Expert Group Meeting

Promoting Social Integration

Session VI: Investing in inclusion: Ways and means to develop national capacities.

Part 1 – Policy formulation, implementation and co-ordination
Working to achieve inclusion requires action across a range of Government policies to a greater or lesser degree, and at both national, regional and local levels. In addition to a "whole of Government" approach, it requires mobilisation of the social partners, civil society and virtually all citizens, directly or indirectly. In terms of policy content, it has economic, social, demographic and political dimensions.

Inclusion – economic, social, political and demographic
Economic inclusion is a key part of achieving inclusion overall, It essentially involves working to ensure that people of working age have adequately paid employment and that children and young people are receiving the necessary education and training to enable them obtain employment as adults. It also involves ensuring that adequate .income support is available for those who cannot work. The degree of success realised in achieving economic inclusion, depends greatly on economic growth and development, which in turn depends on maintaining and enhancing economic competitiveness in a globalised world.

Social policy and programmes in terms of income support and other services, such as health care, education and housing, provide at a minimum for a basic standard of living and are an essential element in achieving social inclusion. However, achieving social inclusion also requires mobilising support from family, local community, and non-governmental organisations in the community and voluntary sector. The degree to which such support is required

depends on the level of economic development and the resulting capacity of the State to provide social protection.
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Political inclusion requires that all sectors of society have a meaningful role at both local and national levels in the development of policies, allocation of resources and the monitoring of implementation

Demographic inclusion involves ensuring that adequate provision is made to provide equal treatment to and otherwise integrate migrants and ethnic minorities into the society of the host country. It also includes having a long term approach designed to ensure adequate provision is made for an ageing population, especially in terms of income support and care, and for future generations

Vulnerable Groups
Working to achieve inclusion involves recognising the varying degrees of vulnerability to exclusion among various groups in society. Certain identifiable groups are particularly vulnerable to exclusion – women, families with children, especially lone parent families and those with a large number of children, the unemployed, people with disabilities, minorities, such as migrants, and older people. Additional resources normally need to be targeted at these groups to ensure that they can achieve, at a minimum, a basic standard of living and access to essential services. In addition, provision must be made, through education and training, to continually build capacity, especially among vulnerable young people and workers generally, to meet the demands of increasingly complex jobs in a growing knowledge intensive economy and society.

Aging
Virtually all countries worldwide are facing the challenge of an ageing society. The fact that people are living longer, of course,

means that a better return on human capital is being obtained. But there is also an increase on average in periods of dependency in old age. Demographic aging is also due to people having fewer children and often fewer than the desired number of children. This is already contributing to a shrinking workforce in a number of countries, which is projected to occur in most countries worldwide in the decades ahead. These changes could have a negative impact on inter-generational solidarity with, potentially, negative consequences for inclusion.

Inclusion – requires achieving the right balance
The variety of factors involved, many of a fundamental nature, in achieving inclusion means that an essential part of the process requires finding the right balance between all of them. For example, the right balance has to found between achieving economic development and maintaining continued economic competitiveness, and making adequate provision to meet the social and demographic challenges. Working to achieve this balance mainly involves the political dimension, including effective leadership at all levels, best achieved through the meaningful participation in governance of all sectors of society.

Strategic approach
Working to promote inclusion, therefore, is a "whole of society" endeavour. It can benefit greatly from the adoption of a strategic approach and plan that accommodates as far as possible all the various complex elements involved.

The first stage in the strategic approach is to produce a clear analysis of current economic, social and demographic realities and likely future trends. This greatly assists policy makers and stakeholders ensure that the strategy helps to promote both economic and social sustainability. Social sustainability in this context means ensuring that balanced provision is made across all vulnerable groups and all relevant policy areas.

The strategy itself should

- take into account all the essential elements mentioned above,

- provide a clear road map on the objectives for achieving inclusion in both the short and longer term,

- set down the measures and resources needed in the shorter term to meet the objectives identified,

- put the necessary structures in place to continually monitor and evaluate progress and, on the basis of this,

- advise on further development of the strategy..

Understanding - nature and extent of inclusion/exclusion
Most people at least for most of their lives will achieve inclusion, by the standards of the society in which they live, through their own efforts, and through the support they obtain from family and existing state and private services. It is the absence of adequate supports from these sources, and the lack of capacity and confidence that this can entail, which leaves individuals and groups socially excluded. It is essential, therefore, to determine what supports are lacking across all the various policy and services areas. Some of the supports lacking may be common to all groups e.g lack of employment or income support, but may apply to a greater or lesser extent among the various groups. Some such as lack of child care may be a major barrier to employment for certain groups, such as lone parents

Goals and Objectives
The goals set should reflect in broad terms the course of action to be taken and form the basis for the more detailed objectives.

Member States of the European Union have set themselves the following common objectives for achieving social inclusion:

- *Access for all to the resources, rights and services needed for participation in society, preventing and addressing exclusion, and fighting all forms of discrimination leading to exclusion; and*

- *The active social exclusion of all, both by promoting participation in the labour market and by fighting poverty and social exclusion*

Resources, Rights and Services
To participate in society people need a basic level of resources. For the majority in the working age population (18 to 65), these resources are obtained from paid work in employment/self-employment. It is essential to determine, in the case of people who are unemployed or otherwise jobless, the barriers to employment and to well paid employment. These may include lack of access to education, training, health services, housing, transport and, in the case of families, child care and elder care. For example, people with low levels of educational attainment are much more vulnerable to being unemployed or in precarious, low paid employment.

