



Ex post evaluation of the 2000-2006 ESF support to the Open Method of Coordination in Social Protection and Social Inclusion

VC/2008/0211

Annex 5

Summary and analysis of the case studies

December 2009

Foreword

This Annex is structured in three parts:

1. The first part¹ summarises methodology and structure of the case studies as well as presenting main characteristics of the case studies (case studies list);
2. The second part presents a comparative analysis of the case studies in terms of coherence and complementarity between ESF and SPSI OMC;
3. The third part identifies success factors that hampered the coherence.

1. Methodology, structure and main characteristics of the case studies

The case studies set out to illustrate inter-relationships between ESF and SPSI OMC as reflected in indicative examples of programme interventions. Although the overall methodology follows standard practices of in-depth case studies², it also draws on techniques used in policy analysis, focusing in particular on the ‘history’ of an intervention; why and how it happened and how it evolved.

The approach uses a multi-methodological design that considers not just the ‘voice’ and perspective of the stakeholders, but also the interaction between them. The main objective of the case studies is to explore and explain complex causal linkages encountered in real intervention settings³. Each case study provides factual evidence about how ESF projects contributed successfully to the development of SPSI OMC.

The 10 case studies were selected based on the results of the mapping of programmes. They comprise examples of interventions drawn from those programmes that present a major coherence between ESF and SPSI OMC, including ESF/Equal projects that successfully contributed to the development of the Open Method of Coordination.

The analysis includes a cross-case comparison. This enables comparisons to be drawn on how coherence and complementarity operate in different scenarios, and allows the aggregate learning achieved from a synthesis of the case study results to be feed into the overall conclusions and recommendations for future ESF support to the Open Method of Coordination for Social Protection and Social Inclusion.

¹ Mainly extracted from the Chapter 5 of the Intermediate Report approved on October 28th 2009.

² Yin R., *Case study research: design and methods* (2nd ed.), Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing, 1994.

³ Yin, R. (1994). *Case study research: Design and methods* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing.

To ensure standardisation of data collection and analysis, and to promote cross-case comparisons, the case studies were carried out using a common case study template, as explained below⁴.

Common case study template

The case study data collection and analysis instrument incorporated four elements:

- 1) Introduction.
- 2) Chronology.
- 3) Actor and patterns of interaction analysis.
- 4) Critical success factors.

1) Introduction

The introduction section provides an overview of the specific case features. It describes the intervention analysed, its main activities, its monitoring and evaluation processes. This section also highlights the features of the case that make it relevant for evaluation purposes.

2) Chronology

This section provides a 'narrative' of the case, from its inception to its current status.

Objectives

The objective of this section was to define the case study framework (the 'boundaries' of the process), under two different dimensions: time and main actors involved. This included both the 'formal' history of the case, and the 'informal' processes and interactions that defined it, including: informal interactions between actors involved in the process; decisions about the organisation of the work; resources available, problems encountered.

Techniques

The initial data collection process focused on compiling a chronological history of the case. This was a 'rough' document, portraying a sequential time line of events, containing all the information considered useful for the analysis. The chronology was an 'open' document, to be integrated, if necessary, with additional information in the course of the analysis. All sources of information were recorded. Analysis of the narrative data was carried out using content analysis to determine the level and nature of its contribution to promoting cohesion and complementarity.

⁴ Face to face interviews were carried out in the period between April and September 2009.

Sources

The main source of data was 'secondary' material - the (formal and informal) documents issued by main stakeholders involved in the project. These documents are linked to the specific chronological phases identified in the case 'narrative'. A second source is primary data - in-depth interviews by 'observers'/'informants' of the process. These provided missing data; deepened understandings of the outcomes of the content analysis and clarified issues raised by that analysis.

3) Actors and patterns of interaction analysis

After the chronology, the analyst had to complete a fiche for each of the most relevant actors involved in the intervention, considering also the institutional framework in which the intervention operated.

Objectives

Objective of this analysis part is to describe the *behaviour of the main actors involved* in the process, the factors determining it and the patterns of interaction between them.

For each actor the analyst specified:

- What were the initial objectives that determined the actor's involvement in the project and his/her goals at different stages of the process (and the possible changes in the course of the process);
- the resources (economic, political, legal) he/she was able to mobilise in the course of the process;
- the actor's role in the process.
- the actors with whom each actor interacted most in the process.

Techniques

This element is based on carrying out *informal, in-depth interviews* with the main actors of the process identified in the chronology. Analysis of interview data was carried out using content analysis. This covered both the 'manifest content' of the interviews (i.e. the 'objective' data attributed to informants) and also the 'latent content'. This latter material was analysed using discourse analysis aimed at de-constructing different actor representations of the process, in order to identify how each actor perceived the process and the role within it.

The structure of the interview

The data collection instrument used a semi-structured interview schedule in which the questions were mainly open, designed to encourage the respondent to talk freely around each topic. However, there were two levels of questions:

- *a set of open questions*: this was the common part of the interview, applied in the same way to all the actors.

Examples of these questions are:

- Describe the 'story' of the decision making process;
- What is their perception of the elements (critical factors of success) that facilitated to reach a positive outcome.
 - *a set of specific questions*, related to the subject interviewed, that should have helped the interviewer in conducting the discussion around each of the topics of the first level (specifying some aspects considered relevant in each case), and in reaching the objectives above mentioned.

4) Analysis of the Critical success factors

Objectives

The last element consisted of the *identification of the success factors regarding the ESF contribution of the selected intervention to the development of the Open Method of Coordination*.

Techniques

This involved an interpretative assessment and synthesis of the data collected for each case study. Using a common analysis template, the case study analyst used 'item analysis' to provide a summary of how each case contributes to promoting coherence and complementarity between ESF and SPSI OMC; what challenges were addressed; how they were overcome; what learning can be derived from the case and how it can contribute to future policy in the field.

Case studies list

The list that follows presents the 10 case studies that were undertaken for this evaluation. The following 10 interventions/projects cover all the geographical/welfare areas: Mediterranean (Italy and Spain); Anglo-Saxon (UK and Ireland); Nordic (Sweden and Finland); Continental (Germany and France); New Member States (Slovenia and Czech Republic). They also cover the main target groups (disadvantaged people, gypsy community, immigrants, long-term unemployed, early-school leaving students, ex-convicts, disabled, older women, lone mother) and strands of work related to SPSI OMC (social inclusion, social protection, poverty, health). Attention was given also to interventions/projects that focus on the relevance/complexity of networking between stakeholders and decision-making processes. Both OP and EQUAL projects were considered.

	COUNTRY	INTERVENTION/PROJECT
1	ITALY	Networking for social inclusion The Autonomous Province of Bolzano and Trento promoted in 2003 an interregional project called “Networking for social inclusion”. In addition to the two promoters, other Italian Regions participated in the project implementation (9 from the North and one from the South). The main aims of the project were: • promoting coordinated actions between ESF Managing Authorities for the implementation of a network of different actors dealing with social inclusion issues through ESF; • the exchange of best practices implemented on the territories in coherence with the objectives and the aims of the European policies on employment and social inclusion; • the design of common strategies of intervention; • horizontal and comparative analysis. At local level (OP Obj.3 Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano – Axe B – Measure B1), the project was implemented through an intermediary body composed of 6 of the main social organizations in the Province of Bolzano offering small financial aids to structures operating in the field of social exclusion (cooperatives, NGOs, etc.), helping disadvantaged people to be reinserted in the labour market and offering support and financial aids for activating spin-off processes from social enterprises. The project was chosen because it involved several social actors and different territories in Italy with the aim of networking and exchanging best practice in the field of social inclusion. It also refers to different disadvantaged target groups.
2	SPAIN	Acceder: Fight discrimination against the Roma community 13 Autonomous Communities in Spain participated in the programme ‘Acceder’, which aimed to facilitate the Roma community’s access to training and employment opportunities. Objectives of the project were: • Finding employment for members of the Roma Community; • Establishing direct links between Roma and companies; • Standardising pro-active policies targeting the Roma population; • Raising awareness with respect to prejudice and discriminatory practices. The Project was funded by both Objective 1 and 3 and established a nationwide programme targeted specifically at the Roma community. The Project was managed by the Fundación Secretariado General Gitano that was able to start up institutional cooperation with many public administrations at regional and local level through the signing of specific Agreements. The project achieved great success both in the number of Roma people helped in the insertion in the labour market, both for the cooperation levels activated. The project was chosen because it represents one of the few successful interventions addressed at Roma communities and because their full and active involvement in the programming and implementation of training and employment opportunities. It also involved many actors at different levels of governance through the establishment of formalised agreements.
3	SWEDEN	Integrating immigrants into the Swedish workforce Objective 3, Increasing migrants’ participation in employment Target group: Migrants, The long-term unemployed Organisation: The Employment Office of Rehabilitation and Education Immigrants from Africa and the Middle East were given individual coaching through work placements and new jobs thanks to a project devised by the Blekinge labour exchange. Interpreting between employers

	COUNTRY	INTERVENTION/PROJECT
		and participants formed a key component of the scheme. In the Blekinge county, around 400 kilometres south of Stockholm, attempts to minimise immigrant social exclusion have been carried out by the local labour exchange. Focusing on immigrants who had poor language skills in Swedish and in some cases, mental or physical difficulties, a highly intensive, hands-on approach was taken to the problem. Two people worked full-time with the immigrants and saw each participant individually to get a good understanding of their needs. Together, they devised a personal employment plan for the participant to follow. The individual was accompanied by a coach to their work placement and then to their new place of work to support them through the difficult earlier stages of finding, and staying in, a new job. The project was chosen because it addressed people who present multiple disadvantages (immigrants with mental or physical difficulties).
4	FINLAND	The Support for Job Retention and Return to-Work and Sickness Absence Practices: development-, training- and co-operation project (JATS 2005-2008) The project was carried out by Rehabilitation ORTON and the Finnish Project Institute. The co-operative project partners were the Occupational Health Unit of Kymijoki, the occupational Health Care Centre of the City of Helsinki, the Occupational Health Care services of Diacor, The City of Kerava, the State Treasure and Tapiola Group as well as six SMEs. The main aims of the project were: • developing work place related practices and models for early intervention and support for employees' work ability problems in SME • developing a well-being- at work training programme targeted at executives and superiors of SMEs Key results: • several functioning practices and models • a workbook for SMEs and their occupational healthcare services • a guide for reporting the sickness absences in SMEs • high training courses targeted at improving their skills to discuss about the work ability issues with employees • a well-being at work training mini-intervention programme • co-operative on-the-job based early intervention rehabilitation process The project was chosen because it related to health care issues and because it involved actively SMEs with intervention programmes addressed to disadvantaged people.
5	GB	South West Opportunities For Older People This project, financed by Equal, was aimed at supporting individuals suffering discrimination within and outside the labour market based on their age. Its' main aims were: • empower older people in representing their experience and aptitudes to enhance their employability; • to assist employers in understanding and acting positively with regard to employing and supporting older workers; • to ensure age demography issues have direct influence on the region's key strategic agencies; • to promote the productivity and competitiveness of the SW Region. The Project was chosen because it focused on active ageing issues; enriching networking and collaboration between different stakeholders; and engaging target groups in an inclusive, empowering

