

Phase II – the Next Steps

A book and manual will be produced during Phase II. The following themes or questions will be covered in the book:

- A clearer understanding of what is 'effective' mainstreaming. Under what conditions or requirements can mainstreaming bring about poverty reduction?
- Can mainstreaming bring about greater policy coherence between different policies and hence a greater understanding of poverty?
- How should 'effective' mainstreaming be investigated? What tools or techniques can be used?
- Has mainstreaming the potential to bring about greater equity in policymaking? Can it include people experiencing poverty in the policymaking process?
- What potential does mainstreaming social inclusion have to influence the NAPs/incl and the Social Inclusion Strategy.

The manual will be a practical guide on how to mainstream social inclusion. It will be aimed at practitioners, NGOs and service providers.

The documents from the Phase I work are:

1. Research report
2. Seminar report

Copies of these documents are available in English, Czech, French and Portuguese and on the websites of the partners. Hard copies are also available from the partners. Contact details including the website addresses for the partners may be found on:

www.combatpoverty.ie

For additional details of the project please contact:

Kevin P O'Kelly,
EU Project Co-ordinator,
or
Izabela Litewska
Research Administrator
Combat Poverty Agency,
Bridgewater Centre,
Islandbridge,
Dublin 8
Ireland

Tel: +353 1 602 6620
+353 1 602 6619
Fax: +353 1 670 6760
Email: msi@cpa.ie



Mainstreaming Social Inclusion



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SOCIAL EXCLUSION – A POLICY RESPONSE

Background

Poverty and social exclusion remain deeply disturbing problems within European society with 15% (or 55 million people) living below the official EU poverty line. Poverty and social exclusion have many and varied causes and to address them there is a need for wide ranging and integrated policies and measures across many areas of society and government.

A new understanding is emerging that to do this successfully, all national policies should have a poverty perspective. This is known as Mainstreaming Social Inclusion.

This is a new concept and, consequently, what it means differs across the Member States.

In 2003, the Combat Poverty Agency, along with transnational partners in Europe and the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN), undertook a three-year research project to advance an understanding of mainstreaming social inclusion. The project is part funded by the European Commission through the Transnational Exchange Programme.

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AIMS AND FORMAT OF PROJECT

The project is in two phases. The information gathered in Phase I will guide the work in Phase II.

- **Phase I:** To map out how mainstreaming social inclusion is understood in each partner country or region and to identify the key features of what constitutes mainstreaming;
- **Phase II:** To build on the work of Phase I, and, in particular, to investigate the potential of mainstreaming for achieving positive outcomes for people experiencing poverty and the benefits that mainstreaming can confer.

Phase I of the Project has been completed and its key outputs are:

- Research Report
- Seminar Report based on a seminar on Mainstreaming Social Inclusion held in June 2003.

Phase II

The substantial research will take place under Phase II. This phase of the project will advance understanding of mainstreaming social inclusion. A book and a manual will be produced.

Phase I

Key Findings to Date

To increase information on what is understood by mainstreaming, the partner countries / regions that participated in Phase I set out their understanding of mainstreaming and provided two case studies to illustrate this understanding. The project found that there was no common understanding of, or approach to, mainstreaming social inclusion. Rather, it identified a number of approaches amongst the partners, which are attempting to shift existing policy and delivery models to produce positive outcomes for people experiencing poverty.

These approaches may be classified as follows:

Administrative Types of Mainstreaming - Ireland and Portugal

Policies are assessed to identify their impact on poverty and in some cases try to ensure that they do not worsen poverty. In addition, in Ireland there are policy targets for poverty reduction and social inclusion. Implicitly these may also act to direct policy. In Portugal, there is also a well-developed strategic planning system which involves co-ordination and partnership between stakeholders at the local level.



“The European Commission and the European Council have continued to press the need for Member States to mainstream social inclusion.”

Executive Mainstreaming - Northern Ireland

‘New TSN’ (Targeting Social Needs) is where efforts and available resources within existing public programmes of the Northern Ireland Executive are redirected towards people, groups and areas in greatest objective social need. Finding additional resources for ‘New TSN’ activities involves targeting resources within existing programmes or making bids for additional resources within the annual public expenditure round.

Judicial Mainstreaming - France

There is no formal attempt to “mainstream social inclusion”. However, there are many examples of policies and measures that enable individuals and groups experiencing poverty and social exclusion to get back into the mainstream of society. These are developed and implemented through partnership between different sectors and are facilitated through the political system by legislation.

There are two distinct approaches that determine whether or not the inclusion of a poverty perspective is ‘integrationist’ or ‘agenda setting’. The former is where social inclusion perspectives are introduced into existing policy processes but do not challenge the existing policy paradigm. The latter involves a fundamental re-think of the ends or goals of the policies themselves so as to include a social inclusion perspective. However, the two approaches share a number of features, including:

- The inclusion of a poverty perspective when developing policy;
- Cross-boundary working arrangements;
- Mechanisms for the involvement of people experiencing poverty;
- An evaluation and monitoring system.

Benefits of Mainstreaming Social Inclusion

The research has found that mainstreaming is a neutral concept as it is not clear whether or not it can result in a reduction or elimination of poverty or an improvement in the lives of people who are experiencing poverty. However, the research did find that there were potentially positive outcomes following implementation of mainstreaming processes, some of which were demonstrated in the different case studies.



These include:

Outcomes for People Experiencing Poverty

- More actions within existing policies for excluded people;
- Greater participation and dialogue for social partners and people experiencing poverty;
- More resources within existing policies/ programmes directed towards social inclusion.

Outcomes for Policymaking and Policymakers

- Change in attitudes and working culture to include a poverty perspective;
- Greater responsibility and ownership for social inclusion outcomes across all policy areas;
- Better data and information around poverty and social exclusion and improved systems for spreading innovation and learning about poverty and social exclusion;
- Greater coherence in policymaking.

“The key elements of Mainstreaming Social Inclusion are: the inclusion of a poverty perspective when developing policy; cross-boundary working arrangements; mechanisms for the involvement of people experiencing poverty and an evaluation and monitoring system.”

