President of European Network Against Racism

Laco Oravec, Milan Simecka Foundation (Integration of Roma Communities in Slovakia)

The ENAR representative outlined conditions for ethnic minorities in Denmark. ENAR's annual shadow report on negative developments in each EU member-state found the unemployment rate of ethnic minorities in Denmark was 50% whereas the national average is 4.5%. The recent tightening of the Aliens Act has caused widespread poverty - 5 years ago homelessness amongst the ethnic minority community was 10%, now it is 50% and minorities are blamed for not wanting integration. A Media Watch report found that although ethnic minorities make up 5% of the Danish population, they get 35% media coverage, 65% of which is negative. There is open castigation of ethnic minorities and their cultures. Police protection is rare as they cite freedom of speech. It has become harder for non-EU citizens to enter Denmark and all NGO funding has been abolished since 2005. There has been unsatisfactory implementation of legal protection and discrimination is taking new forms. Political propaganda is unacceptable and hurts mainstream society. The racist climate is reinforced by restrictive laws of which the Romas bear the brunt. What is the impact of these attitudes and legislation on the inclusion of ethnic minorities in the EU, is Denmark a unique case and does the Commission need to use 'strong arm tactics'?

Laco Oravec spoke of overcoming barriers against Roma employment in Slovakia. It is difficult raising money from the EU structure and insufficient attention is paid to the need of eliminating unemployment amongst ethnic minority groups as an EU unemployment policy target - as shown by the absence of Roma from NAPS on employment. Recent projects have not had marked impact on family and community levels of poverty and employment policies and strategies are needed. Unemployment is the biggest problem for the Roma community (over 86%), which perceives ethnicity as the main problem. Slovakia has one of the highest growth rates in the EU and implemented radical social benefit cuts in Feb 2004 without providing any alternatives. No party is interested in social inclusion, cohesion, poverty and Roma issues. The main tool of social cohesion policy is to use the ESF and other funds. Slovakia does not introduce its own programmes e.g. housing. Roma employment has only become an issue with EU enlargement. It is important to ensure that any inclusion policies do not exclude the Roma through a lack of statistics. Migration seems to be the best solution for many Roma who are successful in the UK and CZ.

The discussion took to the floor. The ECRE representative pointed out that politicians and parties must promote a more positive image of asylum-seekers and refugees rather than focusing on negative restrictive policies. Refugees need access to recognition of their qualifications and training. Representatives of the Swedish Ministry of Social Affairs and the CRE both noted that Denmark was not a unique case and that, although less blatant, there is structural racism in housing, employment and the police throughout Europe. A Roma representative noted that the groups themselves should be participating in the social policy-making that affects them.. She stated that Roma children were being educated in ghetto schools.

The rapporteur summed up by synthesising the points made in the workshop. Taking stock is an important and fundamental aspect - if you cannot define the problem you cannot find the solution. The presence of racism pervades through all countries and there are trends of exclusion in employment, housing and health. Life-long poverty leads to early mortality in rich continents. The primary social exclusion indicators are murky because of the complexity of racism. There is an economic basis for racism and whichever ethnic minority group you come from the unemployment rate is doubled if not quadrupled. The state exploits the phenomena of racism which has many trends and there is fear of physical violence. Denmark is not a unique example. Progress is nullified as racism is employed as an important tool. Why use racism when dependant on a minority labour force? Why continue using racist discourse in ordinary language? Must be more explicit about the elements of multiple discrimination. The Slovakian presentation was an important reminder that the EC not only funds but directly intervenes in the shaping of policy and bringing in those without a voice and plays an

important role in bringing racism onto the agenda. It is important not to focus entirely on the economics of a situation as this leads to the danger of forgetting the social aspects. It was also noted that the current political climate is not conducive for the implementation of race directives.