	COUNTRY	INTERVENTION/PROJECT
		and cost-effective way.
6	IRELAND	The School Completion Initiative As part of the national EHRDOP, Ireland, with co financing from the ESF, introduced the school completion initiative This was designed to deal with issues of both concentrated and regionally dispersed disadvantage. Schools involved in the initiative were required to operate on a multi-agency basis establishing, where appropriate, cross community links. Key elements of each school's retention plan were the establishment of a retention target, links with feeder primary schools and co-ordination with local agencies. This initiative had four strands: Research and evaluation to evaluate models of best practice and research on the early identification of potential school leavers, Tracking the development of an integrated database for primary and post-primary pupils to identify pupils at risk of leaving school early, Whole school support to target schools with retention rates, 10% below the national average which will be required to agree a programme of action, tailored to their particular needs and Student support strand, to target pupils at risk of school leaving early, who do not attend schools that are significantly below the national average. This project was chosen because it addressed early school leavers and because it involved 'actively' schools and social actors at the community level.
7	FRANCE	Re- conciliation Family Handicap This project, financed by Equal, had, within its objectives, the aim of helping families, and in particular lone mother of disabled children, to find a role in society and in the labour market. Interventions implemented were related to integrated pathways in order to increase the inclusion in the families, schools, and, when possible, the labour market. The project was chosen because it was part of the France Equal Programme and because it is addressed the particular target group (multiple disadvantages) of lone mothers with disabled children.
8	GERMANY	Local capital for social aims (LOS) The programme LOS was primarily directed at people who were at risk of being excluded from the labour market and hence are threatened or affected by social exclusion. The programme funded micro-projects in disadvantaged or structurally weak regions, cities or boroughs. The aim was to raise the employability of these target groups, to support their social and professional integration and to strengthen tolerance and democracy. The selection of the micro-projects happened on the basis of a local action plan and was undertaken by a steering committee composed of representatives of the local administration, and local actors (in particular representatives of the affected target group). The programme aimed to reach local actors who were not normally reached through ESF interventions. LOS was an integrated multi-disciplinary programme combining regeneration, cultural, integration and charitable objectives. Funds were used in deprived areas and in areas of the "Social City" programme run by the national and regional level. The project was chosen because it involved different levels of governance and because it involved actively and directly disadvantaged groups in the implementation and managing of the initiatives.
9	SLOVENIA	Project Learning for Young Adults (PLYA) This was a project for unemployed young adults under the age of 26 who had failed at school and were facing social exclusion. The aim was to motivate participants to continue their formal education and acquire job-market skills. From 2005 to 2006, 409 young people participated, 60 % of whom restarted their education. The programme's achievements were

	COUNTRY	INTERVENTION/PROJECT
		based on stimulating active participation, requiring candidates to plan their own responsibilities and work, and thereby to discover their own interests and professional aspirations. The project was chosen because it addressed young adults that had both social disadvantages at home and those that had failed at school.
10	CZECH REPUBLIC	Together for the integration of the Half-Way House clients into the labour market This project, financed by EQUAL, focused on integration of the socially disadvantaged into the labour market. The target group was represented by clients of the Half-Way House in Velký Dvůr u Pohořelice: youngsters who, upon reaching the age of 18, leave state institutions and find temporary accommodation and employment in the Half-Way House. Because these clients were often lacking a good education and proper practical training, their integration into the labour market could be very problematic. Thus, a common educational work programme was created especially for work in eco-farming. This way the clients learned the necessary work habits, skills and knowledge, which they eventually would use when entering the labour market independently. Besides the work programme, an educational programme based on pedagogical experience was also prepared for the clients. With the aim of leading to successful integration of disadvantaged people into the labour market. The project was chosen because it addressed a very specific target groups young people coming from State institutions and because the interventions employed typically represented integrated pathways.

2. The comparative analysis of the case studies in terms of coherence and complementarities

As mentioned previously, the selected ESF financed interventions (programmes and projects) represent best practices for their high coherence and complementarity with the SPSI OMC, in relation to objectives, target groups and interventions.

The literature review, analysis of the OPs, and interviews with Commission officials all showed that coherence and complementarity is higher with regard to the social inclusion objectives than with respect to the social protection and health care objectives, therefore particular attention was paid to interventions that were coherent and complementary with the OMC social inclusion objectives.

Coherence and complementarity with OMC₁ at the level of objectives

In the ten selected case studies *coherence and complementarity with the social inclusion objectives* (guaranteeing access for all to the basic resources, rights and social services needed for participation society and promoting participation in the labour market; fight extreme forms of social exclusion of the most marginalised people) *are addressed through interventions focusing on employment*. This is in-line with the literature review finding, that employment is considered as one of the primary sources of social exclusion - “unemployment is the single most important reason for poverty, whereas a job the best safeguard against social exclusion”, as well as the analysis of the country fiches A and B, which prove that both the NAPs/NSRs and the ESF

focused on enhancing employment and preventing unemployment, especially for categories at risk of social exclusion.

- the German case focused on financing small scale projects targeted at categories of those at risk of social exclusion who faced problems entering the labour market in order to raise their employability, to support their social and professional integration and to strengthen civil tolerance and democracy;
- the Italian case focused on offering small financial aids to structures operating in the field of social exclusion (cooperatives, NGOs, etc), helping disadvantaged people to be reinserted into the labour market and offering support and financial aids for activating spin-off processes from social enterprises;
- the Czech study focused on integration of the socially disadvantaged (young adults coming from social houses) into the labour market;
- the Slovenian case addressed the issue of social exclusion of youth that have dropped out of the school system by focusing on increasing their employability skills in order to prevent exclusion from the labour market;
- the Irish case focused on school retention from the perspective of preventing unemployment and increasing the employability skills of youth;
- the Swedish case addressed the integration of immigrants and particularly immigrants with disabilities, into the labour market;
- the French case aimed to combat the exclusion of families, and especially lone mothers, with disabled children, from the labour market and society;
- the Spanish case focused on the integration in the labour market of Roma people (“the programmes main assumption was that gaining access to the labour market is the gateway to social inclusion and equal opportunity”) and on combating prejudices against Roma.
- the British programme SWOOP focused on the retention in the labour market of people over 45 years old.

The comparative analysis of the ten case study confirms (supports the findings from the interviews and fiche analysis) that whilst employment continues to be considered as the primary means for combating social exclusion, this is accomplished by *adopting an active inclusion perspective, where active inclusion combines active labour market policies with access to quality services*. This is especially relevant in the Italian case:

The programme “*Networking for Inclusion*” supported the financing of small scale projects aimed on the one hand at consolidating the quality of the services offered by the structures that

operate in the social inclusion field, and on the other at sustaining the inclusion in the labour market of disadvantaged categories, also by promoting self-employment. **(Italian case study)**

Furthermore, the active labour market policy perspective, which refers to increasing the likelihood of employment or improving income prospects for vulnerable groups who find it difficult to enter the labour market, through *measures such as training, job rotation and job sharing, employment incentives, direct job creation and start-up incentives*, is a common characteristic of the selected case studies. In fact, most of the ten cases focused on linking training to employment in order to increase the capacity of groups at risk of social exclusion. In addition, the centralisation of employment as the main driver to reach the Social Inclusion objective is reinforced by linking not only training, but also education (formal and non-formal one) to employment, even within the same programme/project, offering thus integrated responses to fighting the risks of social exclusion.

The Project *Learning for Young Adults PLYA* was a publicly recognised non-formal education programme targeted at young drop outs who were unemployed. The project's intervention goals were related to the social integration of unemployed young adults under the age of 26 who failed in school and faced social exclusion. The aim was to motivate participants to continue their formal education and acquire job-market skills. Whilst concentrating on the individual and addressing personal issues (motivation, self respect, interests etc) it also targeted education, training, the relationship of the individual with the school and larger environment, employment, etc. **(Slovenian case study)**

The *School Completion Programme* was one strand of the Department of Education and Science's Social Inclusion Policy designed as a strategy to discriminate positively in favour of children and young people who were at risk or who were experiencing educational disadvantage. The aims of the School Completion Programme stated in the Aims and Principles SCP promotional booklet, included: retaining young people in the formal education system to completion of the Senior Educational Cycle, or equivalent; improving quality of participation and educational attainment of targeted children and young people in the educational process; to offer positive supports in schools towards the prevention of educational disadvantage; to encourage young people who have left mainstream education to return to school; to influence in a positive way policies relating to the prevention of early school leaving in the education system⁵. **(Ireland case study)**

The *LOS programme* financed micro-projects that supported qualification and integration projects targeting excluded groups facing problems in entering into the labour market, such as long-term unemployed or socially disadvantaged groups. The programme aimed at promoting vocational training, supporting organisations and networks that support the cause of

⁵ Aims and Principles SCP promotional booklet.

disadvantaged people in the labour market, preventing school drop-out, etc. (**German case study**)

SWOOP (funded by EQUAL) was a regional partnership of agencies and organisations based at the University of Exeter that provided guidance, support and programmes to employers and individuals in regards to the employability of older people. *SWOOP*'s main project strands were: Action Group - Employers aimed to challenge and inform employer attitudes to age discrimination through supporting age-friendly staff recruitment, selection and development practice; Action Group – IAG & Skills aimed at enhancing the employability of older people; Action Group – E-portfolios aimed at establishing, under what circumstances, if any, older people could benefit from using an ePortfolio and identify methods. (**UK case study**)

Moreover, the social inclusion objective (fighting extreme forms of exclusion of the most marginalised people) and the active inclusion on the labour market objective (integration of specific groups into the labour market, in particular, the disabled, the long-term unemployed, lone-parents, those returning to work after a long term of care leave, migrants, young people and the elderly), go hand in hand in the following cases:

- Spanish (integration on the labour market of Roma people);
- British (retention on the labour market of older people aged over 45);
- Swedish (integration on the labour market of immigrants with poor education and Swedish language skills as well as disabilities);
- German (the programme promotes small scale projects addressed to the labour market integration of groups that face difficulties in the (re) integration on the labour market such as socially disadvantaged youth, disabled people, resettled ethnic Germans, migrants, single parents, long term unemployed and older employees);
- And Italian (most of the projects addressed to support disadvantaged groups' integration on the labour market regard disabled).

Two interesting cases that show how the ESF interventions can contribute to fighting multiple disadvantages that increase the risk of social exclusion and hence promote a multi-dimensional vision of social inclusion, are the EQUAL Czech and the French cases. In fact, Equal was initially conceived as a thematic programme and this allowed the development of wider actions that address multiple disadvantages.

The French case *Reconciliation Family handicap* addresses both the access of disabled people to training, education and integration in society and the reconciliation of the professional and private life of disabled children's parents and especially lone mothers, that face major difficulties in reconciling work and childcare.

The Centre National d'Etudes et de formation pour l'Enfance Inadaptée (CNEFEI) started the Reconciliation Family Disability (Conciliation Famille Handicap) project in 2002 with the aim of helping families with a disabled child to have a more normal life through better reconciliation of their private, social and working lives. The project focused also on defending the right to education and training of disabled persons and pursued the objective of seeing this right truly and effectively exercised in France. **(French case study)**

The Czech case not only linked training and education to employment in order to increase the capacities of young adults at risk of social exclusion in relation to entering the labour market, but it also introduced within the same programme other dimensions considered particularly relevant for those at risk of social exclusion (such as preventing homelessness, ensuring access to services and ensuring participation in social/cultural life).

