



Towards Effective Involvement

A Report from Seminars in Five EU States

Combat Poverty Agency
*working for the prevention
and elimination of poverty*



The Department of
Social, Community and
Family Affairs

The Irish
National
Anti-Poverty
Networks



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STAKES
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TOWARDS EFFECTIVE INVOLVEMENT

**A Report from Seminars in Five EU States on
Involving Excluded People and their Organisations in Anti-Poverty and
Social Inclusion Policies**

August 2000

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INTRODUCTION

In 1999, the Combat Poverty Agency (Ireland) responded to a Commission call for proposals for preparatory actions to combat and prevent social exclusion. A grant (representing approximately 60% of the project cost) was awarded for a project on the involvement of excluded people and their organisations in the design, implementation and evaluation of anti-poverty and social inclusion strategies.

This project is based on a partnership between a number of countries and organisations. The partners are

<i>Ireland:</i>	Combat Poverty Agency National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) Unit, Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs Irish National Anti-Poverty Networks
<i>U.K. - Northern Ireland:</i>	Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust
<i>Netherlands:</i>	Odyssee MO
<i>Finland:</i>	Stakes
<i>Portugal:</i>	I.O. Integrar, Ministry for Labour and Solidarity

Many European countries are currently engaged in developing, implementing and evaluating social inclusion and anti-poverty strategies. The overall aim of the project is to draw on learning across the partner countries in order to develop a set of guidelines on involving people in anti-poverty and social inclusion strategies. The project seeks to include those with an interest in consultation or involvement in the policy making-process, including those affected by poverty and social exclusion, those who represent their interests, as well as those responsible for drawing up policy. The project provides for exchange of experience and information, mutual learning, and the development of an approach that will contribute to improving the design of policies and measures to combat exclusion at all levels.

Between April and June 2000, each participating country held a number of seminars that looked at the involvement of excluded persons in social inclusion and anti-poverty strategies. The focus of the seminars was shaped by the particular stage each country was at in terms of development, implementation or evaluation of social inclusion and anti-poverty policies and consultation and involvement policy and practice in their country. Each partner sought to involve, if possible, statutory representatives, NGOs and excluded people themselves.

Each partner country has produced a report, in its national language, that draws together the lessons emerging from the seminars. This report provides a summary of those reports and is available in the language of each participating country.

The next step for the project involves bringing together the learning from the partner countries at a transnational seminar. This will be held in Dublin in September 2000 and will be used to further develop thinking and ideas on the transnational guidelines. The proceedings from this seminar will be published with a multi-lingual summary and the guidelines will be available in the language of each partner country.

July 2000

CONSULTATION, POVERTY AND POLICY IN IRELAND

Introduction

In Ireland, the project took the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) as its focus. This is an integrated strategy, that is, it addresses several areas of policy that effect the lives of people who experience poverty and social exclusion. It is the first integrated strategy of its kind in Ireland. Consultation on the development of the NAPS was extensive, involving people experiencing poverty and social exclusion and their representative groups. There has been no such broad consultation on the NAPS since its launch in 1997. There is ongoing consultation between the NAPS Unit, the Combat Poverty Agency and Ireland's seven National Anti-Poverty Networks. There is also a commitment to involve the social partners in the revision of the existing NAPS targets and the setting of new ones.

The issue of consultation is not new in Ireland and a number of consultations have taken place on anti-poverty policies at national level in recent years that have provided substantial learning in relation to consultation. In addition, there are a number of well-established mechanisms for consultation on national policy, such as the National Economic and Social Forum and the National Economic and Social Council. At local level, new consultation mechanisms in the form of Strategic Policy Committees are emerging as part of the local government reform process. In addition, many community and voluntary organisations initiate and carry out local consultation exercises or build consultation into their every day work. The project was informed by this experience of previous consultation exercises. It also sought to draw on less well known and local level experiences of consultation.

The Seminars

The seminars, titled Consultation and the National Anti-Poverty Strategy, were held on 11th April and 4th May 2000. The first of these seminars provided an opportunity for individuals and organisations to share their experience of consultation in relation to poverty and how to address it. It also looked at the opportunities presented by consultation the barriers that prevent effective consultation, as well as the supports required by different organisations and sectors. The second seminar started with the presentation of a small number of examples of consultation processes and then focussed on the practice of consultation and how it could be carried out in a number of situations. In facilitated workshops participants were asked to draw up a practical consultation process for an imaginary situation, but to view this from the perspective of an organisation or group other than the one they actually represent.

