



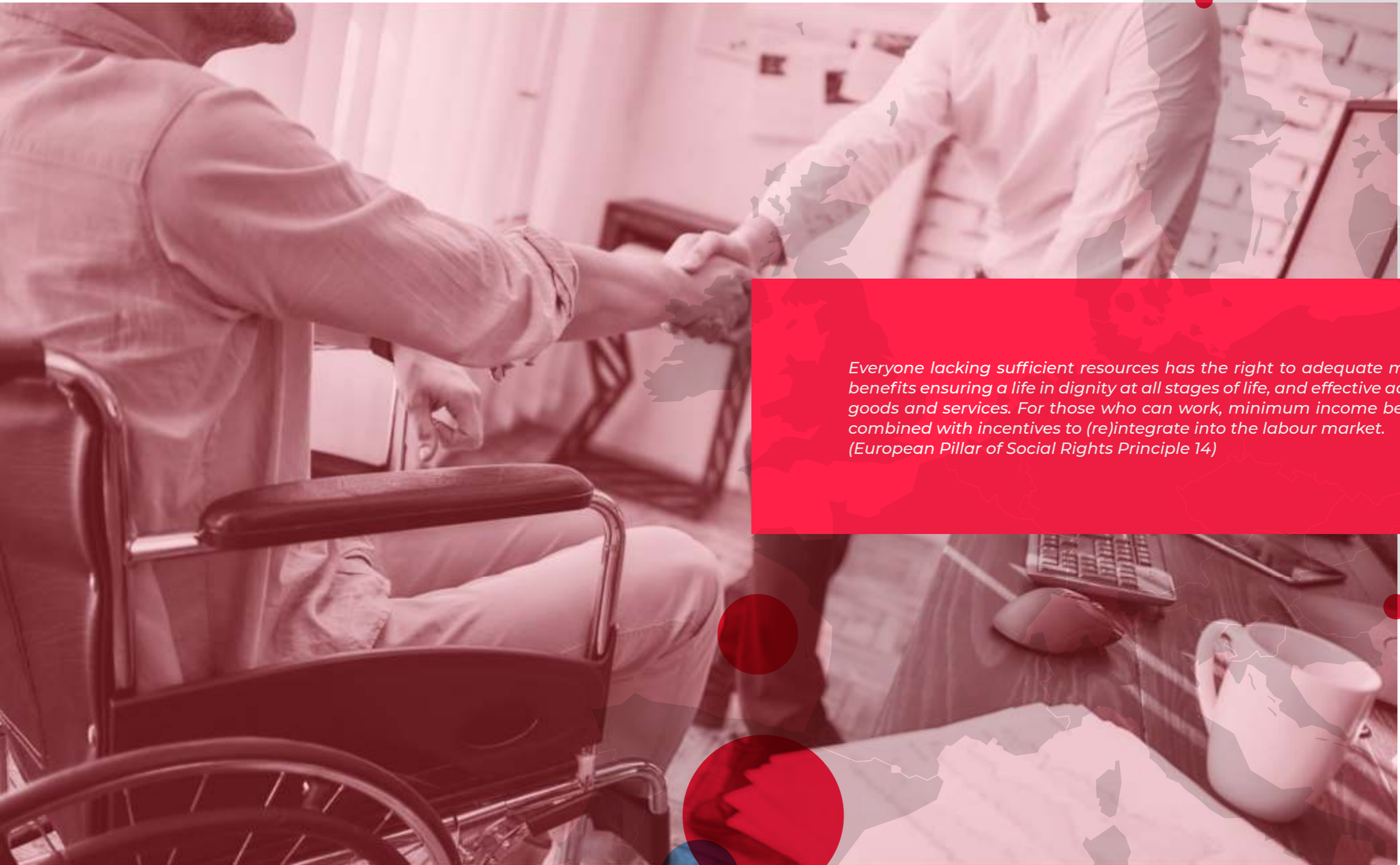
# PARTNERSHIPS FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION

**Integrated Minimum Income and  
Social Services Programmes**



Co-funded by  
the European Union

[www.esn-eu.org](http://www.esn-eu.org)



*Everyone lacking sufficient resources has the right to adequate minimum income benefits ensuring a life in dignity at all stages of life, and effective access to enabling goods and services. For those who can work, minimum income benefits should be combined with incentives to (re)integrate into the labour market.  
(European Pillar of Social Rights Principle 14)*

## About the European Social Network (ESN)

The European Social Network (ESN) is the independent network for local public social services in Europe. It brings together the organisations that plan, deliver, finance, manage, research, and regulate local public social services, including health, social welfare, employment, education and housing. We support the development of effective social policy and social care practice through the exchange of knowledge and expertise.

## About this report

This report assesses integrated social inclusion programmes for people receiving or qualifying for minimum income support. It presents how social benefits such as minimum income can be combined with social services programmes to ensure the effective social inclusion of people who may be at risk of poverty or social exclusion. It reviews existing European and national social inclusion policies and provides examples of local integrated social inclusion programmes. As part of this analysis, it also looks at reasons for non-take up of benefits and how access to social support can be improved. This report is based on a literature review, social services' responses to an ESN questionnaire circulated in April and May 2022 as well as inputs collected at our annual seminar held in Bordeaux, France, on 26 – 27 September 2022.

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## Many thanks to

the following persons who contributed to this report:

**Bettina Steffel**, City of Vienna, Department of Social Welfare, Social and Public Health Law, Austria

**Josee Goris**, Federal Planning Service for Social Integration, Belgium

**Koen Geirnaert**, City of Ghent, Belgium

**Katica Lažeta**, Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, Croatia

**Zorana Uzelac Bošnjak**, City of Zagreb, Office for Social Protection, Health, War Veterans and Persons with Disabilities, Croatia

**Elsbeth Nebeling**, City of Esbjerg, Denmark

**Jakob Gudbrand**, City of Odense, Denmark

**Virginie Monnié**, Seine-Maritime County Council, France

**Minna Kivipelto**, National Institute for Health and Welfare, Finland

**Andreas Krampe**, German Association for Public and Private Welfare, Germany

**Dirk Schumacher**, City of Cologne on behalf of the Conference of Social Welfare Directors in large cities, Germany

**Evdoxia Ioannidou**, City of Athens, Greece

**Gabriel Amitsis**, University of West Attica - Social Administration Research Lab, Greece

**Georgios Vellis**, Municipality of Fyli, Greece

**Carmine De Blasio**, Local Consortium of Social Services, A5 Atripalda, Campania Region, Italy

**Liliana Di Fede**, Bolzano Social Services (ASSB), Italy

**Emmanuel Cornelius**, City of Esch sur Alzette, Luxemburg

**Alexandra Castro**, Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa, Portugal

**Carmen Ciornei**, Cluj-Napoca City Council, Directorate for Social and Health Services, Romania

**Liljana Rihter**, Faculty of Social Work, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

**Darja Korva**, Association of Centres for Social Work (CCSW), Slovenia

**Sonia Oriola**, Catalan Association of Municipalities, Spain

**Lluís Torrens Mèlich**, Barcelona City Council, Spain

**Sara Pinilla Tabares**, Regional Government of Castilla-La Mancha, Spain

**María Almela Martínez**, SAMU Foundation, Spain

**Sara Buesa Rodriguez**, Basque Employment Services, Spain

**Andreu Horrach Torrens**, Ministry of Social Affairs and Sports of the Balearic Islands Government, Spain

**Jose Sánchez Serrano**, Fundación Secretariado Gitano, Spain

**Joseba Zalakain**, SIIIS Applied Research Centre, Spain

**Andrés Carbonero**, Regional Government of Navarra, Spain

**Mar Ureña Campaña**, Madrid City Council, Spain

**Miguel Angel Manzano Rodríguez**, Barcelona Provincial Council, Spain

**Graham Owen**, Association of Directors of Social Welfare Services, Sweden

**Mats Eriksson**, City of Linköping, Research and Development Centre in Care and Social Work, Sweden

**Maja Bjarneby**, City of Stockholm, Sweden

## Country Abbreviations

AT Austria

BE Belgium

CZ Czech Republic

DE Germany

DK Denmark

ES Spain

EL Estland

FI Finland

FR France

HR Croatia

HU Hungary

IE Ireland

IT Italy

LV Latvia

MT Malta

NL The Netherlands

PL Poland

RO Romania

SE Sweden

SI Slovenia

UK United Kingdom



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# INTRODUCTION

## About this report

Activating and enabling social services play a vital role in lifting the most vulnerable people out of poverty and social exclusion (Council of the European Union, 2020). Combining minimum income, or similar financial benefits schemes, with accompanying social services support in an integrated manner, helps to build an enabling ecosystem that fosters the economic and social inclusion of minimum income beneficiaries.

In this report, we will discuss how the different services available to people in situations of poverty or social exclusion can work together to support them in an integrated way to achieve the greatest possible impact.

## Methodology

This publication is based on literature research, a questionnaire developed to gather data and information from ESN members on legislation, policy and practice related to integrated inclusion programmes for minimum income beneficiaries in their countries, as well as input from group work at our annual seminar.

The survey implemented in March and April 2022 gathered data on integrated support programmes from 35 respondent organisations in 15 countries: Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, France, Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden.

Different types of organisations answered the questionnaire. Most were public authorities at the local (17), regional (6) and national (4) levels. Other respondents included non-governmental organisations (4), an association of service directors (1), and universities/applied research centres (3). The information gathered, though not fully representative of all European countries, provides an overview of ongoing trends and issues in the planning, design and implementation of integrated social inclusion programmes combining minimum income and social services for the most vulnerable populations across our societies. For further information on the organisations that answered the questionnaire, please see Annex I.

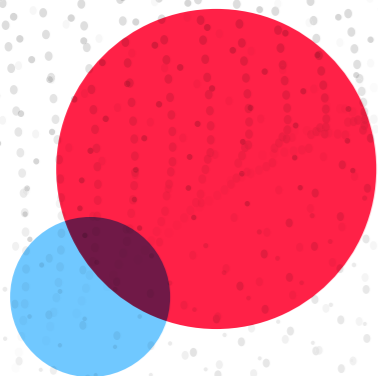
## Theme

The report starts by outlining and defining key concepts and features of minimum income support schemes. The second part covers the requirements to improve coordination and provide integrated support programmes.

The third part takes stock of EU policy guidance on minimum income and integrated social inclusion, while the fourth part describes recent reforms in European countries on integrating minimum income with social services.

Next, we analyse how integrated social support for beneficiaries of minimum income and socially vulnerable people is provided in practice at national and local levels.

In the final part of the publication, we conclude with recommendations for local, national and European policymakers to advance integrated social inclusion programmes for minimum income beneficiaries.



## ESN's work on integrated social inclusion

This publication is part of a large body of work of the European Social Network (ESN) on integrated ways of supporting the social inclusion of people furthest from the labour market, including those receiving minimum income.

From 2006 to 2007, ESN held a series of seminars on social inclusion covering issues such as access to quality services, anti-discrimination and integration, social and employment activation and child poverty and protection, leading to the set-up of a working group on 'active inclusion and employment' that got together over the years 2008 and 2009. The outcomes of the working group were published in the report '[Realising potential](#)', which covered insights from practitioners on bringing active inclusion to action at the local level. It highlighted the importance of welcoming, coordinated and comprehensive services and of working closely with individuals to identify how to help them make progress. It stresses the value of working with all relevant stakeholders and points to the shortcomings of siloed approaches. It was based on the views of ESN members brought together in the ESN policy & practice working group on active inclusion.

In 2012, ESN conducted a policy review on the impact of the 2008 Commission Recommendation on '[Active Inclusion of People Excluded from the Labour Market](#)' in eight European countries and identified the following challenges for public services working with people furthest from the labour market:

1. Finding an adequate level of income for those who can and those who cannot work;
2. Coordination of services (social, employment, education, housing, health);
3. Working closely with people taking account of their individual circumstances to help them make progress towards inclusion in the labour market and in the community as a whole.



The assessment found that the impact of the EU active inclusion recommendation had been limited in most countries except in Finland, Spain and Portugal, where it was an important incentive to redirect and enhance national social policy through an integrated and comprehensive approach combining adequate income support, inclusive labour markets and access to quality services.

In 2015, ESN responded to the European Commission's consultation in preparation of the 2016 European Council Recommendation on the '[Integration of Long-term Unemployed People in the Labour Market](#)'. In its response to this consultation, ESN highlighted that activation based only on employment does not offer a real opportunity for people furthest from the labour market to be socially included, especially for those where participation in the labour market is limited for example due to care responsibilities, or health related issues. Therefore, it is key to shift policy and practice from activation focused solely on employment to an 'inclusive activation' approach.

In 2018, ESN held a seminar on '[Inclusive Activation](#)', where we analysed what we meant by this concept, specifically how people furthest from the labour market are supported in a holistic manner which is adapted to their

needs, where social, health, education, housing and employment services are all considered relevant in promoting their social inclusion.

The concept of 'inclusive activation', as implemented by many ESN members, is built on six principles: adequate income support, personalised plan, access to quality services, inclusive labour markets, holistic view of needs and integrated services. People furthest from the labour market are often not properly supported by mainstream employment services. Therefore, public social services play a key role in leading inclusive activation, reaching

out to disadvantaged populations to support them into employment through integrated social inclusion programmes. This seminar led to the publication of an '[Inclusive Activation Toolkit](#)', providing guidance and practice examples on inclusion strategies of people furthest from the labour market.

In 2021, during the annual European Social Services Conference, ESN organised an online debate on '[integrated minimum income and social services programmes](#)', which led to the publication of a briefing. The briefing highlighted that coordination between sectors and collaboration between professionals requires regulatory frameworks, a shared vision, shared tools and electronic data management systems. It concluded that integrated minimum income and social services programmes should be approached from the perspective of social inclusion so that these models guarantee access to an integrated set of adequate financial support, social services, and labour market support.

ESN is currently a partner of two EU funded social innovation projects supporting the set-up of local social inclusion programmes for minimum income beneficiaries, namely 'Reticulate' in Tuscany (Italy) and 'xEITU' in Asturias (Spain) with responsibility for benchmarking other international practices for the development of the regional models.



# PARTNERSHIPS FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION: Integrated Minimum Income and Social Services



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report addresses central concepts and implementation of integrated social inclusion programmes including the adequacy and take-up of minimum income and social services as well as inclusive activation and partnerships across services involved in social and labour market inclusion. Those concepts are built on the realisation that financial support alone is often not sufficient to ensure the full participation in society of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

Minimum income is a financial safety net provided by public authorities for people who do not have sufficient income and no access to unemployment benefits or support. According to the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) Principle 14: “Everyone lacking sufficient resources has the right to adequate minimum income benefits ensuring a life in dignity at all stages of life...”. But financial support alone is not sufficient to support people’s social inclusion. Vulnerable populations facing homelessness, disability, substance abuse, poor health, or care responsibilities are often not properly supported by mainstream employment services to access the labour market, since activation grounded only on employment does not offer a real opportunity for integration into all aspects of community life. Therefore, ESN put forward the concept of inclusive activation built on six principles: adequate income support, personalised plan, access to quality services, inclusive labour markets, holistic view of needs and integrated services.