The project “*Jointly for the clients Half Way House integration in the job market*” was a programme of educational work, designed for young people who leave state institutions. The project aimed to facilitate the integration of these socially disadvantaged young adults into the labour market in particular and in social life in general. Residents of the Half Way House often lacked a quality educational and professional experience, which made it difficult for them to find jobs in the labour market. The “Half Way House” offered access to temporary accommodation, educational training, work training (in particular in bio-agriculture), counselling, social services and other services for integration support. The basic activities of the programme included: provision of accommodation, enhancing participation in economic life, mediation of contacts with the social environment, socio-therapeutic activities and assistance in the application of rights. **(Czech case study)**

Summing up, in the selected cases the ESF supported the social inclusion SPSI OMC specific objectives by designing programmes/projects that combined access to human capital (education and training) with access to employment and social services. This finding reinforces the literature review finding, that “both ESF and the Social OMC share a similar multi-dimensional view of social inclusion to that commonly taken by academics and theorists in the field. These typically envisage social inclusion as a combination of access to earnings acquired through employment and other sources of income, physical capital (possession of property, neighbourhood infrastructure and assets that facilitate access to education and other societal activities), human capital (education and training) and social capital (social networks and relationships)”⁶.

⁶ Dirk-Jan Omtzigt, Report working paper *Survey on Social Inclusion: theory and policy*, January 2009, http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/future/pdf/1_omtzig_final_formatted.pdf.

Coherence and complementarity with OMC2 at the level of objectives

As to coherence and complementarity with the social protection objective of the SPSI OMC, in the selected case (British programme SWOOP) this is addressed by promoting actions for the retention of old people (in this case people over 45 years old) in the labour market. In the programme, this issue was addressed by both enhancing the access old people have to the labour market (e.g.: one of the actions envisaged by the programme consisted of assisting employers to understand and act positively with regard to employing and supporting older workers) and promoting training for increasing older persons' capacities and knowledge in order to enter or stay in the labour market (e.g.: one of the actions promoted by the programme consisted of empowering older people in representing their experience and aptitudes to enhance their employability). Linking actions to promote social protection to the active labour market policy perspective is in line with the findings of the OPs analysis, according to which coherence and complementarity of ESF with the OMC social protection objective is reached by supporting longer working lives and active ageing.

The South West Opportunities For Older People project, financed by Equal, was aimed at supporting individuals suffering discrimination within and outside the labour market based on their age.

Its main aims were:

- empower older people in representing their experience and aptitudes to enhance their employability;
- assist employers to understand and act positively regarding employing and supporting older workers;
- ensure age demography issues have direct influence on the region's key strategic agencies;
- promote the productivity and competitiveness of the SW Region. (**The British case study**)

Coherence and complementarity with OMC3 at the level of objectives

As to coherence and complementarity with the healthcare and long term objective of the SPSI OMC, in the selected case, this is addressed from the labour market perspective and focuses on training.

The Support for Job Retention and Return to-Work and Sickness Absence Practices: The development, training and co-operation project (JATS 2005-2008) was carried out by the Rehabilitation ORTON and the Finnish Project Institute. The wider project partners included the Occupational Health Unit of Kymijoki, the occupational Health Care Centre of the City of Helsinki, the Occupational Health Care services of Diacor, The City of Kerava, the State Treasure and Tapiola Group, as well as six SMEs.

The main aims of the project were:

- developing work place related practices and models for early intervention and support for employees' work ability problems in SME
- developing a well-being-at work training programme targeted at executives and superiors of SMEs. **(Finnish case study)**

This corresponds also to the findings of the OPs analysis and stakeholders' interviews that reported the difficulty of financing pure healthcare programmes from ESF funds.

Coherence and complementarity with OMC1 at the level of interventions

The analysis of the OPs suggests that the main types of interventions implemented focus on reducing unemployment, increasing employability and tackling disadvantages in the training and education of vulnerable groups. This is also the case of the ten analysed projects: in the Czech, the Swedish, the Spanish, and the German cases, interventions focused on preventing unemployment and increasing employability, whilst in the Irish, the Slovenian, the Czech and the German cases interventions looked to tackle disadvantages in training and education of vulnerable categories.

The Halfway house from Velky Dvur developed an integrated services approach for young vulnerable adults. The project tried to solve the specific problems of the Halfway House clients through work-educational programmes, social counselling and social assistance. **(Czech case study)**

The Swedish project - "Integrating immigrants into the Swedish workforce" focused on offering immigrants individual coaching through work placements. **(Swedish case study)**

PLYA offered to young school drop-outs an integrated approach for their situation. The education programme uses the help of mentors and the group in order to assist participants in better dealing with their problems. **(The Slovenian case study)**

Acceder programme combined work and training schemes for enhancing the participation of Roma people in the labour market. **(The Spanish case study)**

In two of the selected case studies, the social inclusion objective were reached through combining interventions for preventing unemployment and increasing employability with interventions supporting access to decent housing (the Czech case) and care giving interventions (the French case).

Coherence and complementarity with OMC2 at the level of interventions

With regards to the second pillar of the SPSI OMC, in the selected case study (British programme SWOOP) the focus was on promoting measures to contrast early retirement.

The SWOOP Equal Project started with the idea that there was a special need within the South West region to research and experiment with ways of (i) encouraging older people to remain in work; (ii) supporting employers to recognize the value of employing older workers; and (iii) re-training older workers and supporting them in representing their skills and knowledge.

A considerable number of actions were activated:

- Action Learning Sets to help employers explore the implications of the age legislation on the HR policy and practice within their own organizations;
- Developing and testing training materials to improve the awareness of age issues amongst Train to Gain brokers;
- Action research to support long-serving staff in a process of personal and professional review and career planning;
- The provision of information and advice to older people and Age Concern staff on the age discrimination;
- IAG sessions, personal action planning and training and coaching in work-related skills, providing volunteer placements for work preparation and/or confidence building.
- IAG for people with visual impairment, offered alongside its expertise in employee and employer support and training in assistive technology.
- Sessions in self-employment awareness and business start-up preparation.
- A workshop for participants to explore their capabilities, and career and life opportunities.

(British case study).

Coherence and complementarity with OMC3 at the level of interventions

As to the third SPSI OMC pillar, the Finnish case promoted measures that focused on modernising healthcare and enhancing well-being.

JATS was divided into four different programmes, each with their own products, processes and supporting methods. The programmes were:

- Occupational Health Care, rehabilitation and work place roles at the work place and rehabilitation of the employees;
- Development of models and procedures in SMEs and their work communities related to sickness absences;

- Development of support structures for employees returning to work, retention at work and the superiors;
- The communication of supportive procedures for well-being at work.

(Finnish case study).

Typology of interventions mainly used

Concerning the typology of interventions promoted by the analysed case studies, it is observed that most of cases focused mainly on direct assistance to persons, with the exception of the Irish project. The typologies of interventions promoted in the case studies regard mainly training, counselling and orientation, mediation, and integrated pathways for labour market access (pre-skills assessment, training, work experiences, etc) of disadvantaged groups. Training interventions are also common in the Finnish and British case studies, which are coherent and complementary with the second and third pillars of the SPSI OMC.

The project focused their services for immigrants who had poor language skills in Swedish and in some cases, mental or physical difficulties. It was based on the idea of transferring the “supported employment method” already used successfully with disabled people, to immigrants as a target group. The method employed involved an individual coach accompanying a participant first to their work placement, and subsequently to their new place of employment to support them through the difficult early stages of finding, and maintaining a new job. **(Sweden case study)**

The project was aimed at helping families (particularly mothers) of disabled children to have a social and professional life. The intention was to meet the need for disability information and training, as many families do not feel competent to raise a disabled child, and ultimately to recognise and valorise the skills acquired by the parents. Parents associations and training centres were co-promoting this project. The project also included working with companies employing parents of disabled children, to encourage employers to adapt working hours and conditions. **(French case study)**

The Project Learning for Young Adults PLYA is a publicly recognised non-formal education programme targeted at young unemployed people. PLYA was included in the case studies pool as it illustrates a social programme with innovative qualities. The programme demonstrates the way in which valuable principles and methods of continuous learning can be used in order to prevent and alleviate social problems. Moreover, PLYA targets two key dimensions of social policy in Europe: continuous learning and employment. The success of the project can be attributed to a number of factors: firstly, a comprehensive approach addressing all the problems of the participants in the programme, adapted to their needs, interests and abilities. This integrated approach was designed in order to achieve integration in school, employment and society. Secondly, the very methods and content of the intervention can be considered as a factor

triggering success of the programme: the empowerment approach, the personalised and individualised methods of learning based on project work and negotiating curriculum, the non-conventional school methods, all make the working method flexible and innovative. Thirdly, the use of trained mentors who guide, moderate and advise students was another major factor that positively contributed to the programmes overall success. **(Slovenia case study)**

It has to be underlined that most of the analysed cases regard small-scale interventions that focused specifically on the individuals' needs and problems, more than on target groups' generic difficulties. This is also considered to be a factor that contributed to the success of the analysed projects particularly in the Czech, the Swedish, the Slovenian and the French cases.

The intervention did not use conventional school methods and was individualised and personalised⁷, in an attempt to answer the various needs and motivations of the participants in the programme. The specific methods of education were based on project work which permitted adaptation of education content to interests and abilities of participants as well as empowering them to make their own decisions. Participation in designing the project from the very beginning involved choosing the theme of the project, deciding on learning sources, methods and procedures, while assisted by mentors. Each mentor guided, moderated the work of and advised 6 students. The educational methods were based on positive experiences. **(Slovenian case study)**

The project focused their services for immigrants who had poor language skills in Swedish and in some cases, mental or physical difficulties; it took a highly intensive, hands-on approach to the problem. Two people worked full-time with the immigrants and saw each participant individually to get a good understanding of their needs. A coach accompanied the participants to their work placement and then to their new place of work to support them through the difficult earlier stages of finding, and staying in a new job. The individual coaching was based on the supported employment method that has been created for people with disabilities. The key player of this form of supported employment model was the coach who worked as a cultural and also linguistic interpreter. The coaches working in the project had immigrant background, therefore they had a deep understanding of the situation of their clients. **(Swedish case study)**

The type of intervention was considered to be the main success factor - the personal empowerment approach made the clients of the Halfway House responsible for their lives. **(Czech case study)**

The Reconciliation Family Disability (Conciliation Famille Handicap) project consisted, among others, in the accompaniment of the disabled person in the family, at school, socially and at work, as well as collective accompaniment whenever possible. **(French case study)**

⁷ Bostjan Bozic, Project-Based Integral Development of Youth in Slovenia, 2007.

Whilst direct assistance to persons interventions characterize most of the selected cases, some of them also focus on assistance to structures so as to increase the capacity of the system to offer adequate solutions for promoting social inclusion. In the selected cases, assistance to structures is mainly related to studies and research (French case, British case, Italian case), development of education and training systems (Irish case), and teachers' training (Slovenian case).

The SCP is a Department of Education & Science programme, under the Social Inclusion Unit, that aims to have a significant positive impact on levels of pupil retention in primary and post-primary level schools and on the number of pupils who successfully complete the Senior Cycle of education, or equivalent. The aim of the School Completion Programme stated in the Aims and Principles SCP promotional booklet, included: to retain young people in the formal education system to completion of the Senior Educational Cycle, or equivalent; to improve quality of participation and educational attainment of targeted children and young people in the educational process; to bring together all local stakeholders to tackle early school leaving; to offer positive supports in schools towards the prevention of educational disadvantage; to encourage young people who have left mainstream education to return to school; to influence in a positive way policies relating to the prevention of early school leaving in the education system. **(Irish case study)**

The Slovenian programme "Project learning for young adults, includes besides direct assistance to person interventions, also interventions focused on teachers' training (in this case mentors). Mentors⁸ are educated as defined in the decree on nature and level of education required for the mentor - group leader and mentors in the educational programme Project Learning for Young Adults. If they met the requirements they were issued with a licence for mentors in the programme Project Learning for Young Adults, the licence is renewed every three years. **(Slovenian case study)**

The French programme included, a survey on a significant sample of families with children presenting the various disabilities mentioned above. The aim was to get an indication of the number of families concerned, who would like to have access to common law schemes concerning their disabled child (the disabilities taken into account were deafness, blind-deafness, autism, Down syndrome, mental and motor disability and epilepsy). An output of the project was the publication of a collection of stories called "Life stories" and other publications focusing on problems of disabled children. **(French case study)**

The Italian programme "Networking for inclusion" aimed at creating a network of third sector representatives that operated in the social inclusion field, reaching also NGOs from different regions (Bolzano and Trentino). The programme promoted also common analysis of the social exclusion phenomenon and seminars for deepening the results of the analysis and discussing them with all the relevant stakeholders. **(Italian case study)**

The German LOS programme focused also on supporting organisations and networks that support the cause of disadvantaged people in the labour market. **(German case study)**

Furthermore, assistance to structures may consist in part of networking between different services and systems. In the analysed cases, this type of intervention is more common amongst the EQUAL projects than in the ESF experiences. Only two of the ESF analysed programmes contain networking activities (Italian and German cases), whilst almost all the EQUAL programmes include networking interventions (the Czech, the French and the British cases).

