

**PROPOSAL FOR INCLUSION IN THE NATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR THE SPENDING OF
STRUCTURAL
FUNDS 1993-1997.**

COMBAT POVERTY AGENCY

NAME OF ORGANISATION:
ADDRESS:

Combat Poverty Agency
8 Charlemont Street, Dublin 2
Phone: (01) 783355
Fax: (01) 783731

Combat Poverty Agency
Library 710
Reference Only
Please Do Not Remove
From Library

INTRODUCTION

The Combat Poverty Agency has already submitted to the Department of Finance its concerns about the impact of the last round of Structural Funds on the unemployed, poor and those groups in society who are excluded from the mainstream social and economic life of the country. The Agency has submitted detailed recommendations on the changes it sees necessary in the regulations governing the next round of the Structural Funds if they are to achieve its priority objectives in relation to the long termed unemployed and other categories of marginalised groups. The Agency contends that any measures taken under the Structural Funds, be these in relation to tourism or roadways, should have actions within them to combat the problem of social and economic exclusion.

In addition to these indirect actions the Agency contends that direct action should be taken as part of the Delors 11 Strategy to eliminate social and economic exclusion. It is to this direct action that the Agency addresses this proposal. Specifically the Agency wants, through a Structural Fund allocation, to resolve a major weakness in the community sector and that is **the lack of adequate premises in which to carry out training and other activity targeting the long termed unemployed and local disadvantaged people.**

BACKGROUND

The Combat Poverty Agency Act 1986, outlines four general functions for the Agency. These are:

- a) advising and making recommendations to the Minister for Social Welfare on all aspects of economic and social planning in relation to poverty in the State;
- b) the initiation of measures aimed at overcoming poverty in the state and the evaluation of such measures;
- c) the examination of the nature ,causes and the extent of poverty in the State and for that purpose the promotion, commission and interpretation of research;
- d) the promotion of greater understanding of the nature and causes of poverty in the State and the measures necessary to overcome such poverty.

A detailed description of how the Agency translates these aims into practice is outlined in its fifth Annual Report for 1991.

The Agency has concluded that community development as a process involving disadvantaged groups has the potential to become a major mechanism in overcoming the problems such groups experience by being socially and economically marginalised.

In its task of initiating pilot schemes to combat social exclusion the Agency has funded a wide range of activity. These activities have the characteristic of directly involving individuals and communities whose condition could be described as multi-disadvantaged as a consequence of being outside the labour market. These projects include women's groups, unemployed groups and community groups whose aim is to socially and economically improve the position of their target groups.

In January 1990 the Department of Social Welfare established a Community Development Programme to fund community resource centres in disadvantaged areas. The programme was, to some extent, in response to the piloting work carried out by the Agency. The Agency is responsible for monitoring the work of these projects, providing ongoing support and has a role in relation to the evaluation of the projects and the programme.

These projects seek to bring about positive changes in their communities by increasing opportunities for those who are disadvantaged. They also aim to ensure that the state response to needs is relevant and effective. In 1992 the Community Development Programme became part of the EC Horizon Programme. The impact of this has been to enhance the community projects ability to relate to people marginalised from the labour market in an intensive way and to deliver programmes to them which act as stepping stones out of economic exclusion.

The projects all operate in areas of economic and social disadvantage and are located in inner city, suburban and rural areas.

The inner city areas would have suffered from the collapse of the local economy. Many of the traditional skills which the indigenous communities possess are no longer relevant to the emerging labour market. This alienation has produced antisocial behaviour which in turn limits the options on strategies available to revive the local economy.

Suburban areas are largely amorphous housing estates on the periphery of the mainstream economic and business activity. Frequently the local community organisations, if they exist at all, are poorly integrated into the statutory agencies who are responsible for delivering socioeconomic programmes into the locality .

Rural areas are marked by the changes in traditional farming methods and by a reliance on a tourist strategy the benefits of which do not trickle down to everyone. Serious obstacles to alternative economic strategies exist such as remoteness and isolation, distance from key institutions and emigration which tends to deprive the areas of energy and leadership.

- **The Community Development Projects, located in these areas, provide a means of local people getting involved in the social and economic development of their community at the most relevant level. They act as a catalyst to bring the social and the economic dimensions into a fruitful relationship with each other.**

It is in relation to the Community Development Programme and the pilot projects, funded by the Agency, that is the concern of this proposal.