Ethnic Minorities Issues
Workshop 2

**Looking for Solutions:
Ethnic Minority Services**

Chair: Adam Tyson, Head of Social Inclusion Unit, European Commission

Rapporteur: Prof Naina Patel OBE, Director of Policy Research Institute on Ageing and Ethnicity

Speakers: Johanna Forberg, Project Manager, Kvinnoforum,
Arthur Ivatts OBE, Education Consultant

Johanna Forberg's presentation highlighted honour-related violence and social inclusion in Europe. Honour-related violence is a form of social exclusion preventing the development of skills and education and is an indicator of how western European societies protect the rights of women and children. It should be incorporated into EU policies to allow the understanding and empowerment of migrant communities and marginalised women's groups. It is perpetuated by males against females within a framework of family structures. Many girls/women/boys are subjected to social exclusion. Girls escaping honour-related violence risk homelessness, poverty and prostitution. Women are kept out of the labour market through early and forced marriage. There are four forms of oppression:- gender, age, ethnic minority and class (not necessarily an indicator). Honour-related violence is different from domestic violence in that there is more than one perpetrator and is condoned by the family. There has been some success with national and international multi-sectoral cooperation. Women's groups are run by local activists and work with the police. There is more awareness of honour-related violence e.g. Germany which refused to see it as an issue even one year ago. The European Network of Police Officers is now dedicated to

honour-related violence with interactive and process-orientated training and the encouragement of both formal and informal cooperation. The UK's Scotland Yard has asked for frontline officers to receive training in honour-related violence. With improved knowledge, enhanced strategies and methods of cooperation the situation can be improved. It is a global problem and must be approached from a human rights perspective with multi-levelled and multi-sectoral strategies. The first step has been taken with the help of the EC. The labour market is also an important factor as there is increased marginalisation in the workforce.

Arthur Ivatts's detailed presentation focused on education as a route to the social inclusion of Roma/Gypsies/Travellers in the UK. Since 1972 there has been voluntary NGO activity and advocacy to help education for travellers. Slow action by the Local Education Authority led to the development of the Roma/Gypsy/Traveller Education Services (TES) with specialist teachers, educational welfare officers etc. Central government has been actively involved since 1985 and the Department of Education has shown a positive approach. There has been significant progress in the move to mainstreaming and the Human Rights Act and Racial Discrimination Act have helped. Irish travellers have been included as an ethnic minority and cannot be excluded. There has been increased success in access to schools, regular attendance and rising achievement levels. However the honest picture shows a lack of data and coordinated action due to no land etc. Governments are irresponsible in collecting data - nothing is known about these communities apart from negative stereotypes. These children are underachieving mainly due to racist attitudes in educational institutions. They are the highest group of children excluded from schools. Barriers to change include endemic ignorance, racism in society at large and no leadership at a political level. Factors aiding policy are the anti-discrimination and social inclusion laws central to the groups being included in data. The issue is now pan-European and there is explicit international concern from the EC/World Bank etc. This will be a major European issue for the next 30 years with increasing Roma community awareness worldwide. Data must drive policy and the desegregation of Roma schooling.

The chair noted the similar key points - the importance of establishing indicators, the definition of the problem, the resistance to these measures by political parties and the importance of training, media awareness and positive images.

The discussion took to the floor. The ENAR representative stated his concern over the term 'honour killings' and stressed the importance of terminology. The Roma representative mentioned the diversity of employment in the EC/UN etc. There are 82,000 people working in Human Rights only 8 of which are Roma. She stressed that the roundtable needs to include the minorities of which they speak.

The chair noted that the Commission must apply its own standards and employ people from ethnic minorities. Surveys are needed at an EU level which take ethnicity into account. Many member-states are against the collection of data and civil society organisations need to keep pushing.

The rapporteur summed up that struggles within the EC give a reality check on the impact. The grass-roots approach can be successful as shown by the development of NGOs into a mainstream organisation. The importance of the systematic progression of data-gathering and policy response and the importance of who is giving out the knowledge, how it is disseminated and how policy-makers will have an effect.