Who Attended the Seminars?

	11 th April	4 th May
Statutory Sector	23	19
Community and Voluntary Sector	28	14
Individuals	9	7
Others	2	4
Total	62	43

In total, almost 80 participants attended the seminars. However, quite a small number, only 25, attended both days. The biggest fall off in participants was from among the community and voluntary organisations. Possible reasons for this include that many such groups did not have the staff resources to allow them to commit two days to the seminars, or, did not feel that the topic was relevant to their daily work.

Some Basic Guidelines

From the two seminars, the beginnings of a set of guidelines for good practice that should apply to all sectors and all levels of consultation began to emerge. These are summarised below.

- *Clearly establish the purpose, objectives and expected outcomes of the process.* These should be agreed, as far as possible, among participants in the consultation exercise.
- *Establish clear rules of engagement.* These should outline the practical arrangements and working methods of the consultation process and be agreed with the participants in the process.
- *Ensure that the topic and exercise are relevant to those you involve.* Ways in which this might be achieved include through clearly targeted consultations or building consultation into services.
- *Be an ongoing process that contributes to the decision and policy making process.* The definition of 'ongoing', whether this means for the lifetime of a policy or for a limited period in any one form or with any one group of people, should form part of the rules of engagement.
- *Provide sufficient advance resources for groups and individuals to prepare for involvement.* These should include time and financial resources.
- *Cover all participation costs including childcare, eldercare and transport.* For local organisations, paying such expenses may not be possible. Alternatives such as taking the process to the people in their homes and using community resources and facilities were identified.
- *Use appropriate ways of involving people.* Consultation should be mainly face-to-face, use creative approaches where appropriate, build on existing services such as advocacy and advice, allow sufficient time for people to think about what they want to say, and involve regular meetings to let people get to know each other.
- *Be based on the principles of accountability and transparency.* All parties to the consultation must accept these principles.
- *Be free of jargon and use clear language.* The use of jargon and complicated language should be avoided if at all possible.
- *Involve, but not expose, people affected by poverty.* Consultation should always be voluntary and be facilitated rather than imposed. The right of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion to respect and privacy should be upheld.
- *Be based on institutional rather than individual commitment.* This is essential if the consultation is to be ongoing, meaningful and effective. This requires organisations to develop a culture that accepts consultation as part of the way in which it works.
- *Learn from and build on previous experience and existing models of consultation.* This places the onus on those leading the consultation to document the models used, to make this information available and, if possible, have the models evaluated.
- *Where possible be based on small rather than large groups.* This is particularly important when involving people who experience poverty and social exclusion to whom large groups may be more intimidating.
- *Provide regular and accurate feedback.* In particular, feedback should be provided on the role that consultation played in formulating policy and the reasons for decisions.

Conclusions

What is clear from these seminars is that consultation is not a simple exercise to which a set of rigid rules can be applied. What is possible, however, is the identification of guidelines within which consultation exercises can be designed to suit specific situations and facilitate and support the participation of all relevant groups. However, any guidelines emerging from the project will only be of use if they are accepted across different sectors and are implemented. This is the real challenge facing the partners in this project.

MODELS FOR INVOLVEMENT OF EXCLUDED PEOPLE

Report from Northern Ireland

Introduction

The interest shown in the project and the nature and spread of participation in the seminars, show clearly that all sectors recognise the urgent need for a code of good practice to ensure the meaningful involvement of excluded people. The current emphasis on civic responsibility, consultation and social inclusion has been welcomed. Besides, there is now a statutory requirement laid down by the Northern Ireland Act 1998 for public bodies to engage in a consultative process in order to promote equality of opportunity. There are several other ongoing projects working on a similar agenda currently in Northern Ireland. These will all feed into each other and form a body of good practice material. The model below addresses institutional, psychological/cultural, physical, economic and technical barriers identified and is presented in the form of overarching values, principles and practical guidelines.

