

**THE SOCIAL BACKGROUND AND  
COMMUNITY / SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF  
COMBINED EUROPEAN BUREAU FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT  
MEMBER COUNTRIES**

**Combat Poverty Agency  
May 1996**

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors wish to thank all those who contributed to the completion of this survey. In particular we wish to thank all those who completed and returned questionnaires. Paul Henderson, Community Development Foundation (UK), Fred Stafleu, Landelijk Centrum Opbouwwerk (Netherlands); Christine Foret, Mouvement pour un Development Social Local (France); Armin Kuphal, Paritatisches Bildungswerk - Bundesverband (Germany); Ilona Vercseg, Kozossegefejlesztok Egyesulete (Hungary); Fernanda Rodrigues, Cooperativa de Ensino Superior de Service Social (Portugal); Emma Fasolo, Fondazione Labos (Italy); Hans Anderson, CESAM (Sweden); Hugh Frazer, Combat Poverty Agency (Ireland); Jan Theuissen, Viboso (Belgium). We would also like to thank those who commented on an earlier draft of this report, particularly Paul Henderson, Community Development Foundation (UK), Margaret Barry, Combat Poverty Agency (Ireland) and current President of the Combined European Bureau for Social Development

## **SURVEY RESULTS**

### **BACKGROUND**

The Combined European Bureau for Social development (CEBSD) was established in 1989/90 as a joint venture between several national community development organisations to promote community development throughout Europe. Its objectives are to:

- act as a cross-national exchange for community development practitioners and those directly or indirectly involved in the discussions about 'Social Europe';
- promote the transfer of ideas and good practice between agencies in different parts of Europe, and to facilitate exchanges between professional organisations and between local communities;
- promote community development and influence social policy in the EU, the Council for Europe and national regional governments;
- foster understanding of the value of community development and its contributions to social and economic change;
- study and address key social development issues, and to foster the effective participation of fringe groups on the basis of their own experience;
- secure resources for the members of the CEBSD to enable them to co-operate in cross-national activities such as training, development work and research

Margaret Barry, Combat Poverty Agency (Ireland) is the current Chairperson of CEBSD and Paul Henderson, Community Development Foundation (UK) is Director. The organisation meets on a twice annual basis and has to-date organised seminars, research and training

### **BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH**

At a CEBSD meeting in 1994 it was suggested that it could be useful to have some background information on community development in each of the member countries. CEBSD members agreed that a research project should be undertaken with the following aims.

- to gather information on community development in each of the member states and the context in which it has developed and operated;
- drawing on the information gathered, to comment on the conditions conducive to community development and the difficulties and limitations which countries experience; and

- to draw conclusions and recommendations from the research

Helen Johnston of the Combat Poverty Agency (Ireland) agreed to manage the necessary research project. In 1994 a questionnaire was designed to collect the relevant information. It was subsequently agreed by CEBSD member organisations and sent to them for completion. The questionnaire sought information on the following.

- Central Government Structures
- Regional Government Structures
- Policy Framework
- Local Development
- Details of Organisation

The information received from completed questionnaires has been summarised and is presented in tabular form below. In the case of details about current government structures, some member countries have undergone a change of government since the questionnaires were completed. In such cases, the information received by questionnaire has been up-dates (May 1996). Any changes in the economic conditions of the countries since the survey questionnaires were completed could not be taken into account in this report.

It should also be noted that the information presented below is incomplete. This is because the Italian organisation involved in the research (LABOS) was unable to reply to certain questions and a Spanish reply to the questionnaire was not received.

A brief commentary on the results of the survey is given below.

## **RESULTS OF THE SURVEY**

A clear finding from this study is that 'community development' does not have a uniform definition in CEBSD member countries. This difference seems to reflect variations in member countries' social, political and economic ideologies and histories. In Italy and France, for example, community and/or local development has little meaning. In Italy, however, where it does exist it normally refers to 'decentralisation of power', while in France, community development is seldom initiated by local groups. In Sweden, where there has been an increased interest in community development recently, it also has many meanings including the decentralisation of public services. In contrast, in the Netherlands, there is a lot of local involvement in community development and it is mainly the responsibility of local authorities. In Ireland, while local involvement is also evident, community development is not traditionally managed by local authorities, who are not very powerful. Rather in Ireland, community development is encouraged by state-sponsored bodies, which also establish regional and national links, and local initiatives.