Ethnic Minorities Issues **Workshop 3**

Making a decisive impact: Strategies for tackling disadvantage

Chair: Adam Tyson, Head of Social Inclusion Unit, European Commission

Rapporteur: Prof Naina Patel OBE, Director of Policy Research Institute on Ageing and Ethnicity

Speakers: Czeslaw Walek, Council of Roma Community Affairs of Czech Government

Valeriu Nicolae, Director of European Roma Information Office

Isabela Mihalache, Roma Participation Programme

Following a brief recap of the previous two workshops by the chair, Czeslaw Walek gave a presentation on Roma integration in the Czech Republic. The current situation in CZ is 90% unemployment in the Roma community and emerging ghettos. The Roma Integration Policy Concept (RIPC) aims to improve the status of Roma in all spheres of life revolving around human rights, minority rights, national identity and ethnicity. Its priorities are the removal of external and internal obstacles. The government adopts

affirmative measures for everyday problems. The most successful are kindergarten and social care (field work in excluded Roma communities). Less successful are the housing programmes and health mediators. Only 5% of children attend secondary schools. The RIPC's lack of executive powers means it cannot force municipalities to implement policies. It is difficult to get people to discuss issues and there is a lack of political will on a local level. No one programme is currently focusing on Roma Issues so only a few NGOs and one municipality applied for ESF funds. EC funding is good however the main problem is personal capacities (implementing public policies on a local level). The aim is to create an agency that will absorb cumulative funding from the ESF, which will then be redistributed.

Valeriu Nicolae and Isabele Mihalache highlighted Roma issues in their presentation. Roma people want to be included in policy-making processes and are concerned over media portrayal. There are many documents on problems faced by the Roma but there are no pro-active measures. The Commission has said that it would raise the Roma issue (most disadvantaged ethnic minority group in Europe) to a pan-European level but seems ambiguous about the action to be taken, with talk of social cohesion but no outcry over racist comments ('no gypsies, no pikies' etc.) and racist adverts. The EC needs to encourage member-states to take more active measures to achieve equality, adopt different strategies on social cohesion and curb social exclusion. Many ESF projects do not include the Roma and in central and eastern Europe it is considered political suicide to spend money on them. The EUMC report showed much lower mortality rates for Roma men and women. Recommendations included using the horizontal approach regarding ethnic minorities, tackling unemployment among Roma women and employing micro-credits.

Recommendations and good practice were heard from the floor. An EAPN representative noted that there has been no change in the situation of the Roma in Portugal despite 20 years of ESF, there is no data on Roma communities and no follow-up on structural funds. His recommendations included mediators asked for by prisons/hospitals/schools. Housing, health and education are the primary needs before any employment strategy can be implemented. Other's recommendations included the development of policies for social inclusion with the consideration of gender analysis and the need to be aware of target-setting conditionality in the benefits system which can push groups into further exclusion. Key groups such as Roma in some member-states are of a size that cannot be picked up. NAPs inclusions must report on EU migrants. Training programmes, participation with NGOs, empowerment through identification of own problems and own solutions. The acute issue of new member-states in central and eastern Europe deflects the addressing of problems faced in old member-states such as the Arab communities in France, Turkish communities in Germany etc. There should

also be more clarity about funding and mainstreaming of ethnic minority employment. The unclear legal position of women from ethnic minority groups in relation to domestic violence was also brought up and should be remembered in NAPs.

The rapporteur summed up the 3 workshops with 5 points of principles and recommendations.

1. Basic humanity - social inclusion is necessary. There is a gap between the constant denial of racism and its acceptable face e.g. politicians use of terrorism in immigration policies, the media should take responsibility to foster and create a positive environment.

2. Policy-makers must gather data. The absence of data should not be used as an excuse for lack of policies.

3. A consistent long-term trend of discrimination and disadvantage in health, housing, education that is external. There should be a clear set of measures in the anti-discrimination legal framework. Funders need to focus on long-term development rather than short-term.

4. When mainstreaming it is critical not to replace ethnic minority community developments. There must be a balance between social policy and economic cohesion policy.

5. Ethnic minorities should be central to policy-making decisions. Implementable measures and investment cannot happen without ethnic minority participation and empowerment. Ethnic minorities must have access to these areas.

