

## The Programme for developing local plans for social inclusion in Catalonia

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### 1. Brief assessment of the possible relevance of the 'Programme for developing local plans for social inclusion in Catalonia' / similarities and differences to Bulgaria

The Programme for Developing Local Plans for Social Inclusion in Catalonia offers systematic holistic approach with a set of resources which facilitates the local authorities in developing programmes and strategies for social inclusion of the vulnerable groups.

For the moment in Bulgaria it is harder to distinguish a model with clear criteria to be recognised and followed by the local authorities in the development of strategies for social inclusion. However during the development of the National Programme for the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion – 2010 Bulgaria set as one of its goals the identification of the main priorities of the Bulgarian strategy for combating poverty and social exclusion in long-term and medium-term plan after 2010. In the frames of the EY-2010 Bulgaria will develop local plans for combating poverty and social exclusion in the 28 municipalities in the country that are also regional centres.

The development and the implementation of the local plans aims first and foremost to strengthen the capacity of the local authorities to prepare and implement integrated initiatives targeted at overcoming the problems of the people living in poverty and social exclusion including in the following six directions:

1. To set clear priorities and to refract them through specific goals whose implementation is subservient to concrete indicators for progress, strict time schedule and clear division of tasks;
2. To prepare local profiles of poverty and social exclusion including the development of local indicators for assessment of poverty and social exclusion' to identify the communities living in poverty and social exclusion at local level, to analyse the reasons for their vulnerability, their problems and needs;
3. To assess the existing initiative targeted at overcoming the problems of the poor and the socially excluded at local level via consultations with the people living in poverty and social exclusion;
4. To establish partnerships at local level and to mobilise the local stakeholders for solving the problems of the poor and socially excluded communities;

5. To identify the omissions in the capacity of the stakeholders at local level, which prevents their active participation in overcoming poverty and social exclusion and to plan and implement activities for overcoming that shortage;
6. To assess the impact of how the planned activities and public services will affect the welfare and the quality of life of the people in poverty and social exclusion etc.

These local plans are to be used as the foundations for developing the Bulgarian Strategy for combating poverty and social exclusion.

The document from Catalonia provides broader interpretation of the term 'social inclusion' and the factors that exert influence on the problem. The presented model allows rationalisation of the role of all stakeholders with special focus on the local authorities and their role in the development and implementation of strategies for social inclusion.

## 2. Potential transferability of the Programme to Bulgaria. Specific issues that could be useful

The introduction of the local authorities in Bulgaria and the other stakeholders to model and their eventual training to use it could be of significant use for development of the capacity of the local communities to develop strategies/programmes for social inclusion.

In contrast to the presented model of broad participation and partnership in Catalonia until recently in Bulgaria the institutions and the experts seemed to be the main actors engaged in combating poverty and social exclusion, not the local communities and the citizens. That created the idea that this is problem of the institutions and not of the community. It sustained the implementation of subscription-like approach for socially excluded people or people at risk of exclusion. The process of clear communication and partnership between the institutions in Bulgaria and the civil organisations at local level is still in its initial stages and relies more on good personal relationships. That however is about to change. Additional information about the governance of the anti-poverty and social inclusion policies, the partnerships and the role of the users and beneficiaries in the process is presented in part 4 of this paper.

The guiding principles of the Catalan programme: community perspective, promotion of personal autonomy, multidimensional approach, strategic view, focus on causes, multilevel and cross-cutting perspective, stimulation of participation and recognition of territorial specificity represent some of the most important issue that should be taken into consideration when developing similar framework documents. As such they are easily transferrable in Bulgaria. Some of the strategic goals such as weakening the factors which cause exclusion, the production and transfer of knowledge and raising the awareness about the phenomenon of social exclusion are fairly universal and applicable for Bulgaria as well as for any other country that is about to develop local plans.

It can also be noted that in contrast to the model in Catalonia in Bulgaria more attention is paid to vulnerable groups rather than to the entire public context which sustains the social exclusion. The addition of the community perspective and the recognition of territorial specificity when developing the local plans for combating poverty and social exclusion will hopefully change that.

### **3. Important questions about programmes/plans for social inclusion at local level that are being raised in Bulgaria**

Some of the questions being raised in Bulgaria regarding the development of plans for social inclusion include the access of and to the vulnerable groups, the methodology to be used and the mechanisms for updating the programmes.

The support of the development and the implementation of the local plans for combating poverty and social exclusion should create the conditions necessary for solving the problem of the insufficient consistency between the priorities of the policy of social inclusion at national level and the local initiatives of the social sector. That activity should also achieve sustained integration of the priorities of the social inclusion policy in other fields of action of the local authorities such as the economic development, budget and finance, infrastructure, municipal undertaking etc. That will guarantee the more active participation of the local authorities in the implementation of the national priorities of the policy for social inclusion.

In the frames of the EY-2010 the Ministry of labour and social policy conducts a series of local initiatives such as Round tables on the issues of poverty and social exclusion, Local meetings of people living in poverty and social exclusion, Public debates on the issues of poverty and social exclusion and Information days. These initiatives are new for Bulgaria and provide the people with the opportunity to meet with governmental officials and discuss their problems, the existing policies in the field of social inclusion, to present their ideas for combating poverty and social exclusion and to receive information about their rights. For the local initiatives the Ministry works in close cooperation with EAPN – Bulgaria and representatives of various NGOs. So far the feedback from the local initiatives has been very positive. Lots of interesting ideas were generated during that process that will be taken into consideration when developing the policies in the field of social inclusion.