A MODEL FOR INVOLVEMENT

VALUES	PRINCIPLES	PRACTICAL GUIDELINES
OPENNESS/TRANSPARENCY In the process to be followed and in the weight to be given to the consultation input	MEANINGFUL INVOLVEMENT REQUIRES THAT: There is maximum accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provision needs to be made to relieve carers of children and other dependent people to enable them to participate. - Provision of adequate and suitable transport is required especially in remote areas and for people with disabilities. - Public buildings must be made accessible - Meetings need to be in a safe and neutral location and at a suitable time and location to enable user participation.
INTEGRITY: In that there will be a clear adherence by all parties to the terms agreed		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The language needs to be made clear and simple and as far as possible jargon free. - There needs to be use of the full range of communication media – television, radio, internet, newspapers, road shows, community newsletters and journals. - Ways need to be found of how to include marginalised people who do not belong to organisations.
CO-OPERATIVE WORKING: In that all parties will engage in the process to work together towards the desired outcomes.	There is a user-led approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community and voluntary organisations need to ensure that their make-up is truly representative of the community they claim to represent and that their programmes seek to include more marginalised people. - Policies and funding programmes need to promote and support user-led organisations of excluded people.
EQUALITY: Each party's contribution is equally welcomed.	There is commitment to genuine partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Care needs to be taken to ensure the most appropriate partnership for ongoing implementation and evaluation. - The consultation document and process should be put together through a partnership with the main stakeholders

VALUES	PRINCIPLES	PRACTICAL GUIDELINES
INCLUSION: That specific care is taken to include marginalised people directly, in particular those most affected by the policy being discussed and decided on.	There is recognition of the ongoing long-term nature of involvement including fostering responsible citizenship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is a need to promote training and education across sectors in relevant participative skills in the decision making process - It is not enough to obtain a mandate through a consultation exercise. Involvement needs to be ongoing in relation to the implementation and evaluation of the policies established. - Investment in education in schools and colleges is needed to promote active citizenship as a major part of the curriculum. - Equal access to third level education needs to be re-instated in order not to further disadvantage poorer people.
OWNERSHIP: That participants are fully involved in the process and can claim credit for outcomes.	Good practice is shared.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Effective participation and follow-up requires adequate resourcing. - Clear mechanisms need to be agreed to ensure that good practice is shared and to learn the lessons from bad practice.
EMPOWERMENT: That the consultation process leaves those who have taken part better informed, more skilled, better organised and more confident	<p>The process is matched to the needs and interests of the participants</p> <p>Genuine change is planned and possible.</p> <p>Engagement in the process increases the skills and knowledge and confidence of participants.</p> <p>There is consistency in the approach to involvement of excluded people across government departments and statutory bodies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Those leading the consultations need to be skilled in a variety of methods and approaches and able to select which are most appropriate for particular situations. - The potential of IT needs to be harnessed, especially as a means of involving individual excluded persons. This will require making it more affordable and/or more accessible to poorer people. - There needs to be clarity about what can potentially be changed and what cannot. - There needs to be openness to be challenged about what is considered not changeable. - Through facilitation of participative methods in the process, participants will increase their knowledge of new ways of making decisions in groups and will learn new skills and gain confidence. - Agreed guidelines should be embedded at the highest level in national anti-poverty and inclusion strategies and mechanisms deployed to ensure that they are adhered to in a consistent manner throughout the statutory sector

POVERTY, EXCLUSION AND INVOLVEMENT IN THE NETHERLANDS

Introduction

In the Netherlands there is a long tradition of involving excluded people and their organisations in the development, implementation and evaluation of anti-poverty strategies, at local, regional and national level.

At local level: In over 50% of Dutch cities, excluded people and their organisations are organised into local client councils. The involvement of these client councils in the development, implementation and evaluation of local anti-poverty policy is based on an article in the national Public Assistance Act (PAA), an article that states that local authorities have to organise some way of consulting with clients.

At regional level: on this level the networks for (professional) support, exchange of experience and training are organised for the members of the local client councils and their organisations. At local level these activists often feel isolated in their work. At regional level they meet their "colleagues".

At national level: Every year the Ministry of Social Affairs organises a national "Social Conference". The Ministry reports on the measures introduced by the government, researchers report on trends in poverty and exclusion and the self-organisations and the NGO's are facilitated to have their independent input at these conferences.

The participants in the transnational project were involved in three seminars on poverty, involvement and policy-making:

14 th of April in Maastricht:	The new PAA and participation of client councils
09 th of May in Utrecht:	National working conference on social justice: Approach 2000
22 nd of June in Nijmegen:	Strategies to combat poverty and to prevent exclusion: the involvement of excluded people and their organisations.