In a similar manner, EPSR principle 14, not only stipulates the right to minimum income, but also the right to “effective access to enabling goods and services”, such as social work, counselling, coaching, mentoring, psychological support, rehabilitation and other general enabling services, including early childhood education and care, healthcare, long

term care, education and training, and housing. Local social services are often responsible for providing these enabling services while minimum income is often provided by national authorities. Coordination and integration of the different organisations, services and authorities involved can help to optimise the support provided. All EU countries now have a (more or less) comprehensive set of measures to support households at risk of social exclusion due to financial difficulties. However, evidence shows that there is scope for improvement in most EU countries. In 2022, the European Commission proposed a Council Recommendation on adequate minimum income to support national governments in ensuring active inclusion of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion in a more integrated manner.

Local social services are key partners for the implementation of integrated social inclusion programmes. An ESN questionnaire found that they are involved in different stages of support such as needs assessments, and the design of social and labour market inclusion support for minimum income beneficiaries. The level of cooperation between services at local level is highly dependent on the type of services involved. While for job counselling and job training well-structured cooperation through joint assessment or in one-stop-shops is common, this is not the case for others, in particular for childcare services, schools, health and addiction support services. Apart from highly structured one-stop-shops, where agencies work together to jointly deliver services in joint teams or through shared case management systems, collaboration is frequently based on informal agreements and professional networks, but this type of agreement is highly dependent on individuals’ willingness to collaborate. By formalising collaborations between organisations, integrated support can become more sustainable. Below we provide a series of recommendations for European, national and local policymakers with responsibility for integrated social inclusion support programmes.

## European Commission

### Foster integrated support

- Ensure Member States invest in integrated support for people at risk of poverty and social exclusion such as beneficiaries of minimum income, through recommendations provided in the framework of the European Semester policy coordination cycle, national programmes funded by EU Recovery Funds, and programmes supported by the European Social Fund Plus.

### Implementation of EU policies

- Ensure Member States implement latest EU policies such as the upcoming Council Recommendations on adequate minimum income, by creating a robust monitoring system to support effective implementation, through the Social Protection Committee and relevant country specific recommendations issued by the European Commission to national governments. In addition, the Commission should look at promoting monitoring frameworks that assess the situation holistically covering at least three pillars: social rights legislation, economic investment, and coverage along the lines of ESN’s proposed ‘Rights-Economic Investment-Coverage (REC) Index’.

### Reducing (perceived) barriers to data exchange for integrated inclusion

- Clarify the impact of data protection obligations under EU legislation on collaboration and data exchange between authorities and services responsible for providing support for people at risk of poverty and social exclusion, such as beneficiaries of minimum income.



## National Governments

### Implementation of EPSR Principle 14

- Establish national programmes which are aligned to the European Council Recommendation on adequate minimum income, which includes proposals on integrated support for minimum income beneficiaries through adequate income support, inclusive labour markets, and access to quality services. This should happen in close collaboration with sub-national authorities.

### Provide adequate Minimum Income

- Establish procedures to determine the adequacy of minimum financial support required for a life in dignity, taking into account the increasing costs of living, for instance by considering providing some form of indexation.

### Foster take-up and accessibility

- Foster take-up and accessibility by proactively informing potential beneficiaries about available minimum income support.
- Reduce the complexity of application procedures to minimum income schemes. Organise media campaigns that address societal bias against minimum income beneficiaries. Provide support for the completion of application forms through public social service front offices.
- Reach out to potential beneficiaries through campaigns, invitation letters, proactive home visits and collaboration with third sector organisations.
- Establish a network of referral professionals across sectors for citizens and, for example GPs, who can refer potential clients to social services.

### Digitise access to benefits

- Digitise application procedures to facilitate access to social benefits. For instance, a national platform could be used to by



applicants to file their request. Digital application procedures can be supported through digital helpers such as chat bots, but onsite services should remain available for those unable to use online application forms. Investments in automatic detection of needs i.e. through data exchange on payment defaults of private households and proactive provision of social benefits and social services can increase the take-up of benefits.

### Access to enabling services and personalised support

- Provide access to enabling services such as social work, education, childcare, health, and housing and offer individualised support, based on needs assessment, assisted by a case manager, to improve social inclusion.

### Improve governance between administrations

- Establish programmes improving coordination of minimum income, social and labour market support programmes.
- Strengthen the operational capacity of authorities responsible for income support, employment services and social services and enhancing their cooperation through data sharing while also promoting further integrated service models across administrations. For this to happen effectively, national governments should develop a legislative framework that enables collaboration and joint working between authorities across administrative levels.

### Improve data exchange

- Establish a legislative framework to allow to create integrated IT systems that enables professionals in public employment and social services to access and update data of jointly supported beneficiaries.

### Collaboration with local services

- Collaborate closely with regional and local social services to ensure beneficiaries receive support in an integrated manner.

This means for example that local authorities are involved in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of minimum income and social inclusion programmes. Local authorities should have sufficient financing to provide enabling social services that complement financial support made available through national minimum income schemes. They should have shared access to data gathered by national social services to address the multiple needs of minimum income beneficiaries.

## Local Authorities

### Implementation of EU policies

- Contribute to the implementation of EU policies regarding minimum income. The EU provides a number of funding programmes such as the ESF+, that can be used by local authorities to experiment with new ways of working. Local authorities can tap into EU funding to test and introduce integrated social support programmes. The EU regularly consults with local authorities and other key agencies on the implementation of EU social policies. Local authorities should participate in such consultations.

### Set up local integrated support strategies, programmes and partnerships

- Set up one-stop-shops, joint needs assessment and case management involving different public authorities such as youth, social, housing, and employment services. Map all available support services and create or re-design the network of partnerships with key agencies such as training bodies, employers, providers, local services.

### Case Management

- Determine a professional responsible follow the person in need along its trajectory. This person should have an overview of what support is provided and should have

access to all relevant information. The case manager, usually a social worker, should function as a professional of reference who can accompany beneficiaries to navigate the support system.

### Joint teams & training

- Establish joined-up teams of multiple professionals from different services who meet and train together to facilitate joint working, increase the ownership of staff in relation to integrated working, foster team spirit and bring staff closer together.

### Formalise collaboration between agencies

- Set up joint partnership agreements to clearly define responsibilities regarding the integrated provision of support for minimum income beneficiaries. Such partnerships could include agreements on which data can be shared between organisations and how it should be stored. This can facilitate the exchange of data required to jointly support beneficiaries.

### Joint Vision

- Support the creation of a joint vision of all stakeholders involved. A joint mission statement of all organisations involved and signed by representatives of each organisation can lead to a sense of togetherness for organisations that were initially separate entities. The role of leadership is decisive when setting up integrated programmes. The management level should clearly communicate to staff how new integrated working methods will be implemented. A joint programme logo can also show externally that the different organisations now work jointly for a common goal.

### Co-design and Co-production

- Put in place a consultation and engagement plan of the integrated programme with all relevant stakeholders from employment and social services, including beneficiaries in relation to planning and design, delivery and evaluation. Both the programme and the professionals should adapt to the needs of different populations such as youth, families, single parents and migrants. The beneficiaries of these integrated forms of support are experts by experience and can help public social services design more effective services. Therefore, they need to be active participants in the development and monitoring of their personalised integrated social inclusion plans. When considering the involvement of the beneficiary in discussing the individual activation plan, requirements and agreed goals have to be realistic and viable in practice. To ensure beneficiaries feel ownership of their inclusion plan, beneficiaries should feel welcome and considered as equal partners during the formulation of the agreement.

### Outreach to potential beneficiaries

- Support professionals to visit (potential) clients in their homes, for instance those who may need services based on an assessment of the needs of people supported by social services. This can be done through mobile units of professionals who leave centres and go into their communities.

# 1. SECURING ADEQUATE INCOME: KEY PROGRAMMES

All European countries now have a (more or less) comprehensive set of measures to support households at risk of social exclusion due to financial difficulties. These measures can be grouped mostly into two types: social insurance and social support measures. Social insurance schemes protect workers that have paid sufficient contributions while employed, and in case of unemployment can access unemployment benefits. Social support schemes are not linked to contributions. These are generally means-tested and aim to protect households from poverty (IMF, 2021). Social support schemes, which are the focus of this publication, are varied in nature and cover not just minimum income support but an integrated set of measures including enabling and supporting services.

## 1.1 Minimum Income Schemes

The most common social support measures are Minimum Income Schemes (MIS). MISs are currently implemented in all 27 EU Member States, albeit with significant variations in

adequacy, coverage, take-up, and coordination with labour market activation measures and enabling goods and services (Konle-Seidl, 2021). Even with these differences, all over Europe MISs play the role of a support programme aimed at protecting working-age households from poverty. As the International Monetary Fund puts it, its primary objective is “to provide households with enough income to prevent them falling into poverty” (IMF, 2021). MIS may also be conceptualised as a tool to support people in work, with or without conditionality. Minimum Income Schemes are mostly national or regional programmes but may be implemented at all governance levels with varying degrees of responsibility at local, county, regional or national levels.

Konle-Seidl (2021) provided an overview of the role played by MISs within different policy contexts. In the following table, her overview has been integrated with recent policy reforms for a more complete overview.



## Table 1: Overview of recent minimum income reforms in Europe

1. In countries where working-age people who are capable of working can count on well-implemented primary income replacement benefits, MISs operate as lower-tier programmes and have mainly an anti-poverty function. This is the case in the Nordic countries, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. In these countries, the MIS plays a residual role, as ‘higher tier social protection systems’ (unemployment, disability or social inclusion programmes) are much more relevant in promoting the social inclusion of beneficiaries.
2. In Anglophone countries (UK, IE) and Germany a means-tested MIS is targeted to the working-age population able to work and combines non-contributory unemployment and social support benefits. In Ireland, the Supplementary Welfare Allowance is a residual non-contributory minimum income programme, while the most relevant measure to support those in need is the non-contributory Jobseeker’s Allowance. In the UK, in the last few years, Universal Credit has replaced Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA), Child Tax Credit, Housing Benefit, Income Support, income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and Working Tax Credit. In Germany, the unemployed working-age population is covered by a means-tested welfare benefit called the Basic Income Scheme for Jobseekers (the central element of the German minimum income benefit system), while those unable to work and older people can count on a basic income scheme ‘Social Assistance’, specifically targeted to them (Raitano, M. et al., 2021; Social Code - Book XII - Social Assistance). According to the IMF (2021), MISs in these countries can be integrated with targeted support for specific households (for example, households with children or where a member may have a disability or single parents). In Germany, in November 2022 the government established a minimum income scheme called Citizens’ Income, bringing together the Basic income scheme for Jobseekers and the Social Assistance. It also provides an adaptation of benefits to increased cost of living and shifts the focus from quick labour market activation towards a more training-oriented approach ensuring a more sustainable labour market placement in higher qualified jobs. This new approach will follow the principle of ‘training before low-skilled jobs’. The Citizens’ Income will be implemented in two steps in January and June 2023 (Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2022).
3. In other European countries such as Austria or France the system is organised through a complex network of schemes with different schemes for different populations such as people able to work and not able to work. MISs take effect when other insurance benefits have been exhausted. As described by the IMF (2021), France has a network of different measures where the most important is the Revenu de Solidarité Active (RSA), a government aid to encourage unemployed and underemployed people to find work or increase their income. It is accompanied by other means-tested minimum income benefits such as the ‘Allocation de Solidarité Spécifique’, which provides additional support to those that have exhausted their unemployment insurance and meet certain criteria, the Allocation de Solidarité aux Personnes Agées, which provides income support for the over 65s and the Allocation aux Adultes Handicapés, which provides income support for people with disabilities. The Revenu Universel d’Activité (RUA) is set to come into force in 2023 merging several social benefits, including the RSA.
4. In Eastern Europe, MISs tend to cover often only small segments of the population with generally targeted, patchy and incomplete measures.
5. In Southern Europe, following the example of the most advanced EU countries, recent reforms have introduced new universal minimum income schemes. This is the case in Italy (Reddito di Cittadinanza - 2019), Spain (Ingreso Mínimo Vital – 2020, the first national programme in a country where regional MISs have been developed for the past 15 years), and Greece (Guaranteed Minimum Income Scheme – 2017).

## Adequate minimum income

A key issue widely described in the literature refers to the risk that generous cash benefits can lead to work disincentives: unemployed people can refuse to take up employment as, once employed, they might lose their financial benefits. This depends on “the generosity of benefits, how quickly generosity is reduced as income increases, and how earnings are taxed(...)”. Empirical evidence finds that such work disincentives are particularly important for low-income and secondary (typically female) workers” (IMF, 2021). When these disincentives overcome the benefits of taking up employment or training, minimum income beneficiaries risk being caught in a ‘poverty trap’. To reduce this risk, almost all EU Member States have linked the access of employable beneficiaries to MISs to involvement in measures intended to foster their employability or different forms of activation for the community. Moreover, in several countries part of the income generated by labour is disregarded from the count in the means-test formula: it is used to help people move progressively from benefits into work, allowing them, in general for a fixed period, to accept paid activities avoiding a reduction in benefits.

Regarding protection from poverty, these schemes have proved to be key in the context of economic shocks, such as the 2008-2010 financial crisis or of the Covid-19 pandemic, where they have played a vital role not only in protecting households from poverty as a consequence of lockdowns but also in supporting the economy: “income support schemes have been crucial in mitigating economic hardship. They have contributed to stabilising the economy by supporting aggregate demand” (ILO-OECD, 2020).

In its publication on inclusive activation, ESN (2019) recognised that adequate income support is an important element in supporting people’s social inclusion, especially when it comes to preventing the multigenerational transmission of poverty. There are different models of financial support in EU countries to ensure a minimum standard of living. These vary from minimum income schemes to other types of non-contributory means-tested benefits for people of working age. However, as noted in a study published by the European Commission, in many countries, “the generosity and coverage of minimum income

schemes seems to have been reduced as a result of financial retrenchment in recent years” (European Commission 2016). Cuts in national budgets have reduced the level of financial support or have led to increased conditionality (ESN 2019).