The “Network for social inclusion” project promoted networking between third sector organizations from different territories, operating in social inclusion field, and public authorities. **(Italian case study)**

The LOS programme included also 20 regional conferences that took place in different German cities. These conferences were attended by the managing authorities and the Monitoring Committee (made of civil society bodies and citizens at risk of social exclusion) and were considered a platform to exchange experiences and best practices. The programme included also four LOS-congresses in order to interchange experiences and information between the Ministry, the Regiestelle (made of two private organizations) and the Regional Cooperation offices (composed of public agency networks). **(German case study)**

The managing organization of the Reconciliation Family Disability project aimed at promoting heterogenic cooperation. Many parents of children with disabilities face challenges when they search for information related to their child. One of the problems is the lack of cooperation between the authorities and third sector organizations dealing with this issue. The right information and organizations can be difficult to find. Therefore, the broad partnership was also considered to be a way to make different organizations see synergies of the cooperation. Learning to cooperate and form networks was seen as a great advantage for small organizations wanting to promote mutual interests. The project included also international partners from Italy, Holland and Belgium that participate to symposiums and other exchanges of experiences. **(French case study)**

The project was also part of a Transnational Co-operation Partnerships financed by Equal, named “From Eastern to Western Europe: a challenge for integration” (TCA Id code: 4426). The network was based on exchange of information and experiences, and was focused on creation and implementation of common tools and methodologies concerning social communication, development of innovative approaches and exchange of trainees/trainers/staff. The interviewed persons considered the network helpful in exchanging experiences, trainers and setting up methodologies, one of the key elements in the dissemination of the project’ results. As an important result of the project, a formal national network was developed with interests in social economy domain – National Thematic Network “C”. This thematic network brings together

⁸ Andreja Dobrovoljc, presentation of the PLYA programme, Slovenian Institute for Adult Education.

seven separate efforts, mainly projects financed by the ESF EQUAL Community Initiative in the Czech Republic. **(Czech case study)**

The SWOOP project was chosen as a case study of good practice and high relevance because of its specific focus on active ageing issues; its strong principle of enriching networking and collaboration between the different stakeholder groups; and because of its ethos of engaging the target groups in an inclusive, empowering and cost-effective way. SWOOP secured transnational partners during Action 1 to proceed to Action 2. SWOOP established two transnational partner groupings through two Transnational Cooperation Agreements (TCAs); the Age Management and Employability - Transatlantic Partnership (AMET) and the Equality through Transnational Actions on Age Partnership (ETAAP). Partners were constantly encouraged to share from one another and also to learn from abroad and any trips. **(UK case study)**

Within accompanying measures, the analysis of the OPs revealed that both support in the individualization of the interventions and awareness of the multi-dimensional nature of social exclusion are identified as relevant. This is exemplified also in some of the selected case studies. Guidance services and tutorial mentor are particularly relevant in the Czech, the Slovenian and the French cases. As to awareness raising campaigns interventions, these are present in the French case study that included the realization of numerous films and other communication materials on difficulties of disabled people and their families, especially lone mothers with disabled children, and solutions available for facing these difficulties.

It has to be highlighted that the analysed cases consider the manifold disadvantages of target groups, therefore, the interventions designed were not strictly related to a single type of intervention, but rather combined multiple typologies in order to address the multi-dimensionality of social exclusion. For instance, the French project combined networking, studies and research with training, mediation and awareness raising and dissemination activities; the Slovenian project integrated within the same programme teachers' training, and integrated pathways for access to the labour market; the British, the German and the Italian cases used both assistance to persons interventions and assistance to structures in an effort to increase the capacity of the project to fight social exclusion, etc.

Furthermore, in one of the analysed cases studies (the German one) risks of social exclusion are considered to be in continuous change, according to developments in society and economy. Therefore, interventions adapt continuously to the actual situation to tackle better disadvantages that cause social exclusion.

Adaptation of the projects to the actual situation is one of the success factors of the project. The funding, granted for a one-year period, was based on Local Action plans, which had to be updated yearly. This guaranteed that activities were adapted to the actual situation. **(German case study)**

Target groups mainly addressed

As to target groups, the comparative analysis of the ten case studies reveals that these are represented by unemployed youngsters, youth at risk of school dropout, immigrants, elderly, other people at risk of social exclusion (such as youngsters coming from social houses – Czech case). Furthermore, evidence from case studies shows that projects address the multiple dimension of social exclusion not only by promoting integrated interventions but also by targeting different groups at risk of exclusion within the same action. This was particularly relevant in the German case (the programme finances small-scale interventions that can reach different target groups: immigrants, unemployed people, youth at risk of social exclusion, resettled ethnic Germans, elderly, disabled) the French case (the project tackles both disabled children and families, with a special focus on lone mothers that face double disadvantages) and the Swedish case (immigrants and in particular immigrants with disabilities).

Coherence and complementarity at the level of stakeholder involvement

Another relevant general and specific aim of the SPSI OMC regards strengthening governance, transparency and the involvement of stakeholders in the design, implementation and monitoring of policy.

As shown by the literature review, ESF supports the development of broad partnerships and encourages the participation to programmes of all stakeholders, including disadvantaged people.

The results of the selected case studies are in line with the above finding and present some concrete examples of how the ESF interventions can support the SPSI OMC aim of strengthening governance and ensuring the involvement of all relevant stakeholders in the project.

All selected interventions are characterized by a complex network of actors, made of both public authorities and civil society (NGOs representing the interests of disadvantaged people) at all levels (national, regional and local). Furthermore, in some cases (German, Irish), the network of actors participating to the projects includes also citizens that might be at risk of social exclusion. This is the case of the German LOS project, where citizens participate to the Local Monitoring Committee and the local networks, which have an important role in designing the content of the Local Plan Action, according to which interventions are financed, and in the selection of interventions. Furthermore, this is also a characteristic of the Irish project, where students and parents are integral part of the Local Management Committees with a role in the design of the interventions to be financed and the monitoring of the project. In addition, a strong partnership between public bodies and third sector organizations operating in the social inclusion, social protection and healthcare and long-term care seems to favour the improvement of the managing system, the development of learning processes and the creation of resources synergy. The

selected case studies highlight also that the involvement of stakeholders at all stages of the project ensures its transparency and visibility. Therefore, the existence of complex and variegated networks become an essential condition for reaching positive outcomes.

Cooperation was relevant at regional and local level, including political and social stakeholders in this process. The institutionalization of this interchange, through the implementation of Regional coordinating offices, involving different governmental agencies and regional political stakeholders, was an important instrument to coordinate political activities at inter-ministerial level, fostering cooperation and partnership between the governmental agencies, which previously did not cooperate. This process helped to adapt political activities related to social inclusion, and stimulated new cooperation and restructuring of the work division. Also the establishment of the Monitoring committee, involving both political representatives as well as the civil society and citizens at risk of social exclusion, resulted into an important learning process for the involved parties, as the agreement process for the selection of the projects was accompanied by intense discussions. Due to the strong involvement of local stakeholders in the selection process (and therefore participation of the stakeholders themselves), the procedure sustained also visibility and transparency selection procedure. **(German case study)**

The functioning of PLYA required a synergy among all participants – from the state and local community to provider organisations, mentor groups and consequently also programme participants. The main actors participating to the programme are: the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education, under the Ministry of Education, the Slovenian Ministry of Education and Sport, schools (primary and secondary), local employment agencies, local centres for social work, local centres for youth education, rehabilitation centres, regional development agency Tolmin, two public high schools and one private educational institution. Cooperation resulted into the creation of networks that continue the project. **(Slovenian case study)**

The ACCEDER Programm was managed by the Fundación Secretariado General Gitano that started up institutional cooperation with many public administrations at regional and local level through the signing of specific agreements. The project achieved great success both in the number of Roma people helped into the labour market, and with respect to the cooperation levels achieved. **(Spanish case study)**

At the outset, membership of the Development Partnership (DP) led by the University of Exeter (through Marchmont) included SWRDA (South West Regional Development Agency); Jobcentre Plus; Third Age Employment Network (TAEN); Exeter CVS; Age Concern Training; Regional Skills Partnership; Fairplay South West; National Institute for Continuing Education (NIACE); Learning South West; Business Link Berkshire and Wiltshire; Careerfinder; and PRIME. A core group emerged in the partnership, which attempted to get many stakeholders involved in the project. **(UK case study).**

The Irish School Completion Programme was based on a rich partnership bringing together public authorities and civil society, as well as direct interested citizens, at different levels.

Therefore, the main actors are: the Social Inclusion department of the Department of Education and Science, the SCP National Coordination service, local coordinators and the local management committee made of principals, SCP staff, community agencies, youth agencies, statutory agencies, parents, school staff, external education staff, private companies, sporting agencies, and students. The SCP also engaged a wider range of stakeholders, who were contacted by the SCP National Coordination Service, Local Coordinators or the Chair of the Local Management Committees to participate in the SCP. Stakeholders included Home School Liaison Officers (HSCL), National Educational Welfare Board, SCP staff (400 full time and hundreds of part time workers who work on the SCP projects), local businesses, educational partners, Principals Network, Parents Board, Irish VEC's, and the Association of Catholic Schools etc. Consultation with the actors takes place through letters, meetings, consultation forums and invited submissions. The stakeholders were effective in bringing a range of backgrounds and expertise, helping to make SCP effective and accountable. The SCP Specification stated that "developing coordination and through more flexible organisation, greater benefits may be derived from the combined effects of these considerable resources". **(Irish case study)**

Comparative analysis of cases studies reveals also that the selected interventions combine top-down logics with the bottom-up approach, being thus, consistent with the literature review findings. This allows projects to incorporate the actual needs of people at risk of social exclusion and ensure connection with the territorial context.

