Social Community Teams against poverty (Den Haag, 19-20 January 2016)

Discussion Paper: Social Community Teams (SCT) against poverty in the Netherlands[1]

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Introduction: Background and context

This discussion paper aims at enabling readers to situate the Dutch initiative 'Social community teams against poverty' within the European context of social policy, to relate it to the Europe 2020 Strategy[2] and the Social Investment Package[3], and to provide a comparative European perspective. The purpose is to give a balanced view of the policy and its possible contribution to European policy development, and an assessment of the effectiveness of the policy from an independent point of view.

Issues that the policy under review aims to tackle

On September 17, 2013, King Willem-Alexander, in a speech written by Prime Minister Mark Rutte's government, informed the Dutch people that the welfare state of the 20th century is gone and that it will be replaced by a 'participation society'.[4] From now on, people must take responsibility for their own future and create their own social and financial safety nets. The 'Participation Act' from 1 January 2015 merges three Acts that addressed those who are most distant from the labour market: the Act on Work and Welfare (Social Assistance; WWB), the Act on Income Provision and Reintegration of Young Handicapped (WAJONG), and the Act on Sheltered Work Places (*Wet Sociale Werkvoorziening*).

This act devolves large parts of the social security system and of long-term care - care of the elderly, youth services, job retraining - to municipalities, at which level they are expected to be better tailored to local circumstances. The idea is that the local level is better equipped to strengthen a feeling of ownership, responsibility and capability because it is much closer to the people. This transfer of services to the municipal level is also motivated by budgetary concerns. Anticipating efficiency gains resulting from the transfer, the budget is on average reduced by 30 %.

The transfer of social assistance provisions and active labor market policies to the municipalities is not a recent phenomenon in the Netherlands, though; it started earlier, in 2004. The amount of funding for social assistance that municipalities should receive is based on an estimation of the expected number of social assistance claimants in the municipality. The formula uses the past number of recipients and, in larger municipalities, other demographic and regional labor market factors as well. Municipalities have to close the gap if they spend more, but they may keep money that is not used[5].

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1 Prepared for the Peer Review in Social Protection and Social Inclusion programme coordinated by ÖSB Consulting, the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) and Applica, and funded by the European Commission.

2 http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm

3 http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1044&newsId=1807&furtherNews=yes

4 https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/toespraken/2013/09/17/troonrede-2013

5 http://www.umdcipe.org/reports/JPAM_Paris_Labor_Activation_conference_summary.pdf

A very brief comparison with the Belgian system, Netherlands' closest neighbour could help to highlight some specificities of the Dutch system of social protection, more in particular its governance dimension. Whereas in both countries social protection is a mix of the Beveridge[6] and the Bismarck model, the latter is more dominant in the Belgian system. In fact, the only provisions that are clearly Beveridgean are the reimbursement of medical costs and, more in particular, social assistance system. In the Netherlands, this idea of universal coverage was central to social security from its beginnings.

In the Netherlands, the role of the social partners in the administration of social security has been reduced since the 1990's; their role is now largely restricted to collective bargaining and advising the government (de Beer et al., 2009) whereas the Belgian social partners just had to accept the government as a new partner in the supervisory bodies of the social security administration. Labour unions, the employers' organisations, and the health insurance funds (or 'mutual aid societies) still co-decide about various aspects of the system, depending on the sector. Another remarkable difference is that private-for-profit organisations play an increasing role in Dutch social security provisions, whereas they are virtually absent in the Belgian context (although trying to break in).

> Social security legislation still is predominantly a federal matter in Belgium, although certain sectors (such as family allowances) have been devolved to the regions. The local level however, never is a partner when it comes to social security provisions. It plays, however, a role (which is shared with the federal and regional levels) with respect the 'Right to Social Integration' (RSI)[7], which can be seen as the cornerstone and the very last social safety net of social protection. The federal authorities fix the level and conditions of RSI while the regional level – Public Centres for Social Welfare (PCSW) – is responsible for the administration of RSI. The financing of RSI is also shared between those levels.
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> This combination of a centrally – still mainly federal, but increasingly regional - steered social protection system, consisting of 'Bismarckian' social security schemes and of 'Beveridgean' social assistance schemes; an important role of 'social partners' (labour unions, employers' associations, mutual aid societies) in the social security schemes and of the local PCSW in the RMI thus results in a complex and (perhaps, therefore, fairly balanced) system of social protection.

Since the start of the crisis, most European governments have introduced major reforms on welfare, healthcare, education, and housing. Those reforms usually entailed budgetary cuts. But the wider discourse involves more than austerity concerns (Veldboer et al., 2015): social security is increasingly becoming conditional. As a result of new legislation introduced in 2012, Dutch local authorities may oblige unemployed people on social benefits to carry out unpaid work for 'the benefit of society'. These so-called 'something-for-something' programmes are considered as 'normal' and 'fair' by most politicians and by the general public (Veldheer et al., 2012).

The city of Rotterdam was an 'early innovator' with respect to those strategies. In a white paper from 2010 ('Rotterdam Werkt' – 'Rotterdam works') it is written that all citizens in Rotterdam have an obligation to participate in society up to the limits of their

[6] Welfare system named after William Beveridge – British economist and social reformer who in the 1940-s proposed that all people of working age should pay national insurance contribution to the state. In return benefits would be paid to unemployed, sick, retired, etc. It was argued that this system would provide a minimum standard of living.

[7] The RSI provides a minimum income for those whose income falls below a certain threshold and who are not able to raise that income by means of employment or by exercising their rights to allowances they are entitled to by virtue of Belgian or foreign social legislation. Entitlement is dependent upon a means test and upon the claimants' willingness to work – or, more in general, their willingness to be activated; towards the labour market in the first place, but more in general in terms of 'social activation'.

capabilities. The unemployed that are fit to enter the labour market must accept any paid job that is offered. Those who are too far from the labour market due to language, age or educational problems, are obliged to do volunteer work for at least twenty hours per week. Although according to policymakers, this volunteer work would consist of community work (in schools or sports clubs) or informal care, it sometimes has taken strange turns. The most famous case is that of a municipal street sweeper in Amsterdam who became redundant and unemployed; he was reassigned to his old job, but then as a 'social assistance volunteer' (Vranken, 2015[8]).

In response to those developments, many municipalities have set up 'Social Community Teams' (SCT, 'Sociale Wijkteams') often already before the afore-mentioned formal introduction of the 'participation society'. Although there is no blueprint for a SCT, they usually consist of a broad range of people from both the public and private sector and from various disciplines, such as social workers, family coaches, and people with expertise in healthcare, education or debt-relief. They jointly operate on a community level to provide and coordinate services to people who, albeit temporarily, need help.[9]

How acute is the issue across Europe: key trends and challenges

Although the Netherlands occupies a relatively good position in comparison with other Member States, poverty and social exclusion have increased. In 2014, 11.6 % of the households were at risk of poverty, which is an increase with 1.5 pp since 2012; in the same year, 16.5 % was in a situation of AROPE (people either at risk of poverty, or severely materially deprived, or living in a household with very low work intensity), which is low compared with 24.4 % of the population in the EU-28[10], but which means an increase with 1.5 pp compared to 2012.

The target for one of the seven 'flagships' of the Europe 2020-strategy is to reduce the number of people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion (AROPE) with 20 million by 2020. We are now over halfway and instead of a reduction, the gap with the target has actually increased to 27 million.

Although a series of measures have been initiated at the European level – such as the monitoring of Member States' economic and structural reforms through the European Semester and a number of actions designed to help meet the poverty target at the European level – the European Commission, in its stocktaking of the Europe 2020 strategy, acknowledges that there is no sign of rapid improvement. The European Commission is concerned that 'the situation is particularly aggravated in certain Member States and has been driven by increases in severe material deprivation and in the share of jobless households', reckoning that 'the crisis has demonstrated the need for effective social protection systems.'[11]

Moreover, poverty has spread among broader segments of the population. It no longer is limited to the traditional groups at risk. The economic crisis, austerity policies and the dismantling of the welfare state have threatened other population groups. Even an increasing share of the middle class is now at risk of becoming poor at some point in their lives, because of the significant fall in real household income per head between 2008 and 2014; which is in line with the fall in GDP per head and the fall in employment rates (Natali & Vanhercke, 2015: 14). According to the ESN (European Social Network),

[8] http://www.volkskrant.nl/vk/nl/2686/Binnenland/article/detail/3567202/2013/12/24/Vernederende-klusjes-voor-Amsterdammers-in-bijstand.dhtml and http://www.vn.nl/Archief/Samenleving/Artikel-Samenleving/De-doehetlekkerzelfmaatschappij.htm.