The following are examples of actual objectives in relation to employment (these examples taken from recent Irish National Action Plan on inclusion):

To increase the overall employment rate to 70% by 2010; to continue to increase the female employment rate by 60%; and to continue to increase the employment rate of older workers above 50%.

The following are more specific objectives designed to assist in meeting the overall employment objective above, but targeted in particular at groups that are more vulnerable:

The proportion of the population aged 16-64 with restricted literacy will be reduced to between 10% - 15% by 2016, from the level of 25% found in 1997.

Introduce an active case management approach that will support those on long term social welfare into education, training and employment. The target is to support 50,000 such people, including lone parents and the long term unemployed, with the overall aim of reducing by 20% the number of those whose total income is derived from long-term social welfare payments by 2016. This target will be reviewed in the light of experience.

Resources for those not in employment
A key priority is income support for vulnerable groups who are not in employment –children and older people. Examples of such objectives are:

Maintain the combined value of child income support measures at 33%-35% of the minimum adult social welfare payment rate over the course of this Plan and review child income supports aimed at assisting children in families on low incomes

Maintain a minimum payment rate of E200 per week in 2007 terms, for all social welfare pensions over the course of the plan.

Services

A corresponding approach applies to the provision of services. An example of an objective in relation to services for older people is the following:

Continue to increase investment in community care services for older people, including home care packages and enhanced day care services, to support them to live independently in the community for as long as possible

Rights.

A strategic approach to be effective should also be based on overall economic and social rights. These are particularly important for those vulnerable to social exclusion and involves progressively removing discretion from the provision of economic and social supports. The extent to which rights can be provided for, however, has to be subject to economic, social and political constraints and this also has to be reflected in the strategy.

Much social exclusion results from discrimination on the nine grounds of gender, marital status, family status, age, sexual orientation, disability, religion, race and membership of the Traveller community (similar in Ireland to Roma). Clear legislative provision is required to combat such discrimination together with effective enforcement structures.

Institutional Mechanisms

The process of ongoing development of the strategy and monitoring and evaluating progress require that the necessary institutional mechanisms are in place. The process benefits greatly from leadership at the top of Government. In some countries this is provided by a Cabinet Committee or its equivalent chaired by the Prime Minister. This can be supported by a group of Senior Officials from all the relevant Ministries/Departments. Generally a dedicated Government Office is required to drive the process

forward in support of the Senior Officials and to support coordination among the Government Departments at national level and local level. Special social inclusion units may be set up in each Government Department (Ministry) and Local Authority (Municipality) to coordinate policies and their implementation at that level and liaise with the central coordinating office.

In addition to the ongoing development of the strategy, monitoring evaluating and reporting on its implementation, the institutional mechanisms can further support the process through

- coordinating and promoting effective mechanisms for data collection,
- research into the nature and causes of poverty and on integrated policy development,
- implementing procedures to assess the impact of policies and their implementation on poverty and social exclusion,
- organising adequate communications among the stakeholders, with the media and the public generally on the nature and causes of poverty and on what is being done to combat it.

Coordinated design and implementation of inclusion policies
The institutional mechanisms described above can facilitate and promote coordination within the Governmental system at national and local levels. But this greatly benefits from being embedded in a wider coordination system involving the social partners and civil society. In Ireland, for example, social partnership agreements covering policies relating to pay, economic, social and other issues are negotiated by the Government and the following four pillars: - employers (private sector), trade unions, farmers, and civil society (community and voluntary sector). The relevant provisions of these agreements in turn become the basis for many elements of the strategic plans on social inclusion and their development. Institutional mechanisms are also in place for monitoring and

evaluating the progress being made in implementing the plan, in which the civil society pillar in particular is involved.

Participatory Dialogue
The mechanisms within Government and between Government and the social partners, described above, promote and facilitate dialogue among all the parties concerned. However, it is also necessary to dialogue with the myriad users of services, especially those experiencing poverty and social exclusion, and the organisations that work with them. In Ireland, for example, when each plan is being developed such organisations are invited to submit written comments on social inclusion policies on the basis of questions such as the following:

What's working?

What's not working or could work better?

What improvements should be made and the priorities?

Public consultations are held at regional level on the same questions, with workshops dealing with various policy areas such as health, education etc. This gives an opportunity for those who might experience difficulties in providing written comments to have their views heard. It also gives a regional perspective on the process. A report on all the consultations is compiled and made available to those negotiating the social partnership agreement and developing the national plans.

Social Inclusion Forum
Each year in Ireland a social inclusion forum is organised. This is attended by people experiencing poverty and people representing civil society from all over the country. The opening or closing address is given by the Minister for Social and Family Affairs and

it is attended by senior officials from Government Departments and offices. The agenda is organised to facilitate maximum time for discussions. These generally take place in workshops on selected policy related themes and particularly using the lifecycle approach. Senior officials are present to participate in the discussions. The forum provides, in addition, an opportunity for participants to network and exchange information and policy views. A full report on the proceedings is prepared and made available to policymakers and other stakeholders.

Conclusions

The complexity involved in working to achieve inclusion requires a "whole of Government" approach . This approach can be more effectively implemented with a comprehensive roadmap in the form of a strategy. This should include clear objectives and measures to achieve them that promotes coordination and integration, where necessary, across all relevant policy areas. The likelihood of successful implementation will be greatly enhanced, if all sectors in society are involved through partnership and consultation in a "whole of society" approach. Finally, key elements are leadership and commitment to the strategic objectives from the top of Government and transparent accountability for the progress being achieved.

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