Strand 5

Strand 5: Housing and Homelessness

Workshop 1: Taking stock: access to decent housing

First of all, two key tasks were mentioned: assessing housing policy and preventing homelessness. The provision of affordable housing of a good standard was identified as a fundamental requirement, though it was also stressed that housing policy alone is not enough. As the homeless are among the most disadvantaged people in society, with other problems in addition to lack of housing, a multi-dimensional, multi-agency approach is required.

There followed a presentation from Mateja Tamara Fajs, representing the Association of Tenants of Slovenia, on insecure housing in CEE. Her talk outlined the problems facing tenants in Slovenia and other CCEE since the fall of communism. From the end of WWII to the early 1990s, 10-20% of people in CEE were tenants in state-owned property, with adequate, secure housing, low rent and a legal title. The reforms of the 1990s, moving from a providing to an enabling system, have severely threatened tenants' security.

The first step of the transition was the privatization of housing stock in all CCEE, resulting in a profit-oriented system rather than one reflecting a social conscience. The second step was a change to housing legislation, market-oriented to the detriment of tenants, imposing time limits on leases and it easier for landlords to evict. The third step was court practice and state policy, born of ideological prejudice and reinforced by the political influence of the new owners and the difficulty in organizing tenants as an effective pressure group. 10%-20% of people in CEE now have insecure housing.

In Slovenia, there have been a series of anti-tenant regulations during the transition from communism to capitalism. Under communism, there were three reasons for which a tenant could be evicted; in 1991 this was increased to nine. From 1993-95 there were restrictions on the inheritability of tenancy. In 1996, it became permissible for landlords to move tenants between properties without giving any reason, and in 2003 the number of reasons for eviction rose to thirteen. In 2005 the right to inherit tenancies was removed completely, and it also became possible for landlords to evict cohabitants after the tenant's death. In Poland, Estonia and Latvia, the countries' highest courts have over the last two years annulled rent regulations. Tenants' rights were further damaged by the landmark ECHR ruling in February 2005 in the Czapska case.

There then followed a presentation by Dominique Gross of Movimiento Cuarto Mundo, who spoke of his experiences helping people from the shantytowns of Madrid, where

there is often inadequate roofing and no water supply, relocate to better housing. In shantytowns, people are severely marginalized, not least because the poor hygiene of such areas hinders them at school and at work. Relocation is obviously a positive thing for such people, though integration into their new communities can be difficult for all concerned. Mr Gross stressed the need to urge and allow relocated families to participate in their new communities, with improving literacy a key aspect of this, and emphasized that focusing on what they are able to do, on how they can give to society and not just receive, is crucial to their dignity.

From the floor, Claude Cahn from the European Roma Rights Centre mentioned the general lack of awareness of how badly the housing framework in CEE has collapsed over the past fifteen years. He also stressed the problem of racial discrimination against Roma in Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, which often leads to eviction for members of this group.

It was pointed out that, while homelessness is most severe in CEE, it is a problem affecting the whole EU.

The need for more public housing was mentioned, though it was pointed out that it is difficult to find people who want to invest in this, and difficult to obtain land for new housing.

Advanced homelessness legislation was also seen as important, with Scotland cited as an excellent example of this.

Returning to the subject of Madrid shantytowns, Mr Gross pointed out that relocation can lead to marginalization, as relocated people often feel isolated. He stressed that we cannot relocate people and then simply leave them unaided. Relocating two or three families to the same place at the same time, as well as helping communities to accept relocated people, is very important.

Strand 5: Housing and Homelessness

Workshop 2: Looking for solutions: tackling homelessness

The workshop began with a presentation from Jan Vranken comparing the English and Danish strategies for tackling homelessness.

In England, there has been an extraordinary growth in the number of rough sleepers since the 1980s, requiring a new coherent approach. This took the form of a specific government strategy of returning rough sleepers to their city of origin. This was a

bottom-up strategy involving a degree of coordination between various actors and serving as a test case for the government's social inclusion efforts. The strategy had six key principles: a) to tackle the roots of the problem; b) to pursue approaches to get people off the streets; c) to focus on the most needy; d) never to give up on the most vulnerable; e) to help rough sleepers to be active in society; and f) to be realistic. The English model is one of forcible integration of homeless people into society, coupled with a belief that prevention is the only means of ensuring a lasting end to the problem of rough sleeping.