The seminars in Maastricht and Nijmegen were organised within the framework of the transnational project. The seminars were focussed on four items:

1. What are the results of the anti-poverty policies initiated by national and local government?
2. How is the involvement, participation, consultation of excluded people and their organisations organised?
3. What are the main results of these forms of involvement, participation and consultation?
4. Under what conditions can involvement contribute to a more effective policy to combat poverty and exclusion?

Stakeholder Analysis

"The new PAA and the participation of client-organisations", was the topic of a regional seminar organised by Odyssee in co-operation with the self-organisations of claimants in the province of Limburg. There were 75 participants: 45 representatives of the self-organisations (unemployed, single parent networks, disability groups, organisations of the elderly, local client councils) and 30 representatives of the local social security departments (civil servants, local politicians and some Aldermen).

The *"National working conference on social justice: Approach 2000"*, was a national working conference organised by Sjakus and the National Combat Poverty Platform. There were 250 participants, all from the self-organisations of claimants and the NGO's on poverty and exclusion.

"Strategies to combat poverty and to prevent exclusion: the involvement of excluded people and their organisations", was the focus of a seminar attended by 25 people that participated at the two above mentioned conferences: 2 representatives of Odyssee, 1 representative of Sjakus and 23 representatives of the self-organisations and the NGO's related to them. The delegation of 13 participants for the transnational conference in Dublin was taken from this group.

Issues arising

14th April: "The new PAA and participation of clients"

The central themes of the conference were, "Does the new Public Assistance Act (PAA) prevent or produce new forms of poverty and exclusion?" and "What is the position of claimants and their organisations?" The principal conclusion of the day was that the new PAA on the one hand does not solve the problems of poverty and exclusion, but on the other hand does allow local authorities to develop more tailor-made solutions to prevent poverty and exclusion. These opportunities however can only be successful when excluded people and their organisations are involved in the development, implementation and evaluation of local anti-poverty policy.

9th May: "National working conference on social justice: Approach 2000" The central themes of the conference were, "What are the results of the national anti-poverty strategies so far?", "What is still to be achieved at the level of income, access to work, the combination of work and care, inclusion and participation, access to support systems (education, housing, health, care)?", and "Are the national strategies really addressing the fundamental causes of poverty and exclusion or are they only focussed on the need of politicians to minimise the visibility of poverty and exclusion?" The main conclusion of the conference was that the self-organisations and the NGO's associated with them still have a long way to go. Their analyses and proposals are part of the agenda and debate at the "Social Conferences" organised by the Ministry of Affairs. But too many of their proposed solutions and measures are not listened to. The "National working conference on social justice: Approach 2000" developed proposals on the above mentioned themes related to poverty and exclusion. This conference also developed an "Approach" to involve excluded people and their organisations in the development and implementation of local and national anti-poverty policy.

22nd June: "Strategies to combat poverty and to prevent exclusion: the involvement of excluded people and their organisations" This seminar was organised to evaluate the results of the conferences of April and May and especially focused on the question of involvement. The central conclusion was that organised involvement has results at three levels:

- involvement keeps poverty and exclusion on the agenda of policy-makers, civil servants and their trend-spotters: it can no longer be denied, marginalised or individualised;
- involvement produces new approaches, other measures, more tailor-made solutions for specific groups, areas and items;
- involvement has an impact on the empowerment of the self-organisations: it produces co-operation between different groups of claimants, it is a stimulus for local, regional and national co-operation based on respect and diversity, an impetus to produce support and develop expertise.

Conclusions

The main conclusion from these seminars was that involvement of excluded people and their organisations should be based on an "all-in approach". Involvement should not be localised at the end of the line, where policy-makers developed anti-poverty strategies and the self-organisations are used to implement these strategies. Involvement should not be localised at the start of the line where the expertise of the self-organisations is used to develop more effective policies, but where the world of social, legislative and council institutions is responsible for the implementation and evaluation of these policies. Effective involvement is involvement in the analyses of the fundamental causes, involvement in the development of tailor-made solutions for specific groups, areas and items, involvement in the political decision making processes, involvement in the control of the institutions responsible for the implementation of these policies, and involvement in the evaluation of the whole process.

This kind of involvement can only be successful if it has a legal basis: the right of excluded people and their organisations to claim involvement. It can only be successful if it has a material basis and the right of excluded people and their organisations to claim for support, education and all other facilities to do their job is seen as important.

