



Spain 2010

The Programme for developing local plans for social inclusion in Catalonia

Short Report



On behalf of the
European Commission
DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities



The Peer Review was held in Barcelona, Spain, on 7-8 October 2010 to discuss 'The Programme for developing local plans for social inclusion in Catalonia'. It was hosted by the Spanish Ministry of Health and Social Policy, and the Catalan Institute of Assistance and Social Services (ICASS).

Joining the host country, Spain, to assess the programme and provide information about their own systems were government representatives and experts from seven peer countries: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Latvia, the Netherlands, Norway, Romania and Serbia. Also participating were the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) and a European Commission representative from the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. Jan Vranken from the University of Antwerp acted as thematic expert.

1. The policy under review

Background

The European Union's Lisbon Strategy, agreed in 2000, established the basis to fight against social exclusion and to stimulate social inclusion and cohesion. As a result, in 2001 the Spanish government began developing its National Action Plan for Social Inclusion. In February 2006, the Generalitat of Catalonia (Catalan Regional Government) proposed its own Social Inclusion Plan, and encouraged municipalities to draw up their own local plans (PLIS). Today, there are 41 Catalan municipalities involved, and the aim is to extend this to all 103. The recent Europe 2020 Strategy stresses the need for inclusive growth and this has influenced current plans.

Plans for Social Inclusion

A municipality's Plan for Social Inclusion (PLIS) follows a 6-year cycle, and is essentially inter-administrative, i.e. it adopts cross-cutting policies to encourage social inclusion by coordinating the services offered by the public authorities: employment, housing, social protection, family support, etc. The Plan is steered by local committees, and an essential element is 'third sector' (i.e. civil society) participation. Catalonia's long tradition of citizens' participation has made this a particularly successful aspect of the plans.

The Programme for Developing Local Plans for Social Inclusion is overseen by the Catalan Institute of Social Assistance and Services (ICASS), which offers participating local authorities a package of resources to support their Plans. In each area (e.g. Barcelona, Lleida) a local Technical Office, with two staff, has been set up to assess the current local situation, establish a network of partners, and drive pilot projects to promote greater social inclusion.

ICASS offers technical support, and encourages networking to share best practices, and created the e-Catalonia Platform to boost information-exchange among participating municipalities on-line.

Concrete examples of the Plan for Social Inclusion in action

The Peer Review heard from representatives of two cities which had developed their plans. The aim of the plan in **Sant Boi de Llobregat**, a city in Barcelona's metropolitan area, has been to develop and implement policies that bring together housing, education, health, employment and social welfare needs. This has been done through creating a local Pact for Inclusion, signed by over 100 stakeholders. This lays out 99 actions to mitigate the effects of the crisis through job creation, access to housing and social services, and also builds on the city's expertise in mental health care to promote its medical and educational facilities.

In **Lleida**, a city in an agricultural region, the Plan for Inclusion and Social Cohesion has been drawn up with the participation of stakeholders, including many service users. Over 240 projects that span all departments are being implemented. These focus on supporting children and families; helping older people; positive targeting of the homeless; job creation, improving social service delivery; awareness-raising on inclusion through seminars and exhibitions and providing tools for innovation and employment in social activities. Training sessions on the plan are also provided.

2. Key issues

The presentations and discussions of the Peer Review focused particularly on the following issues:

National/regional context

- The contribution of the local plans to the **Spanish National Plan for Social Inclusion**.
- The **synchronisation of services**, as some services offered were the responsibility of the national/region authorities and some the responsibility of the local authorities.
- The role of **regional bodies** in supporting the plan.

Local context

- The significance of the historical, political, financial as well as **national and local context** in determining local plans' successes or failures.

Institutional set up

- The extent of **technical and financial support** to local offices needed to support the plan.
- The degree of **autonomy** of municipalities in developing their plans.
- The effect of the **existing municipal and political set-up** on the plans.

The PLIS

- The appropriateness of the **length of time** between the initial stages/set up of the local plans and implementation.
- The need to have **indicators** and **clear expectations**.
- **Monitoring** of the plans.
- How to set **realistic expectations** of what could be achieved.

Role of the third sector

- **Ensuring participation** and ways to **measure success**.
- **How important is a 'bottom-up approach** for the success of the programme, and are people at risk of social exclusion likely to participate?
- **Extent of participation** (e.g. deciding budgets).

3. Lessons learned

National Plan for Social Inclusion

- The National Plan for Social Inclusion, an important tool for the social Open Method of Coordination, and the local plans for social inclusion mutually foster each other. The city of Lleida, for example, included in its local plan actions to combat family and child poverty – an element also represented in the national plan.
- **Economic circumstances** have an important impact on the design of a National Plan for Social Inclusion.
- **Regional bodies** like ICASS are needed to **oversee implementation of local plans**.

Importance of the local context

- Local plans help stress the importance of **introducing a cross-cutting approach to social inclusion**, an element emphasised in the new Europe 2020 Strategy. Even after the plan is finished, the mentality towards a cross-cutting approach will be institutionalised in the local context.
- It is important to give **local offices autonomy to develop the plans** in response to local needs, since these needs differ.
- The success of the local plan is **strongly dependent on the local context** – e.g. Catalonia's history of fighting poverty and social exclusion.

Political support important

- **High visibility** and **political support** at all levels is very important to the success of the plan

Need for guidance, indicators and monitoring

- The local offices **need basic indicators** of poverty levels/unemployment/ number of social service recipients, etc., in order to be able to measure the effectiveness of the plan.
- There was some concern about **the length of time between drawing up and implementing the plan**, so it would be useful to draw clear timetables for actions.
- It is crucial that **some organisation monitors the plans**.

Need for local institutional support

- It is important to ensure that those in the local offices are given **sufficient financial and technical resources** to implement the plan.
- The plan will only work with strong support (**'buy-in'**) from the local administration.
- More use could be made of Internet Platforms like the **e-Catalonia Platform** to build up resources, encourage information-sharing and network-building.

Third sector participation

- It is important to **encourage a 'bottom-up approach'** so that plans are 'owned' by the local community.
- **Clarify the role of civil society organisations in local plans**. At times these overlapped, with some organisations involved in a number of parallel programmes. Also some civil-society organisations play an advocacy role, while others are service providers.
- **Guard against unrealistic expectations about the role of civil society organisations**. They need sufficient information and training to be closely involved in the plan.
- **Encourage private organisations to become involved and set up 'public-private partnerships** (PPPs) to be help implement local plans.