A critical success factor of the SCP is that it was a multi agency programme, encompassing a wide range of community platforms and geographical space. Partnership was thus a key principle of the SCP and was successfully displayed by its positive work with local businesses, the Gardai, Home School Liaison Officers, principals and teenage parenting projects (Crisis Pregnancy Agency) etc. The programme combined top-down with the bottom-up approach utilising a wide range of expertise and building community and school buy-in to the programme by involving a wide range of stakeholders from the Local Management Committees. **(Irish case study)**

The involvement of local stakeholders was a relevant aspect within the SPSI OMC, assured through the organisational structure of the LOS programme. Stakeholders at the local level could act and decide independently on the projects to be implemented and the activities to be carried out. To this end, the programme combined the top-down approach – general objectives were formulated at national level - with a bottom-up approach - involving the local population responsible for the project formulation and its implementation. This procedure supported the promotion of social dialogue of different stakeholders, including the government levels and the local level, and contributed to the mutual learning processes and interchange of experiences. **(German case study)**

While SPSI OMC tries to mix top-down and bottom-up logics, ESF is rather focused on the bottom-up approach. It can be considered that PLYA fits best the SPSI OMC method. While started as a top-down instrument implemented by SIAE, it also came in time to benefit from a wide support of local organisations and participants themselves. **(Slovenian case study)**

The Italian project was conceived by the Managing Authority of Bolzano and soon became an interregional programme coordinated and delivered by an intermediary organism composed of the most relevant NGOs representing the interests of socially disadvantaged people. **(Italian case study)**

At the point of starting the project, the unemployment rate in the Moravia region was 10.76%, being one of the highest in Czech Republic. There was no significant public or private entrepreneurship initiative to alleviate the situation. Even skilled and experienced workers faced difficulties at that time. Without necessary qualifications and without job experience, the chances to integrate on the employment market for the youngsters leaving the institutional care were extremely low. In collaboration with „Key players” in the job market (Employment Agencies, private entrepreneurs, personal agencies), the Foster Parents Association (Sdružení pěstounských rodin / Pestouni) initiated a project aimed to enrol youngsters in the work-educational program in order to increase their chances for integration in the labour market. **(Czech case study)**

Whilst NIACE, Marchmont and other related bodies had an informal network which worked together on the issue of the ageing workforce in the south west prior to SWOOP they did not have a funded programme to work with. The partnership developed in reaction to several government policy papers and growing evidence that older people, particularly in the South West, had a low employment rate. The appetite for a large formal partnership and the salience of the issue of ageing at the time led to the search for a substantial funding opportunity to provide this. A number of people from partners in the South West came together to discuss the case for addressing the needs of older workers in the region and how this might be addressed through the opportunity of EQUAL funding, which would be open for a second round of applications.⁹

The University of Exeter's Marchmont Observatory Skills and Learning Intelligence Module had previously agreed with SWRDA to conduct a programme of research into age and employability as a 'learning theme'. It concluded that there was a case for intervention and action in the region in this field. **(UK case study)**

Another relevant aspect related to the stakeholders' participation regards transnational partnerships. In some of the selected case studies, promotion of transnational partnerships encourages development of best practices exchanges and therefore enhances cross learning processes. This might result into complex interventions that tackle the different dimensions of

⁹ Prevista, 2009. SWRDA Evaluation of SWOOP – (South West Opportunities for Older People) Final Evaluation Report, p43.

the fight to social exclusion and in the transferring of best practices (as in the Slovenian and German cases). Furthermore, in the selected case studies, this seems to be more common amongst the EQUAL financed projects than the ESF ones (see below).

The SCP National Coordination Service also produced best practice guidelines, covering international programmes, for SCP projects to learn from¹⁰. For example, a 'Core Elements' consultation process and report started in May 2008, which aimed to ensure that SCP projects kept in line with identified international research on retention¹¹. "The 'Core Elements' and the 'Regional In-service practice over the lifespan of the SCP' reports have been vital in disseminating good practice regarding supports for retaining young people in school"¹². **(Irish case study)**

Trans-nationality. Collaborations with organizations from other countries implementing EQUAL projects, were identified as beneficial for Pestouni. The transnational network with partners from Italy and Slovak Republic, in which the project was part of, represents also a very strong point of the project. The interviewed persons considered the network helpful in exchanging experiences, trainers and setting up methodologies, one of the key elements in the dissemination of the project' results. **(Czech case study)**

The rich partnership also allowed Best practice sharing, an SPSI OMC Support Activity. Partners were constantly encouraged to share from one another and also to learn from abroad and any trips. Best practice was also part of the research and managers delivering their strand tried to compare with similar schemes around the country, particularly the South East region. At the regional conference, SWOOP shared their best practice with other organizations although further work in this area was not discussed. **(UK case study)**

3. Inventory of success factors: institutional and process factors hampering coherence

What we learn from the case studies?

- a. The creation of large networks, composed of different types of actors (politicians, bureaucrats, economic interest groups, social interest groups) and increased vertical and horizontal cooperation favours positive outcome (Slovenian, UK, German, Czech, the Irish, the Spanish, the Finnish cases). Particularly relevant is the Italian case study, where the network of actors reached was extended to actors from different regions.

¹⁰ SCP guidelines towards best practice.

¹¹ The Core elements of the SCP. SCP report. 2008. Main finding was that SCP supports implemented by local projects closely match those identified in international research. P 1.

¹² SCP National Coordination Service; validation data. 20th August 2009.

Cooperation was relevant at regional and local level, including political and social stakeholders in this process. The institutionalization of this interchange, though the implementation of Regional coordinating offices, involving different governmental agencies and regional political stakeholders, was an important instrument to coordinate political activities at inter-ministerial level, fostering cooperation and partnership between the governmental agencies, which previously did not cooperate. This process helped to adapt political activities related to social inclusion, and stimulated new cooperation and restructuring of the work division. Also the establishment of the Monitoring committee, involving both political representatives as well as the civil society and citizens at risk of social exclusion, resulted into an important learning process for the involved parties, as the agreement process for the selection of the projects was accompanied by intends discussions. **(German case study)**

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The Irish School Completion Programme was based on a rich partnership bringing together public authorities and civil society, as well as direct interested citizens, at different levels. Therefore, the main actors were: the Social Inclusion department of the Department of Education and Science, the SCP National Coordination service, local coordinators and the local management committee made of principals, SCP staff, community agencies, youth agencies, statutory agencies, parents, school staff, external education staff, private companies, sporting agencies, and students. The SCP also engages a wider range of stakeholders, who are contacted

by the SCP National Coordination Service, Local Coordinators or the Chair of the Local Management Committees to participate in the SCP. Stakeholders include Home School Liaison Officers (HSCL), National Educational Welfare Board, SCP staff (400 full time and hundreds of part time workers who work on the SCP projects), local businesses, educational partners, Principals Network, Parents Board, Irish VEC's, and the Association of Catholic Schools etc. Consultation with the actors takes place through letters, meetings, consultation forums and invited submissions. The stakeholders were effective in bringing a range of backgrounds and expertise, helping to make SCP effective and accountable. The SCP Specification states that "developing coordination and through more flexible organisation, greater benefits may be derived from the combined effects of these considerable resources". **(Irish case study)**

- b. Increasing the participation of social interest actors that represent disadvantaged people's interests in the programming phase. The case studies reveal that a success factor is represented not only by increasing the NGOs participation in the programming phase, but also the participation of those directly affected (disadvantaged individuals). While the involvement of social interest groups (NGOs, universities, etc) is usual in all the analysed cases, the direct involvement of disadvantaged people in the programming phase is relevant in the Spanish (involvement of Roma people in the programme). In other cases, interested people are involved in the project at a later stage, such as in the German case (citizens are involved in the selection of the interventions through the network and monitoring committee) and the Irish case (both students and parents participate to the Local Management Committee, which contributes to the creation of Local Retention Plans and delivery of the interventions).

The ACCEDER Programme is based on an intercultural approach involving Roma and non Roma people at all levels of organizations giving the possibility of an NGO composed also by Roma people to run their own programme. Thus, the project represents one of the few successful interventions addressing the Roma communities, demonstrating their full and active involvement in the programming and implementation of training and employment opportunities. **(Spanish case study)**

The LOS programme follows a decentralized approach in which the national, regional and local levels, as well as social partners and civil society, are actively involved, using variable forms of partnership. The local Monitoring committees (Begleitausschuss) were comprised of representatives of the local authorities (in 96% of the committees) and local stakeholders that took on responsibilities in the respective development area, such as the neighbourhood managements (Quartiersmanagement), NGOs, (locally established) associations, agenda-21 groups, local residents representing the LOS target groups (which consisted of 1,29% of the Monitoring committee participants). **(German case study)**

- c. The involvement of institutional actors that can ensure programme content is mainstreamed in other programmes or in national policies and that can ensure also additional financial resources (Czech, German, Spanish and UK cases).

The continued commitment of SWRDA, as a match-funder and member of the Partnership, was vital in the success in the project. SWRDA were very actively involved in monitoring and evaluation in particular and put a lot of funding in the additionality of SWOOP. Their commitment to evaluation, the impact in the long term of the project, and learning by all stakeholders was key to the success of SWOOP. There is universal recognition that the levels of understanding and in many cases the capabilities of regional stakeholders to be 'age aware' and learn from the project was particularly relevant. It is apparent from the feedback from stakeholders that there is also direct causality between the work of SWOOP and changes in the policy of the South West region's key strategic agencies. **(UK case study)**

The Equal finance was only one part of the resources of the Halfway House project. For social services, the project needed money from others sources – Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, from regional level and also from Brno municipality. The participation of national bodies corroborated to the creation of a network on this issue made of public and civil society bodies enhanced mainstreaming of the intervention, designed by Pestouni, into national legislation concerning social firms. **(Czech case study)**

What we learn from Acceder? Actions should be implemented both at national and local level. These actions fit within the framework of the Multi-regional Anti-Discrimination Programmes which includes actions targeting those groups suffering discrimination and social exclusion. When dealing with certain issues, the national institutional dimension favours greater cohesion and territorial balance and allows learning taking place in one location to be transferred to others thus capitalizing on knowledge. **(Spanish case study)**

- d. There is at least one case where political actors are involved in the implementation of the programme. This is the case of the Czech project, where the strong involvement of political actors had a positive impact on the development of the programme in terms of ensuring its visibility at local level and its continuity from a financial point of view. Furthermore, the mayor supported the project by carrying on lobby activities.

The support of the political factors is also considered to be significant: the project had a high influence and a high visibility; this visibility allowed also to the project to receive funds also from public sources. **(Czech case study)**

- e. Well structured and developed partnerships is an essential condition for reaching outputs, as long as there is the capacity to govern the interaction processes between the actors. This can be realised by developing multilevel governance systems and by the creation of formal structures that "administrate the partnership". The creation of a multilevel governance system of the programme is extremely relevant in the German and Irish cases, where governance of the system occurs at the national, regional and local level. The creation of

structures that administrate partnership during the programme and that can ensure also a continuation of the intervention after its formal ending is essential in the Italian, the German, the British and the Irish cases.

In 2002, the Ministry build-up the conducting office „Arbeitsgemeinschaft Regiestelle LOS“ (ARGE Regiestelle LOS), comprising two private entities, the *Society for social consulting* (*Gesellschaft für soziale Unternehmensberatung mbH* - Gsub mbH) and the *SPI Foundation Berlin*.¹³ The Regiestelle was responsible for the financial and technical assistance of the Ministry and contractual partner for all local authorities taking part in the programme. It represented the intermediate level between the Ministry at national level on the one hand, and the Regional Coordinating offices at regional level on the other. For each eligible area the local managing authorities had to establish a Regional Coordinating office, and to provide one staff member. The Regional Coordinating Offices were the intermediate agencies between then national and the local level. They were main contact partner for the Regiestelle and for the potential micro-project providers at local level. The Offices also worked closely together with the Monitoring committee (being represented by one member) which they were assigned to build up. The Regional Coordinating Offices were in charge to instruct the local network, being the main contact partner for potential micro-project providers, as well as responsible to define/build-up the Monitoring committee (Begleitausschuss). The local Monitoring committees (Begleitausschuss) were comprised of representatives of the local authorities and local stakeholders that took on responsibilities in the respective development area, such as the neighbourhood managements (Quartiersmanagement), NGOs, (locally established) associations, agenda-21 groups, local residents representing the LOS target groups. The Monitoring Committee was responsible for selection of the micro-projects, which were selected on the basis of the online-application form. The Monitoring Committee was further responsible for assigning the necessary budget to the micro-projects applicants. The Monitoring Committee was also responsible for providing support and information to the potential micro-project providers and supports them with the application procedure. The Monitoring committee also encouraged local stakeholders to participate at the LOS programme. The local network affiliated to each Regional Coordinating office consisted in relevant actors at local level. The networks included the local authority institutions, city representatives, the local residents, associations, charities, local entrepreneurs, public corporations, private associations and organisations, cooperatives, and the job centres (*Agentur für Arbeit*). The local networks were a voluntary association to bring together the local stakeholders, to learn each other and to interchange experiences. Participants could apply for funding of micro-projects, but in turn it was not necessary to be member of the network to apply for funding. **(German case study)**

The SCP National Coordination Service and the Social Inclusion Unit's SCP team have a joint role of managing, reviewing and monitoring the 124 projects. The SCP National Coordination

¹³ They were selected after a public call for tender (öffentliche Ausschreibung) in 2002.