ANTI-POVERTY AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION STRATEGIES: INVOLVING THE POPULATION AND THE ORGANISATIONS THAT REPRESENT THEM

Report from Portugal

Introduction

In Portugal the project is led by *IO Integrar*. The project tried to re-launch the discussion on participation and involvement, in order to improve anti-poverty and social exclusion projects and policies. The seminars also provided an opportunity to consider the issue of involvement in the design of actions under the Third Community Framework, which had just been launched. A number of those with responsibility for the Framework attended the seminars and this provided an opportunity to engage them in the debate on involvement.

The Seminars

The Seminars took place in Lisbon, on the 17th April and 19th May 2000. The first seminars encouraged discussion among participants, in order to achieve either a consensus or to collect the diversity of views on the following: the components of participation and involvement; the conditions under which they may occur, and the advantages of and the obstacles to participation and involvement. The second seminar focused on achieving concrete recommendations; that would contribute to a stronger commitment to these processes in the future.

The Participants

About 60 participants attended the first seminar. 70 participants attended the second seminar. Approximately 50 people attended both seminars. In both seminars, participation was evenly spread (close to 20% each) across the sectors, project beneficiaries, organisation representatives, practitioners, those responsible for national programmes and politics (statutory sector) and independent experts.

Recommendations

To the population

- ✓ Express your views on the reality around you.
- ✓ Think that you can contribute towards changing things.
- ✓ Form advocacy groups.
- ✓ Get involved not only in the social but also in the economic sphere.
- ✓ Communicate and circulate information and ask, "What is being done?" "What can be done?"
- ✓ Be aware of the dynamics created by the projects that are implemented.

To the organisation representing the populations

- ✓ Create ways of circulating information (e.g. leaflets, newsletters or a neighbourhood newspaper) to publicise the different types of support (technical, financial, logistic, etc.) and of sharing the results and fruits of collective participation.
- ✓ Reinforce the ability to listen to and express motivations and opinions that traditionally go unheard and have no expression.
- ✓ Concentrate efforts and base actions on exemplary projects that make the population believe in the advantages and utility of getting involved.
- ✓ Listen to the reality and identify needs without making decisions on behalf of the population.
- ✓ Work towards reinforcing the population's competencies in terms of qualifications and citizenship.
- ✓ Make constant and consistent efforts to self-evaluate.

To practitioners

- ✓ Improve technical and relational skills for more effective intervention in local social problems.
- ✓ Make projects flexible by creating room for manoeuvre in training programmes in order to adjust them to the needs and concerns of the target populations.
- ✓ Be more independent in actions within the organisations to which one belongs.
- ✓ Know how to listen to the population and make active links between the obvious needs and the ways of dealing with them.
- ✓ Be able to assess projects while they are underway.
- ✓ Encourage communities to participate, valuing each individual's resources and making projects a space for participation.
- ✓ Give value to multiple cultures.
- ✓ Publicise the projects.

To those responsible for national and local policies and programmes

- ✓ Consider that there are different degrees of access to and absorption of information, which means increasing dissemination mechanisms to ensure that it reaches its targets.
- ✓ Formalise useful instances and occasions for participation and consultation.
- ✓ Regard forms of participation as essential to the projects effectiveness and efficiency.
- ✓ Make programmes more flexible and make it easier to include in them the knowledge gleaned from the participation processes.
- ✓ Ensure that financial measures and instruments associated with tackling poverty and social exclusion are more suited to this task.
- ✓ Make existing legislation more relevant, with a view to making the laws clearer and more transparent, and predict the cost implications of legislative change on participation (e.g. on recognising new professions and integrating them).
- ✓ Decentralise teams and make hands-on work more important.
- ✓ Make measures and programmes complementary (facilitating rural development, licensing, creation of companies, etc.)
- ✓ Guarantee inter-ministerial and inter-sectoral co-operation.
- ✓ Reduce bureaucracy.
- ✓ Take into account the points of view of local entrepreneurs, families and individual users.
- ✓ Promote self-employment, family businesses and monitoring of the targets set by the programmes.

To those in charge of European community programmes and policies

- ✓ Design programmes and interventions with specific components that facilitate participation prior to the development of projects.
- ✓ Make the eligibility requirements for programmes and supports flexible so as to facilitate the participation of those that are disadvantaged and socially excluded.
- ✓ Increase co-operation not only between northern countries but also with southern countries.
- ✓ Support projects that continue from others, so that they do not all have to start again from scratch.