### **4. Governance of anti-poverty and social inclusion policies at national, regional and local level**

The overall organisation and coordination of the development and implementation of the anti-poverty and social inclusion policy is realised by the Minister of labour and social policy. The monitoring regarding the implementation of that policy is also in the authority of the Minister of labour and social policy. Within the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy was established Social Inclusion Directorate which assists the minister in the execution of these responsibilities. There is broad spectrum of institutions engaged in implementing the policy at national and local level.

The state and the municipalities are obliged to create conditions for active participation of the civil organisations and the social partners. However, unlike the state authorities to what extent these organisations and partners will actively participate depends on them as well.

#### **How the partnership is defined?**

Partnership is defined as a process allowing all individual citizens and/or stakeholders actively to participate (directly or indirectly) in decision making process. In general, partnership should aim at

empowering the different stakeholders, thus expanding the capabilities of represented by them groups to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives.

Partnership seeks for the achievement of four broad goals: 1) access to information for stakeholders and ensuring that a regular feedback from stakeholders to the social inclusion policy management is in place; 2) inclusion and participation of stakeholders in decision making process; 3) political and administrative accountability and 4) improved governance of anti-poverty and social inclusion policy at national and local level. Those four goals are firmly embedded under in Bulgarian National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2008-2010 (NAPincl) – one out of the four NAPincl priorities is exactly the better governance of social inclusion policy.

Moreover, the ideas of participation, better governance of anti-poverty and social inclusion policy were included in the Government programme (2009-2013) as a separate priority axis.

### **Role of users/beneficiaries within the whole process**

The consultation with the interested parties is defined as mandatory in the Bulgarian legislation. A number of consultative bodies are established for that purpose. Without their consulting it is impossible to adopt certain documents. The approach applied in Bulgaria allows the interested parties to participate not only during the consultation and the control of the implementation of the policies but during their formulation as well. All legislative and strategic documents in the field of social protection and social inclusion are developed according to that approach, including the National strategy report on social protection and social inclusion. At the two other levels of governance in Bulgaria – the local and the regional are established different consultative bodies resembling the national model.

In addition, social protection and social inclusion policies are part of the topics discussed by the social partners at the National Council for Tripartite Cooperation. According to Bulgarian Labour Code, social partners should be consulted about each piece of legislation and/or policy initiative in the field of social protection and social inclusion. A fine example for the role of the partnerships is the adoption of the poverty line for Bulgaria.

With a government decree from October 31, 2008 the poverty line for Bulgaria for 2009 was set as BGN 194. It is being calculated as 60% of the median net equivalent income for the country. The poverty line is monetary indicator for determining the people living in poverty. Its amount should guarantee and be enough for satisfying the so called “minimum living needs” which are the monetary equivalent of the actual expenditures for foodstuffs that cover the recommended daily allowance of 2700 calories. The percentage correlation of expenditures for foodstuffs and non nutritious products and services should correspond to the average correlation in 20% of the households with low incomes.

The poverty line is important instrument of social policy. The methodology for determining and the annual update of the poverty line was developed in 2006 by experts from the Ministry of labour and social policy, the National Statistical Institute, the Bulgarian Academy of Science and the Social partners. The amount of the poverty line is based on the results from the annual research of the budgets of the households conducted by the National Statistical Institute. The amount of the poverty line for 2007 was set at BGN 152. In 2008 it was set at BGN 166, for 2009 it was

BGN 194, and from January 1, 2010 it was set at BGN 211. With the adoption of the official poverty line for 2009 the government fulfilled its obligation in the frames of the Tripartite Pact for Economic and Social Development of Bulgaria until 2009. The pact required "setting the poverty line at the basis of the system for social protection". Its amount was adopted with consensus by the representatives of the social partners in the frames of the National Council for Tripartite Cooperation.

In 2009 Bulgaria established National council on social inclusion issues to the Council of Ministers. The council is presided by the minister of labour and social policy and includes deputy ministers from all involved ministries as well as the chairpersons of all involved institutions, representatives of NAMRB, representatives of the social partners, representatives of the organisations members of the European networks, the chairpersons of NGOs with proven experience in the field of social inclusion and representative of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. The council is the body for coordination, cooperation and consultation in the development, implementation, monitoring and assessment of the state policy in the field of social inclusion. In June the council discussed the proposal for national targets for encouraging the social inclusion and poverty reduction. On June 10, 2010 the proposal was presented and on June 28, 2010 it was approved by the National council. The proposal was consistent with the proposals of the Social Protection Committee and the conclusions subsequently adopted by the European Council. In October it was adopted by the Council of Ministers.

The Bulgarian target is developed as one common target which is reduction of the overall number of persons living in poverty and 4 specific sub-targets for specific groups at risk. The targets are objective and consistent with the possibilities for securing their attainment. The overall goal is by 2020 to reduce the number of people living in poverty by 260,000 persons or 16% compared to their number in 2008. The four specific sub-targets are as follows: Reducing the number of children ages 0-18 years living in poverty by 78,000 (30% of the common national target and 24% of the poor children in 2008); Reducing the number of persons ages 65 and above living in poverty by 52,000 (20% of the common national target and 12% of the poor elderly persons in 2008); Reducing the number of unemployed persons ages 18-64 living in poverty by 78,000 (30% of the common national target and 25% of the poor unemployed persons ages 18-64 in 2008); Reducing the number of employed persons ages 18-64 living in poverty by 52,000 (20% of the common national target and 22% of the poor employed persons ages 18-64 in 2008).

With the current definition of the common national target the contribution of Bulgaria to the European target will be approximately 1.3%. That contribution is correlative to the share of the Bulgarian population in the overall European population – 1.6%.