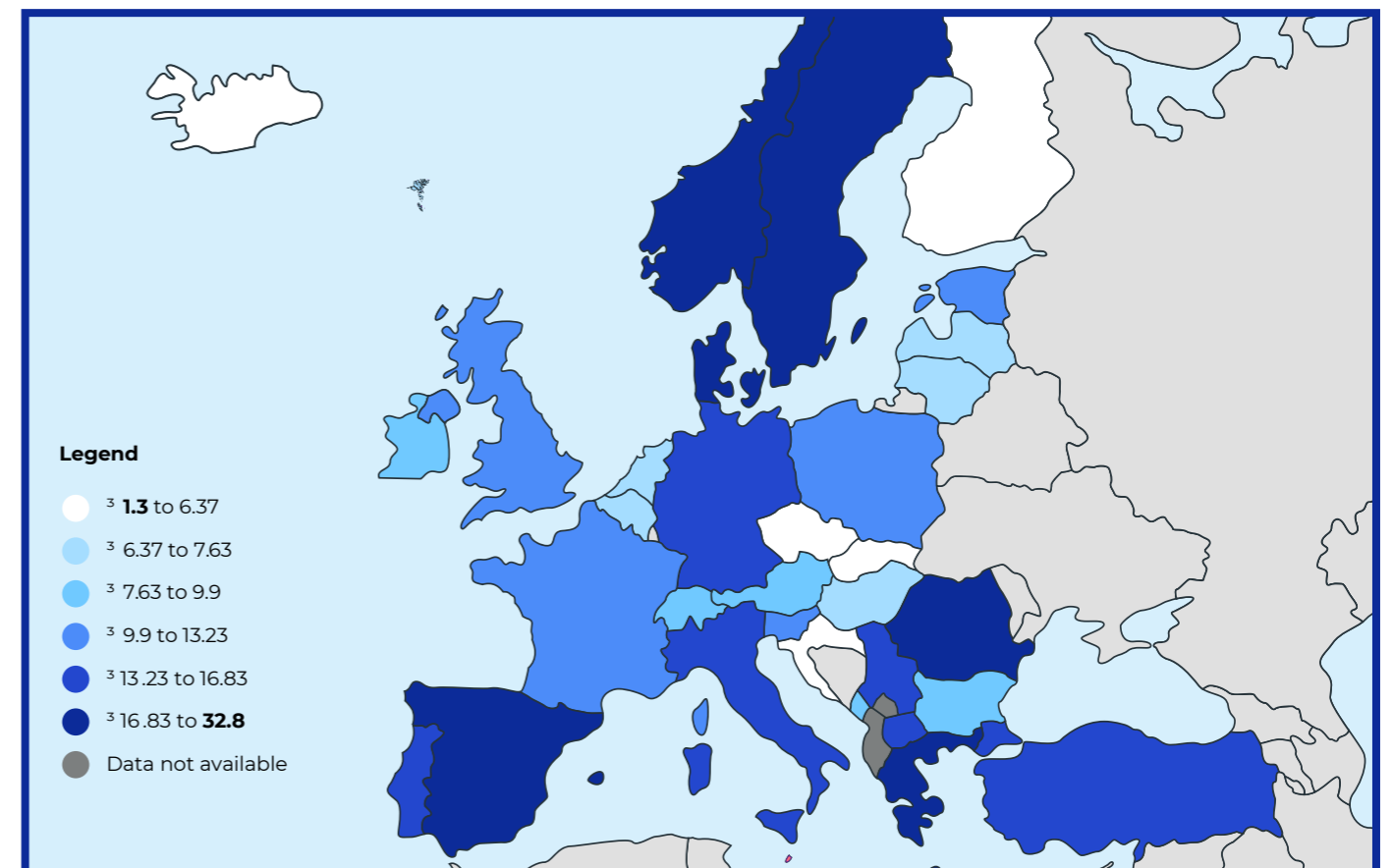
It is crucial to guarantee the social inclusion of people in vulnerable situations furthest from the labour market. This population can benefit significantly from access to good quality social services. Too often ‘access to quality services’, recognised as one of three key pillars by the European Commission in its 2008 Active Inclusion Recommendation, is the one that has been most disregarded. Comparative studies evidence that MIS is much more effective when combined with social support services,

but in many countries, services remain highly fragmented, insufficiently coordinated or integrated or not available (EMIN, 2015; Figari, 2013; Crepaldi et al., 2017). Access to high-quality social services is important in guaranteeing quality of life for beneficiaries of minimum income, but as highlighted in ESN’s (2012) review of the implementation of the Active Inclusion Recommendation, the combination of minimum income with social services remains problematic for the most vulnerable populations with whom social services work ESN.

Likewise, in the current context, having a job is not always sufficient to eliminate the risk of poverty or social exclusion, since the rate of those in work who are at risk of poverty remains high in several European countries (Crepaldi et al., 2017).



**Figure 1: In-work at-risk-of-poverty rate by age and sex**



Source of data: EU-SILC survey (2020), (online data code: ILC\_IW01) Sex: Total Age class: 18 years or over

## 1.2 Universal Basic Income

In the context of financial support for those in need, the **universal and unconditional basic income** has taken centre stage in the policy debate. As the UNESCO (2021) puts it, “The idea of a universal basic income (UBI) – a flat, unconditional stipend periodically given to every legal resident in a country to stay above the poverty line – is not new. It has long stayed, however, on the policy fringe. Covid-19 has changed that”. Over the past two years several countries in fact introduced different variations of temporary basic income as a crisis measure to cushion the immediate social and economic damage of the Covid-19 pandemic. According to the network BIEN, a Basic Income should have 5 key characteristics:

1. **Periodic:** It is paid at regular intervals (for example every month), not as a one-off grant.
2. **Cash payment:** It is paid in an appropriate medium of exchange, allowing those who receive it to decide what they spend it on. It is not, therefore, paid either in kind (such as food or services) or in vouchers dedicated to a specific use.
3. **Individual:** It is paid on an individual basis—and not, for instance, to households.
4. **Universal:** It is paid to all, without means test.
5. **Unconditional:** It is paid without a requirement to work or to demonstrate willingness to work.

In many European countries, there is an increasing debate concerning the viability of introducing a **universal and unconditional basic income** due to the evolution of the labour market linked to digitalisation, where work may not always be possible, the difficulties that some beneficiaries of minimum income may face to access work, or the increasing numbers of informal carers (Colombino U., 2019; Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2021).

There have been attempts in Europe to experiment with an UBI in Finland and the Netherlands.

- In 2017 and 2018, the Finnish government experimented with a universal and unconditional monthly payment of 560 EUR. The pilot project involved 2,000 unemployed persons regardless of any other income or whether they were actively looking for work. The basic income recipients were selected through random sampling among those who in November 2016 received an unemployment benefit from the social benefits agency KELA (Kangas, O. Jauhiainen, Signe S., M., 2020). The evaluation found that beneficiaries experienced less mental strain and more positive perception of their economic welfare than those who did not receive it but there was no positive impact on their access to the labour market.
- There have been several UBI pilots in The Netherlands. In 2017 the City of Utrecht tested different conditional and non-conditional schemes with five test groups: One group of benefit recipients remained on the traditional workfare regime under certain obligations whilst another group received the same benefits unconditionally without sanctions or obligations. A third group also received the same benefits unconditionally and an extra monthly bonus of 125 EUR if they did volunteering work. A fourth group was obliged to do volunteering work in order not to lose their 125 EUR bonus. A fifth group received unconditional benefits without the bonus, while being allowed to earn additional income from other jobs. Similar experiments have been conducted in other Dutch cities such as Wageningen, Tilburg, Groningen, and Nijmegen (Crepaldi, C. et al., 2017). However, there has not been any evaluation.

In addition to the debate on achievable outcomes for social inclusion, other key issues related to the UBI are how to finance it and whether it should be part of wider system of social support measures or a stand-alone programme.



## 2. IMPROVING COORDINATION OF MINIMUM INCOME AND SOCIAL SERVICES PROGRAMMES

### 2.1 Barriers faced by minimum income beneficiaries

Often confronted with multiple social problems, minimum income beneficiaries require more than monetary support to get out of their precarious situation. Access to enabling services such as childcare, healthcare, housing, professional training and job counselling is for many vulnerable persons a precondition for their participation in the labour market and society.

Eurofound (2015) has evidenced the difficulties faced by minimum income beneficiaries in their path towards social inclusion. The most vulnerable among minimum income beneficiaries **are people who are unable to work due to several life circumstances**, such as disability, ill mental health, care responsibilities or belonging to a particularly disadvantaged population, such as homeless people and undocumented migrants. They may also lack training/education or have to deal with addiction or debt. All these circumstances may create barriers to access the support they need to live a life in dignity and difficulties entering and retaining employment.

A **holistic consideration of the overall needs of the whole household** seems to be widely recognised as a success factor in supporting people into employment together with a **case management approach**.

The key element of case management is the ability to integrate specific services depending on the needs of the household such as: free childcare, home care for dependent relatives, support to schooling of children, free childcare or free meals at schools, healthcare support, transport support, or legal and financial advice.

Support measures including activation should be available to all household members, with targeted measures for each of them according to their needs. For the long-term unemployed, specific personalised support that combines a selection of less to more demanding measures has proved to be successful in helping them towards work. Crucial to the success is the cooperation between social and employment services, and the cooperation with the employers on a continuous basis (ICF and Istituto per la Ricerca Sociale, 2019).

Currently these measures are, in most cases, still managed and provided separately for the various populations who can be activated through different services and administrations.

A review of progress in implementing the Commission Recommendation 2008/867/EC, carried out in 2017 found that integrated and comprehensive policy measures for disadvantaged people need to be further developed, and it highlighted the need for close cooperation and the active involvement of all relevant partners (European Commission, 2017a).

### 2.2 From labour market activation to social inclusion

The evolution of the labour market, the introduction of austerity measures during the financial crisis, and the impact of Covid-19 on the labour market limited the potential of an active inclusion approach. This approach has also been linked to the introduction of measures narrowly focused on employment through the increase in conditionality and sanctions. For instance, several countries have introduced an obligation to take up public work or any kind of work as a condition for receiving minimum income support. According to the European

Minimum Income Network (EMIN), these measures do not increase people's chances to return to the labour market, considering those affected by serious personal and health difficulties (EMIN, 2015).

ESN, in its research on activation, emphasised that activation grounded only on employment programmes does not offer a real opportunity for social inclusion to people furthest from the labour market.

*“Activation grounded only on employment does not offer a real opportunity to people furthest from the labour market to be socially included, especially for those in a situation where participation in the labour market is limited. Therefore, it is key to shift policy and practice from activation focused solely on employment to an ‘inclusive activation’ approach. This means that people furthest from the labour market are supported in a holistic manner which is adapted to their needs, where social, health, education, housing and employment services are all considered relevant in promoting their social inclusion. (ESN, 2019)”*

In 2012, ESN undertook a review of the active inclusion approach promoted by the European Commission since 2008. It found that specialist social work and welfare services at local level are often already working with those ‘furthest from the labour market’ because they may also be the most excluded from society, with whom social services typically work. They may be helping someone manage or overcome various problems in their life, notably a drug or alcohol addiction, poor mental health or over-indebtedness. Besides providing specialist support, social services also try to ensure access to mainstream services such as health and housing, but also make sure that clients access the benefits to which they are entitled. Social services are therefore important to all three pillars of active inclusion as promoted by the European Commission, and to the coordination between them. ESN emphasised the importance of a holistic assessment of needs, cooperation between services and professionals and alternative forms of inclusion for those not able to work ESN (2012).

For the social inclusion of certain populations, it is vital to shift policy and practice from activation focused solely on employment to an ‘inclusive activation’ approach, meaning that people furthest from the labour market are supported in a holistic manner which is adapted to their needs, where social, health, education, housing and employment services are all considered relevant in promoting their social inclusion.

### The ‘inclusive activation’ concept

The concept of ‘inclusive activation’, as implemented by many ESN members, is built on six principles. At the start of the service users’ journey, there is an assessment of needs conducted by social workers, who in many cases become case managers. Social services have a holistic view of the needs of people using services, since their work is not only aimed at improving employability but more broadly the social inclusion of individuals at higher risk of exclusion.

After this first step, social services, together with the people they support, establish a personalised plan based on specific individual needs. Linking this plan with the person’s employability is crucial to ensure their inclusion. Providing adequate income support is an important part of the personalised plan,

especially when it comes to preventing the multigenerational transmission of poverty. Social services can help employment services identify which measures could support the labour market to become more inclusive for people with complex needs. Social services can also help employment services to develop alternative programmes for people who cannot be included in the labour market and require a different approach to ensure their social inclusion.

This approach was recently presented by ESN CEO Alfonso Lara Montero at a peer review on 'Active inclusion of young adults receiving social assistance benefits' hosted by the Norwegian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs on 23-24 November 2022. Alfonso Lara Montero emphasised that inclusive activation also means that social assistance goes beyond providing minimum income for a decent living, but that it needs to be accompanied by additional social support services.

**Figure 2: Proposal for an inclusive activation approach**



Source: European Social Network (2019)

**“ It is about more than just money. It is about partnerships, consultation involving all services providing support from planning through implementation to evaluation, case management, a good governance to formalise collaboration between relevant organisations, (...), a joint vision for the organizations and professionals, investing in joint teams of multiple professionals from different services who meet and train together, and enabling technology, Alfonso Lara-Montero, Chief Executive Officer, at ESN Seminar on Partnerships for Social Inclusion 2022 ”**

### 2.3 Definition of integrated social inclusion programmes

Coordination across social services ensures that minimum income beneficiaries, and those who qualify for it, have access to the range of services necessary to tackle the multiple barriers they face. Over the past 15 years, the ESN has gathered evidence on integrated social support programmes in different contexts such as long-term care, child protection and minimum income.

As per ESN research, the term 'integrated services' can be defined as a range of activities, (depending on sectors, target groups and governance contexts), implemented to achieve more efficient coordination between services and improved outcomes for service users (ESN 2016).

Integrated working can take many different forms. There is not one template for establishing or implementing similar models and there are different visions for what the way forward should be. It can be between organisations or different services within departments (Cameron, A., Bostock, L. and Lart, R., 2014). It can be 'vertical', joining up different levels of provision within one service, such as preventative and statutory sections of social care or different administrative levels from local to national. It

can also be 'horizontal', involving, for example, multidisciplinary teams, with professionals drawn from health and social care. Integration may involve services collaborating but may also involve commissioners of different public agencies responsible for contracting third sector or private services when public budgets are pooled (Curry, N. and Ham, C.,2010).

In 2016, ESN published a review of practice examples covering some key forms of integrated working. According to this review, we can distinguish four ways in which integrated support may be organised and delivered:

1. **Case management:** this category refers to the coordination by multiple professionals to meet the user's needs.
2. **One-stop-services provision:** all services are located in the same place, so the service user only needs to go to one contact point for support - at least at the point of entry.
3. **Multidisciplinary teams:** professionals from different sectors, with various expertise and backgrounds, work together in one team.
4. **Collaborative information/consultation exchange platform for professionals:** a professional platform with emphasis on sharing knowledge and information (ESN, 2016).

## Case management

According to the definition put forward by ESN, case management refers to:

***The coordination by multiple professionals to meet the users' needs. A single contact person for service users is often essential in case management and may require the creation of a new role: a case manager who oversees available services, works in a person-centred way and has the authority to coordinate different services from different sectors. (ESN, 2016)***

This can be facilitated with tools such as single assessment frameworks or new professional roles that then become a single point of contact.

Case managers play a central role in tailoring services to the individual and ensure that service users' needs are met through effective service provision. Assessing service users' needs, establishing a personalised care plan, and continuous monitoring and evaluation of the interventions are the primary steps of an efficient provision of integrated services (ESN, 2016).

## One-stop-shops

To overcome barriers in accessing an often complex mix of services, **one-stop-shops** connect and integrate all these different services within a common premise, website or even mobile teams.