In Denmark, the 2002 action programme "Our Common Responsibility" established a comprehensive homelessness strategy developed within the framework of social inclusion. This was a top-down, individualized approach aiming to ensure that no one was without a roof over his head. It also aimed to improve the quality of life of the target groups on their own terms, accepting that they have a different life rather than attempting to forcibly integrate them into the community. This has led to the establishment of so-called "freak houses", specific permanent dwellings in less populous areas where homeless people can behave differently and form mutually-supportive communities, looked after by CATs (Contact and Assessment Teams).

Prof. Dr Vranken emphasized the importance of slowing down the production line of homelessness, but pointed out the lack of an organized arrangement in either England or Denmark. He contrasted the English approach of integration through trajectories with the Danish system of integration through isolation, and wondered whether different countries in the EU should aim for transferability or simply learn from each other.

It was pointed out from the floor that freak houses are merely an experiment for a specific target group, rather than a solution to rough sleeping in general, and that there are other initiatives in Denmark, which Prof. Dr Vranken acknowledged.

There then followed a presentation from Renate Kitzman, Director of FAWOS (Centre for Secure Tenancy), an NGO in cooperation with Vienna city council. Homelessness has been on the rise in Vienna since the 1980s, with drastically increasing rent and evictions and a lack of affordable accommodation.

The aims of FAWOS are secure housing, prevention instead of resettlement, prevention of personal suffering and social inclusion, and assistance to self-support. The organization offers advice on several issues, such as tenancy legislation, people's rights to claim benefits, negotiating with landlords, and financial planning.

FAWOS has been highly successful in reducing evictions in Vienna. In 1995, the percentage not carried out of evictions for which landlords had successfully applied was

37%; in 1996, the year in which FAWOS was founded, this figure leapt to 63.5%, and for 2004 had risen to 78%. In addition, the organization has successfully cooperated with landlords and lawyers and has influenced tenancy legislation.

Ms Kitzman concluded by stressing the economic importance of preventing homelessness in the first place, stating that €10 spent on prevention saves €100 on reintegration, and emphasizing the need to make contact in time with those at risk of eviction.

The Chairman suggested extending the Viennese model throughout Europe, especially eastwards.

There was then a presentation by Catherine Jamieson, Head of the Homelessness Partnership in Glasgow, focusing on the progress made by the city, and Scotland in general, in combating homelessness in recent years. In 2001, a national homelessness taskforce was set up in Scotland, with fifty-nine recommendations, and in 2003, Scotland won the International Human Rights Award for Homelessness.

The key aim of the Partnership, a cooperation between Glasgow City Council, the Greater Glasgow Health Board, the voluntary sector and the Scottish Executive, is to provide homelessness services at a local level, developed from detailed analysis of the causes, nature and extent of homelessness, bearing in mind the importance of preventing homelessness by dealing with its complex underlying causes.

The Partnership performs a number of services, such as: integrated assessment at the point of application to determine housing and support needs; a range of integrated health and homelessness services; floating support for service-users with learning disabilities or mental illness, older people and continuing drinkers; enhanced personal support and homecare; rehabilitation services for alcohol or drug addiction; various accommodation services; links to training, education and employment; and various homelessness-prevention services.

In conclusion, Ms Jamieson stressed the following key factors in Glasgow's success: a joined-up approach; striving to meet key goals in the homelessness strategy; a vibrant mixed economy of services; a significant role for the voluntary sector; a clear goal of integration with mainstream services; and local and national political commitment.

Strand 5: Housing and Homelessness

Workshop 3: Making a decisive impact:

Tackling the problem through an integrated approach

This workshop looked at how to use the EU framework to tackle homelessness. The first presentation was from Freek Spinnewijn, the Director of FEANTSA, and dealt with ETHOS (European Typology on Homelessness and housing exclusion).