STRUCTURAL FUND MEASURES

"I am afraid that economic growth and change which will hopefully be the result of the single market, will at the same time produce more social exclusion, which even the most ambitious social programmes will be inadequate to counteract unless there are fundamental changes in strategies being undertaken to combat exclusion".

- Professor Bent Rold Andersen (former Minister, Denmark)

"The social dimension (of the Structural Funds) seems to me to be quite clear in that our action consists essentially of attempting to reduce the inequalities which exists in our societies by promoting activities such as vocational training social and professional reintegration of groups in difficulty".

- George Katzourakis (Co-ordinator of the Community initiatives Human Resources)

In inviting submissions to help inform the new round of the Structural Funds the Department of Finance stressed that it is interested in strategies that :-

- maximize employment creation;
- maximise economic growth;
- assist the training of the long-termed unemployed.

These strategies are the means of achieving the five major priority objectives of the Structural Funds. The Agency have already in numerous research documents shown the link between poverty, exclusion and the condition of being long termed unemployed. The Agency has also shown that there is not an inevitable link between economic growth and employment creation.

The Agency is keen therefore to present a strategy within the measures to ensure that the benefit to the unemployed and economically marginalised is maximised.

THEMES

The Department of Finance have further asked for measures to be taken in and around the following themes :-

- a) Human Resource
- b) Infrastructure
- c) Industry and services
- d) Transport
- e) Tourism

It is certain that in devising operational plans around these strategies that measures will have to be taken that allow for the participation of the economically and socially excluded.

It is now widely accepted that to combat unemployment and its negative effects require **measures** of a multidimensional and integrated measures. It is also clear that in identifying the actions to achieve these measures an integrated approach is required which involves the active participation of the organisations who have the closest relationship with the unemployed and the excluded and who have the capacity to deliver relevant programmes.

Community development provides the mechanism for such an integrated approach. The potential of this programme is severely blocked by inadequate resources on both the capital side and the operational side. The Agency is proposing a strategy to address this problem.

PROPOSAL

The Agency is proposing that under the Structural Fund objectives one, three and four and operating under the measures a, b and c, above that the community development sector be funded so as to allow it to build, develop and operate, in selective project areas, fully equipped Socio/Economic Resource Centres.

The Resource Centres would have as their primary objectives the development of an integrated programme which would be aimed at breaking the cycle of deprivation which prevents the integration of some social groups into the dominant forms of economic activity. The provision of a learning environment of excellence is a prerequisite for the development of such a programme. Most of the community projects the Agency funds, either through the Community Development Programme or its pilot schemes, have to operate from rented accommodation whose size and space is totally inadequate to the programmes they operate. In addition a relatively high proportion of their funds leave the locality in the form of rent and other overheads. Although the proposal builds on the work of the CAP and its Horizon activities the same consideration are applicable to other projects operating in disadvantaged areas of low economic activity. The provision of such multi-purpose resource centres would allow for more refined targeted actions in relation both to income generation, labour market opportunities and an increase in the quality of life of the long termed unemployed. The following is a summary of such priority actions.

ACTIONS

1. The implementation of actions to break down the obstacles that prevent long term unemployed people from re-entering the mainstream social and economic life of the region.
2. The development of actions aimed at kindling the local economy so that the net income of the inhabitants will increase. The aim will be the development of viable socio/economic enterprise activities linked into training. This training will target young people outside the mainstream labour and the long termed unemployed whose skills are no longer relevant to the labour market.
3. The development of actions designed to increase the capacity of local disadvantaged communities to engage in partnerships with the private and statutory sector so as to allow for the efficient delivery of innovative programmes aimed at the needs of the long termed unemployed.
4. The development of actions that would tackle the internal mental and social blocks that cause the apathy that reinforces objective social and economic exclusion.

COSTS

Capital allocation	£28 million
Operational programme - (over four years)	£10 million

The capital costs relate to the building of a multi purpose resource buildings capable of housing pre-training and other relevant activity aimed at giving local people a stepping stone out of the exclusion they experience. The technical aid necessary to carry out all the preliminary work is also included in this costing. It is also anticipated that as well as the construction of new buildings, renovation and refurbishment of old buildings will also take place.

In both options there will be a strong local labour and training content. Thus the actual building process will act as a catalyst for both involving the long termed unemployed and contributing to a rekindling of the local economy.

The operational costs refer to the total cost of the activities and some of these activities will build on the achievements of the present Horizon Programme of which the Agency is a part.

It is envisaged that 35 to 50 community groups will benefit from the allocation of the Structural Funds in this way.

The costs can be broken down into specific areas of expenditure under a more detailed action plan.