The most common approach is to create a physical space shared by multiple support agencies, but it can also work virtually through joint online counselling or through mobile social counselling teams jointly providing needs assessments for different social agencies (ESN, 2016).

In Belgium (Brussels and Wallonia regions), the **Public Centre for Social Welfare (PCSW)** is a one stop-shop for the population in need. The PCSW's mission is to provide individuals and families with the material, social, medical, medico-social or psychological assistance they need. For homeless people, the PCSW is also a contact address to access their main administrative and social rights.

In Belgium, people's access to social rights is linked to registration in the local register, as only those who have previously registered can receive an identity card, have the right to vote, the right to unemployment benefits and to family allowances and affiliation with a mutual health insurance company. The PCSW supports homeless people to **register at an address** and offers assistance, but also examines what other support can be provided with a view to reintegration into society such as housing, financial, psychological, medical or social support (European Commission, 2019).

Often one-stop-shops and case management are combined, particularly in social and employment services. There are other forms of coordinated service delivery, such as colocation, where a social worker is based at public employment services, or employment officers visit social services to support social workers in their assessment and work with people who need to access employment.

One-stop-shops can also be virtual, such as in a shared website, and have different professionals involved, or can focus on just one population group. They are easy-to-access places where case managers can reach out to

populations in need of help and accompany them when accessing different services. These professionals employ a personalised response through the activation of a network of services and stakeholders connecting the multiple resources in the community.

ESN research shows that the one-stop-shop approach is not a one-size-fits-all solution and differs between urban and rural areas as the lack of mobility and large physical distances require innovative implementation approaches. For instance, additional innovative approaches can lead to improved access despite the longer distances to be crossed in rural areas, including joint consultation hours, the development of a mobility ticket, information coaches and driving services (ESN, 2016).

## Multi-disciplinary teams

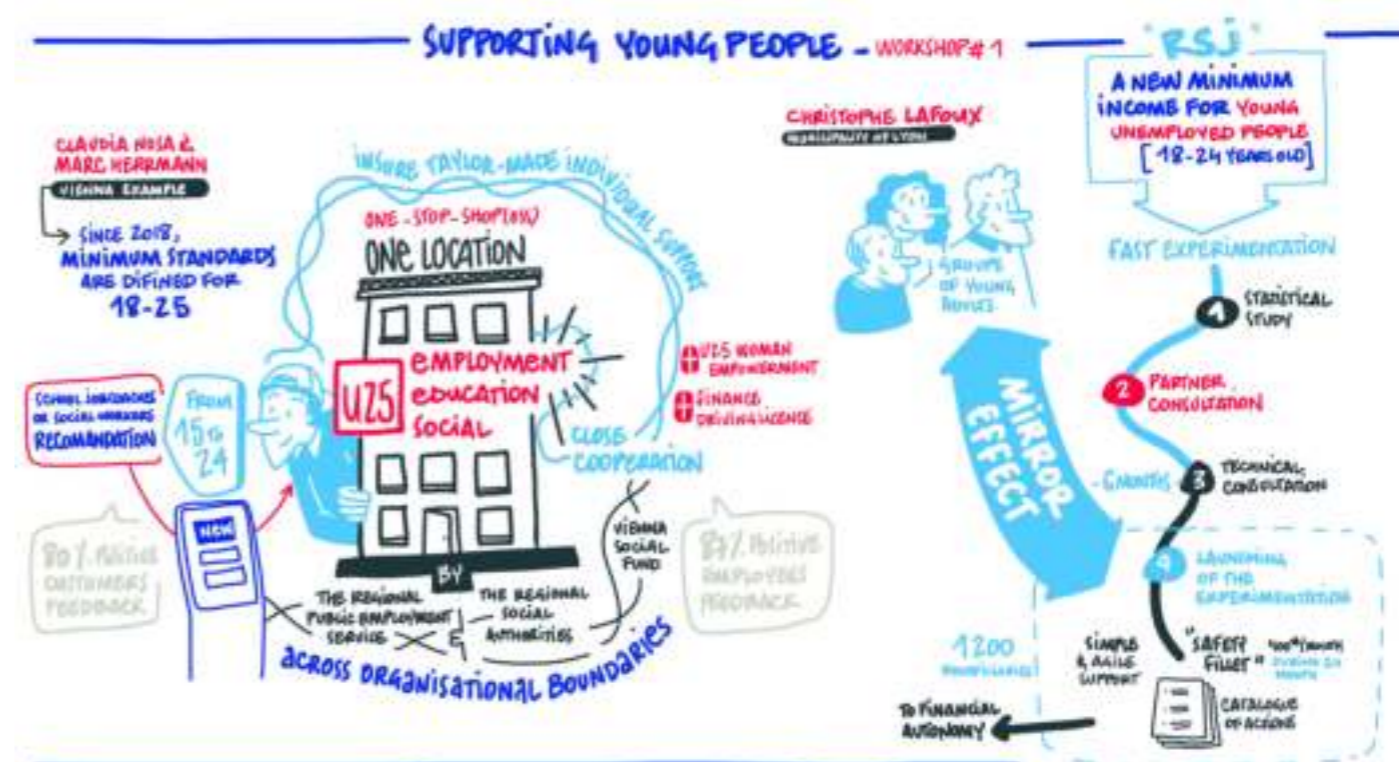
ESN research on integrated working concluded that multi-disciplinary teams are often seen as the cornerstone of collaboration and integration (SCIE, 2018). Multidisciplinary teams are a looser, collaborative approach on service integration than case management or one-stop-shops. Information sharing occurs in a number of ways including regular meetings, shared care plans and digital data transfer. The reviewed literature suggested that multi-professional teams may also work together at a managerial level.

To provide multi-professional support the Job Centre Essen in Germany, the team of job counsellors includes a psychologist, who has an office within the premises of the jobcentre. Case-managers signpost people with signs of mental health issues to the psychologist, who makes an assessment interview and proposes support programmes related to mental well-being (See Best Practice description below).

In Vienna's U 25 support agency for young people in Austria, case managers of the job centre and the city's youth service jointly support young people with social problems and discuss cases requiring a high level of support in their joint team meetings.

## Consultation/Information exchange platforms

ESN (2016) findings show that integrated working is also organised via consultation/information exchange platforms for professionals. Consultation platforms aim to bring together agencies and practitioners to share and exchange knowledge and information. Such platforms may lay down their procedures in specific cooperation protocols, guidelines and tools enabling intersectoral cooperation.



# PROMOTING MENTAL HEALTH FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION

City of Essen; Job Centre Essen, Germany



## Summary

A multi-professional service based in the Job Centre with a focus on mental health support.



## Social issues addressed

Mental health and Employment

- Good mental health is an essential factor for people's employability as well as their access to the labour market and social inclusion.
- Scientific research shows that unemployment can lead to:
  - a loss of social contacts/support
  - a loss of time structures
  - financial problems
  - fear of the future
- 33% of the people in the German basic income support system have relevant mental health difficulties. 65% of those have 2 different mental health difficulties at the same time and 30% even 3 difficulties – from depression to social anxiety (Schubert, M., Parthier, K., Kupka P., et al., 2013).



## Objectives

- To improve the state of mental health, employability, motivation and skills of people with mental health difficulties related to unemployment.
- To provide labour market opportunities despite the mental health difficulties.
- To accelerate and sustain the job placement process.



## Activities

- In partnership with the local university mental health clinic, the Job Centre in Essen created a programme combining health support and job placement for unemployed people/beneficiaries of minimum income. This means psychological support and participation in a labour market program take place at the same time.
- Job counsellors have special training and can identify signs of mental health issues.
- Professional psychologists are imbedded in the Job Centre team and job councillors can signpost interested clients to the psychologist for a first assessment. Job councillors can signpost interested clients to the psychologist for a first analysis.
- Further support can be organised in collaboration with the local mental health clinic.
- Psycho-education courses teach beneficiaries to learn more about their mental health difficulties and how to address and live with them.
- For beneficiaries who need mental health support to improve their employability but don't want to take part in the mental health support programmes, the Job Centre has other labour market programmes.
- Besides labour market qualifications, these programmes include individual coaching and offer peer support via 'Team-Cooking' or 'Team-Walking'. These activities encourage healthy lifestyles, convey positive experiences, and improve the motivation.



## Evaluation

- An evaluation of the programme showed that because of the integrated approach, many more Job Centre clients accept medical support and improve their health. This leads to an acceleration of the job placement process, to higher levels of integration into the labour market or to a higher remain-rate in labour market programs and social (re)inclusion.
- However, many Job Centre clients do not take up all the benefits they are eligible for. For instance, they might have never used mental health services because they lack the resources or knowledge about how to access them. The Job Centre integration of mental health services helps to identify those people with mental health difficulties for the first time.
- Some clients are so unwell that integration into the labour market is unrealistic. In this case, the only possibility is to refer clients to sheltered employment.



## Key Lessons

- Close cooperation between the Job Centre and mental health services is beneficial.
- Professionals from mental health services should have offices inside the Job Centre. Direct contact prevents beneficiaries falling through the net.
- After any diagnosis, concrete health support offers are necessary. Otherwise, beneficiaries could lose their motivation.



## 2.4 Key drivers and barriers to integrated working

Key drivers and aims for integrated care and support can be categorised broadly at an individual or micro level, an organisational or meso-level and a system or macro level (ESN, 2021).

- At an **individual or micro-level**, integrated care and support aims to organise services around the person, so that their care and support is more personalised (Stoop et al 2020).
- At an **organisational level**, the aim is to increase collaboration and coordination between services to reduce fragmentation and prevent gaps in services.
- At a **system level**, integrated care and support aims to create more sustainable public services through maximising cost-efficiency by, for example, reducing duplication of services.

Desmedt et al (2017) identified a number of barriers to integrated support including inadequate funding, interoperability problems between systems, inadequate technical support and infrastructure, lack of skills amongst users and providers, as well as a lack of a legislative framework and privacy issues. This has been echoed by discussions at the ESN seminar 'Partnerships for Social Inclusion'. Lack of data interoperability, fears of data protection breaches and fears of loss of institutional power often hinder exchange of data between organisations that should actually collaborate as they are supporting the same clients.

The availability of new technologies – especially in terms of IT management – has made the coordination between different services and policies much easier. In **Gloucestershire County Council**, UK, integrated recording of data has allowed for the centralisation of all relevant information about service users.

With respect to employment and social policies, IT innovation improves big data management and allows public employment services,

social services and civil servants to process information faster and more effectively than in the past. One-stop-shops can help people requesting employment and social services support to get all information at once.

The centralisation of all relevant information about service users helps professionals access that information and avoids service users having to retell their story multiple times. The paperwork is done in less time and practitioners can focus more on social work with people. It is done through the assessment of current platforms in organisations to verify adaptability or explore the possibility of adopting a new platform.

Based on this first assessment, IT providers can then develop a platform that takes account of the views of those who would use it. (ESN, 2019).

## 2.5 Non-take-up of social inclusion programmes

**“Non-take-up refers to the situation where an eligible person does not benefit from one or more rights that he or she is entitled to. (Warin P., 2010)”**

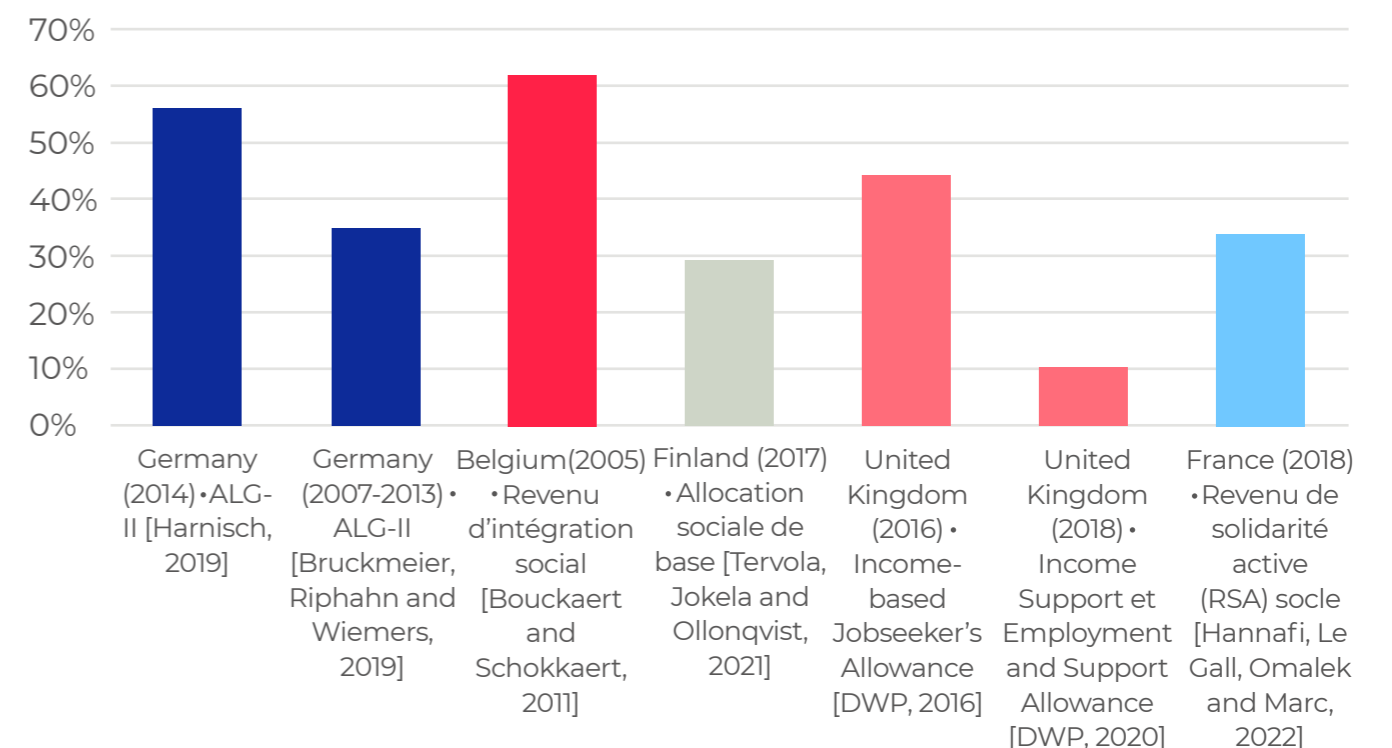
Research shows that not everyone entitled to access minimum income schemes uses them, which means that people in need do not receive the right type of support. This impacts negatively on their capacity to fully take part in society. Therefore, it is vital to reach out to them, and help them access and navigate the social support system.

Olivier De Schutter, UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights., recently rang the alarm bell on this issue: “Governments have a duty not just to provide social protection on paper, but to ensure individuals are aware of – and can access – the benefits to which they are entitled.” (UN, 2022).