Community development in the UK is associated with self-help and self-reliance and was traditionally practised at the neighbourhood level. In recent years, many local authorities in the UK have started using community development in regeneration programmes. This

practice does not seem to feature prominently in other CEBSD member countries. In Germany, community development is mainly provided by the voluntary sector and has a social work background. This helps to explain the lack of formal partnerships in German community development - social workers have a client rather than a partner base. In Hungary, where the potential for community development is just being realised, the focus is, as in the Netherlands, Ireland and the UK, on tapping local resources. Community development in Hungary has its roots in community education.

A second finding from the research is that community development exists in different political environments. This may be because under right wing governments, community development can be seen as encouraging self-reliance (for example the UK), while under more left wing administrations it can be seen as advancing local empowerment and citizenship (Hungary). It may also reflect the situation where community development is established by one administration and continued by another administration of a different political persuasion.

The reports of the different member countries also reflect different approaches to problem solving. These include problem solving at an individual to collective level and problem solving at a local and national level. Further discussion on this point is required before any formal conclusions could be reached. However, the findings of the survey do highlight the importance of acknowledging the impact of cultural differences in the way in which member countries approach community development.

Finally, the economic conditions reported by member organisations did not vary greatly - with most either in recession or slowly emerging from recession. This made it difficult for this study to decipher what part, if any, economic conditions play in the evolution of community development. A larger study, taking into consideration member countries' economic history is required to address this question fully.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The findings of this brief study indicate the variations in the meaning and practice of community development in CEBSD member countries. It also points to the need for a forum such as CEBSD so that countries can exchange information about different approaches to community development, both through studies such as this one and by cross-national visits and training. Such activities will also promote better practice in this area and in turn will increase the profile of community development to local groups and as a tool for policy-makers.

## REPLIES TO QUESTIONNAIRES

Country	Belgium	France	Germany	Hungary	Ireland
<p>1. Central Government Structure</p> <p>The current political system and the main political parties</p>	<p><b>Political Parties</b> <i>In Power:</i> Christian Democrats and the Socialists. <i>Opposition:</i> Liberals Green Party Nationalists</p>	<p><b>Political Parties</b> <i>In Power:</i> Rassemblement pour le Republic (RPR) (central right). <i>Opposition</i> Union des Democraties pour la France (UDV) Parte Republican (PR) Centres Democraties Social (CDS)</p>	<p><b>Political Parties</b> <i>In Power:</i> Christian Party in coalition with the Liberals <i>Opposition</i> The Social-Democratic Party Awaiting further details</p>	<p><b>Political Parties</b> <i>In Power:</i> Socialist Party (MSZP) in coalition with Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ) (liberal) <i>Opposition</i> Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF), Independent Smallholders' Party (FKGP), Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP) and Federation of Young Democrats (FIDESZ)</p>	<p><b>Political Parties</b> <i>In Power:</i> Fine Gael (christian democrats), Labour (left) and Democratic Left in coalition <i>Opposition:</i> Fianna Fail (centre right) Progressive Democrats (right)</p>
Italy	Netherlands	Portugal	Spain	Sweden	United Kingdom
<p>The Italian political system is in a state of flux at the moment. Following the resignation of Mr Berlusconi earlier this year, Mr. Lamberto Dini was appointed to the post of Prime Minister by the President. National elections are planned and may take place in October '95. There are currently 26 political parties represented in the Italian Parliament. The majority of these parties are organised into two coalitions - the centre right (Polo della liberta - currently the majority) and the centre left.</p>	<p><b>Political Parties</b> <i>In Power:</i> Partij van de Arbeid (PvdA) (social democrats), Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (VVD) (liberals) and Democraten 66 (D 66) (neo-liberals) in coalition <i>Opposition</i> Christen-Democratisch Appel (CDA) (christian democrats), Groen Links (greens)</p>	<p><b>Political Parties</b> <i>In Power:</i> The Social Democratic Party (PSD) (liberal). <i>Opposition:</i> The Socialist Party (PS) (left) Communist Party (PCP) (left) The Popular Party (PP) (right)</p>	<p><b>Political Parties</b> <i>In Power:</i> Partido Popular (Popular Party) but they do not have a majority <i>Opposition</i> Partido Socialista Obrero Espanol (Socialist Party) Catalan Party (CIU) Izquierda Unida (United Left) National Basque Party</p>	<p><b>Political Parties</b> <i>In Power:</i> Social Democratic Party but they do not have a majority <i>Opposition</i> The Moderate Party The Centre Party The Liberal Party The Left Party The Green Party The Christian Democrats</p>	<p><b>Political Parties</b> <i>In Power:</i> Conservative Party <i>Opposition:</i> Labour <i>Minority Parties:</i> Liberal Democrats Ulster Unionists Scottish and Welsh Nationalist</p>