[9] For a map of SCTs, see: http://wijkteams.info/cms/wijkteams-in-NL/index.php?rubric=Wijkteams+in+NL

[10] http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/refreshTableAction.do?tab=table&plugin=1&pcode=t2020_50&language=en

[11] European Commission, Taking stock of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, COM (2014) 130 final, Brussels, 2014 (p.14)

in many European countries, 'the dominance of economic considerations at the expense of social considerations (for instance, in the National Reform Programmes (NRPs)) has played an important role. Austerity programmes have lacked social impact assessments integrated with fiscal sustainability assessments when agreeing conditional stability' (European Social Network, 2015: 8).

A brief overview of the situation in the European countries

Five EU Member States had a very high risk of AROPE in 2014, which for the EU-28 stood at 24.4 %: Romania (40.2 %), Bulgaria (40.1 %), Greece (36 %), Latvia (32.7 %) and Hungary (31.1 %). The Member States with the lowest percentages of persons AROPE were Sweden (16.9 %), Finland (17.3 %), the Netherlands (16.5 %) and the Czech Republic (14.8 %).

The AROPE remained fairly stable at EU-28 level between 2011 and 2014 (24.3; 24.7; 24.5; 24.4 %) but there are differences between the Member States. Over that period, the risk of poverty or social exclusion decreased by 2.8 pp in Poland, 3.3 pp in Croatia, 5,8 pp in Lithuania and even 7.4 pp in Latvia, but it increased by 2.5 pp in Spain, 3.1 pp in Portugal and 5.0 pp in Greece.[12]

To provide a context for discussions at the Peer Review meeting, we include in annex an overview of the Europe 2020 targets for people in poverty and social exclusion (and for the employment rate and early school leavers), and the information on the poverty and social exclusion situation that is available from the country reports of the Member States participating in the current Peer Review.[13]

Introduction of relevant concepts, definitions and the methodological background

Residual vs. institutional model of welfare state

The King's announcement in 2013 was not so much the start of a new type of society, but rather the culmination of the 'activating' welfare state; a welfare state in which citizenship is defined in terms of duties and responsibilities and no longer in terms of rights (Tonkens, 2009). The approaching end of the welfare state was already announced in the 1970's (Van Doorn and Schuyt, 1978) and Dutch citizens were urged to take more responsibility for themselves and for each other. Ever since, the term 'participation society' turned up in the debate (Tonkens, 2014).

Both concepts remain connected, in the sense that 'participation society' is defined in terms of Richard Titmuss' 'residual' model of the welfare state (Titmuss, 1958), a model in which government only intervenes where the market and the family fail. This means that the 'institutional' approach of the welfare state is abandoned, a model that sees the welfare state as a constitutive part of modern societies. This difference should be kept in mind, when trying to understand the position and the functioning of the Social Community Teams (SCT) against poverty – which rather fit into the 'residual' framework.

Poverty

In the Host Country report, poverty is defined as a complex phenomenon that is related to many other domains than mere income. From the remainder of the paragraph we deduce that poverty is seen as a situation that anyone could encounter, and that even high-income families and entrepreneurs may find themselves in poverty; it seems as if poverty is again reduced to income poverty. The definition used thus is a very broad one, closer to 'people in (temporary) need of social support or social care'. It does not

[12] http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/refreshTableAction.do?tab=table&plugin=1&pcode=t2020_50&language=en
[13] It is significant that some countries did not have a section on poverty or social protection in their country report.

take account of the above average poverty risk of some population groups, common to all Member States; such as (long-term) unemployed or single mothers.

In the literature on poverty and social exclusion, the supportive functions of **networks** are highlighted. Strengthening the networks of the poor would increase their opportunities to fully participate in relevant sectors of society, such as the labour market, education and health care. However, the 'inclusive' function of networks sometimes turns sour, and 'encloses' people in their present position. If they do not succeed in cutting off close ties with their former network, including their family of origin, their upward social mobility becomes fragile. Moreover, successful upward mobility depends very much on the presence of both an instrumental and an expressive dimension. If only the former (a job, education, a new relation) is present but the latter (integration into the new networks of the non-poor and emotional support) stays behind, social climbers are doomed to return to their original position.

Participation is another concept that has multiple meanings. The lowest rung of the participation ladder is when participation is restricted to just informing people. Another, more ambitious, use of participation is as a learning process, about the fabric of (local) society and about constraints and opportunities. Finally, maximal participation is about 'concerted decision', 'partnership', 'delegated powers', and 'citizenship control'. In short, it is about the promotion of active citizenship. Participants act as citizens when they work to reach an agreement on a project that shapes their 'common good'.

Consequently, five factors seem to explain the relevance of participation for different groups: (i) suitability (level of education, profession, age and group, sources, skills and knowledge), (ii) sense of involvement (identity, homogeneity, trust and citizenship), (iii) degree of organisation (type of organisation, its activities and its organisational structure), (iv) whether the citizens have been asked to participate (forms of participation, strategy and diversity) and (v) whether the citizens' participation is appreciated (listening to citizens, prioritisation of public opinion, feedback and training).[14]

Part A: Tackling poverty and social exclusion: overview of policy developments at the European level

A.1 The place of the issue on the European agenda

Since the topic of this Peer Review combines three strands – tackling poverty and other forms of social exclusion; the local level; and the governance approach – policy developments regarding those three strands need to be taken into account. In this section, we will discuss the first two items and pay special attention to the Social Investment Package (SIP); governance is the subject of the next section.

Poverty, social exclusion and social inclusion

From 1975 to 1994 the European Commission funded three **Poverty Programmes**. The first one (1975-1980) is important because it included a definition of poverty. According to the Council, being poor refers to persons, families and groups of persons whose resources (material, cultural and social) 'are so small as to exclude them from the minimum acceptable way of life of the Member State in which they live' (Council of the EU, 1975: Art. 1.2). The third anti-poverty programme (1989-1994), established the European Observatory on National Policies to Combat Social Exclusion (1991-1994), which produced four annual reports and a number of thematic reports. It had a

[14] For further information in this very relevant CLEAR model, see https://wcd.coe.int/com.instranet.InstraServlet?command=com.instranet.CmdBlobGet&InstranetImage=1160788&SecMode=1&DocId=1343278&Usage=2

considerable influence on (policy) thinking in this area (Vanhercke, 2012).[15] However, Community action was continually being contested in the absence of a legal basis.[16]

In 1999, the situation changed. The Treaty of Amsterdam established the eradication of social exclusion as an objective of Community social policy, and one year later a Social Protection Committee (SPC) was established to promote cooperation between Member States and with the Commission. In the same year, the Lisbon Strategy created the OMC: a mechanism to monitor and to coordinate. It contained the setting of objectives, poverty measurement on the basis of a set of indicators and benchmarks, guidelines for the Member States and national action plans against poverty (NAPIncl). In 2005, the Commission proposed to streamline the on-going processes into a more encompassing framework for the OMC: the 'social OMC' ('Open Method of Coordination for Social Protection and Social Inclusion'). Policy decisions remain at the national level, cooperation is voluntary, and the European Commission's function is limited. Because of this 'soft approach' to intergovernmental policy coordination, the OMC has been termed 'soft law'. The OMC is organised in cycles and Peer Reviews are part of them. The objectives of this 'social OMC' include social cohesion, gender equality, and equal opportunities for all through efficient social protection systems; effective and mutual interaction between the Lisbon objectives of growth, jobs and social cohesion; good governance and the involvement of stakeholders.[17]

An important, but somewhat undervalued, document regarding our subject is the 'Recommendation 2008/867/EC of 3 October 2008 on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market [Official Journal L 307 of 18.11.2008] confirmed by the European Parliament resolution of 6 May 2009, which stated that 'Member States should design and implement an integrated comprehensive strategy for the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market combining adequate income support, inclusive labour markets and access to quality services'.

The Lisbon Agenda was succeeded by the Europe 2020 strategy 'for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth'.

> The Lisbon Agenda largely failed to turn the EU into 'the world's most dynamic knowledge-based economy by 2010'. The main concern of Europe 2020 is to better focus efforts in order to boost Europe's competitiveness, productivity, growth potential and economic convergence'. Seven flagship initiatives have been selected 'to catalyse progress under each priority theme'. The seventh flagship initiative is the European Platform against Poverty to 'ensure social and territorial cohesion such that the benefits of growth and jobs are widely shared and people experiencing poverty and social exclusion are enabled to live in dignity and take an active part in society'.