Many studies evidence non-take-up of social assistance. In Europe, non-take-up rates are above 40% for most benefits considered, confirming that the phenomenon is far from marginal (Eurofound, 2015). In 2022, a study of four European Union countries and the United Kingdom found that the rate of non-take-up of minimum income schemes frequently exceeded 30% (Marc, C. Portela, M., Hannaf, C. et al., 2022). In France, one in three households is in a situation of non-take-up per quarter. This represents 3 billion EUR not paid per year. The estimated financial loss per eligible persons is approximately 330 EUR per month. One in five households is in a situation of permanent non-take-up during a given year (Portela, M., 2022). In Germany, estimates of non-take up of minimum income varies from 35% (Bruckmeier K., Riphahn R., and Wiemers J., 2019) to 56% (Harnisch, M., 2019). In Belgium, the estimated non-take up of minimum income is 62%. In Finland, 29% of eligible persons seem not to take up benefits. Estimates for the United Kingdom vary from 10% to 44%.



**Figure 3: Share of Non-take-up in European Countries**



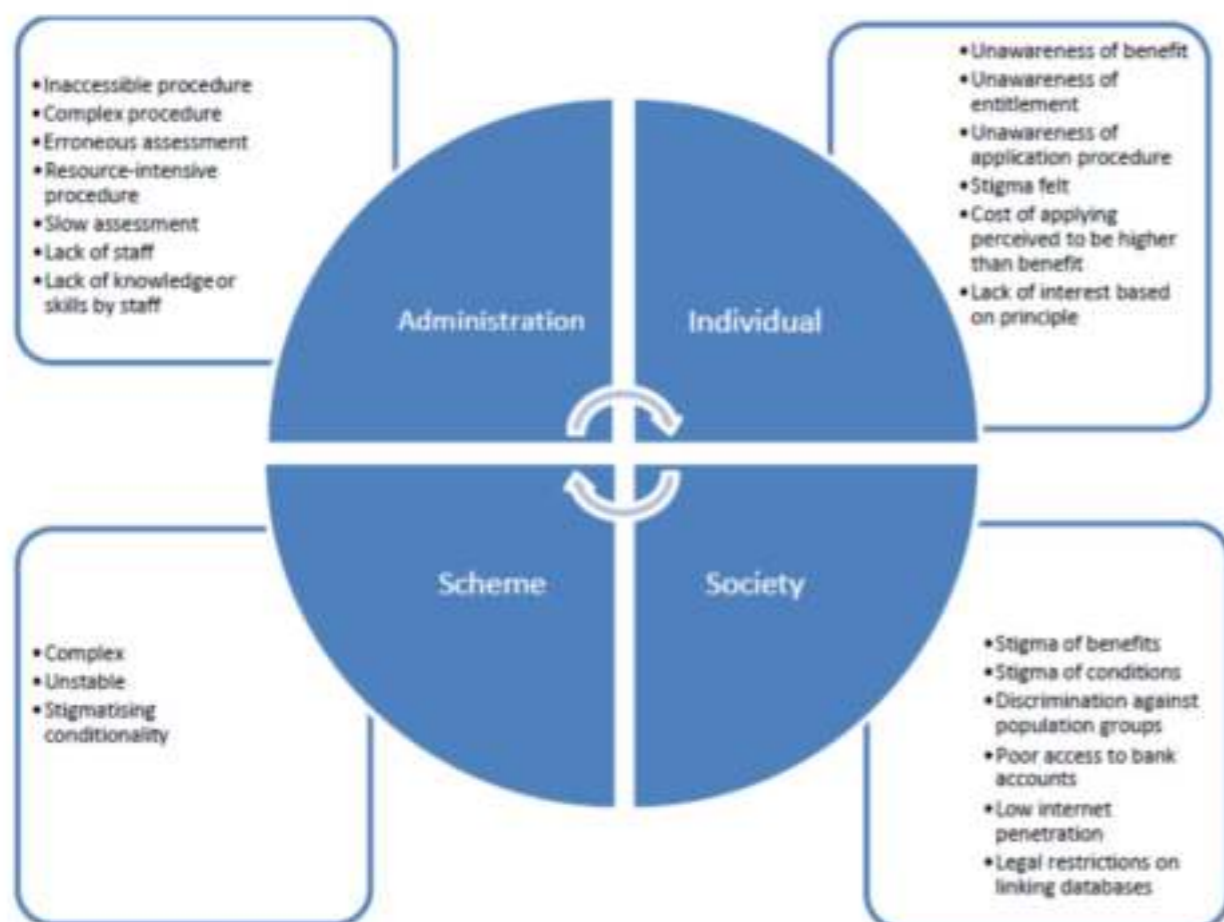
Source: Drees (2022) – PowerPoint presented at ESN seminar, based on several non-take-up studies (Marc, C. Portela, M., Hannafi, C. et al., (2022).

## 2.6 Risk factors of non-take-up among groups in vulnerable situations

Based on Van Oorschot (1995) Eurofound (2015) has identified three levels of risk for non-take-up: the design of the benefit scheme, the administration of the benefit for the individual eligible for the benefit, and the societal context. The figure on the next page shows the different factors that can influence each level. These risk factors can be interlinked and mutually reinforce each other.

For example, a benefit scheme can be so complex that individuals refrain from applying. This factor can be reinforced if the potential applicant is illiterate or lacks language skills. A societal stigma on recipients of social benefits can create an application barrier for persons who are eligible for social support, if a face-to-face meeting is required by the administration.

**Figure 4: Risk factors of non-take-up in vulnerable populations**



Source: Eurofound (2015)

Other barriers refer to **bureaucracy and lack of a personalised and caring approach**. According to Eurofound (2015), non-take-up of social benefits by vulnerable populations, such as homeless people or migrants is a reality in more than half of the Member States. There are several reasons for non-take-up:

- **Lack of information:** vulnerable people do not take up rights because they do not know about social benefits schemes and other rights, or they do not know how to claim them;
- **Costly or complex access:** in several countries application procedures are complex and vulnerable people lack resources to understand them;
- **Social barriers:** vulnerable people may lack trust in institutions;
- **Administrative barriers:** vulnerable people such as homeless or refugees may lack a municipal residence, and in general a stable address.

Another key issue refers to the **geographical spread of services:** they are generally much more present in cities and towns than in rural

areas. Finally, in some countries the residency in a municipality is required to access services (Crepaldi C., 2019).

Several recommendations have been put forward to increase take-up:

**Information:** To increase awareness about available support schemes, information campaigns can help to reach out to people unaware of their potential eligibility for benefits. But in most cases, this will not be sufficient (Eurofound, 2015).

In **Germany**, the project **Check-In 1 and Check-In 2**, coordinated by Göttingen public administration and two local organisations, provides counselling and holistic support to newly arrived disadvantaged EU citizens and their families.

The project provides referrals to kindergartens for children up to the age of seven, as well as access to social, employment, housing, social inclusion, and other supports. This project started in 2016 and ended in June 2022. It had been funded under FEAD and local government funding. The aim of the project was to introduce newly arrived EU citizens in Germany to the support system through **low threshold and outreach social work**. The project team approaches the target population, offering initial counselling in neighbourhood centres and in the local Migration Centre (Check-In 1). Queries that require more intensive support are then referred to social workers, either locally or at the Centre (Check-In 2). After an initial counselling session, newly arrived immigrants are referred to existing support services, including mediation and personal accompaniment to authorities; information and counselling services; housing assistance services; employment services; healthcare services; other services (debt counselling, pregnancy counselling, etc.).

Check-In has become an indispensable part of Göttingen's social infrastructure since it began in 2016. It has achieved considerable success in integrating new immigrants, reaching more than 400 people each year and carrying out more than 3,500 consultations (European Commission, 2021a).

**Internet:** As Internet becomes increasingly widespread, access to benefits could be simplified through online applications. Since people face difficulties in navigating an online application, these initiatives should be accompanied with supportive technologies such as chat bots and some onsite support (ESN, 2022a).

**Procedures:** Decoupling benefit applications from social welfare can provide a solution as application procedures through social welfare offices are prone to stigma (Eurofound, 2015).

**Integrated support:** linking public administration at national, regional and local level as well as local service providers and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), employers and trade unions, can help to support people in taking up their entitlements (Eurofound, 2015).

**Integrated IT systems:** A greater integration of ICT systems of the different authorities and organisations holding the data of potential beneficiaries of social support can help to identify eligible people (Eurofound, 2015).

**Proactive benefit systems:** Backed up by readily available data, payment of benefits could be triggered once simple and transparent entitlement criteria are fulfilled. A condition for such an approach is the connection of different data bases in order to identify life events that could trigger eligibility for benefits. This could be for example reaching the pension age or the birth of a child (Eurofound, 2015).

**Outreach:** Outreach measures are crucial to providing support to vulnerable groups such as homeless people. The City of Amsterdam has a good example of proactive outreach policies. The city reaches out to potential clients for debt counselling, based on exchanging data on tenants' payment defaults with public and private housing companies. In addition, it has developed a network of key contacts such as general practitioners that can sign post potential clients to the city's social services if they identify a person with social needs.

# - 'VROEG EROP AF' - PARTNERSHIP FOR EARLY INTERVENTION AND SUPPORT -

City of Amsterdam, The Netherlands

## Summary

A proactive debt detection service to tackle non-take-up of debt mediation and to reduce poverty.



### Social issues addressed

- The City of Amsterdam has found that around 25% of inhabitants eligible for social benefits do not take them up.
- Furthermore, approximately 50% of inhabitants eligible for social benefits do not take up debt assistance.



### Objectives

- Identify people in need of social support and debt mediation.
- Combat non-take-up of social benefits and debt mediation support.
- Reduce financial stress and foster social inclusion of the low-income population.



### Activities

- Created a partnership for early intervention and support called 'Vroeg Erop Af'.
- Within this partnership the city's social service cooperates with 80 'fixed-cost' partners such as housing corporations, institutes for health insurance, energy and water suppliers, local tax office, and private housing companies. The agreement involves notifying the debt counselling services when a person is three months or longer in arrears with one of the fixed-cost partners.
- In 2021 for instance, the social services debt mediation department received 25,000 notices of payment delays.
- Once a payment failure has been detected, the city's anti-poverty department organises a combined intervention proposing tailor-made support to the household in financial difficulties.
- This assistance is voluntary for the contacted beneficiaries.
- A network of intermediaries involving 1,200 professional and voluntary social workers in direct contact with the beneficiary is available to counsel people with debt issues.
- Those interventions are coordinated by a personal social workers/case manager.



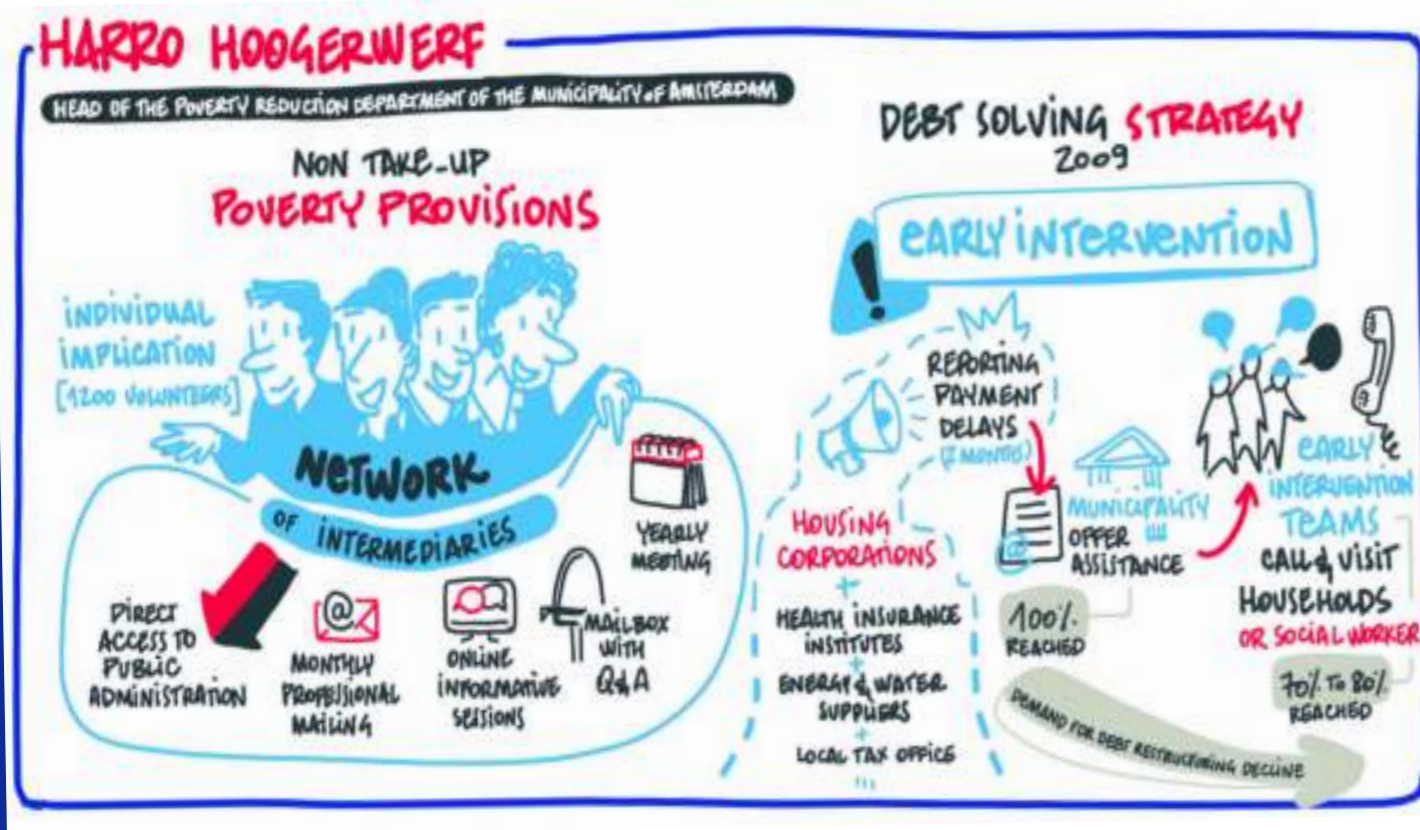
### Evaluation

- 100% of the signalled people are contacted by post, but the response is primarily low.
- 70% can be reached through phone calls and home visits.
- During the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic outreach increased to 80% as people were at home and could receive phone calls.
- According to Amsterdam (2021) about 65% of reported households accept the offered support, meaning that a plan of action for the payment arrears has been made or other actions have been taken, such as a referral, support and/or monitoring.



### Key Lessons

- The establishment of a network of intermediaries to reach the population.
- National legislation to create a legal basis and obligation for fixed-cost partners to make large scale data available for municipalities is a prerequisite.
- Local politicians need to understand the long-term social and economic benefits of this up-front investment.



# 3. RELEVANT EU SOCIAL PROTECTION POLICIES

## 3.1 Early EU initiatives

The EU has only limited competence in social inclusion based on the subsidiarity principle as defined by the Treaty of the EU. Therefore, the EU mostly promotes soft coordination with Member States. In the context of constant evolution of EU initiatives to address poverty and social exclusion, EU institutions have expressed their commitment to strengthening social inclusion, such as through proposals to promote social protection, active inclusion or minimum income.