Mr Spinnewijn stressed the importance of defining the problem as a basis of good policy. ETHOS defines homelessness as rooflessness, houselessness, inadequate housing or insecure housing, and considers a person to be homeless if any of the social, legal or physical aspects of home life is diminished. ETHOS relies on data collection for conceptual development and measurement, and considers such aspects as the new realities of homelessness, for example in Eastern Europe, the pathways into and out of homelessness and between different kinds of homelessness, and a new approach to poverty, for example the importance of housing versus employment. ETHOS has been adopted by the NGO sector and is increasingly supported by public policy, research and intergovernmental bodies.

He went on to describe the ten approaches recommended by ETHOS for any homelessness policy, as follows:

1. Evidence-based approach. At present there are too many assumptions. It is essential to recognize expertise and to place importance on research and data collection.
2. Comprehensive approach. We need to establish whether a policy should provide emergency help and whether integration should be by choice or coercion, and we need to focus on prevention.
3. Multi-dimensional approach. We need to involve various sectors, such as housing, health, employment and education, though we should remember that these various dimensions are not always of equal importance. It is essential to be wary of inertia and to ensure that someone is always leading and driving progress.
4. Rights-based approach. An international and European rights context is best for guaranteeing the enforceable right to housing.
5. Participatory approach. All actors are responsible for implementing homelessness policies. While involving homeless people, we should be careful with regard to what level this takes place at.
6. Statutory approach. We must have a comprehensive legal framework.
7. Sustainable approach. It should be remembered that solving homelessness is a long and costly process and that substantial funding is therefore required, as are political commitment and public support. The danger of relying solely on economic arguments was also stressed.

8. Needs-based approach. This is better than a structures-based approach and more effectively targets the relevant groups.
9. Pragmatic approach. It is important to have realistic objectives and schedules.
10. Bottom-up approach. The importance of involving organizations at a local level was stressed.

The chairman noted the shift in policy away from programme-based and towards rights-based approaches, and mentioned the need for a dynamic and innovative dimension to all ten approaches. Mr Spinnewijn suggested that the approaches did not necessarily have to be innovative.

There then followed a presentation by Hugues Feltesse of the European Commission. The EC's three main policy objectives were outlined as follows: a) to provide decent, affordable, sanitary and desegregated housing; b) to strike a balance between the rights and obligations of tenants and landlords; and c) to provide housing for vulnerable people.

Three key areas for achieving these objectives were identified, as follows: a) improving knowledge, by developing a classification system and proposing methodologies for measurement and data collection; b) developing a more integrated policy, incorporating comprehensive, multi-dimensional, rights-based and statutory approaches; and c) promoting the involvement of all relevant authorities and actors, with a bottom-up approach.

Mr Feltesse then discussed the Open Method of Cooperation (OMC), which has the following objectives: a) to exchange information; b) to support public awareness; c) to promote the mobilization of actors; d) to allow transnational comparisons; and e) to show examples of policies yielding good results.

There have been several positive results from the OMC, such as increased momentum and a heightened profile of social inclusion, the mobilization of stakeholders, a clear commitment from all twenty-five Member States to the NAPsIncl, and a better understanding of the multi-dimensional nature of homelessness.

The following key areas of progress are now expected:

- Drafting policies to translate the identification of key problems into on-the-ground action;
- Setting specific challenging yet achievable targets, to be assessed periodically;
- Establishing links with economic policy;
- Reinforcing the coordination and mainstreaming of social inclusion across all policy domains;



- Strengthening the participation of local and national authorities.

The tools used to achieve this progress will be mutual learning, peer reviews, structural funds, and measurement and quantification.

The rapporteur concluded by stressing the need for legal protection, provision of decent housing, and specific policies linked to EU competences and to consumer-protection and anti-discrimination measures. He emphasized the need to adapt means to needs, rather than vice-versa, and pointed out the fundamental importance of monitoring and implementing policies to this issue and indeed to the entire conference.

Strand 6

Round Table on Poverty and Social Exclusion – Partnerships for Inclusion Workshop 1 – Taking Stock: local government and social inclusion

The first workshop from the Partnerships for Inclusion strand focussed on the role of local government in pushing the social inclusion process forwards. Five years into the Lisbon commitment, work is still needed in order to mobilise all relevant actors, and debate centred on how to bring all levels of government closer together and improve the participation of social partners and non-government organisations.