One of the major innovations was a new common target in the fight against poverty and social exclusion: to reduce by 25 % the number of Europeans living below the national

[15] http://www.ose.be/files/publication/2012/Vanhercke_2012_BckgrndPaper_EC_12122012.pdf
[16] http://www.europarl.europa.eu/atyourservice/en/displayFtu.html?ftuId=FTU_5.10.9.html
[17] In his background paper, Bart Vanhercke (2012) identifies ten milestones that brought about the Social OMC: (1) the EU's Poverty Programme (1975-1994) in a context of constitutional asymmetry; (2) two symbolic Council Recommendations in 1992, providing a premature version of OMC; (3) Commission activism and Nordic enlargement during the nineties; (4) the politics of indicators and "technical" cooperation through the Administrative Commission; (5) the Court of Justice applies competition law to social protection and rules on "Poverty IV; (6) the Treaty of Amsterdam: social policy becomes a joint responsibility; (7) a strategic Communication in 1999 from a resigning European Commission; (8) a sense of urgency in a new – social-democratic – landscape; (9) the Lisbon rubberstamp; and (10) the development of the basic architecture (2001-2002). See http://www.ose.be/files/publication/2012/Vanhercke_2012_BckgrndPaper_EC_12122012.pdf

poverty line and to lift more than 20 million people out of poverty[18]. 2010 also was pronounced the 'European Year to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion' (EY 2010).[19] The final Declaration of the Council[20] represented a firm commitment of the EU and Member States to go beyond awareness-raising and give this European Year 'a strong political legacy that delivers concrete results'.

In December 2010, the Commission launched the 'European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion', which brings together policymakers, key stakeholders and people who have experienced poverty in an Annual Convention since 2011. The Platform is based on five areas for action:

- Delivering actions across the whole policy spectrum such as the labour market, minimum income support, health care, education, housing, and access to basic banking accounts.
- Better use of EU funds to support social inclusion. The Commission has proposed that 20 % of the ESF be earmarked for fighting poverty and social exclusion[21].
- Promoting robust evidence of what does and does not work in social policy innovations, before implementing them more widely.
- Working in partnership with civil society to support more effectively the implementation of social policy reforms. Participation of people experiencing poverty is now acknowledged as a catalyst for inclusion strategies.
- Enhanced policy coordination among EU countries has been established through the use of the Social OMC and the SPC (Social Protection Committee) in particular.

Faced with an increasing number of people in Europe at risk of poverty, the Commission adopted two further initiatives in 2013: the Social Investment Package (SIP)[22] and the 'social scoreboard'.

In the **SIP**, the Commission urges the Member States to prioritise social investment in people. This policy framework gives guidance to the Member States on issues such as simplifying and better targeting social systems, strengthening active inclusion and ensuring investment in human capital throughout the individual's life. Particular attention is given to investing in children in order to break the cycle of disadvantage. (A more detailed discussion follows).

The **social scoreboard** is a key component in the Commission's proposal of October 2013 to strengthen the social dimension in the governance of the Economic and Monetary Union. It is an analytical tool for detecting developments across the EU that require closer monitoring. It comprises five key indicators: unemployment; youth unemployment and the rate of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET); household disposable income; the 'at risk of poverty' rate; and income inequalities.[23] Since the 2014 European Semester exercise, the scoreboard has been included in the Joint Employment Report of the Annual Growth Survey, which sets out strategic policy priorities.[24] However, it has no binding policy implications. Social

[18] As mentioned earlier, we now have about 127 million people in poverty, seven million more.
[19] European Commission (2012), Report: Evaluation of the European Year 2010 for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=751&langId=en&moreDocuments=yes
[20] Council Declaration on The European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion: Working together to fight poverty in 2010 and beyond, 3053rd Employment, Social Policy Health and Consumer Affairs Council meeting, Brussels, 6 December 2010.
[21] http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/bibliotheque/briefing/2013/130660/LDM_BRI(2013)130660_REV1_EN.pdf
[22] Communication 'Towards Social Investment for Growth and Cohesion — Social Investment Package' of February 2013 (COM(2013) 0083).
[23] It thus complements the set of indicators in two other tools: the Employment Performance Monitor and the Social Protection Performance Monitor.
[24] In addition, the Alert Mechanism Report of the Macroeconomic Imbalance Procedure now contains some employment and social indicators (participation rate, long-term unemployment

protection and social inclusion still are a minor topic in the most recent Communication[25], where social protection and social cohesion are still seen in their relation to economic growth' and not as independent goals.

> 'Improving employment policy and social protection to activate, support and protect people and to ensure stronger social cohesion as key components of sustainable economic growth'.

More on the Social Investment Package

The Social Investment Package (SIP), published by the European Commission in 2013, intends to guide the Member States in using their social budgets more efficiently and effectively to ensure adequate and sustainable social welfare systems; seeks to strengthen people's capacities; focuses on integrated packages of benefits and services; stresses prevention and calls for investing in children and young people to increase their life opportunities.

Some of the intentions formulated in the SIP are close to the ones in the Peer Review's, although they may differ in their application. Social budgets are being used more efficiently, in the sense that with the same or a reduced budget, more activities have to be undertaken (and more needs covered). Answering the question(s) of effectiveness, adequateness and sustainability, is more difficult. Strengthening peoples capacities also will very much depend on the capacities that people already possess and these are very much dependent upon their economic and social position (such as social networks) and their cultural and social capital (education); they will be much lesser present in people living in poverty. Integration of packages and benefits is expected to being fostered by the transfer of their management to the local level and that is one of the main purposes of the Social Community Teams (SCT). Whether this devolving of responsibilities to the local level is more preventative is an important question; since most of the means for real prevention are not present at the local level but remain in the hands of national authorities – such as labour market policies, housing policies and educational policies – and, today, increasingly of European institutions such as the European Commission and the European Central Bank (focusing on budgetary concerns rather than on investment).

The EU seems to have missed the opportunity of the Social Investment Package to develop a true investment strategy; it is not a (constraining) 'Pact' (Natali & Vanhercke, 2015:22). It seems difficult to reconcile such a set of policy measures and instruments that promotes investments in human capital and enhancement of people's capacity to participate in both social and economic life, with austerity and fiscal consolidation. On the basis of an assessment of the introduction of a social investment approach in Member States, Bouget et al. (2015: 12) recently identified several ways in which 'a focus on fiscal consolidation and a failure to apply social impact assessments of policy changes have often led to negative effects for the development of social investment policies'. Fiscal consolidation has led to cuts in public and social expenditure, resulting in reductions in the availability and/or quality of programmes. It has led to a move away from successful universal social investment policies to more specific and conditional policies that target those most in need. These targeted policies are often less effective in addressing social challenges and lead to increased stigmatisation and inequality. Finally, fiscal consolidation has resulted in giving priority to passive short-term measures aimed at protecting people over the introduction of more enabling and active longer-term measures. The newly established European Social Policy Network (ESPN) has identified key areas where recent negative outcomes in relation to social investment are frequently highlighted by experts: social insurance and income support (e.g. BG, EE, EL, HU, IT, PT,

ratio, youth unemployment rate and at risk of poverty or social exclusion rate) and in the case of in-depth reviews these include a section on employment and social developments.

[25] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Central Bank and the Eurogroup - http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/csr2015/cr2015_comm_en.pdf

RO, SE, SI); active labour market policies (e.g. ES, IT, PT, RO, RS, SE, SK); child and family policies (e.g. ES, IT, PT, SI); education (e.g. HU, PT, SK); elder and long-term care (e.g. NL, RO, SE); and access to health care (e.g. LV, PT). The deterioration of unemployment and minimum income protection (in terms of both length and adequacy) is particularly worrisome, insofar as adequate income protection should be the basis on which more 'social investment-related' policies should be built (Bouget et al., 2015:14).

The local level

Already in 2003 the European Commission emphasised the importance of the local level in the development of inclusion policies. In March 2006, the local area was identified as the best level for combating inclusion. Regional players complain that the role of the regions is not visible enough in the Europe 2020 strategy (EurActiv 23/06/10). They are convinced that if local leaders are given the freedom and the responsibility to create tailor-made solutions for making the 'Europe 2020' growth strategy work, it will be more successful than its predecessor. This could best be achieved by using stricter earmarking methodologies to allow for a tailor-made approach by cities and regions. Improvements could include the simplification of funding procedures: finding a better balance between risks and audit and control, applying simplified cost models more quickly and more easily, and easing the administrative burden of Article 55, which governs the treatment of revenue-generating EU-funded projects. Multilevel governance and innovative approaches in programme management should go hand in hand.

At the EU-level (URBAN and LEADER Community Initiatives) and in many Member States, urban (and rural) development programmes emphasised capacity building and empowerment of local actors, using a multidimensional approach, partnership and community involvement. Local partnerships were involved in the definition of strategies and priorities, resource allocation, programme implementation and monitoring.

Those central ideas were confirmed in the Leipzig Charter – in full the 'Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities' (May 2007) – the reference document in European urban development coordination efforts. It emphasised both the importance of integrated urban development policy approaches (cities should be compact in urban form, complex in functions, cohesive in social terms) and the need for interventions specifically in deprived neighbourhoods.

The importance of and the need for territorialised interventions was theoretically grounded in the famous Barca report[26] from 2009, which states that 'a place-based strategy is the only policy model compatible with the EU's limited democratic legitimacy'. Since cities also harbour neighbourhoods that are characterised by forms of deprivation, place-based development strategies should include among its objectives the reduction of the persistent underutilisation of potential (inefficiency) and of persistent social exclusion. The Toledo Declaration of June 2010 also highlights the importance of integrated urban development and the urban dimension of cohesion policy. It expects that, after 2014, to be more focus on cities as key driver for delivery of Europe 2020 and more responsibilities to cities for programme delivery.