Conclusions

All participants in the seminars showed a great deal of enthusiasm for the project and high expectations of the implementation of its recommendations. The opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences was extremely worthwhile and was important in sensitising people to the issues involved. Through the seminars it was possible to draw attention to the need for discussions on involvement and participation. These events also served to combat isolation among participants and to create a sense of unity in the fight against poverty and social exclusion.

FINLAND, THE WELFARE STATE AND POVERTY

Introduction

The traditionally dominant influence of the state in Finnish society means that citizen organisations (except for labour market organisations) and civic movements have a much weaker status than in countries such as Ireland and the Netherlands. In the Nordic welfare regime the public sector assumes greater responsibility for providing welfare services than in countries where families and the market have a more central significance. However, the general trend during the 1990s for increased family responsibility for welfare and for the market to offer more services can also be observed in Finland.

In accordance with the normative basis of the Nordic welfare model, the Finnish Government has no specific poverty or exclusion programme. The main aim of the entire social policy system is to prevent poverty. This is not achieved via specific programmes, but through high taxation and the provision of public welfare services that are usually free of charge. Opinions in the voluntary sector, however, differ widely from those of the state in relation to the need for a separate poverty and exclusion strategy or programme. This discrepancy emerges from divergent opinions on the seriousness of the problems involved, but also from the differing political perspectives held.

The information on which actions are based also differs. The fact that the statistics drawn upon by the government to help in planning and political decision-making are often very general and deliberately framed positively means that local information is lost and thus that final estimations may be average values which are inappropriate. "Second knowledge" as a means of capturing marginal tendencies has received much attention in our national seminars. Second knowledge is often inferred knowledge that surfaces in face-to-face meetings. Second knowledge arising from grass-roots level challenges official truths. Moreover, different sources of information imply a discussion of values. Since these affect interpretations, they need to be brought into the equation.

Some Issues Arising at the Seminars

The tendency in our seminars was to discuss ways of increasing influence and impact rather than consultation and involvement. The potential of representative democracy for involvement and influence should naturally be fully utilised, but numerous forms of direct influence are also required. The Finnish consulting or listening method often functions well to gather the views of different organisations. The fostering of genuine influence requires citizenship to be acknowledged regardless of status. In terms of influence and impact, the fight for publicity grows ever more crucial.

The goal of poverty programmes should not be to generate a unanimous view of matters, but to hear the voices of as many people as possible and to exert an influence on politics. The thriving tendency within the EU to develop new ways to "participate" raises questions about the benefits of these models. There is a danger that the government's status will become more powerful – at both national and local level. At the same time the status and importance of nation-states and districts, such as provinces, is blurring. Locality has a different meaning in Kivijärvi (1 500 inhabitants), than in, Helsinki (550 000 inhabitants). Locality and territoriality can also be seen as arenas of citizenship where people can be heard.

Our national seminars generated many important initiatives, both strategic and functional. The central objective of the Nordic welfare regime, i.e. equality of opportunities for people, is not always realised for the poor and excluded. There is a need for new discussion forums that facilitate straightforward contacts with the decision-making process. The issue of second knowledge at grass-roots level came up often during the seminars. Observing and monitoring methodologies need to be developed for this purpose. Information should also be easier to understand and made available in various forms.

One suggestion for action was that those looking after social assistance recipients' interests could represent the poor and help ensure that the legal complaints process is used more effectively. The

parties involved should be heard early enough and the barriers to influencing and participating, such as lack of money, should be eliminated. The state is primarily responsible for lowering the participating fees – it does, after all, subsidise political parties. Such a subsidy could perhaps be termed “influencing funds”. It is difficult to run even the best of projects without money. Although there might be EU funds forthcoming, small local communities are reluctant to apply for these as they are granted only retrospectively.

Conclusions

Influence in this context can be represented by the three dimensions of knowledge, influencing and politics. *Knowledge* contains two parts: (i) monitoring and observing to obtain direct knowledge of the circumstances, i.e. how people are doing on the grass-roots level, and (ii) observing politics and government. *Influencing* refers to those activities and operational models by which the poor, the excluded and their organisations can try to affect public sector planning and politics in the welfare state. Consulting, demonstrations and other interventions may all be involved here. The third dimension is *politics* or “programmes” in which strategies and ways of action are assessed.

Involving Excluded People and their Organisations in Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Policies

Combat Poverty Agency
working for the prevention
and elimination of poverty



The Department of
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