While local governments have been involved with the Lisbon strategy from the outset, it was felt that better coordination is needed between the different levels – local, regional, national and EU. Local governments have encountered difficulties in implementing the strategies contained in the National Action Plans on Social Inclusion. It was asked whether NAPs can indeed be translated into action plans at a local level, and whether a degree of adaptation is necessary. One Swedish delegate told of the difficulties he had faced in trying to develop a local action plan on social inclusion over the previous two years.

Various examples were provided of successful efforts to bring national initiatives into the local sphere. A presentation was made of a project in Swansea in the UK where the local government has created its own ‘mini-NAP’ aimed at replicating the NAP at a local level. The Get Heard project in the UK was also cited as an initiative that is helping bridge the gap between the NAPs and local initiatives.

Delegates said they believed that NAPs could be brought down to neighbourhood level with sufficient courage and determination. They also noted that such actions would need time in order to succeed.

In addition to vertical integration, horizontal integration was addressed by a presentation from Clare Batty of the Social Inclusion Exchange Programme who spoke of efforts to produce transnational quality benchmarks. A project involving five EU member states – Ireland, Spain, Lithuania, Sweden and the UK – has attempted to produce a common framework between different countries to determine how local authorities conduct their work. This has helped the participating countries to learn different ways of implementing the European action plans.

Delegates noted that existing partnership approaches need to involve voluntary and community associations. Ritta Särkelä of the Finnish Federation for Social Welfare and Health presented an initiative that has been successful in promoting local partnerships.

The HYVE project, the focus of the Finnish Peer Review, aims to find new and more flexible ways of delivering services to respond to the needs of citizens within the context of Finland's Universal Approach. The programme fosters partnerships between different actors at local and regional level including public authorities, NGOs and citizens to ensure greater grass roots involvement.

Key to the Finnish programme is the concept of working in pairs, with shared leadership and shared objectives between NGOs and the Public Sector. The programme involves piloting, training and research initiatives in order to connect with citizens. The programme has achieved new forms of support for the excluded, such as mutual support, crisis intervention and drop-in centres, and has helped repair gaps in the existing system.

The idea is now to expand the programme to the rest of the country. Indeed, delegates said that national governments would benefit from closer consultation with local government before setting NAPs since it is local players that are called upon to implement national strategy. And it was hoped that if such local programmes can be expanded to the national level, this would provide a model for extending national programmes to the EU level.

Questions were raised as to whether the NAPs will succeed in achieving the Lisbon goals. It was agreed that the key to improving social cohesions lies with local government. As one delegate put it, "Perhaps this looks like a big task when seen from the top down. When seen from the bottom up it looks much more manageable and achievable."

Round Table on Poverty and Social Exclusion – Partnerships for Inclusion Workshop 2 – Site visits: Local partnerships for jobs

During the morning's workshop some delegates had questioned whether the orientation for competition within the EU came into conflict with the partnership model. The afternoon's site visit to the offices of the Wise Group provided an opportunity to see an example of a private business creating effective partnerships in order to help the long-term unemployed find training and jobs.

The Wise Group pioneered the Intermediate Labour Market (ILM), a model that has since been adopted throughout the UK and which aims to build the skills and confidence of those out of work in order to assist them to find employment. The model is based on the philosophy that it is easier for someone already in employment to find work, and the group therefore provides training and work as a first step on the path to re-employment.

The programme centres on 'meaningful partnerships', since at the same time as providing work it also contributes to the wider regeneration of disadvantaged communities through activities such as environmental improvement projects, energy efficiency and advice activity, home safety and security services. Delegates visited the group's call centre, which is staffed by those on the programme. The call centre training programme encourages people to seek jobs in Glasgow's expanding tertiary sector as traditional jobs in heavy industry have disappeared.