Country	Belgium	France	Germany	Hungary	Ireland
<p><b>2. Regional Government Structures</b></p> <p>Are there regional and local structures and what is the relationship between national government and local and regional government?</p>	Information not available	<p>Yes</p> <p>A doubled-layered system is in operation.</p> <p>Since decentralisation in 1984, the Regional Councils and the General Council, which are elected structures, take local decisions.</p> <p>The relationship between central and local government is good when they are both on the same side politically. At present, the relationship is conflictual.</p>	<p>Page 2 of questionnaire missing</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>The territorial divisions are the capital, 19 counties, cities, towns and villages.</p> <p>A new Law on Local Government was ratified in August 1990 which gave citizens local election rights.</p> <p>Central state has only normative control over local government, but Parliament can dissolve a local government.</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>29 county councils</p> <p>8 Health Boards</p> <p>County councils consist of elected representatives and are funded by the Department of the Environment.</p> <p>Each Health Board includes three members appointed by government.</p> <p>Advisory non-statutory bodies also provide an important link between national and local structures.</p>
Italy	Netherlands	Portugal	Spain	Sweden	United Kingdom
<p>Yes</p> <p>20 Regional Governments</p> <p>About 8,000 Communes</p> <p>650 local Health Units</p> <p>The regions are responsible for planning and financing social and health policies. The Communes and Local Health Units are responsible for implementing these policies.</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>12 Provincial Govs.</p> <p>About 550 Local Govs.</p> <p>The relationship between local and central Government is largely complementary. It is based on the concept of decentralisation - what can be done by local/provincial government should not be done by provincial/central government.</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>There are local structures but no regional ones. The local structures are the Parish Assembly and, in the Town Hall, the Municipal Assembly.</p> <p>Metropolitan Assemblies in Lisbon and Oporto are in the process of being formed.</p> <p>Financial, political and administrative control is at a central level. There is a recent move to transfer power from a central to local level, but without a corresponding shift to local financial autonomy.</p>	<p>Information not available</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>The national government controls 23 county administration boards. At county level there are also 23 elected county councils, which are responsible for health and other county issues. 286 elected municipality boards are responsible for social welfare, youth education and technical issues. County councils and municipality boards have power of taxation.</p>	<p>Yes - Scottish and Welsh Offices - but they are based in Whitehall, London.</p> <p>10 Integrated Regional Offices of the Government set up last year which are responsible for the Single Regeneration Budget.</p> <p>Budgets and funding of local services decided at a national level.</p> <p>Local Government has few powers to raise money locally.</p>