A pivotal initiative is the 1992 Council Recommendation on Common Criteria for Sufficient Resources and Social Assistance in Social Protection Systems (Council of the European Communities, 1992). This Recommendation was the first that recognised the basic right of a person to sufficient resources and social assistance to live in a manner compatible with human dignity and provided practical guidelines on how to implement this right.

Another central input given by the European Commission is the Recommendation on the Active Inclusion of People Excluded from the Labour Market endorsed by the European Council and the European Parliament in 2008 (European Commission, 2008). The Recommendation underlines that active inclusion policies are only effective if they set out **an integrated strategy in the implementation of three social inclusion strands:**

1. **Adequate income support:** (i.e. welfare benefits to ensure people can live adequately while they are not working);
2. **Inclusive labour markets:** (i.e. direct support and advice to help people re-enter the labour market and incentives for employers to recruit people who have had difficulty finding work);
3. **Access to quality services:** (i.e. social services and other services that allow

people to overcome or manage whatever condition or disability prevents them from working).

The Commission strongly emphasises the concept of **one-stop-shops** as an approach to integrate the three pillars of active inclusion. It argues that through this approach national governments would increase take-up of benefits and services, ensure access to different services for a holistic and personalised approach, and simplify coordination of local and national services and administration of benefits.

Since the 2008 European Commission Recommendation, social exclusion has progressively been defined across Europe as a multidimensional problem, which goes beyond material poverty and encompasses other forms of social deprivation such as lack of regular and equal access to education, employment, healthcare, or societal participation. In this understanding, the **active inclusion approach** intends to tackle social exclusion and poverty not only by addressing the lack of resources but also by supporting access to the labour market and social services (Crepaldi, 2015). MISs can promote inclusion if they can **link economic support with employment policies** and a set of different **policies and enabling services**. The integration of these policies is aimed at supporting the **individual and their household to move from being passive 'recipients' of support to active participants in society**.

The analyses carried out show that active inclusion approaches have continued to focus strongly solely on the provision of financial support. But some studies suggest that following the 3-pillar approach of the European Commission's Recommendation, minimum income schemes in Europe have become **"complex social policy benefits that combine income support with a set of services and programmes** designed to help recipients to return to the labour market and to avoid social exclusion of those unfit to work" Natili (2019) and Raitano (2021).

However, the level of implementation and how the activation and integration of policies is realised differs considerably across countries. Some point to an enabling perspective based on 'positive' incentives, such as the opportunity to participate in training activities, be involved in active labour market policies or be supported by counselling services.

Others introduce 'negative incentives' in a 'workfare perspective', such as obliging individuals to accept a certain job or to participate in public works for free in order not to lose their benefits (Natili, 2019 and Raitano, 2021).

In 2010 the **European Parliament** adopted a Resolution on the Role of Minimum Income in Combating Poverty and Promoting an Inclusive Society in Europe (European Parliament, 2010). In October 2017 the European Parliament approved a new Resolution on Minimum Income Policies as a Tool for Fighting Poverty. It called on Member States to upgrade their minimum income schemes so that they ensure a life in dignity for households with insufficient income, **support their participation in society and ensure their autonomy across the life cycle** (European Parliament, 2017).

Other key documents setting the EU strategy in the fight against poverty and social exclusion are **the 2016 Recommendation on the Integration of the Long-term Unemployed in the Labour Market** (Council of the European Union, 2016), and the integrated guidelines for the employment policies which highlight various elements of fighting poverty and social exclusion in line with the active inclusion approach and the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) (Council of the European Union, 2017). The 2017 Commission Staff Working Document took stock of the implementation of the 2008 Recommendation and concluded that the Recommendation has acted as a driver for structural reforms in many Member States, but reforms sometimes focused on a particular strand (i.e. minimum income) rather than an integrated approach in combination with employment measures and social services support, which meant that overall impact had been uneven (European Commission, 2017a).

## 3.2 The European Pillar of Social Rights

The **European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR)** put forward by Member States in 2017 laid the foundation for the right to minimum income across Europe. In its principle 14, the EPSR introduces the right to adequate minimum income, though the concepts of adequate and minimum might oppose each other. The principle also refers to access to enabling services and incentives to reintegrate in the labour market:

**“Everyone lacking sufficient resources has the right to adequate minimum income benefits ensuring a life in dignity at all stages of life, and effective access to enabling goods and services. For those who can work, minimum income benefits should be combined with incentives to (re)integrate into the labour market.**  
European Pillar of Social Rights, Principle 14

Principle 14 of the EPSR stems directly from the 1992 Council Recommendation on common criteria for sufficient resources and social assistance in social protection systems which recognised for the first time the basic right of a person to sufficient resources and social assistance to live in dignity (Council of the European Communities, 1992). On the other hand, aspects relating to labour market integration stem from the Commission Recommendation of 3 October 2008 on the active inclusion of people excluded from the

labour market endorsed by the European Council and the European Parliament in 2008 (European Commission, 2008). This second document emphasised the need to implement integrated policies to promote active inclusion within a comprehensive policy framework based on three pillars: adequate income support, inclusive labour markets and access to quality services (ibid.).

## Implementing EPSR Principle 14

Social rights and policies **remain national responsibilities**, even if the EU has been increasingly launching new policy initiatives and provided **new opportunities and funding**. Member States are responsible for the concrete implementation of the twenty principles of the EPSR.

The **Commission's Action Plan on the implementation of the EPSR** proposed a Council Recommendation on minimum income to be adopted in the third quarter of 2022 (European Commission, 2021b). The Action Plan also set a new target of reducing the number of persons at-risk-of poverty and social exclusion by at least 15 million in 2030. It is a much lower target than the one set for the Europe 2020 strategy, which fixed a reduction of poverty by at least 20 million people by 2020, a target not reached at the close of the decade. The Action Plan sets out several key elements of social inclusion policies to ensure people's life in dignity: access to minimum income, equal access to children's services, access to affordable housing and access to essential services.

But the Pillar's action plan **does not provide detail as to how it will be implemented and**

**the role to be played by those responsible for implementation:** "the majority of actions (launched by the EU in the field of social inclusion) are based on coordination, support and guidance to national policies" (Fernandes, S., Kerneis, K., 2021).

One important step forward in the implementation of EPSR Principle 14 is the **2020 Council Conclusions on Strengthening Minimum Income Protection in the Covid-19 Pandemic and Beyond**. It states that "one of the best ways to prevent people being dragged into poverty is to build individual and societal resilience – and strong social protection systems are the cornerstone of such resilience" (Council of the European Union, 2020).

In this context, minimum income schemes which are adequate, accessible, and enabling have an essential role to play as an ultimate safety net. The Conclusions invite the Commission to "initiate an update of the Union framework to effectively support and complement the policies of Member States on national minimum income protection" and to update the existing EU Council Recommendation on sufficient resources and social protection and the Recommendation on active inclusion. National governments were also requested to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their income support programmes, especially with regard to adequacy, coverage, take-up and incentives to work.

### 3.3 2022 Council Recommendation on Minimum Income

In 2022, the European Commission issued a proposal for a Council Recommendation that would address issues minimum income schemes across Europe have been facing in recent years (European Commission, 2022a). Those challenges include:

1. Gaps in coverage and lack of take-up;
2. Ineffective activation and labour market integration;
3. Limited coordination with enabling social services;

4. Gaps in governance systems, monitoring and evaluation.

They shall be addressed by policies supporting:

- Effective access to **activation measures**, in particular to tailor-made active labour market measures, and the tapering of benefits in order to incentivise labour market integration;
- Effective **coordination** among providers of **enabling social services**, employment services and benefit-paying authorities;
- Sound governance, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, including **integrated administrative procedures and data management**.

In the proposed Council Recommendation, the European Commission recognises, that:

- coordination between income support policies and incentives to (re)integrate to the labour market remains insufficient;
- in many Member States support measures are not sufficiently tailored to individual needs of beneficiaries of minimum income who are often furthest away from the labour market;
- only around half of Member States that carry out a multidimensional needs assessment offer a tailor-made inclusion plan to address the barriers to social integration, and, eventually, employment.

#### 1. Addressing gaps in coverage and take-up

In the proposed recommendation many issues related to non-take up explained under chapter II are addressed. Among others, Member States are recommended to encourage full take-up of minimum income through:

- a. reducing administrative burden, including through simplifying the application procedures and ensuring step-by-step guidance for those who need it, while paying attention to the availability of digital and non-digital tools;

**“Minimum income schemes are essential to ensure that no one is left behind.**

**Breaking the intergenerational cycles of disadvantage starts with investing in children to reduce the gap between children in need and their better-off peers when it comes to access to key services, to foster equal opportunities for all children in the EU and prevent children in poor families from becoming adults at risk of poverty....**

**Access to affordable housing is an increasing concern in many Member States, regions and cities.**

**Effective access to essential services of sufficient quality, such as water, sanitation, healthcare, energy, transport, financial services and digital communications, is key to guaranteeing social and economic inclusion. These services can also be an important source of job creation. European Commission 2021b**



- b. ensuring access to user-friendly, free of charge, and updated information on rights and obligations related to minimum income;
- c. pro-actively reaching out to persons lacking sufficient resources to raise awareness and encourage the take-up, particularly of single-parent households, including through involving relevant stakeholders at national, regional and local level;
- d. taking steps to combat stigmatisation and unconscious bias attached to poverty and social exclusion;
- e. regularly assessing the non-take-up of minimum income and, where applicable, related labour market activation measures, identifying the barriers and put in place remedial actions.

In its 2022 proposal for a Council Recommendation, the European Commission notably highlights the need for improved integrated working, as coordination between income support policies and activation measures remain insufficient and supportive benefits are not always integrated with support schemes.

**“The coordination between income support policies and incentives to (re)integrate to the labour market of those who can work remains insufficient. European Commission 2022a”**

**“In-kind benefits such as social housing, reduced fees for certain services (i.e. public transport, gas, energy and other utility costs) or targeted support to cover the out-of-pocket costs of childcare or healthcare, including in maternal and infant healthcare are not always integrated with minimum income. Evidence shows that the take-up of some of these services (i.e. childcare) is lower for low-income households in spite of the additional support provided. European Commission 2022a”**

**“While all Member States have adopted reforms in the area of minimum income, evidence shows that there is scope for improvement in most of the Member States to address the identified challenges in an integrated way. European Commission 2022a”**

## 2. Addressing ineffective activation and labour market integration

In the proposed Council Recommendation, the European Commission recognises, that:

**“the coordination between income support policies and incentives to (re)integrate to the labour market of those who can work remains insufficient.”**

Regarding people further from the labour market the 2022 Council Recommendation further lays out that:

- “Some people (...) might not be (immediately) able to work, such as people with severe disabilities or health problems, those lacking basic social skills, the homeless, or those looking after young children or dependent adults.”
- “ensuring effective access to quality enabling and essential services is (...) a necessity for beneficiaries to participate in the labour market and integrate in the society.”

## 3. Limited coordination with enabling social services

**An individualised support including by enabling services**

Enabling services that help beneficiaries to improve their disadvantaged situation, notably social services, healthcare, education and training, and essential services are recognised as central elements of minimum income support. The proposed Council Recommendation uses the following definition:



**“Enabling services means services targeting specific needs of persons lacking sufficient resources to ensure that they are able to integrate in society and, where relevant, into the labour market, including social inclusion services, for example social work, counselling, coaching, mentoring, psychological support, and rehabilitation and other general enabling services, including early childhood education and care, healthcare, long term care, education and training, and housing. European Commission 2022a”**

The proposed Council Recommendation encourages Member States to put forward programmes providing tailor-made support including with enabling services – a key cornerstone of integrated social inclusion and inclusive activation as described under Chapter II:

“With a view to addressing diverse barriers of persons lacking sufficient resources to social inclusion and, for those who can work, to employment, Member States are recommended to develop an individualised approach and coordinate service provision, by:

carrying out a multi-dimensional needs assessment examining barriers to social inclusion and employment, identifying enabling and essential services necessary to address those barriers and determining the support needed.”

Indeed, already in 2017, the European Pillar of Social Rights principle 14 granted that:

“Everyone lacking sufficient resources has the right to adequate minimum income benefits ensuring a life in dignity at all stages of life, and effective access to enabling goods and services.”

#### 4. Gaps in governance systems, monitoring and evaluation

The Recommendation emphasises that for the empowering active inclusion approach, comprising income support, inclusive labour markets, social inclusion and access to quality services to be effective, adequate governance systems should support cooperation among different actors on vertical and horizontal levels.

“Data exchange and closer co-operation across different levels of governance and services, including through formal agreements or one-stop-shops, facilitate better-integrated support.”

Member States are recommended to: (...) strengthen the operational capacity of authorities (...), including through data sharing and promoting further integrated service models;

“Member States are recommended to: (...) empower relevant stakeholders, such as regional and local authorities (...) in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of minimum income schemes.”

If accepted by Member States, this Council Recommendation would be an important step forward for creating better EU-wide access to integrated social support.

At the time of writing this report, it was not yet clear if national governments would accept the suggested wording of the proposed Council Recommendation.

### 3.4 Monitoring national implementation of EU policies

Monitoring the implementation of these policy measures takes place in the framework of the **European Semester**, the cycle of policy coordination between the European Commission and national governments. The Commission launches reports with its analysis of the situation by country followed by Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs) providing guidance for national reforms in different areas, including social inclusion related policies. Though the Semester has been criticised for not being particularly social when it comes to analyses and recommendations, this has been changing over the years with an increasing number of social CSRs. The Semester, if taking the Pillar as a reference, has the potential to be an important vehicle to promote reforms in the direction suggested by its principles, taking into account national specificities and, at the same time, monitoring developments at EU and national levels (European Commission, 2022c).

The Semester process in 2022 transformed into a tool to steer public investments for reforms planned in the national recovery plans, submitted by national governments to access European funding and respond to the social consequences of the Covid-19 crisis.

However, social inclusion investments in the national plans vary significantly between countries, and the Commission’s Country Specific Recommendations only refer to social inclusion in a small number of countries.

Implementation monitoring is also done through the Open Method of Coordination between national government representatives and the European Commission. An illustration

of this piece of work is the Social Protection Committee (SPC) which carries out peer reviews, studies, and benchmarking, including on minimum income through an indicators sub-group. For instance, an update on benchmarking in the area of minimum income was approved in 2021 to be in line with Principle 14 of the EPSR (Social Protection Committee - Indicators Sub-group, 2021).

## 2022 European Commission’s Social Inclusion Recommendations to National Governments

### ESTONIA:

Strengthen social protection, including by extending the coverage of unemployment benefits, in particular to those with short work spells and in non-standard forms of work. Improve the affordability and quality of long-term care, in particular by ensuring its sustainable funding and integrating health and social services.

### FINLAND:

Present policy proposals for the social security reform, aiming to increase the efficiency of the system of social benefits, improving incentives to work, and also supporting long-term sustainability of public finances.