A.2 The governance approaches taken by the European countries in tackling poverty and social exclusion

To what extent are forms of governance contributing to a more effective promotion of social inclusion at the local level? The simple definition of governance refers to some

[26] http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/future/barca_en.htm. The four main conclusions of the report are: there is a strong case for allocating a large share of the EU budget to a 'place-based development strategy'; cohesion policy provides the appropriate basis for this strategy, but a comprehensive reform is needed; the reforms requires a renewed policy concept, a concentration of priorities, and a change of governance

form of co-operation between actors (public authorities, semi-public institutions, civil society, and for-profit organisations), levels (EU, national, regional, local), and domains (in practice: departments). It is most relevant to both the poverty and the urban strands, because of the multidimensional character of poverty. Moreover, the local level is perhaps more appropriate to tackle more complex problems than that of the national state; approaches inspired by the governance model often are easier to develop and to become successful at this local level. The major motivation for a decentralised approach is the recognition that the differences between cities (and other spatial units) are leading to specific and varying problems. The best level to tackle them is the one closest to these problems and therefore most familiar with them.

In reality, governance covers a wide range of forms: from ad hoc arrangements for one particular occasion (an 'issue network') to a long-term strategy for a set of agents (a 'policy community'). Sometimes local policies may even be identified as the product of an enduring urban 'regime'. Some of these 'real existing forms' of urban governance remain fairly close to traditional government; although sector-bound coalitions may be identified, there is no encompassing regime. Moreover, governance is not only about reforming institutions and finance; it is also about changing attitudes and a new political culture. One of these changes is the growing emphasis on active citizenship, a new localism, and the mobilisation of communities. It is expected that within governance frameworks individual citizens and communities will take more responsibility for their own welfare and the local policy processes that shape their lives and the places in which they live. Old models of representative democracy, associated with the era of powerful local government, are being replaced, albeit gradually, by more participative models of democratic engagement and accountability.

The context in which local plans and programmes have become a prominent feature of policy-making is characterised by the fiscal crisis of the (central) state, globalisation, the principle of subsidiarity, the opinion that the local level could be the best to tackle more complex problems through forms of local governance and that local differences are important to successfully implement policies. The fiscal crisis of the state has reduced the means of the central state, especially in matters of social policy. Important responsibilities – but often not the budgets – have been transferred to the local level and to 'welfare society' (private welfare organisations). This was especially so for initiatives targeting those hard to reach or outside the borders of legality. Secondly, it is implied that globalisation results in shifting power from the nation state not only to the higher level of supranational conglomerates but at the same time also to the 'lower' level of (global) cities and regions. The increased importance of the principle of subsidiarity in the EU legislation and procedures has strengthened this shift.

A comparative overview of relevant national/local policies in view of insufficient data currently is difficult within the frame of a Peer Review. We hope that the exchange during the Peer Review meeting could be the start of serious work on this subject. Useful is a typology that was elaborated in the FP7 project 'ImPRovE' (Oosterlynck, 2013); it could help us to systemise our discussion. It presents horizontal and vertical governance typologies in relation to five welfare models: the four 'traditional' ones, as developed by Esping-Andersen (1990) plus one covering Central and East-European countries. 'The idea is that the different governance arrangements correspond to a different degree of openness and closure towards the capacity of social innovation in the sector of welfare policies. (…) It is, in a sense, taken-for-granted that a more horizontal governing system per se guarantees spaces for new solutions, involving new actors, points of view, competences, tools. This assumption, however, needs to be proved and it remains

important to understand how different governance systems and processes can influence (or even determine) the capacity of innovation' (Oosterlynck, 2013: 32).[27]

The following table and the ensuing comments help to construct some hypotheses about the conditions and challenges, connected to the relationship between governance and welfare models aimed at stimulating potentially socially innovative practices.[28]

Table 1: A cross-tabulation of welfare and governance models, and territorial organisation

Welfare models	Geographical Zones	Territorial organisation	Governance	Relationships State / Third Sector	Capacity of Innovation
Universalistic	North of Europe	Local autonomy centrally framed	Managerial and participative mixed	Pervasive role of the State	High capacity of innovation
Corporatist-conservative	Continental Europe	Regionally /Centrally framed	Corporatist	Active subsidiarity	Later but substantial innovation
Liberal	Anglo-Saxon Countries	Centrally framed	Pluralist and corporative mixed	Market model and residual role of the State	Proactive deregulation
Familistic	South of Europe	Regionally framed	Populist and clientelistic mixed	Passive subsidiarity	Fragmented innovation
Transitional	Central and Eastern Europe	Transitional mixed	Highly diversified – difficult to define	Highly diversified – difficult to define	Highly diversified – difficult to define

Source: Oosterlynck, 2013: 32.

In the universalistic and state-centred Nordic countries, the processes of decentralisation and subsidiarisation have kept a strong role for the State, that not only defines the legal and policy framework, but also coordinates a managerial and participative governance system, and controls through an effective accountability system all actors' activities. In this context, municipalities have a large autonomy in organising welfare policies and the third sector has access to public financing, delivered to support their activities.

The liberal Anglo-Saxon countries mainly rely on the market also in relation to the capacity to innovate. A strong deregulation process has confined the State in an increasingly residual role as provider while it still keeps its persisting importance. State efforts, however, are targeted at creating a more favourable context for a plural competition and subsidise private welfare provider directly or indirectly. Innovation mainly looks like a spontaneous result of competition and entrepreneurial logic.

In the corporatist-conservative welfare countries, the State has to manage governance systems where categorical interests and/or territorial groups can create multiple vetoes. Overcoming these obstacles is a condition to promote reforms and innovation.

The familistic welfare countries in the South of Europe tend to be dominated by populist and clientelistic governance systems. This logic can direct public resources to the strongest and more institutionalised and privileged actors, curbing the rise of new

[27] https://www.google.be/search?q=.+ImPRovE+Discussion+Paper+No.+13/12&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&gws_rd=cr&ei=Re9OVonaA8LiO-WUh7AO

[28] An interesting series of recommendations on the involvement of social service providers at all stages of the innovation process is to be found in Social Services Europe's briefing paper 'Social Innovation: The Role of Social Service Providers' http://solidar.org/IMG/pdf/sse_-_social_innovation_the_role_of_social_service_providers.pdf

subjects and new kind of interventions. They are also characterised by passive subsidiarity in the relationship between the State and Third sector: distributing responsibilities with inadequate resources. In similar conditions, innovation can rise in interstitial spaces: autonomous actors and even informal groups could spontaneously fill what is left (the "blanks"), developing innovative experiences to satisfy new and unmet demands and social needs. The result is mainly fragmentation. It is possible to find highly interesting experimentations in neighbourhoods, but what can be problematic is to up-scale and sustain the experiments.

Eastern and Central European Countries are classified as transition welfare models. For a long period, they have been developing different assets and arrangements, influenced by European guidelines and other countries' models. Institutional competences are differently framed and governance models emerging highly diversified, thus the capacity to develop innovative experiences differs widely.' (Oosterlynck, 2013: 33)

A.3 Thematic links to earlier policy debate and research

It seems interesting to remind the reader of former Peer Reviews, which discussed one or more facets related to the SCT. At the same time, it shows that the concerns of the SCT have been present for several years.[29]

Most recently a Belgian pilot project to set up local 'consultation platforms' on child poverty has been reviewed (*Peer Review Belgium, 13-14.01.2015*). The platforms engage a wide range of local actors – from e.g. anti-poverty associations to child daycare centres, schools, sports clubs and student support centres. Some 57 Public Centres for Social Welfare, which are based in each municipality and are key-actors in local anti-poverty action, were involved in the launch of the platforms, either as initiators or as participants.

The Peer Review in Italy *(Italy, 11-12.12.2014)* examined innovative practices with marginalised families at risk of having their children taken into care. Their Programme of *Intervention to Prevent Institutionalisation* was reviewed; it is a blend of evidence-based research and action. It focuses on families that face multiple, complex difficulties. It gathers the views of parents, children and concerned professionals; then, placing the child at the centre, it designs a plan to help the family and sets up an interdisciplinary team to implement it. An online system allows the workings of the plan to be monitored modified, if need be.

Some earlier Peer Reviews also combined the governance perspective with a focus on the local level. *The City Strategy (Peer Review UK, 06-07. 07. 2009)* aimed to improve support to the jobless, in the most disadvantaged communities across the UK, through a bottom-up approach that devolves more decision and funding powers to the local level. Other key elements were 'how best to combine the work of government agencies, local government agencies, the private sector and voluntary associations in a concerted partnership and to test whether local stakeholders can deliver more by combining their efforts behind shared priorities alongside more freedom to innovate' and 'ensuring that local employment and skills provision services are tailored to the needs of both local employers and residents'.