Service reports to the Social Inclusion Unit on the progress of projects and in turn, the Social Inclusion Unit provides reports and audits to the ESF DG Employment. The Social Inclusion Unit communicates with the SCP National Coordination Service regularly through meetings, letters and telephone calls. Local coordinators play a vital role of helping the Local Management Committees to develop their retention plans and deliver the projects and they are a communication link between the projects and the National Assistant Coordinators. Local Coordinators are charged with overall implementation of the retention plan and ensuring that resources are dedicated to the targeted students. Guidelines governing the programme, mandates projects to work in Local Management Committees/partnership with other agencies in developing the retention plans and delivering the projects. Each project has a Local Management Committee, which is formed with the help of a Local Coordinator, to deliver the project. As it is imperative, that the Retention Plan be the collaborative programme of the schools, the Local Management Committee utilised partnership working with the “community, youth and sporting organisations and with the local representatives of national statutory bodies such as Community Guards, Drugs Task Force, Juvenile Liaison Officers, Social Workers, Health Board Personnel, Community and Youth groups, Area-Based Partnership etc. **(Irish case study)**

- f. Combining top down logics with bottom-up ones (the German, the Irish, the Slovenian and the Italian cases). Only such an approach is able to identify, use and distribute the knowledge on needs of people at risk of social exclusion, enhance the local externalities and absorb or attract the necessary knowledge. In all the other cases, projects are based on the bottom-up principle. This is relevant in the Czech, the British, and the French cases. Linking programmes and projects specifically to territorial problems is highly relevant in the Czech and UK cases. Furthermore, actions should be implemented both at the national and local level, as national based programmes have advantages in terms of articulating a general policy, creating synergies, transferring the knowhow, making the investment more profitable and ensuring its continuity. Evidence in this sense comes from the Czech case study, where the analysed programme not only passed from the local level to the national one, but was applied also in other regions and at the moment legislation is being drawn up based on the content and results of the programme.

A critical success factor of the SCP is that it is a multi agency programme, encompassing a wide range of community platforms and geographical space. Partnership is thus a key principle of the SCP and was successfully displayed by its positive work with local businesses, the Gardai, Home School Liaison Officers, principals and teenage parenting projects (Crisis Pregnancy Agency) etc. The programme combines top-down with the bottom-up approach utilised a wide range of expertise and built community and school buy- in of the programme by involving a wide range of stakeholders on the Local Management Committees. **(Irish case study)**

The involvement of local stakeholders is a relevant aspect within the SPSI OMC, assured through the organisation structure of the LOS programme. Stakeholders at the local level could act and

decide independently of the projects to be implemented and the activities to be carried out. By this, the programme combines the top-down approach – general objectives were formulated at national level - with a bottom-up approach - by involving the local population responsible for the project formulation and its implementation. This procedure supported the promotion of social dialogue of different stakeholders, including the government levels and the local level, and contributed to the mutual learning processes and interchange of experiences. **(German case study)**

While SPSI OMC tries to mix top-down and bottom-up logics, ESF is rather focused on the bottom-up approach. It can be considered that PLYA fits best the SPSI OMC method. While started as a top-down instrument implemented by SIAE, it also came in time to benefit from a wide support of local organisations and participants themselves. **(Slovenian case study)**

The Italian project was conceived by the Managing Authority of Bolzano and soon became an interregional programme coordinated and delivered by an intermediary organism composed of the most relevant NGOs representing the interests of socially disadvantaged people. **(Italian case study)**

At the point of starting the project, the unemployment rate in the Moravia region was 10.76%, being one of the highest in Czech Republic. There was no significant public or private entrepreneurship initiative to alleviate the situation. Even skilled and experienced workers faced difficulties at that time. Without necessary qualifications and without job experience, the chances to integrate on the employment market for the youngsters leaving the institutional care were extremely low. In collaboration with „Key players” in the job market (Employment Agencies, private entrepreneurs, personal agencies), the Foster Parents Association (Sdružení pěstounských rodin / Pestouni) initiated a project aimed to enrol youngsters in the work-educational program in order to increase their chances for integration in the labour market. **(Czech case study)**

Whilst NIACE, Marchmont and other related bodies had an informal network which worked together on the issue of the ageing workforce in the south west prior to SWOOP they did not have a funded programme to work with. The partnership developed in reaction to several government policy papers and growing evidence that older people, particularly in the South West, had a low employment rate. The appetite for a large formal partnership and the salience of the issue of ageing at the time led to the search for a substantial funding opportunity to provide this. A number of people from partners in the South West came together to discuss the case for addressing the needs of older workers in the region and how this might be addressed through the opportunity of EQUAL funding, which would be open for a second round of applications.¹⁴

¹⁴ Prevista, 2009. SWRDA Evaluation of SWOOP – (South West Opportunities for Older People) Final Evaluation Report., p43.

The University of Exeter's Marchmont Observatory Skills and Learning Intelligence Module had previously agreed with SWRDA to conduct a programme of research into age and employability as a 'learning theme'. It concluded that there was a case for intervention and action in the region in this field. **(UK case study)**

- g. Parallel actions with grassroots direct intervention (such as awareness raising campaigns, studies, dissemination events, etc) in order to achieve greater and longer lasting impacts. This is particular evident in one of the Equal case studies (France) that promoted awareness raising campaigns. Some other programmes such as the German case (the German programme included 20 Regional Conferences that were considered to be a laboratory of ideas, 4 LOS congresses and an workshop for discussing the results of the project) and the Irish one (the Irish programme included numerous newsletter, communication materials, an website, etc) promoted dissemination activities. Research activities were particularly relevant in the British (the programme is led by an university and the research dimensions accompanies the programme alongside), the Italian (the Italian project enhances studies and analysis of the social exclusion phenomena and of existing best practices) and the Irish cases (the Irish programme beneficiates also of a Research officer that is dealing with the monitoring and evaluation of the programme and proposes ways of improving its action).

The main events which took place in the mainstreaming strand were attendance of national and regional events, where Strategic partners presented and discussed their findings. Also SWOOP organized its own conferences, most notably the SWOOP dissemination event. The publications were mostly in the form of the evaluations, noted in the chronology section, but also in the form of policy responses, advice to government departments and press releases. The majority of the Evaluations were done in house by the project researcher though important evaluations were also prepared by Prevista Ltd, particularly the final evaluation and the interim evaluation, both funded by SWRDA. The strategic level work has been continued by the Age Management Standing group, set up by the core partners for after the funding of SWOOP had finished. Dissemination and Mainstreaming are ongoing. **(UK case study)**

- h. Promoting research in order to increase the analytical capacity of the programme and the possibility of looking at other experiences and literature on the subject. This is the case for the Irish, the British and the Italian programmes (see before).

The SCP National Co-ordination Service started with 2 members of staff and quickly grew. The Department of Education wished for the Service to have one National and 5 Assistant National Coordinators, however the Service argued for a Research and Development Officer instead of an extra Assistant National Coordinator. A Research and Development Officer was employed in the SCP National Coordination team in 2004. The Principal Officer of the Social Inclusion Unit believes that the introduction of the Researcher Officer increased the quality of the SCP projects delivery and retention plans. By employing a Researcher, the SCP "raised its professional

approach to research, which helped to re- energise projects, when they say there work in reports etc”¹⁵. Research became a core element of SCP. **(Irish case study)**

- i. Promoting transnational exchanges as a way of improving stakeholders’ knowledge and experience with regards to social inclusion, social protection and healthcare and long term care, contributing thus to the SPSI OMC objective of enhancing mutual learning. Furthermore, transnational exchanges between actors and projects can contribute also to the transferring of best practices (one example is the Slovenian programme that is inspired by a Scandinavian similar experience, adapted afterwards to the Slovenian context; another examples is the German programme LOS that was inspired by the participation of Germany to a EU programme – Social Cities- and the Irish Peace Initiative programme). Transnational exchanges are particularly relevant in the EQUAL projects (Czech and France) that contain specific objectives in this respect. It is also relevant in some ESF supported interventions, even though it is not usual.

The SCP National Coordination Service also produced best practice guidelines, covering international programmes, for SCP projects to learn from¹⁶. For example, a ‘Core Elements’ consultation process and report started in May 2008, which aimed to ensure that SCP projects kept in line with identified international research on retention¹⁷. “The ‘Core Elements’ and the ‘Regional In-service practice over the lifespan of the SCP’ reports have been vital in disseminating good practice regarding supports for retaining young people in school”¹⁸. **(Irish case study)**

Trans-nationality. Collaborations with organizations from other countries implementing EQUAL projects, working were appreciated as beneficial for Pestouni. The transnational network with partners from Italy and Slovak Republic, in which the project was part of, represents also a very strong point of the project. The interviewed persons considered the network helpful in exchanging experiences, trainers and setting up methodologies, one of the key elements in the dissemination of the project’ results. **(Czech case study)**

The rich partnership also allowed Best practice sharing, an SPSI OMC Support Activity. Partners were constantly encouraged to share from one another and also to learn from abroad and any trips. Best practice was also part of the research and managers delivering their strand tried to compare with similar schemes around the country, particularly the South East region. At the regional conference, SWOOP shared their best practice with other organizations although further work in this area was not discussed. **(UK case study)**

¹⁵ National Coordinator of SCP. Interview data.

¹⁶ SCP guidelines towards best practice.

¹⁷ The Core elements of the SCP. SCP report. 2008. Main finding was that SCP supports implemented by local projects closely match those identified in international research. P 1.

¹⁸ SCP National Coordination Service; validation data. 20th August 2009.

- j. National cross-learning processes. An important characteristic of SPSI OMC is the open process of learning across the EU, based on enhancing cross-national learning in trying to reach a common vision of European social policy. The ESF selected programmes support the national cross-learning process by promoting exchanges of best practices at the country level and promoting the results of the project at country level. (Irish, German, Italian, Slovenian, and Czech cases)

The learning process was relevant at regional and local level, including political and social stakeholders in this process. The establishment of the Monitoring committee, involving both political representatives as well as the civil society, meant an important learning process for the involved parties, as the agreement process for the selection of the projects was accompanied by intense discussions. At local level, the relevant learning process for the project providers was on the one hand of “technical nature”, such as how to apply for European Funds, but included also a political aspect: The micro-project activities at local level were part of the nationwide strategy of improving employability and including excluded social groups. This strengthens the political awareness of local stakeholders. **(German case study)**

The Italian project supported exchanges of best practices on the field of social inclusion and the valuing of these positive examples for creating improved projects. **(Italian case study)**

In case of PLYA, the programme was a Slovenian creation, a response to a contextual national problem of the 90s in the early context of transition. However, the problem of dropouts had already been encountered and dealt with in other European countries by the time it became an issue in transformation countries. PLYA looked at the model of Scandinavian countries and found inspiration in Danish model of production schools so a process of learning was present in the setting up of the programme. In time, PLYA became a model in itself and there are good chances that it can be replicated in other instances and social contexts: “Owing to its originality through project learning and the relationships it fosters among participants, it has become an important model of educational work, offering lessons or inspiration to increasing numbers of educators in formal education and other experts dealing with the problems of young people”¹⁹ **(Slovenian case study)**

The Czech project was replicated also in other parts of the country: there are several similar projects in different locations from Czech Republic which were set up in recent years, being inspired by the Pestouni project.