### HUNGARY:

Continue the labour market integration of the most vulnerable groups, in particular through upskilling, and extend the duration of unemployment benefits. Improve the adequacy of social assistance and ensure access to essential services and adequate housing for all. Improve education outcomes and increase the participation of disadvantaged groups, in particular Roma in quality mainstream education. Improve access to quality preventive and primary care services.

### LATVIA:

Strengthen the adequacy of healthcare and social protection to reduce inequality.

### LITHUANIA:

Strengthen primary and preventive care. Reduce fragmentation in the planning and delivery of social services and improve their personalisation and integration with other services. Improve access to and quality of social housing.

### POLAND:

Better target social benefits and ensure access to those in need.

Source: European Commission, 2022b

### 3.5 EU Funding for Integrated Social Inclusion

In 2013, an important step was taken towards lifting people out of poverty: the European Parliament and Council Regulation (EU) No 1304/2013 stated that the **ESF** (European Social Fund) should (among other priorities): “... **strengthen social inclusion and fight poverty (...) and develop active, comprehensive and sustainable inclusion policies**” (European Union, 2013). According to this Regulation, ESF was called to fund initiatives aimed at promoting social inclusion and preventing and combatting poverty with a view to breaking the cycle of disadvantage across generations. This was done through the definition of a minimum allocation level of 20% of the total ESF resources of each Member State.

The ESF+ is the successor of the 2014–2020 ESF funding programme. It is currently the main EU financial instrument for improving employment opportunities, strengthening

social cohesion and improving social fairness for the 2021–2027 period. It merges the existing European Social Fund (ESF), the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI), the Fund for European Aid to the most Deprived (FEAD), the Employment and Social Innovation Programme (EaSI) and the EU Health Programme. The new fund, ESF+ concentrates its investment in three main areas: education, employment and social inclusion. Indeed, 25% of its resources (88 billion EUR in 2018 prices) are earmarked for social inclusion. These resources will be “invested in people, creating and protecting job opportunities, promoting social inclusion, fighting poverty and developing the skills needed for the digital and green transition. It will also include a more ambitious requirement for investing in young people and addressing child poverty, as proposed by the Commission” (European Commission, 2021c).

ESF and FEAD as well as the EaSI and Urban Innovative Actions have funded over the years several initiatives on strengthening minimum income schemes and related integration and activation programmes.

A few examples are listed in Table 2 below:

**Table 2: EU-funded projects fostering Social Inclusion**

Country	Project	EU Funding Programme
<b>BELGIUM – Kortrijk</b>	<b>Mobile Integrated Social Services Increasing Employment Outcomes for People in Need (MISSION)</b> Mobile social worker team, visiting minimum income beneficiaries at their homes, helping them to access multiple services.	<b>EaSI (2014 - 2020)</b>
<b>SPAIN – Navarra</b>	<b>Coordinated intervention of Social Services and Employment for the Inclusion of the most Vulnerable (ERSISI)</b> Integrated model between social and employment services to support the social inclusion of the most vulnerable.	<b>EaSI (2014 - 2020)</b>
<b>SPAIN – Castilla y León</b>	<b>ProActive Case-based Targeted Model for Social Inclusion (PACT)</b> Design and test of a new model of care for persons at risk of social exclusion combining two interconnected strategies: public-private partnership and proactive social investment.	<b>EaSI (2014 - 2020)</b>

Country	Project	EU Funding Programme
<b>SPAIN – Andalusia</b>	<b>Regional Single Social Record (RESISOR)</b> One-stop-shop approach boosting coordination between regional and local authorities.	<b>EaSI (2014 - 2020)</b>
<b>SPAIN – Barcelona</b>	<b>Combining a Minimum Guaranteed Income with Active Social Policies in Deprived Urban Areas of Barcelona (B-MINCOME)</b> Piloting a combination of a minimum guaranteed income with active social policies. The pilot project lasted two years and included 1,000 families with the aim of exploring which mix of public social policies contribute to the alleviation of poverty and social exclusion. It could potentially be adopted in other areas of the city.	<b>UIA - Urban Innovative Actions</b>
<b>SPAIN – Asturias</b>	<b>Innovative Strategies for Active Inclusion through Local Integrated Partnerships (xEITU)</b> Led by the Social Rights Department of the region of Asturias (Spain), this project is testing a new model of employment and social services coordination to transform the regional minimum income programme to a new model of social inclusion support.	<b>EaSI (2014 - 2020)</b>
<b>GERMANY – Göttingen</b>	<b>Check-In 1 - Wege zur Hilfe (Finding Help) and Check-In 2 – Orientierung, Beratung und Begleitung (Orientation, Counselling and Ongoing Support)</b> A targeted one-stop-shop to support newly arrived EU citizens and their families in disadvantaged situations. The aim of the project is to introduce them to the German support system through low threshold support (i.e. taking into account the cultural characteristics of the target group and their native language) and outreach social work.	<b>FEAD (2014 - 2020)</b>
<b>GERMANY– Berlin</b>	<b>Frostschutzengel 2.0, Germany (Guardian Angel Against Freezing)</b> Providing multilingual health and social counselling to homeless people in Berlin. The project acts as a bridge between the welfare system and those seeking help, to facilitate their long-term social integration.	<b>FEAD (2014 - 2020)</b>
<b>ITALY – Tuscany</b>	<b>RETICULATE</b> Aiming to integrate social and employment services within a one-stop-shop consisting of a single access point and an integrated network of public and private services.	<b>EaSI (2014 - 2020)</b>
<b>GREECE – Nationally</b>	<b>The Network of Community Centres</b> Allowing Greek citizens to access free support for all social, working and family life-related matters.	<b>ESF (2014 - 2020)</b>
<b>GREECE – Athens</b>	<b>The ‘Centre of the Child’</b> Programme for children and their families designed to offer a combination of services to support their development. The breadth of services offered as part of the overall FEAD programme acts as a unique one-stop-shop, giving beneficiary households access to a number of support services through a single source.	<b>FEAD (2014 - 2020)</b>



## Recovery and Resilience Facility

Member States have received unprecedented financial support to mitigate the economic, social and health impacts of the Covid-19 crisis through the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF). The RRF is part of the recovery package called NextGenerationEU and is funded with 723.8 billion EUR (in current prices) to help Member States implement reforms and investments that are in line with the EU's priorities and address the challenges identified in their country-specific recommendations under the European Semester.

In order to access these funds, each Member State had to submit a **National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP)** that set out their policy reforms addressing the challenges identified in the Recommendations made to them by the European Commission. According to the recent report from the EU Commission on the implementation of the recovery and resilience facility within Pillar 4 on Measures Supporting Social and Territorial Cohesion (193 billion EUR estimated expenditure) measures focus mainly

on large infrastructure investments (72% of the expenditures contributing to Pillar 4).

Combating unemployment is one of the primary goals contained in the EPSR Action Plan. According to the Action Plan, at least 78% of the population aged 20 to 64 should be in employment by 2030 and at least 60% of all adults should participate in training every year.

According to ESN's 2021 review of 19 NRRPs this priority is well represented (ESN, 2021b). However, several ESN respondents noted that social inclusion measures were almost entirely limited to increasing participation in the labour market (DE, EL, LV, PL) which is not enough to address many intricate challenges related to social exclusion. As the number of people living below the subsistence level increased dramatically due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it might have been expected that this issue would be addressed by most plans. However, just 8 of the plans reviewed by ESN in 2021 contain explicit objectives related to eradicating poverty (AT, BE, DK, EL, ES, FR, LV, SE). Where present, anti-poverty efforts involve primarily

the introduction of a minimum income and less often attempt to address the structural causes of the problem.

The RRF can be a transformational opportunity for public social services that have a statutory duty to promote the social inclusion of people in difficult and vulnerable situations.

However, there has been little attention given to investment in social services reforms in the plans submitted by national governments to the EU, even though social services have proved to be essential during the emergency situation brought about by Covid-19. Respondents expressed concerns that the European Commission might not always see the financing of social services as an investment that yields a later return, which can lead to national authorities investing less in this area.



**Figure 5: The six pillars of the Recovery and Resilience Facility**

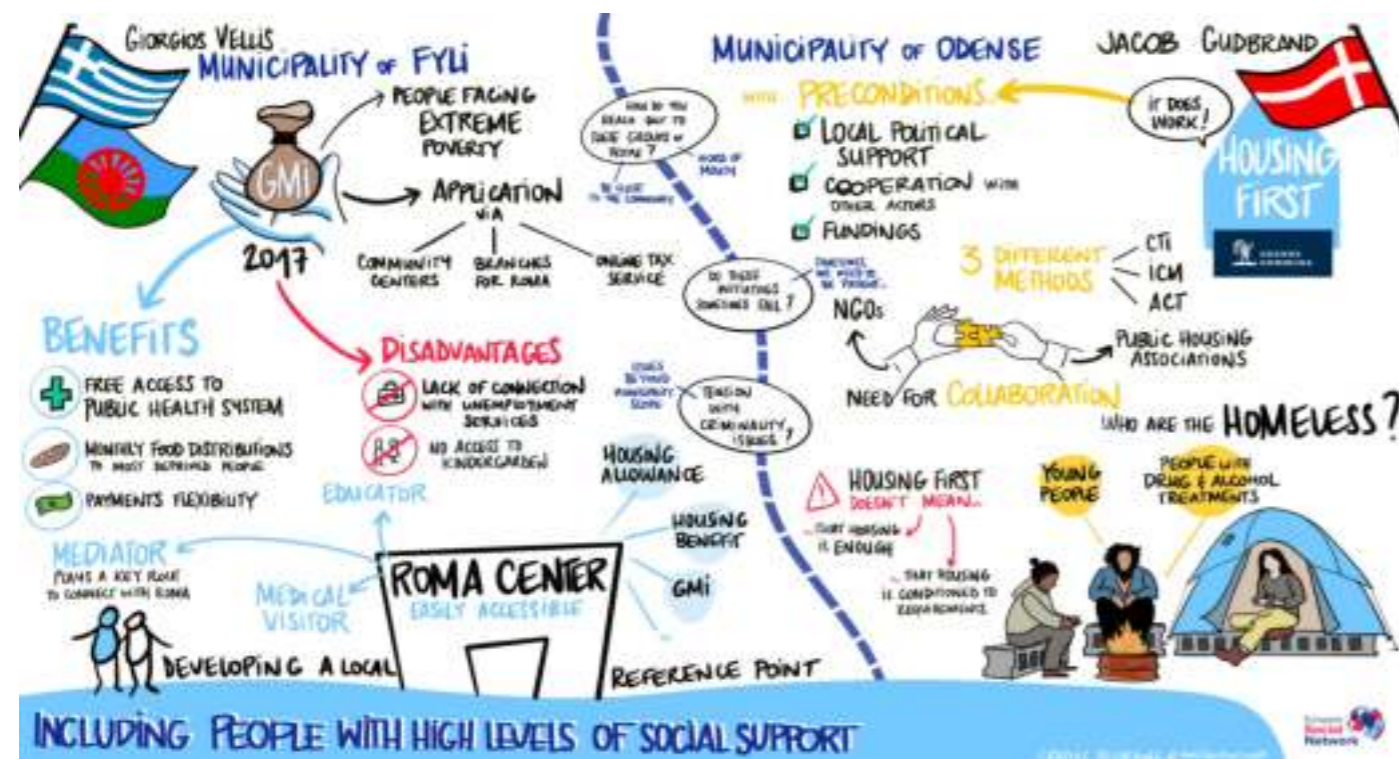


Source: European Commission (2021d)



## 4. REVIEW OF INTEGRATED SOCIAL INCLUSION PROGRAMMES

ESN ran a questionnaire with its member organisations and the results were used to prepare a seminar to further analyse the findings and to prepare this publication. The questionnaire focused on the experience of member organisations in providing integrated support for minimum income beneficiaries. Below, we outline examples of these programmes at national and at local levels.



### 4.1 National integrated social inclusion programmes for minimum income beneficiaries

In 12 out of the 14 countries covered by the respondents, it was highlighted that there had been a reform of some sort to advance coordination between minimum income and social support programmes. While respondents in AT and LU stated that they were not aware of reforms, respondents from BE, HR, DK, FR, DE, GR, IT, PT, RO, SI, ES, SE said they were aware of this reform in their countries.

The following paragraphs outline **reform programmes and policies that have been recently implemented**, characterised by the

integration of different policies: social inclusion, social protection, active labour market policies, training and education, reconciliation and health. Within a multilevel governance structure, they offer different services aimed at supporting beneficiaries to access the labour market, overcome barriers that prevent them from moving into employment (by reducing skill gaps and inexperience, labour market discrimination), access healthcare **and specialist social services. Let's look at some national examples** as reported by ESN members in their countries.

In **Belgium**, social activation is a legal obligation for all minimum income beneficiaries. It is part of the individualised integrated social integration project that is drawn up in mutual agreement and be discussed regularly. The consolidation of a coordinated approach including financial benefits and other services

is implemented through the Public Social Welfare Centres, funded partly by the national government. The centres have a statutory duty to provide minimum income, funded by the federal government, as well as other local statutory and non-statutory services, including psycho-social and health services. Specific examples include the project MIRIAM supporting single mothers receiving minimum income and Children First, an initiative aimed at bridging the gap between education services and welfare services by allowing children and families to access social support while at school. These programmes are expected to improve knowledge on new methods, structures, and possibilities for the organizations involved and a progressive lowering of barriers to social support for beneficiaries, allowing more take-up.

**Croatia's** guaranteed minimum benefit (ZMN in Croatian) changed with the introduction of the new Social Welfare Act in February 2022. The law recognised the right to this benefit also for young people. This reform introduced an important novelty in the minimum income scheme, namely the criteria for exercising the right to a guaranteed minimum benefit, including among eligible 'beneficiaries' who are young people. Social Welfare Centres play an important role as the realisation of the ZMN depends on them at the local level. In this context the new Law on Social Welfare introduced 'Social Mentoring'. This is a service offered to specific targets among the beneficiaries of ZMN and approved according to the assessment of a professional employee, in agreement with the user, and is based on a relationship of trust and partnership between the social mentor and the user.

In **France**, there are several social inclusion policy reforms underway. In 2021, the national government started a new mechanism to coordinate social services involved in the social and labour market inclusion of unemployed people, called 'Service Public de l'Insertion et de l'Emploi (SPIE)'. It promotes local experimentation of a coordinated approach between public employment and social services which together support people who have difficulties finding a job, including beneficiaries of minimum income. Each beneficiary receives an offer for a personalised support pathway that takes into account all of their integration difficulties (housing, health,

mobility, etc.). This pathway is coordinated by the various professionals to avoid duplication of efforts, with follow-up over time proposed. By 2022, 80% of the country was covered by this new coordination measure (2022a).