Part B: Assessment of the policy under review

B.1 Short assessment of the host country policy

There are yet no evaluations of the Participation Act available, which only has been implemented on 1 January 2015, nor on the effectiveness of SCTs that are based on

[29] http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1024&furtherNews=yes&limit=no

large evidence (quantitative and concrete results and outcomes). The municipalities still are going through a transformation phase, focused on implementation and reorganisation.

> 'Broad consultation with relevant stakeholders, such as municipalities, civil society organisations, and research institutes indicated that quantitative and concrete results and outcomes are not yet available. Moreover, partners indicate that quantitative results may never be fully generalisable nor scientifically sound since many variables influence possible outcomes.' (Host Country Paper: s.p.).

However, many concerns were expressed during the drafting of the Act, especially regarding the sharp decrease in budgets for income support and re-integration. Divosa[30] (2014) questioned the scope municipalities have to make good policies, the availability of sufficient jobs and the lack of funds (Divosa, 2014). The participation budget in particular decreased from 1.9 billion EUR in 2010 to 689 million EUR in 2015, a reduction of 65 %. This is partly compensated by the larger budgets municipalities have in the broader social domain (also including care); they also are expected to make policies more cost-effective. The Netherlands Court of Audits (Rekenkamer) and the Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis (CPB) share this concern about reduced budgets (Becker & Withagen, 2015).

The following assessment is mainly based on the information in the Host Country report and on an evaluation of the first initiatives (Oude Vrielink et al., 2014) as well as on information from the "Transition Committee Social Domain" analysing 17 practical cases[31], mostly confirming but also specifying those evaluations. The information in the report of Oude Vrielink et al. is based on qualitative interviews with collaborators in ten SCTs in Enschede, Zaandam and Leeuwarden.[32] Those cities already embarked on experiments with Social Community Teams several years before the official decentralisation (Oude Vrielink et al., 2014: 40). Consequently, the results, constraints and challenges are as perceived by the 'relevant stakeholders', such as municipalities, civil society organisations, and research institutes (Host country report and Oude Vrielink et al., 2014).

Results as perceived by 'relevant stakeholders'

- The **integrated approach**. Poverty and debt-related problems are being signalled earlier, as a diverse team of professionals discusses questions from different life-domains.

> Another plus is that a different involvement of policy makers and political leaders is generated. Until recently case consultation was the exclusive domain of professionals; now administration officials and managers are also involved, apart from professionals. In several municipalities a so-called 'scaling-up model' has been developed or 'mediators' have been appointed with the authority to question ingrained practices and to create space for custom-made solutions. In other municipalities, the middle management of the policy domains 'Social development' and 'Work and income' are made co-responsible to offer such customisation. They illustrate a new attitude where policy makers and practitioners together search for the optimal organisational form and the workable freedom of action for professionals. (Transitiecommissie Sociaal Domein, 2015: 47)

[30] DIVOSA is the Dutch national association of managers with municipal services in the fields of work, participation, income, social welfare and social inclusion. See: Divosa (2014), Factsheet welfare and participation budget 2013, (Monitor factsheet Bijstands- en participatiebudget 2013) 8 July 2014. http://www.divosa.nl/sites/default/files/130708_Divosamonitor_Factsheet_Budgetten_2013.pdf

[31] http://www.transitiecommissiesociaaldomein.nl/actueel/nieuws/2015/september/11/casusboekje-sociale-wijkteams

[32] Together with Utrecht and Eindhoven, the so-called 'leading cities' ('koplopersteden'), which have defined the framework conditions that are required for SCTs to be successful.

- **Financial problems** come to the surface even when another 'problem' determined the initial contact.

  > Indebtedness touches all facets of a citizen's existence. That is also reflected in the daily practice of the social teams. Our assessment is that, in about 80 % of cases, financial problems of clients determine whether they are or are not able to find a solution. It is therefore necessary to anchor knowledge of debt restructuring and (special) assistance within the social team and within its collaboration within the domain 'Work and income'. 'Solutions' should be avoided which lead to unreasonable high social costs, such as when someone remains months longer in social care because of a limited rent debt, leading to a cost many times higher than the rent debt itself. When providing what is needed at lower cost, the knife cuts both ways.

- A broader and faster outreach to previously '**invisible poor'**. Civil society organisations operate close to the people, conduct house visits and/or work at places visited by the target group (like food banks).
- SCTs are more **accessible** than 'official governmental institutions'.
- The engagement of '**experts by experience'** enables SCTs to better relate, signal and find sustainable solutions to poverty and reflect upon their strategies.
- A **broader supply of services and solutions** is possible through cooperation with diverse local partners (including local retailers).
- One **central access point** avoids that clients have to deal with multiple institutions, experts and forms. It facilitates the development of an integrated plan for one person or family, coordinated by one case manager.
- SCTs are able to **empower** the individual to finding sustainable solutions, which could lead to less dependency on institutional support.
- A **higher take-up** of social benefits due to greater reach of the target group.

Constraints and challenges encountered by the municipalities

Some challenges and constraints will be taken up again under 'Some key issues for debate at the Peer Review meeting' (see later).

- The SCTs need to find the **right balance** between applying an integrated approach and developing tailor-made solutions, so as to address specific questions. Some SCTs are entitled to provide income support themselves where others are only allowed to assist in applying for that support. Some are in direct contact with employment agencies; others are instructed to direct their clients to the regular social service.

  > In the case histories we regularly encounter blockages in the form of experienced rules or 'truths ', which in reality not always are that 'hard'. In some teams, there is a lack of clarity or ignorance about where solutions within their own sphere of influence are and what has to be considered as part of legislation and regulations. That is the case, for example, with privacy restrictions and with the use of special assistance and debt counseling. There is fear for taking 'the wrong decision', which may affect the assessment of inspections or of the accountant. Those (self) imposed restrictions sometimes pevail over the available policy freedom; rules offer more certainty than improvisation. But the transformation is an invitation to the professional to accrue the own sphere of influence: not to do what is possible, but to make possible what is necessary. (Transitiecommissie Sociaal Domein, 2015: 47-48).

- The easy way is to strive for direct output, through curative interventions, even when sustainable outcomes are required. This focus on ad hoc needs leaves not enough time for outreach, a **proactive approach, and prevention**. However, working more preventively is difficult as most cases come to the surface when poverty already plays a large or long-term role.
- Diverse and broad **expertise** is needed to better signal, understand and analyse the problems of (people experiencing) poverty. To arrive at solutions, **knowledge** about rules, regulations, services and partners at the municipal level is required; not the

least in the field of financial problems and poverty. The development of those competences implies some equilibrium between **generalists** and **specialists**.

> The transformation is based on knowledge, broad cooperation and, above all, perseverance and guts. To search for a new way of working with new colleagues, near and with the people, in an environment that is under a (political) magnifying glass often is a heavy task for social teams. They need to fight against old systems, strange logics, built-in patterns, and fixed protocols. (Transitiecommissie Sociaal Domein, 2015: 47)
>
> Invest in professionalisation. To realise what is needed, requires a different kind of professionalism. Gains are to be won, not only from knowledge-building and competency training but also from investing in the organisation of the development and learning system of the teams, such as from intervision and peerlearning, from reflective learning from each other practice, from successes and obstacles, from what is (un)changeable and (im)possible; and from determining, within the team, which standards go with it. (Transitiecommissie Sociaal Domein, 2015: 48)

- How to reach the '**invisible poor'** (or the very visible, but very marginalised poor)? The importance of outreaching and the participation of 'experience experts in poverty'.
- The question of **privacy**. This is a complex and, in practice, inconvenient matter for an 'integral' professional in a social community team, for the cooperation with and between health care providers, and in the administrative processes. There are varying perceptions about what can and what is allowed. First and foremost professionals (within a social team or not) have to exchange information between them so as to assist the client. And everyone is bound by professional standards. Whether privacy-sensitive information also is well secured in the administrative systems within the different organisations is a more difficult problem. More attention and clear agreements between are indispensable.
- What about the relationship between the **SCT and the local politics**? The effectiveness of SCTs depends highly on the goal that local politics assign to the teams. Some experience a lack of (long-term) local political motivation, commitment or patience to reorganise or invest (financially). Finding the right balance and implementing a vision takes time. In some municipalities a tendency to risk avoidance can lead to reluctance to form a SCT, to delegate decision-making or to transfer autonomy over budgets. Sometimes the lack of faith in non-conventional partners, fear of extralegal effectuation or ideas on the role government can hamper the SCT from fulfilling its aspirations. Should SCTs be independent from or part of the municipal structure? To what extent should SCTs be involved in decision-making and formulation of policy?
- Decentralisations are intended to change the **relationship between citizen and government**. Previously, claims were concrete and legally enforceable. The new legislation is much more broadly formulated. This new situation creates a kind of dialogue relationship, in which citizens themselves can make their choices in care and support. But from a legal point of view, this leads to a grey area in which concepts such as 'kitchen table talks' ('keukentafelgesprekken)', 'own strength' and 'own responsibility' dominate the discours. That creates fear and skepticism in care seekers. After all, dialogue suggests a equivalent relationship, but in the end the municipality (or a social community team) determines whihch care and support is needed and will be given. (Transitiecommissie Sociaal Domein, 2015: 49)
- But it also leads to **uncertainty in the social community team**. In the end, there is no longer the central indication and directive to fall back on. If the citizen does not get what he wants, then the collaborator of the team now has to explain the decision and to answer for it; sometimes literally at the same kitchen table. That is a different role than the one they used to have and it sometimes makes them feel uncertain. When are you doing your job well and when not? A clear and unambiguous standard

setting is missing here; that is what customisation is about. (Transitiecommissie Sociaal Domein, 2015: 49)