Other half-way houses used this project as a model. But they are more local, as beneficiaries are selected only from those areas (Pestouni representative). **(Czech case study)**

- k. Mobilization of European, local and regional resources in order to create synergies between all available resources and guarantee the continuation of the programme. This is particularly

¹⁹ Natalia Žalec, All the best, PLYA, *Novicke Summer* 2005, p4.

relevant in the Czech, Spanish, and German cases, where European financial resources were integrated with national/regional/local ones in order to ensure financial continuity during and after the project.

1. Usage of tools such as monitoring, evaluation and benchmarking, peer reviews, related to SPSI OMC. (Czech, British, Irish, Italian, German cases)

The Italian programme used tools such as benchmarking (realizing a comparative analysis of the achieved results), monitoring and evaluation (evidence critical points during the implementation and identify improving solutions). **(Italian case study)**

Improvement of the monitoring and evaluation tools: this were based on the application form (Stammblatt), already developed at the beginning of the programme and based on experiences of a previous evaluation of the pilot-projects, which included already specific indicators for the selection of the projects according the general objectives, as well as for the ex-post evaluation. The application form taken from the ESF was elaborated and in parts simplified, which was considered by the Regiestelle an important factor for facilitating the access of the project providers to the European Social Fund. By including already objectives to be defined by each project provider, the evaluation was facilitated, and helped the project-providers also to develop target oriented projects. The indicators were also related to the EES and SPSI OMC objectives, including aspects such as improvement of employability, or the gender mainstreaming approach. **(German case study)**

Another SPSI OMC Support activity, Peer Review was covered as partners learnt from one another and looked at how they were doing against their objectives constantly. The Development Partnership also worked together though, generally, peer review was informal and came more at the latter end of the intervention. Having a full time research officer covered the OMC Support activity of Monitoring & Evaluation. Monitoring and evaluation was not bolted on and was treated as integral to the project. **(UK case study)**

Reviewing the SCP projects is an important element of ensuring quality assurance, meeting of targets, and provides for ongoing planning and implementation of the SCP. The SCP National Coordination Service required that accurate records must be kept of all reviews and submitted to the Service with the annual reports. The reports involved reflective practice and took into account value for money when planning the local review. The review process was very organised with guidelines and templates for reviews created by the SCP National Coordination Service²⁰ and Local Coordinators conducting the reviews, having received in-service training in 2003 and 2004 on review practices. Financial reports of projects were also submitted every quarter to the SCP National Coordination Service and the Social Inclusion Unit, providing accountability. **(Irish case study)**

²⁰ SCP guidelines on the implementation of local review. SCP National Coordination service.

Ex post evaluation of the 2000-2006 ESF support to the Open Method of Coordination in Social Protection and Social Inclusion

VC/2008/0211

Annex 6

Stakeholders dialogue main conclusions

Extract from the Final Stakeholder Dialogue Minutes

December 2009

STAKEHOLDERS DIALOGUE

1. Approach and Methodology

On the 24th September a Stakeholder Dialogue was held in Brussels with the following participants:

1	IT	Favaro	Laura	Objective 3 Operational Programme 2000-2006 Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano Managing Authority
2	DE	Schneider	Bastian	Regiestelle Intermediate Organism for the Programme Local Social Capital (Lokales Programm für soziale Zwecke – LOS)- Operational Programme 2000-2006 Ziel 3 Einheitliches Programmplanungsdocument zur Entwicklung des Arbeitsmarktes und der Humanressourcen
3	ES	Bernal	Irene	Fondacion Gitanos – Intermediate Organism for Acceder Programm - Operational Programme 2000-2006 “Lucha contra la discriminacion” (Obj.1 and 3)
4	SK	Kemenar	Dusan	Human Resources Development Operational Programme 2004-2006
5	GR	Kanaki	Anna	Operational Programme 2000-2006 Health and Welfare Managing Authority
6	PT	Nunes	Carlos	Operational Programme 2000-2006 “Emprego, Formacao e desenvolvimento social” Managing Authority
7	ES	Saez	Javier	ESF Spanish Managing Authority – Operational Programme 2000-2006 “Lucha contra la discriminacion” (Obj.1 and 3)
8	UK	Deeming	Karen	Department for Work and Pensions, European Social Inclusion Team Social – Member of Social Protection Committee
9	BE	DeBeule	Viviane	Responsable du service Fonds Social Européen - DOCUP Objective 3 Bruxelles Capital Region Managing Authority
10	BE	Van Aubel	Florian	DOCUP Objective 3 Bruxelles Capital Region Managing Authority
11	BE	Backes	Stephan	EAPN - Policy Officer Belgian Anti-Poverty Network
12	AT	Kammerhofer-Schlegel	Christa	Permanent Representation of Austria to the EU
13		Antonella	Braucks	European Commission – DG EMPL Head Evaluation Unit
14		Jeannette	Monier	European Commission – DG EMPL Evaluation Unit
15		Raymond	Maes	European Commission– DG EMPL Evaluation Unit
16		Suvi	Aarila	European Commission– DG EMPL Evaluation Unit
17		Pesce	Flavia	Evaluation Staff
18		Barbieri	Davide	Evaluation Staff
19		Sandamas	Claire	Evaluation Staff
20		Drabble	David	Evaluation Staff
21		Dente	Bruno	Evaluation Staff
22		Cullen	Joe	Evaluation Staff

The purpose of the day was to gain views of participants on the preliminary findings of this evaluation, in order to validate the preliminary results and to propose answers to the 5th evaluation question, namely is the ESF a suitable tool to progress for delivery on the common social objectives of the SISP OMC? And if yes, how can this instrument be improved to ensure a better coherence and complementarity with the OMC?

Two focus groups, run concurrently following a set of questions that cover the following core elements:

- **WHY?** Key challenges – the problems, issues and needs that ESF should address to support delivery on the common objectives in social inclusion, pensions and health.
- **WHAT?** Objectives – the broad strategies (scenarios) that need to be developed to promote the future ESF role in the promotion of the social and social protection objectives developed in the Social OMC and the underlying principles of these strategies.
- **WHO?** The target groups of ESF interventions towards whom more attention should be devoted in order to increase coherence and complementarity with the common objectives in social inclusion, pensions and health.
- **HOW?** Actions and processes – practical suggestions to implement these approaches and principles. This should include:
 - a) the type of interventions that might be expected to be developed and operationalised;
 - b) governance issues.

An initial session involving the two concurrent Focus Groups, run in the morning. The two groups were given an identical task: the ‘Future Challenges’ task. It explored a set of questions on the future challenges to be faced by the ESF in the context of the Social OMC, and the key objectives and goals that needed to be set in relation to these challenges.

In the first session the following questions were asked :

1. Do you think that in the future social inclusion issues will become one of the main concerns of ESF supporting more explicitly the social inclusion strand of OMC? If yes, in which policy field should these aspects be emphasized?
2. Do you think that ESF should support the objectives in the social protection strand of the OMC (i.e. adequate and sustainable pensions and access to quality health care)? If yes, how can this be achieved?
3. Do you think that national programming and ESF in the field of social inclusion and social protection should be more linked in the future? If yes, how can the mainstreaming into national programming of successful projects be facilitated?

4. Do you believe that the role of the European Commission in steering the social inclusion/social protection interventions should be altered? If yes, in which way?

A second (afternoon) session involving the two concurrent Focus Groups. The task set was an 'Implementation Strategy' task. This explored two sets of questions. The first set focused on 'Target Groups', reflecting on possible developments/shifts in target groups to be addressed through the ESF. The second set of questions focused on 'Implementation', reflecting on the kinds of actions and initiatives that would best serve the future challenges, objectives and needs of target groups.

In the second session the following questions were asked :

➤ Target Groups

1. Some observers believe that social inclusion efforts – mainly in terms of equality of income and opportunities – should concentrate on very large target groups (e.g. immigrants, children, etc.) and give lower importance to smaller target groups that should be tackled at the national/local level. Is this an acceptable position?
2. On the other hand it can be argued that ESF should concentrate on the challenges that are insufficiently/inadequately addressed at the national level, because of lack of awareness/institutional set-ups/lack of knowledge. Do you believe that this is a better alternative?
3. Some of the target groups that received a lot of attention in the past – e.g. women – may not be considered as a vulnerable target group in the future. Do you agree? Does the set of target groups need to be reviewed in the light of new risk situations? If yes, which target groups should receive higher priority?

➤ Interventions

1. Preliminary findings show that in the 2000-2006 programming period there was a predominance of training within the ESF interventions proposed and implemented. When dealing with social inclusion issues, do you think a shift towards less “traditional” interventions (also aimed at structures and systems) should be preferable? And if yes, to what extent should ESF concentrate on innovative interventions?
2. Do you think in the future that ESF should concentrate more on specialized or integrated interventions?
3. Do you think that it is important that many - if not most - of ESF financed interventions in the field of social inclusion/social protection should be part of transnational networks in order to improve the transferability of good practices and the innovativeness of the whole program?

4. Do you think that typical OMC elements such as empowerment of final beneficiaries, involvement of all relevant stakeholders, exchange of good practice through transnational projects, definition of common indicators and benchmarking, should be more emphasized in the future ESF?

The final session of the afternoon brought together all the participants in a plenary session which presented the results of the Focus Groups, reviewed their conclusions and discussed and formulated a set of agreed answers to the questions posed by the Stakeholder Dialogue. These final conclusions were intended to feed into a key outcome of the Stakeholder Dialogue – a ‘Strategy Paper’ aimed at linking the evaluation findings to exploring future scenarios for ESF and the Social OMF

The content and form of the three sets of questions discussed by the Focus Groups, set out below, reflects a number of purposes and considerations:

- They reflect the structure and design of the proposed Strategy Paper, which has three broad elements, focusing on ‘Objectives and Scenarios’; ‘Target Groups’ and ‘Interventions’
- They reflect the main findings of the evaluation, in particular: the greater emphasis on the programming period 2000-2006 on ‘social inclusion’ vis a vis social protection and health issues
- They reflect the evolving nature of the ESF, in terms of the changes in focus, intervention logic and programme architecture following 2006
- They reflect changes in the social, economic and cultural landscape of Europe, for example the current global economic downturn.

In detail:

Agreed conclusion on GOALS AND SCENARIOS

Social inclusion should have a higher priority within ESF, working more on prevention, maintaining a focus on jobs and employment but recognizing the multidimensional nature of social exclusion.