Country	Belgium	France	Germany	Hungary	Ireland
<p>3. Policy Framework</p> <p>What is the current social climate and the thrust of current social policy.</p> <p>What are the key social issues and what is the degree of integration between economic and social policies?</p>	Information not available	<p>The current economic climate in France is based on plans to renew the economy. Privatisation, the introduction of a liberal economy and the need to tackle unemployment all dominate the thrust of economic policy. Within this context, trade union power has been undermined and there is a fear of public protests. The main social issue is poverty. Social policy is dictated by economic policy.</p>	<p>The current social climate is one of 'soziale kalte' or 'social coldness' where the emphasis is on increasing profits and reducing social services to a minimum. The main social issues are drug and alcohol abuse. The current philosophy is that a lot of social services are not necessary as long as economic conditions are good.</p>	<p>There is an economic crisis in Hungary. The economy is shifting from a centralised to a market economy, but is lacking in resources. There has been a growth in unemployment, homelessness and poverty. The government is trying to integrate economic and social policies</p>	<p>The country is slowly emerging from recession. Current economic policy is based on growth while maintaining control of public spending. Unemployment and poverty are still major problems. The current government is committed to the integration of social and economic policies.</p>
Italy	Netherlands	Portugal	Spain	Sweden	United Kingdom
<p>As Italy was going through a crucial period of social, economical and political change when the information for this survey was being collected, it was impossible to complete this section of the questionnaire.</p>	<p>Economic growth has been evident in the Netherlands, however unemployment has still not declined. Current policy has focused on reducing unemployment by decreasing public spending and employers' costs. In the social context, there has been some criticism of the welfare state, but attempts have been made to balance a reduction in social security spending with social solidarity. Efforts are being made to integrate social and economic policies.</p>	<p>In Portugal, economic growth is at a standstill, investment is decreasing and traditional industries such as agriculture and fishing are in decline. However, economic growth has been evident since March 1994. There has been a recent move to privatise public sector areas such as housing, health and social security. An increase in poverty, delinquency and exclusion has been witnessed. Social and economic policies have been separated and economic ones have dominated policy formation.</p>	Information not available	<p>The economic climate is one of a large budget deficit and growing unemployment. Cuts in public spending is the thrust of current economic policy. The main social policy issues are marginalisation, unemployment, the integration of immigrants and the growth in the number of elderly people.</p>	<p>The economy is emerging from recession. Current economic policies are centred on the pursuit of low inflation, modest economic expansion, no tax cuts and control of public expenditure. Unemployment and a depressed housing market are key economic issues. The reduction of unemployment, the control of social security spending and the pursuit of privatisation are social goals. Economic policy dominates over social policy.</p>

Country	Belgium	France	Germany	Hungary	Ireland
<b>4. Local Development</b>  <b>What local development structures are in place and what is meant by community development in your area. What are the organisational structures?</b>	<p>There are seven Community development organisations in Flanders - five at a provisional level and one each in the cities of Antwerp and Brussels.</p>	<p>Local development in France is undertaken by Regional Councils or General Councils in the municipalities. Community development does not have a meaning in France, but there is some local development (which is economic) and social development. These groups focus mainly on tackling unemployment and youth problems. As projects are rarely initiated by the local community, they are normally linked to the local authorities for funding. However, partnerships exist between state departments, regional/general councils, national/local associations and other professionals. Community involvement in partnership structures is low.</p>	<p>Local development in Germany is predominantly at a town or parish level with financial help from the regional structures. The word for community development in Germany is 'Gemeinwesenarbeit' but is not generally known there. It refers to the third method of social work. (Case work and group work are the other two.) Community development is currently provided by the voluntary sector at a local level, it does not exist at a regional or national level. Most community development projects in Germany are part of the welfare agencies, but towns are now beginning to establish their own projects. Regional or national links with community development projects depend on local circumstances. As the basis of German community development is social work, and social workers have clients rather than partners, there are no partnerships as such - but there are, nonetheless, informal relationships.</p>	<p>In Hungary local development operates under and is financed by local authorities. Here, community development is a way of thinking, of tapping the resources of the local society and of improving citizenship and culture. Community development in Hungary has its roots in community education. There is a growing interest in community development in Hungary and there are now 12 community service agencies in different parts of the country. These agencies run local projects and plan to build up local partnerships and encourage civil initiatives. Regional and national links exist for community development projects through federations and pilot programmes. The potential for local action is just being realised in Hungary and partnerships are beginning to be identified.</p>	<p>In Ireland there has recently been an increased interest in local development, particularly relating to social partnerships. Community development in Ireland focuses on participation and empowering people to shape their own society. It also contributes to local development by trying to overcome the social exclusion which results from poverty, inadequate housing, educational disadvantage and unemployment. Community development has increased in Ireland, particularly since the establishment of the Community Development Programme in 1990. There are regional and national community development links through national networks, and through the Combat Poverty Agency (CPA) and Area Development Management (ADM).</p>