- **Lack of macro-level influence**. Strong factors in the production of poverty – such as unemployment, low work intensity, low income, housing etc. – are beyond the reach of the SCTs. Should they function as a temporary instrument or be part of a larger (permanent) social security structure? The introduction of SCT does not lead automatically to better interventions; bureaucracy and standardisation were meant to provide solutions to frequent errors or inefficient practices.

B.2 Assessment of the policy in relation to the priorities of the Europe 2020 Strategy and the Social Investment Package

Table 2: Comparative table of priorities of SCT in relation to SIP

SIP	SCT
To use the MS's social budgets more efficiently and effectively to ensure adequate and sustainable social welfare systems	Avoid complexity, rigidity of existing system of social security – resulting in undesired consequences (delays in delivery or payment of services, non-take up of benefits, unfamiliarity with possibilities or exclusion of certain groups. Offer tailor-made solutions, while dealing with a package of reforms as well as budget-cuts – directly or indirectly affecting their own work.
To strengthen people's capacities	Top-down institutionalised support systems may increase user dependency. 'Social Community Teams Empowering People out of Poverty': 'The overall goal is to enable and empower people to find their own solutions, stimulate individual (…) power'.
Integrated packages of benefits and services	Municipalities are expected to apply an integrated approach. SCT consist of a broad range of people from various disciplines and the parties involved – either in a team or as a network of cooperative partners - are from both public and private – such as civil society organisations.
Stresses prevention	'Signalling of problems', early prevention. Not in the sense of structural prevention.
Investing in children and young people to increase their life opportunities	Children are only mentioned in relation to social security. Youth care and youth are under the 'social jurisdiction' of the municipalities.

Table 3: Comparative table of priorities of SCT in relation to Europe 2020 and the Platform

Europe 2020 & Platform	SCT
Inclusive growth	General economic policies etc. beyond reach of local initiatives
Reduction of number of people in poverty (7th Flagship Initiative)	Structural features of labour market, social protection, health care, education beyond reach of local initiatives
Platform	
Delivering actions across the whole policy spectrum such as the labour market, minimum income support, health care, education, housing, and access to basic banking accounts.	Most of these domains are covered, partly within the context that is defined by national government, partly under own responsibility.
Better use of EU funds to support social inclusion. The Commission has proposed that 20 % of the ESF be earmarked for fighting poverty and social	Which is the role of SCT in this respect? Are they in a position to introduce ESF-funded projects?

exclusion.	
Promoting robust evidence of what does and does not work in social policy innovations, before implementing them more widely.	Question: enough time to profit from the experiences of the early introducers? Permanent feedback during the life of the SCT?
Working in partnership with civil society to support more effectively the implementation of social policy reforms. Including: participation of people experiencing poverty.	Partnership with civil society is core activity. Participation of people experiencing poverty is being introduced.
Enhanced policy coordination among EU countries has been established through the use of the Social OMC and the SPC (Social Protection Committee) in particular.	Not relevant

Part C: Conclusions and some key issues for debate at the Peer Review meeting

Conclusions

Some of the motives for launching the SCTs have been brought forward in the public debate; others have been kept in the background. It is important to take them all into account into a 360° evaluation of the efficiency and efficacy of this initiative to be realised. The official reasons for devolving provisions regarding social protection and long-term care to the local level is that they will be better tailored to local circumstances, and that the local level is better equipped to install a feeling of ownership, responsibility and capability in the clientele. Less explicitly formulated are budgetary concerns – reducing the financial burden that rests on the state by a shift from professionals to volunteers – but also an ideological preference for a 'residual' welfare state over the former 'institutional' one.

SCTs will contribute to the citizen's welfare if a number of conditions are fulfilled. Some of them have already been discussed and others will be elaborated in the next section.

Some key issues for debate at the Peer Review meeting

During the debate, it is important to keep in mind the level and characteristics of social exclusion and poverty (policies) in the Member State. What are the main types of social exclusion and which type prevails? Is there strong ethnic discrimination, or other forms of social stigma? What are the main production lines of poverty and other forms of social exclusion? Which factors do most directly lead to poverty and how do existing policy measures slow down or increase the speed at which this happens? Has the country developed a coherent anti-poverty strategy?

How important is activation and how is it defined and applied? Is it rather 'disciplining' or 'emancipatory'? Is the latter more concerned with personal empowerment and social emancipation of the target groups? How relevant is the concept of 'active inclusion' in this context?

How important is gender in the generation of social exclusion and in the promotion of social exclusion? Single mothers in particular run an increased risk to become poor or to suffer from other forms of social exclusion. Which role are women in general expected to play in inclusion policies? How to avoid that most of the burden shifts again to women when social care is delegated to supporting networks and to voluntary work, as it used to be in former times? Does their participation have a significant impact on how the local initiatives are run?

> 'The big issue to be solved in the near future is on whose shoulders the extra burden of informal care and volunteering will come to rest. On young shoulders or old shoulders? The

shoulders of working people or non-employed, men or women, the strongest shoulders or shoulders that are ready to cave in? Will women be the ones to carry the heavier load? (…) Still the fact remains that overburdening lies in wait in and because of the participation society. Particularly for those families that have to deal with the burdens of employment and care. All the more reason to pose the question: how are men and women in our participation society going to share the load of paid employment, child care, informal care, volunteering, and – scarce – leisure activities, in a fair and equal way?'[33]

- The respective role of 'structural' prevention and **prevention** as 'early intervention' should clearly be identified. The transfer of the responsibility over social provisions to the local level will bring them closer to the clients and target groups and this certainly will facilitate early intervention. However, this will not necessarily be the case for the structural forms of prevention. Indeed, structural intervention refers to provisions with respect to economic policies, labour market policies, social protection, health provisions and education – and most of these are still decided at the national level.

  Question: Is it possible to define some equilibrium between the role of the national and the local level when it comes to ascribing preventative tasks – this concerns as well public authorities as civil society organisations? Which national contextual variables should be taken into account (see the typology in this discussion paper)? Focusing on the individual level: emerging problems sometimes disappear almost spontaneously. Does that also mean that there is no reason to intervene preventively? Are there limits to the imposing of 'interfering care' ('bemoeizorg' in Dutch), even if things threaten to go wrong?

- '**Integrated work'** is a valid response to overspecialisation and compartmentalisation. But specialisation is not necessarily ineffective or inefficient. On the contrary, in many cases specialisation provides us with knowledge and experience. Different cities seem to come back on an earlier decision to work only with generalists, which does not mean that the overall effects of integral work are not positive (Larsen, Lubbe and de Boer, 2014:35).

  Question: How can the expertise within SCTs be developed and structured to better signal, understand and analyse a situation of poverty? What is needed for the generalists and specialists to work effectively? What expertise and knowledge should a 'generalist' possess? Which specialists should be part of the SCT and/or the consulting network? How do 'experienced experts on poverty' and poverty associations fit into this approach? How to find the right balance between an integrated approach and tailor-made solutions?

- To rely only on the personal power of citizens and on the strengthening of their **network** sometimes seems too optimistic. It is of course wise at a request for help, to investigate what someone can still do and what the person really needs and not directly to investigate his entitlements – as is the idea behind the so-called 'keukentafelgesprekken' (kitchen tables talks)[34]. However, many clients are members of multiple problem families and those are characterised by a lack of power ('poor people have poor networks'). Increased mobility has further ensured that families live scattered over large areas, which renders mutual support difficult to realise. It also is one of the characteristics of people with problems that they have no network, at least no network with enough 'weak ties'. The number of people that want to use volunteer, in addition, has remained stable for years and is difficult to steer. The possibility to 'empower' people and to engage their networks thus is limited.

[33] https://www.movisie.com/news/participation-society-are-women-carry-burden

[34] The idea is that almost everybody has a network that should be mobilised first. The word comes from *Buurtzorg*, the new long-term care organisation that has spearheaded decentralisation in the long-term care sector.