- ESF priorities need to be re-balanced to focus more on social inclusion issues. In the past ten years, an over-emphasis on economic growth has led to an under-representation of focus and effort on social inclusion. Over this period, not a lot of ESF funding¹ has been allocated to social inclusion projects, yet the gap between rich and poor has not decreased markedly. Moreover, the forecast is that the gap is not likely to decrease.
- Although ESF articles do make provision to support social inclusion – for instance under Article 2.b, which focuses on equal opportunities for the socially excluded - there still needs

¹ During the dialogue some participants referred to a 12% of ESF funding.

to be greater recognition that social exclusion is multi-dimensional in nature. For example, it is generally well-accepted that low-paid jobs militate against full integration into society. In turn, low pay and poverty are associated with multiplier effects, such as poor health, that reinforce cycles of deprivation. In the current programming cycle, 2007-2013, steps have been taken, for example under Article 3.1.c, to extend the previous scope of ESF regulation beyond promoting sustainable employment and combating discrimination in the labour market. Future ESF policy should build on these advances to operationalise a broader, more holistic understanding of social inclusion, for example by focusing on the quality of jobs.

- However, although the Stakeholder Dialogue participants called for a broadening of the scope of ESF regulation to take account of the multi-dimensional nature of social inclusion, they also highlighted the need for the regulatory framework to be flexible enough to address local contexts and local needs. In particular, it was argued that eligibility criteria are currently too rigid to support both ‘integrative’ initiatives (for example those that bridge labour market and health issues) and ‘contextual’ initiatives that address complex local issues.

Other concerns can be addressed through ESF only partially (in the case of health and care where the scope of the ESF could be widened) or indirectly (in the area of active ageing, possibly in the future prevention for working poor, deprivation in rural areas, child poverty)

- Although the SPSI OMC has repeatedly emphasized the close relationship between social inclusion, social protection and health dynamics (i.e. the interdependency of the three OMC over-arching objectives) the evaluation suggests that, in practice, the implementation of ESF regulation has largely operated as a set of parallel strands, focusing on labour market integration, active ageing and health respectively. Moreover, there has been a significantly greater concentration of effort in supporting the first of these strands.
- Against this background, it was argued that, in reality, there was little to be gained in pushing for a re-orientation of the ESF regulatory framework to support social protection interventions, not least because the pension system in most member states is an exclusive national competence. However, it was recognized that health issues are, firstly, more closely linked to social inclusion issues and, secondly, more accessible to intervention at the regional level. There is therefore scope for raising awareness and proposing solutions for interventions that take advantage of the existing scope within the ESF regulatory framework for linking inclusion and health, for example training people for health care service occupations, and promoting well-being within the workplace.

The extent to which Member State interpretation of ESF European regulations, including incorporation of additional ESF-related national rules, varies across countries

- One group raised the point that Member States interpretation and enhancement of EC rules on ESF may sometimes constitute a blockage limiting the policy fields, the intervention typologies, and the target groups addressed.

The extent to which ESF Managing Authorities feed into OMC process varies across countries – this input should be maintained and extended. However NGOs representing final beneficiaries are typically only consulted in the final stages making the task of implementing NAPs more difficult in terms of reflecting grass roots needs. This relationship should be improved

- NGO's representing the needs of the target groups are not involved in the production of the NAPs. Greater NGO involvement is desirable since (i) NGOs play a big role in putting into practice the strategic and operational plans of the NAPs. A clearer reflection of NGO knowledge and experience of grass roots needs, and how to address them, would improve the efficiency and effectiveness of NAPs, (ii) NGOs are involved in day to day research, interaction with target groups and monitoring of situations on the ground. They therefore acquire a grounded knowledge that other stakeholders involved in social inclusion do not have.
- Since NGOs are 'sounding boards' for grass roots needs, they can play a key role in identifying target groups, and target group needs, that are not sufficiently covered in NAP agendas.
- Rather than 'token' consultation when the NAP has been produced they should be part of the group that works to generate the NAPs. The NGOs represented in the stakeholder dialogue felt that the 'partnership principle' embedded in the SPSI OMC (which encourages broad stakeholder dialogue and collaboration) is unequally applied in practice. Whilst the views of stakeholders like policy-makers and managing authorities are adequately represented in NAPs, NGOs feel their voice is not heard enough. However, this situation varies from country to country, as those present indicated that they are involved in drafting the NAPs, for example through having their own chapter re ESF in the NAPs.

The main point is to strengthen the European commitment in fighting social exclusion. This does not necessarily imply radical changes to ESF governance structures – for example by imposing a 'supra-national authority' overseeing the implementation of the ESF regulatory apparatus. There needs to be a balance between supporting European added value and supporting flexibility in applying the system to national and regional conditions.

- ESF has very rigid rules and procedures, and the Commission could play a valuable role in ensuring that target groups and interventions are not over-constrained by the regulatory system. A key component of a more flexible regime would be the opportunity for managing authorities, NGOS and other stakeholders to react more quickly to the changing needs of target groups during the ongoing programming period, without requiring a formal change to an Operational Programme.. A related issue is that of awareness of the ESF regulatory and

operational parameters. Perceptions of how ESF can be used, in what circumstances, and for whom, vary considerably from country to country. Possibly the EC could help in increasing awareness and understandings of how and in what circumstances ESF can be applied to support the SPSI OMC, for example by issuing good practice guidelines that are more closely illustrative of rules and procedures.

- The EC should give a strong central steering in terms of ensuring that the SPSI OMC objectives are on the ESF agenda and addressed by member states i.e. there must be a clear commitment at this level to highlighting the link between discrimination and exclusion, and how they can be addressed across Europe. In addition the EC should push for and seek to reinforce partnerships between Managing Authorities and civil society/NGOs.
- The DGs responsible for the specific operational elements that shape the level of complementarity and cohesion between the ESF and the SPSI OMC should work more jointly considering also the multidimensional nature of social exclusion.

Agreed conclusions on TARGET GROUPS

Enlarge the scope of target groups to be addressed by the ESF, building on the typology introduced in the 2007-2013 programming period.

- Although a range of key target groups are currently addressed – including people with disabilities and health conditions; lone parents; the over 50's; people from ethnic minorities; young people; people without basic skills - greater visibility at the European level needs to be given to the needs of other groups that are less well considered. Examples include: citizens whose opportunities are restricted by high levels of debt; the low-waged; carers; the digitally excluded; Roma; people with HIV/AIDS; sex workers, additional youth groups, people suffering from depression.
- Future ESF policy, regulations and procedures should reflect the complex and multi-dimensional nature of social exclusion, focusing more on 'scenarios of need' rather than restrictive lists of target groups, whilst referencing the typical social, economic and cultural characteristics of people who normally face social exclusion.
- Traditional 'targeting' strategies are seen to pose a number of problems. One problem concerns constructing a regulatory framework that can keep pace with the changing nature of need. Social exclusion is not static but evolves in response to changing economic and social dynamics. In turn, ESF interventions create 'transformed needs'. For example an ESF intervention aimed at promoting the integration of unemployed people through adult learning may give rise to a need to increase the supply of adult trainers. In other words, target groups are in practice 'moving targets'.

- Another problem with singling out particular groups for recognition is that it creates ‘displacement and substitution effects’. Introducing a new target group into the regulatory framework is likely to create an ‘internal market’ for providers of services that address the needs of the need target group, diverting resources from other needs groups. A third set of problems reflects the lack of granularity of conventional targeting strategies. These tend to be too generic and homogenised, putting together under a broad target group people and situations of great diversity. For example, the needs of asylum seekers are frequently subsumed within the needs of immigrants, though they are very different in practice.
- Innovations in targeting approaches and strategies are therefore needed to accommodate the complexity, contextuality and evolutionary nature of needs.

Agreed conclusions on INTERVENTIONS

In order to fight social exclusion it is very important that the interventions should be integrated around the needs of the individuals. Focusing both on quantitative and qualitative targets is therefore necessary

- In order to support individuals into employment (as a doorway to inclusion) it needs to be recognized that integrated interventions may be necessary that address that individual's position on the 'pathway to employment' (3 months away from securing a job or 4 years) i.e. focus on individual pathways and needs.
- Training is still considered as adding value, such as the current focus on quality jobs and employment, but also other types of interventions may be considered necessary in the future (more prevention for people with underpaid jobs at risk of social exclusion and/or access to social services/housing,² including possibly some infrastructure).
- The ESF should continue to support interventions that add value compared to national interventions. This support could encompass, inter alia,: reinforcing a commitment to over-arching European policy agendas and instruments (such as the renewed Lisbon goals; i2010 and beyond); highlighting and mainstreaming particular target groups and ‘scenarios of need’; promoting and reinforcing an ‘OMC culture’, one that supports the case for the three over-arching objectives of the SPSI OMC.
- In order to fight social exclusion, it is very important that the interventions should be constructed around the needs of individuals (speak of target needs rather than of target groups, avoid "labeling").

² On this specific issues, there was not an overall agreement with some participants (for example, from Belgium, saying that these issues should not be covered by ESF).

- For certain target groups (e.g. Roma), the goal is social integration, and return to work is a medium term objective. Interventions should not be pre-defined, more flexibility is required to design the most suitable interventions. This should be balanced by setting clear and flexible targets to be reached but avoiding rigidity. In this area, improvements are needed to both on the quality of indicators and in defining the targets (at OP level and at overall level to make the link with the SPSI OMC). Targets should not be the same for all vulnerable target groups.
- In addition, interventions to address social exclusion should avoid over-emphasising the 'individual' and 'end user' context. Although making a difference to people's lives should remain a key objective of ESF supported interventions, there is room for interventions that aim at the 'bigger picture' - addressing structural and systemic weaknesses in the social, economic and cultural fabric of member states which contribute to maintaining inequalities. In turn, one broad category of stakeholder with a key role to play in addressing social inclusion covers employers and commercial companies. These stakeholders have been relatively under-represented in past interventions.
- The ESF regulatory and operational system could benefit from building in more capacity to support collaboration and 'joined up working' between stakeholders working at national and regional levels and within different agencies and units of the overall delivery infrastructure. It is important to recognise that both traditional 'single activity' interventions that reach a large number of beneficiaries, and the much more costly and time intensive integrated approaches that address complex multiple needs of individuals (and which reach only a small number of beneficiaries) continue to be important.

Transnationality is important because it avoids reinventing the wheel over and over again, but should not be compulsory. Partnership between NGOs and Managing Authorities can bring an added value to the transnationality efforts

- Transnational projects facilitate the exchange of good practices, and reduce the tendency to 're-invent the wheel'. Thus, the transnational element should be encouraged but not enforced. Instead find a different mechanism or platform to encourage transnational learning and sharing - not project specific, but based around themes or an exchange of stakeholders; reinforcing partnerships between member states, managing authorities and social partners.
- It was argued that transnationality sometimes works more effectively when it involves key decision-makers, for example between representatives of managing authorities. . However, on the project level, the Commission could do more to facilitate projects with similar interests to identify each other and collaborate. Partnerships between NGOs and MA can bring added value to transnational efforts.

Most of the typical SPSI OMC elements are already emphasized in ESF. This should continue but more support is required in terms of tools to achieve these elements and assess their effects

- Although a recurrent theme in the discussions centred on the need to support more flexibility in the application of ESF regulations in order to address regional and local circumstances – for example through a more relaxed eligibility regime – there was nonetheless support for establishing a ‘baseline’ set of targets and indicators, linked to the over-arching SPSI OMC objectives, to assess the outcomes and impacts of ESF interventions.
- It was also suggested that monitoring and evaluation of ESF outcomes and impacts could be improved through engaging a broader spectrum of stakeholders in ‘ex-ante’ activities (e.g. initial involvement in programme design) and in continuous monitoring of programme implementation and evolution. In the UK, for example, work is currently progressing on setting up new forms of ‘Advisory Groups’ to get involved in programme design, implementation and evaluation. These involve not only social partners like NGOs, but also people with direct experience of poverty and other social inclusion issues (for example drawn from community groups).