Italy	Netherlands	Portugal	Spain	Sweden	United Kingdom
<p>Information incomplete</p> <p>- Local and community development have little meaning in Italy. It might signify local authorities implementing economic policy at a local level, but would not necessarily involve citizen participation or partnerships. Where community development does exist it is normally referred to as 'decentralisation of powers' because the centralised state has been a traditional obstacle to community development.</p>	<p>Local development in the Netherlands involves giving more power to the regions of Amsterdam, the Hague and Rotterdam. The emphasis on community development here is on mobilising citizens' groups to improve their own living circumstances, particularly in less developed regions of the country. It is mainly the responsibility of local authorities. The organisational structures of community development vary from town to town, but they can be linked with regional and national projects on a voluntary basis. A particular feature of the Dutch system is that there is a lot of local action and community involvement in community development.</p>	<p>Community development in Portugal means taking advantage of local resources and trying to promote the local population. It is mainly organised by the Town Hall, by development agencies or private institutions of social solidarity. There are few links with national or regional projects. Partnership structures do exist but are generally not used to full effect - it depends on the area.</p>	<p>Information not available</p>	<p>Community development has many meanings in Sweden. It refers to a tradition of voluntary organisations, popular movements, community adult education and to municipality organised local development and decentralisation of public services. There is an increased interest in community development in Sweden. Community development operates mainly at the level of the county councils and municipalities and there are national, regional and municipal links. Partnerships also exist at these three levels but local involvement in them is dependant on the different organisations.</p>	<p>Community development in the UK is associated with self-help and self-reliance. Every county has a rural community council and urban areas have councils for voluntary service. Community development was traditionally at a neighbourhood level, but now some have become more specialist, eg focus on disabled or urban / rural regeneration. Some community development activities funded by government departments and local authorities employ community workers. There are regional and national links with projects. Partnerships are important in the UK, but local involvement is threatened because professional agencies, such as local authorities, have a lot of the power.</p>

Country	Belgium	France	Germany	Hungary	Ireland
<b>5. Information on Participating Organisations</b>	VIBOSO Vlaams Instituut	MDSL - PACA The role of MDSL - PACA is to help community development groups by giving them advice and information and by encouraging local authorities to treat community development groups as partners.	Paritatisches Bildungswerk. The role of this organisation is to try to bring projects together.	Kozossegefejlesztol Egyesulete (Hungarian Association for Community Development). The role of the organisation is to promote community development and to create a new network through the Community Service Foundation.	CPA One of the functions of CPA is to initiate measures aimed at overcoming poverty (such as community development) and to evaluate these measures. CPA supports community development pilot projects, acts as a national community development resource centre and seeks a greater role for community development groups in policy-making.
Italy	Netherlands	Portugal	Spain	Sweden	United Kingdom
LABOS	Landelijk Centrum Opbouwwerk (National Centre for Community Work). The role of the organisation is to promote (i) co-operation among community development professionals and organisations (ii) quality of community work (iii) dissemination of information about community development and (iv) innovation. In general, the organisation has a good relationship with local and regional organisations.	ISSSP The role of the Superior Institute of Social Work (ISSSP) is to train social workers and through its Foundation Centre help community projects. The ISSSP is also involved in workshops and networking with local community development associations.	Intress	CESAM. CESAM is a national support for the public, voluntary and private sectors in the field of community development. CESAM is partly financed by projects grants by the Ministries of Public Administration and of Social Affairs and partly by consultancy activities. The tasks of CESAM include an advisory service, database information, Nordic network, seminars and education, policy making and project development on behalf of voluntary organisations and the public sector.	CDF CDF works as a support organisation for community development in the UK through training, research and education. CDF provides an important national - regional link. Also, because it is a non-departmental public body, it can work at the policy level, trying in particular to inform and influence the programmes of government departments.