Through the Employment Zone the Wise Group has a contract with the DWP to deliver as many people into work as possible. The group believes the private sector is best placed to get more people working since it has a financial stimulus to do so, pointing out that there would be no bailout from the DWP in the event of failure. But as a not-for-profit company it is not required to return any surplus to shareholders, thereby freeing up more resources to reach harder to help clients and support them into work. They summed this up as a need to balance private enterprise with public good. Success rates are high, with around 2,500 of the 3,000 people the company deals with each year finding employment.

A second site visit learned of a project run jointly by rival Glaswegian football teams which also aims to tackle long-term unemployment. The 10-week football-coaching programme sets out to boost leadership, communication and teamwork among participants as well as introducing IT skills and interview techniques. The project is organised jointly by Job Centre Plus, the Celtic and Rangers teams and local employers, many of which are keen to employ participants after completing the programme.

The project puts people in a social context and breaks the inactivity cycle, with over 70% of participants finding a job or entering vocational training. By combining work at both rival clubs the programme also seeks to overcome the sectarianism within Glasgow.

Finally, a visit to One Plus presented a programme for lone parents which seeks to develop their self-confidence and make them aware of new possibilities. Participants are provided with sufficient support and child benefit to be able to spend a week at the centre, where they have time to stop and think. There they can learn about the benefits available to them, since uptake of government support is generally poor. They can also find friendship and encouragement and escape from the isolation that many in their position suffer from. The presentation even included songs written and performed by those that had taken part.

Round Table on Poverty and Social Exclusion – Partnerships for Inclusion

Workshop 3 – Working with social partners and the voluntary and community sector

At the half-way mark in the drive to eliminate poverty it was asked whether Lisbon is half full or half empty. Poverty is still growing, and the image and perception of the poor is becoming increasingly negative, with individuals who experience poverty being blamed for their situation. Are existing structures sufficient to revert this situation?

Firstly, it was noted that the open method of coordination on social inclusion is working, and there have been notable improvements in structures and ways to involve partnerships at all levels. The General Secretary of Retis, the European Transregional Network for Social Inclusion, gave a detailed discussion as to how to transpose the OMC at a regional and urban level, and delegates observed that discussions have now progressed from whether OMC could work to how best to implement it.

Delegates also noted that within the revision of some of the objectives of the new streamlined OMC, the Nice objectives should be maintained and strengthened, describing the OMC as the cornerstone of a social Europe. And for this, partnerships were deemed to be essential, as without them there could be no possibility of true representivity. However, they said that the OMC does not replace legislation, and called for a stronger social standard to be implemented at a European level, with a minimum income cited as a first example.

There was a call for greater involvement of social partners in the process of reducing poverty in order to form alliances to represent the poor. While some argued that by only representing the working population, labour unions and employers did not speak for those most affected by poverty, it was also said that there was much to learn from the business sector and that employers could be valuable advocates for social change.

A practical example of successful partnerships across the full range of actors was given by Rita Davis, Social Regeneration Manager for the London Borough of Newham. Her unit works together with the government, local councils, community and voluntary bodies as well as solicitors and job brokers from the private sector, in order to maximise income and boost uptake of benefits, enhance access to services, support smaller agencies and help reduce debts.

There was consensus that the kinds of individual successes enjoyed by the Newham project need to be mainstreamed since although these initiatives are working, poverty is still increasing. There is a need to work upstream on social policy and adopt more global approaches. It was noted that just one change in access to water or electricity could sometimes be enough to eliminate most of the improvements being made in the social area.

The latest Eurobarometer poll demonstrated that unemployment and poverty are the principal concerns among European citizens, but there was frustration that this has not been reflected in mainstream political debate. Delegates called for greater political leadership and the need for champions in order to push the inclusion strategy forwards. It was suggested that national leaders could write to citizens to inform them of what steps were being taken to reduce exclusion.

There was a general view that greater balance was required between economic policy and social policy, with some commenting that social ideas are being affected by the way the internal market regulations are being implemented, in particular the focus on competition.

Looking forward, delegates called for the forthcoming European Council meeting in October to ensure a strong social dimension to the European model. It was also agreed that strong links must be made between social inclusion policy action and structural funds policy, to ensure structural funds can be used to forward the social inclusion agenda.