Question: Given that a large part of the target population is lacking the minimum of economic, social and cultural capital, how to develop (long) 'trajectories of empowerment'. How to strengthen their networks, so that they become 'supporting networks' without cutting off their strong ties, that is the ties with their family, friends and neighbours? How to combine instrumental support (jobs, education, housing, income) and expressive support (emotional support and integration into new networks)?

- When comparing and discussing developments in the peer group countries, different visions on the scope and implications regarding the degree of **centralisation or decentralisation** could be expected. It is a choice between a framework in which local bodies become bearers of the guiding principles of an autonomous plan, and participants in the substantive and operative development of this strategic process through trials and innovation in their practices. In order to be successful, the higher levels (central government) should provide favourable structural conditions for dimensions, which are out of reach for the local SCTs – such as income distribution, labour market, housing, and health care. The policy's principal objectives could need written operationalisation and the role the different agents should play in the process needs to be better clarified. They should contribute to the development of a model of intervention concerning fighting exclusion, the need to innovate, the guiding principles in actions for social inclusion, and the fundamental importance of local bodies[35].

  Question: Which are the main obstacles and problems when trying to transfer responsibilities from the central to the local level, such as the lack of budgetary resources to cover liabilities that have been delegated? How powerful are the local level and civil society? How strong are principles of local self-determination and subsidiarity embedded in the country's political culture? How strong is civil society (NGOs) and, in particular, what is the role of 'welfare society' – meaning NGOs as providers of services? Should SCTs function as a temporary instrument or be part of a larger (permanent) social security structure?

- The development of **partnerships and synergies at the local level**, the activation of local stakeholders, the empowerment of local institutions, and the development of integrated local strategies are very useful. On the basis of evidence-based practices, local actors will be keen to participate in local policies. This could lead to the development of a shared local inclusion policy and to local actors taking active responsibility for achieving concrete results in their area. The idea is also to include the target population(s). Insufficient cooperation among (local) partners has often obstructed the combating of situations of social exclusion. For this reason, partnerships between local stakeholders are the backbone of any local strategy; local partners can achieve more together than separately, especially with regard to social inclusion. Thanks to its strategy of involving stakeholders from different levels, encouraging cooperation among local partners, and involving the hard-to-help directly in projects, a programme could have a positive impact on establishing a culture of partnership and dialogue at the local level.

  Question: What is the ideal relationship between the SCT and the government/local politics? Should SCTs be independent from or part of the municipal structure? To what extent should SCTs be involved in decision-making and formulation of policy? In which type of mandate and legal framework can they most effectively tackle poverty? How

[35] In the Netherlands, most government policy has already been decentralised to the municipal level, so the present situation is just a continuation of an existing trend (see Van Berkel, 2006). The problem is that, due to local specificities, universalistic policies can be differently implemented leading to different outcomes. So there always is a trade-off between equality of outcome and localisation. Centralised provision can also lead to differences in outcome due to lack of information about the local situation.

to involve all relevant stakeholders in such partnerships? How to be sure that they are well embedded within the local community? How to guarantee that they have enough expertise? How to regulate unequal power relations between the partners? How to avoid the risk of 'overlapping partnerships' that could lead to 'partnership fatigue', (especially if the actors are involved in several parallel programmes)? How to avoid a 'middle-class bias' in the selection of partners and of participants? Defining and implementing specific local targets requires enough local capacity both for the formulation and the implementation of policies; are these equally present in all areas (neighbourhoods, municipalities)?

Statement. There is an urgent need to develop and to apply tools for sound reporting, monitoring and evaluation; also for a flexible management of emerging problems during implementation at the local level. This requires a rigorous data collection and production system, that not only relies on quantitative indicators, but that includes individual biographies – i.e. the 'human stories' of disadvantaged people in disadvantaged places. Success stories could then be disseminated through a website, serving to encourage social workers and local authorities to seek out similar solutions for the integration of other excluded families.

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Annex 1 – Overview of Europe 2020 Targets[36]

The national targets as set out in the National Reform Programmes (NRP) in April 2015.

*Countries that have expressed their national target in relation to an indicator different than the EU headline target indicator

Member States targets	Employment rate (in %)	Early school leaving in %	Reduction of population at risk of poverty or social exclusion (in number of persons)
EU headline target	**75**	**<10**	**20,000,000**
AT	77-78	9.5	235,000
BE	73.2	9.5	380,000
BG	76	11	260,000
CY	75-77	10	27,000
CZ	75	5.5	Maintaining the number of persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion at the level of 2008, with efforts to reduce it by 30,000*
DE	77	<10	Reducing the number of long-term unemployed by 320,000 compared to 2008*
DK	80	<10	Reducing the number of persons in households with low work intensity by 22,000 compared to 2008*
EE	76	9.5	Reducing the at risk of poverty rate to 15 %*
EL	70	9.7	450,000
ES	74	15 (school dropouts)	1,400,000-1,500,000
FI	78	8	Reducing to 770,000 the number of persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion

Member States targets	Employment rate (in %)	Early school leaving in %	Reduction of population at risk of poverty or social exclusion (in number of persons)
FR	7	9.5	1,900,000
HR	62.9	4	Reducing to 1,220,000 the number of persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion (equivalent to a reduction by 150,000 persons)
HU	75	10	450,000
IE	69-71	8	Reducing by a minimum of 200,000 the population in combined poverty (consistent poverty, at-risk-of-poverty or basic deprivation)*
IT	67-69	16	2,200,000
LT	72.8	<9	Reducing to 814,000 the number of persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion
LU	73	<10	6,000

[36] http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/csr2015/2020-targets-overview-table_en.pdf

LV	73	10	121,000 (at risk of poverty after social transfers and/or living in households with very low work intensity)*
MT	70	10	6,560
NL	80	<8	Reducing by 100,000 the number of people (aged 0-64) living in households with very low work intensity*
PL	71	4.5	1,500,000
PT	75	10	200,000
RO	70	11.3	580,000
SE	>80	<10	Reducing to well under 14 % the number of people aged 20-64 who are not in the labour force (except full-time students), long-term unemployed or on long-term sick leave*
SI	75	5	40,000
SK	72	6	170,000
UK	None	None	None

Annex 2: On the poverty and social exclusion situation in the Peer Review countries[37]

Belgium

An increasing risk of poverty is due to a wide range of mutually reinforcing drivers like low work-intensity, low participation in care and low educational achievement levels. The impact of low work-intensity on child poverty in Belgium is considerable. The share of people living in households with very low work-intensity has increased continuously since 2008 and exceeds the EU average, while about three quarters of minors living in very low work-intensity households are at risk of poverty. People with a migrant background are at disproportionate risk of poverty and social exclusion. The proportion of older people who are at risk of poverty has fallen but is still above the EU average and much higher than in neighbouring countries.

Czech Republic

Poverty and social exclusion remain among the lowest in the EU but the number of socially excluded localities inhabited mainly by Roma has increased in recent years, as has the risk of housing exclusion and the number of homeless people. There are two major challenges related to the low labour market participation of certain groups. Firstly, poorly functioning active labour market policies do not ensure adequate transitions from unemployment to employment. Secondly, there are barriers to higher female labour-market participation.

Denmark

The labour market disadvantage of non-EU nationals could stem from educational disadvantage, but ethnic discrimination may also be a contributing factor. Their poor labour market outcome remains a considerable loss of human capital, and a social inclusion challenge. People with disabilities and reduced work capacity are more often at the margins of the labour market. Young people are increasingly over-represented among social benefit recipients.

The number of people who are at-risk-of-poverty has decreased, while the overall number of people living in at-risk-of-poverty and social exclusion has remained quite stable. Despite the drop in unemployment since 2011-12, the number of people living in low work-intensity households increased to 522,000 in 2013. This underlines the importance of better inclusion of people at the furthest margins of the labour market in order to prevent long–term consequences for social inclusion and cohesion.

The basic pension ensures that the risk of poverty rate for aged 65 and older is lower than for the rest of the population. Current income inequalities among pensioners are small, but they are likely to increase considerably in the future. The gender pension gap is currently no larger than the gender pay gap. The future gender pension gap is expected to be considerably larger as income from the second and the third pillars of the pension system becomes more important.

Finland

The high gender pay gap and career breaks related to childcare responsibilities have a negative impact on retirement incomes of older women which leads to an at-risk of poverty rate for women aged 65+ of twice that of older men.

There are deep-rooted socioeconomic inequalities when it comes to disability, health and life expectancy that also affect labour market participation. The share of Finns in the

[37] http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/making-it-happen/country-specific-recommendations/index_en.htm

bottom-income quintile reporting severe limitations in daily activities is four times higher than in the top quintile, while in the EU on average it is less than two times higher. Recently, health inequalities have even grown. This means that people are not in the same position to prolong their careers, which can deepen inequalities in old age.

Ireland

Social protection has helped to alleviate the rise in poverty that followed the crisis. Ireland is one of the countries where net social expenditure increased the most (as a share of the aggregate level of economic activity) following the 2007 crisis. As a result, the country did not experience the rise in inequality some other Member States did. Nevertheless, deprivation rates have continued to rise in the year to 2013, driven by sharp rises in rural areas. This suggests that improving labour market conditions in Dublin and other urban areas have yet to spread to the rest of the country. The risk of social exclusion is heightened by the high proportion of people living in households with low work intensity, which remains the highest in the EU.

Social transfers sheltered the most vulnerable and reduced poverty rates throughout the crisis. In spite of this and an improving labour market situation, significant challenges remain. The high proportion of people living in households with low work intensity generates serious social challenges. Its increase has been attributed to a combination of factors, such as the increase in unemployment, changes in household structure and other factors – for instance, having a disability or having caring responsibilities. An important feature of Ireland's jobless households is the high rate of children living in jobless households. Low work intensity is particularly severe among single adult households with children, and the proportion of children living in households with low work intensity is nearly three times the EU average. This increases the risk of social exclusion of children, particularly those in lone-parent households. There is a wide range of household joblessness in need of tailor-made measures going beyond labour market activation interventions.

Absolute poverty, including amongst children, is increasing. The severe material deprivation rate indicates a very high rate for low work intensity households.

Latvia

Latvia's key challenges include a weak social security system and a shrinking labour force. Low coverage and adequacy of unemployment and social assistance benefits prevents effective action on reducing poverty, social exclusion risks and the high degree of inequality. Social assistance reforms are still at an early stage. Activation efforts for social assistance beneficiaries remain limited and coverage of active labour market measures is too low. Ensuring sustainable labour market integration of young people, notably those with low levels of education and no work experience, remains a challenge.

Social expenditure has little impact on poverty reduction due to overall low levels of spending and the dominance of insurance-based benefits.

In 2014, around 32.7 % of Latvia's population were at risk of poverty or social exclusion and income inequality remains among the highest in the EU. Single working parents are exposed to a high poverty risk. Poverty rates for young adolescents and elderly show worrying trends. The growing proportion of recipients of the low minimum pension requires particular attention. The elderly are also the most exposed to the risk of unmet medical care needs. The high level of housing deprivation is also a cause for concern. The depth of poverty is also high, thus underlining the need for an effective social assistance. The unemployment and social assistance benefits are characterised by poor benefit adequacy and coverage.

The recent State Audit report identified serious flaws in the social assistance system and its governance. The social assistance reforms have not advanced since the country specific recommendation was made in 2011, although a significant amount of analytical and planning work has been undertaken. In 2014, the authorities presented plans to increase the minimum income level and revise its equivalence scales from 2017. It is also planned to increase minimum unemployment benefits and pensions, increase means-testing for state social benefits and reduce labour taxes for low wage earners. The planned changes would significantly increase several benefits, but are not backed by budgetary plans. While the 2015 budget provides increases in social protection expenditure, no additional funding was allocated for social assistance.

Lithuania

Despite the continuous improvement of the economic situation, inequality and poverty reduction remain major challenges. In spite of a fall since the crisis, the share of the population at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion remained above 30 % in 2013. The high share of severely materially deprived people is of particular concern, as well as the deterioration of the at-risk-of-poverty rate. Moreover, there is a high risk of poverty and social exclusion for persons with disabilities.

Some measures were taken to reduce poverty, but they do seem to be insufficient to tackle the rising share of the population at-risk-of-poverty. As a result of the rise in the minimum monthly wage and the restoration of unemployment benefits to pre-crisis level, income for low income earners has increased slightly. The Action Plan for Enhancing Social Inclusion in 2014-20 was a first positive step, but it does not identify the main target groups or fix a budget. It is therefore unclear how the targets will be achieved.

Reforms have to a large extent focused on fighting abuse, rather than improving coverage and adequacy. A progressive reduction of social benefits for long-term beneficiaries of working age has been introduced. More responsibility and autonomy has been given to municipalities in the provision of cash social assistance. The reform resulted in a significant fall in social benefits expenditure and in the number of recipients, by 25 % in the first quarter 2014 compared to the year before. This could be due to a better targeting of beneficiaries, or to the improved economic situation of those most in need. This fall could however also be due to a more restricted access to social assistance, given that, from 2015, municipalities can reinvest the savings into other municipal programmes, mainly into programmes in the social field. They will also have the responsibility to provide compensation for heating costs, drinking water costs and hot water cost, for poor residents as an independent municipal function.

Total expenditure on social protection in Lithuania is only half the EU average and falling. The activation of social assistance beneficiaries through employment or efficient active labour market policy measures remains limited. About a third of all registered social beneficiaries are involved in 'socially useful activities' carried out by municipalities. However, there is no evidence that this leads to any improvement in their employability. In addition, recipients are not adequately insured while carrying out such work.

Malta

Although the share of persons at risk of poverty and social exclusion remains lower than the EU average, it has increased by 4 pp between 2008 and 2013 reaching 24 %, while severe material deprivation more than doubled over the same period despite the favourable economic and labour market conditions. The share of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion is higher than the EU average, in particular for those living in single-parent households. The statutory minimum wage has been adjusted marginally in 2015. Poverty among the elderly is somewhat higher than EU average, and is closely

related to low pension adequacy. Risk of poverty or social exclusion is significantly higher for persons with only basic educational attainment.

In order to improve efficiency and effectiveness of the social protection system in preventing and reducing poverty, Malta has announced several reforms. Although starting from low levels of social expenditure, Malta has registered progress with a considerable increase in expenditure in child day care, education and, to a lesser extent, for activation measures. Moreover, a strategic Framework for Poverty Reduction and for Social Inclusion, setting out policy to reduce poverty and social exclusion, was launched in December 2014. The efforts to support employment and reduce disincentives to work are expected to further contribute to reduce the share of population at risk of poverty.

Poland

Poland faces serious challenges in terms of the overall adequacy and coverage of the social protection system At 18.1 %, Poland's social protection spending in terms of GDP remains below the EU average of 29.5 %. The impact of social transfers on poverty reduction is continuously decreasing with around 10 pp. lower than the European average in 2013. Older women (65+) are at much higher risk of poverty and social exclusion than men (27.1 % vs 17.4 %) and this gender discrepancy is attributed mainly to the inequalities of the pension system. Despite a growing 'at-risk-of poverty'-rate for children, expenditure on child and family benefits is the lowest in the EU, at 0.8 % of GDP (2012).

The National Programme for the Prevention of Poverty and Social Exclusion for 2014-20 was adopted on 12 August 2014. In addition, some measures supporting large families were introduced. Moreover, the minimum qualifying income for family benefits has been raised, but benefit rates still remain low. However, a comprehensive reform of the social protection system to improve its overall effectiveness and efficiency has not been brought forward. Overall, limited progress has been made on improving the targeting of social policies.

Romania

Reduction of poverty and social exclusion remains a major challenge for Romania. The rate of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion remains high at 40 % in 2013, far above the EU average. Single parents and families with numerous children appear particularly exposed to poverty. A decreasing, yet high, proportion of Romanians is severely materially deprived: 29 % in 2013, almost three times the EU average.

Paid employment does not safeguard against the risk of poverty for a large part of the population. In-work poverty is the highest of the EU. Evidence from the national authorities suggests that this stems mostly from the high number of low-wage earners, poor self-employed subsistence farmers and unpaid family workers. The minimum wage remains among the lowest in the EU. The impact of social transfers (excluding pensions) in reducing poverty appears limited, remaining the second lowest in the EU and resulting in a particularly low impact in the case of children. The Social Reference Index has remained frozen since 2008, in spite of a cumulative inflation of 26 % between 2008 and 2013.

Social transfers are not adequately linked to activation measures. The Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI) and the family allowance are subject to the fulfilment of certain conditions by the beneficiaries. However, even if conditionality is in place, there are large gaps in active labour-market policies addressing GMI beneficiaries. Following an evaluation by the Romanian authorities, financing has been stopped for local public works schemes, where people on social assistance were sometimes hired. There are limited paths for cross-referring beneficiaries among the different activation, social

inclusion or educational programmes. The implementation of the 2011 social assistance reform is still lagging behind schedule. The adoption of the Strategy for Social Inclusion and Combating Poverty and its Action Plans was delayed to March 2015. Limited progress was made in adopting the Minimum Insertion Income, which would simplify social assistance by combining three existing social transfers (the GMI, the family allowance and the heating benefits): a draft law – planned for the end of 2014 – did not materialise. To strengthen the link with activation measures, a social economy law was adopted by the Government in 2013, but is still under debate in the Parliament.

Roma people are facing high poverty. Almost 80 % of Roma households have a disposable income below the national at-risk-of-poverty threshold. Many have no health insurance but difficulties in accessing social services and face poor housing conditions. In particular, 84 % of Roma households report lack of water, sewage or electricity.