In 2023, another reform pilot will start under the name 'RSA for work'. Its aim is to better integrate beneficiaries of the French minimum income 'Revenu de Solidarité Active' (RSA) into the labour market, by obliging 'RSA' beneficiaries to engage in 15 – 20 hours of weekly activities bringing them closer to the labour market. Those activities can entail job placements offered by the employment services or participation in training. Beneficiaries of the 'RSA' agree with their case managers which activities to take on and risk a reduction of benefits in case of non-respect of their engagements. Throughout the year 2023 this new approach will be piloted in 19 county councils.

In **Germany** in December 2022 the government announced that the basic income support for jobseekers, the central element of the German minimum income benefit system, will be replaced by a 'citizen's income'. The 'citizen's income' is designed to provide holistic individualised support focusing on the beneficiaries' employment potential but also on enabling their social participation as a whole. To ensure a more personalised support, beneficiaries and job councillors jointly draw up a 'participation' agreement (previously called 'integration' agreement). It places less emphasis on conditionality to have a job to allow low skilled unemployed people in particular to develop better skills instead of placing them low-skilled jobs, which are often precarious. Investment will be made to ensure an adequate ratio of well-qualified support staff able to provide tailor-made and holistic support at the job centres. Support for coaching and outreach work will become standard instruments in the citizen's income system. Opportunities for combining benefits with earnings will be improved to increase incentives for employment.

In 2017, **Greece** introduced an important social welfare system reform by putting forward the Social Solidarity Income (SSI), which after a two-year pilot, was transformed into a national guaranteed minimum income scheme. The scheme is a welfare programme led by the Ministry of Social Affairs that combines means-

tested income support, complementary social services and actions for integration and reintegration into the labour market. To facilitate access to minimum income there are currently 244 Community Centres in 13 Greek regions to help potential beneficiaries with their applications. To improve take-up in marginalised communities, mobile units provide specialised support to Roma communities as well as migrant, and refugee populations.

In **Italy** in 2019, the government introduced a guaranteed minimum income scheme called 'Reddito di Cittadinanza' (RdC, in English: Citizenship Income). This financial assistance is in most cases conditional upon participation in a personalised intervention plan led by employment or social services. In 2020, 1.1 million families benefitted from the RdC, with 49% of them involved in a plan with employment services, 46% in collaboration with social services and 5% without any specific plan (Caritas Italiana, 2021). With the introduction of this plan, people with vulnerabilities are supported by social services. According to Carmine De Blasio, General Director at the Local Consortium of Social Services A5 Atripalda in the Campania Region, these measures had an important impact on social services at local level and marked a turning point both in the development of local welfare and the consolidation of professional social services.

To enhance the management of social inclusion pacts by local social services, the World Bank financed the introduction of the case management information system 'GePI'. This software allows social workers to create digital case files, including the documentation of pre-needs assessment, in depth assessment for complex cases, matching of families with appropriate support services and the formulation of the social inclusion plan. The plan may involve an agreement including the beneficiaries' commitment to send their children to school regularly, while a social worker supports the beneficiary with applying for subsidised school meals. With the signature of the agreement, GePI allows services to keep track of each supported person through regular follow-up meetings and appointments by SMS (World Bank, 2021). The system established standardised case management across Italy and improved coordination between employment and social services. However,

there has been an increase in caseload that requires the recruitment of additional social workers and interoperability with the National Institute of Social Security needs still to be established (World Bank, 2022).

**Romania** has recently introduced a new model of support for families that applied for minimum income. Families that apply for social financial benefits like minimum income are assessed for a series of psycho-social and economic criteria, and provided with financial support and other services, such as professional integration and access to vocational training, healthcare, children services, and housing, depending on needs. This has led to a decrease in the number of families benefiting from the minimum income and increased employment among adults.

In **Spain**, in June 2020, the government introduced a guaranteed minimum income scheme (IMV, 'Ingreso Mínimo Vital', in Spanish). The IMV is acknowledged in the legislation as a right to a cash transfer. It is a national non-contributory social security benefit financed by the central government and managed by the national Social Security Institute (Arriba González de Durana, A. and Rodríguez-Cabrero, G., 2021). It is implemented by the regions, with the possibility that some can sign agreements with the central government to take over the management of the scheme. Indeed, regional governments in Spain had already started developing their own minimum income schemes for the past 10 years, and in some cases, as in the Basque Country, were particularly advanced. So, in the case of the Basque Country and Navarra, management of the IMV will be directly transferred to them.

In addition to providing financial support, the national IMV seeks to improve opportunities for the labour market access and social inclusion of the beneficiaries. To this end, it includes employment and inclusion incentives, articulated through cooperation agreements between the administrations. For example, the regions follow up on the persons who receive the IMV and propose integrated social inclusion covering employment and social services support. Funded by the EU Recovery and Resilience Facility, Spain has launched 16 pilot projects to improve cooperation between regional employment services and social services amounting to a 109 million EUR

investment. These pilots are implemented in collaboration with regions, city councils and in some cases third sector organisations. The ambition is to reach one out of every four current beneficiaries of the IMV, targeting in particular single-parent families, families with children living in poverty, homeless, and Roma people.

## 4.2 Local integrated social inclusion programmes for minimum income beneficiaries

According to ESN (2016) decentralisation in the social sector is the most visible example of major welfare reforms occurring in European countries over the past years, which has represented a considerable shift in the way public policies are planned and delivered. The shift involves not only the devolution of competences and resources at the local level but also the fact that local authorities are required to work in an even more integrated way. This also includes more integrated deliverable of social and labour market inclusion services. Local authorities are often involved in the needs assessment and social and labour market inclusion support of minimum income beneficiaries.

For successful social inclusion, local authorities rely on a network of different support services provided at local level such as health, childcare and counselling etc. provided by public,

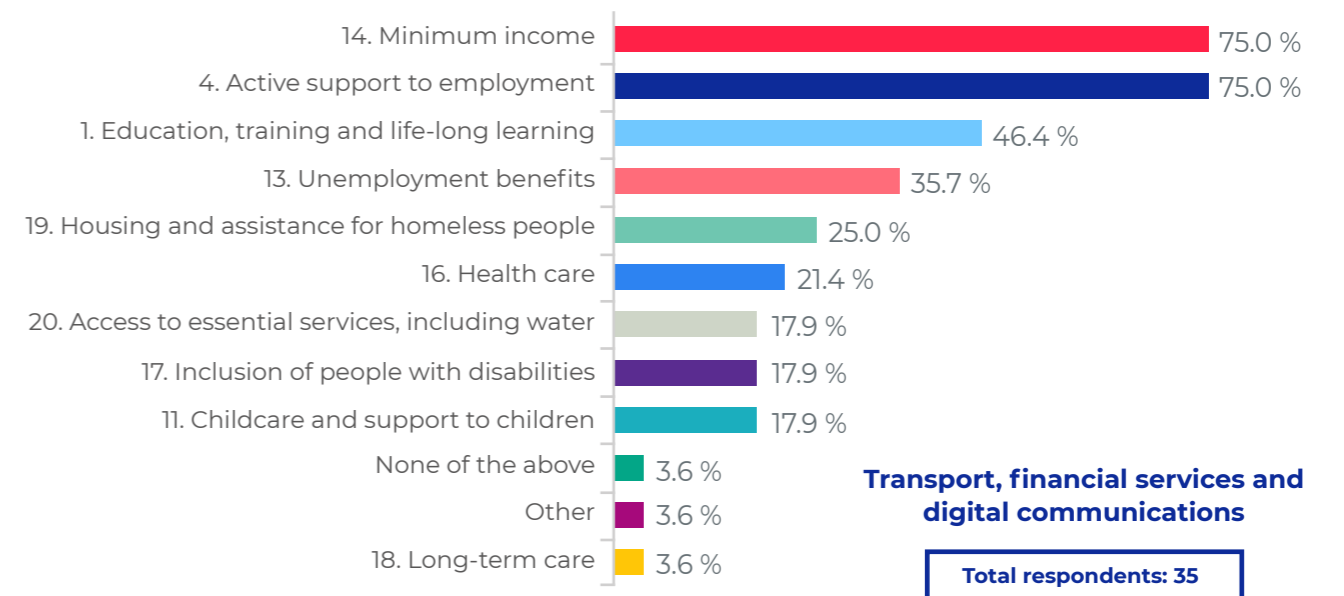
third sector and private entities. In in case of public employment services' local offices they rely on close contact to local companies to be able to place people in unemployment. Integrated social inclusion programmes aim at reinforcing close collaboration and work in partnership with all social and labour market inclusion stakeholders at local level. In the next section, we look at how these programmes are designed, and which services, organisation and working methods are central elements of those programmes.

### 4.2.1 Innovation

The survey and analysis of practical examples in the different European countries has allowed us to identify common features and interesting examples of reforms that have been recently implemented locally across Europe. These practices gather several programmes' services with the aim to support people and families in need to overcome a situation of poverty or social exclusion, hence implementing the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights, mainly principle 14 on Minimum Income and Principle 4 promoting active support to employment.

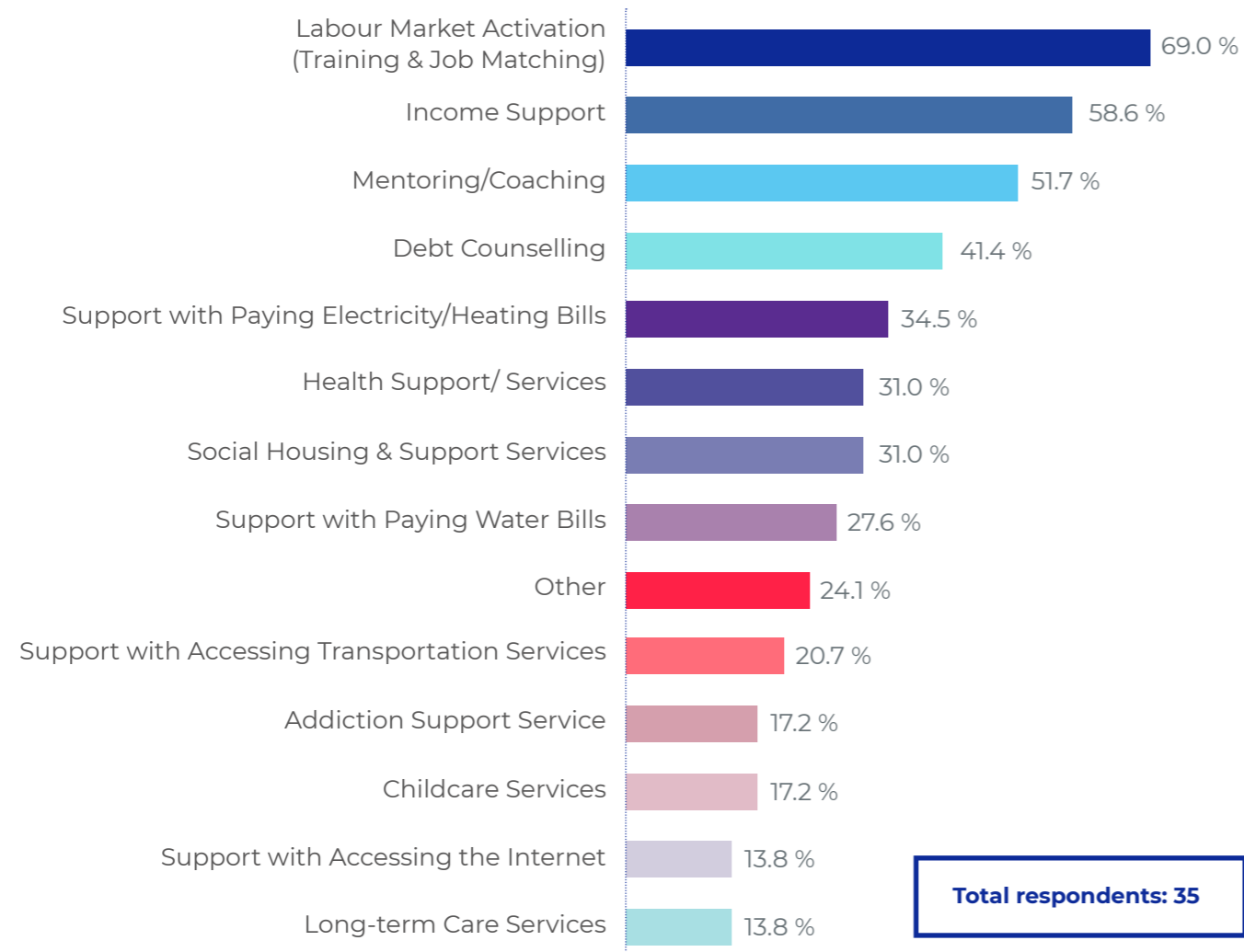
The programmes mentioned are generally targeted to all beneficiaries, but there are also interesting cases targeted to particularly vulnerable groups: homeless, single parent households, people with a migration background, young people and families.

**Figure 6: Relevant European Pillar of Social Rights principles covered by your programme**



## Types of integrated support that beneficiaries receive

Figure 7: Types of integrated support



People in need requiring economic support through minimum income in most cases can also access additional services within social, housing, health, labour market and education services.

For instance, the **City of Esbjerg, Denmark**, has created a one-stop-shop specially dedicated to homeless people. “We have made a one-stop-shop unit from January 2022 in the city for homeless people and all requests concerning homeless people”, explained Elsebeth Nebeling from the City’s Social Services Department.

The **City of Odense**, also in **Denmark**, adopted a Housing First Strategy in 2009. As part of this

policy, Odense provides a homeless person with a home within three months. Additional support is offered for citizens who need support to maintain their homes. This can, for example, involve help to structure their daily life, practical tasks or finances. A social worker provides regular follow-up support to the person in need through calls, contact with public administration and understanding the letters they receive. After the adoption of the Housing First Strategy, Odense succeeded in reducing homelessness considerably while it has increased nationally. Around 500 citizens in the City of Odense got a home through the programme from 2010-2018. Approximately 80 per cent are still in housing three years after they were allocated housing.

# –HOUSING FIRST IN ODENSE–

City of Odense, Denmark



## Summary

With its ‘Housing First’ strategy Odense managed to reduce homelessness to half within the first 10 years of the strategy’s implementation.



## Social issues addressed

- In 2009 homelessness was perceived as a big issue in Odense with about 210 people being homeless out of a total population of 206,000.



## Objectives

- Reduce homelessness in Odense.
- Reduce the time people are waiting for social housing.
- Strengthen long-term social inclusion of people without housing / depending on social housing support.



## Activities

- Odense offers a homeless person a home within three months.
- To avoid dropouts, additional support is offered for citizens with special needs. This can mean, for example, offering help to structure daily life, practical tasks, health support, substance abuse treatment, building social networks, access to employment and training or managing people’s finances.
- A social worker provides regular follow-up support to the person in need through conversations, support in contacting public institutions and understanding letters.



## Evaluation

- Odense has succeeded in reducing homelessness to half from 208 persons homeless in 2009 to 117 in 2022. Over the same time period the number of people who were homeless increased nationally from 4,998 to 5,789.
- According to VIVE (2020), around 500 citizens in Odense City got a home following the implementation of its Housing First strategy between 2010 and 2018.
- Approximately 80% were still in housing three years after they were allocated housing. They either live in the designated accommodation or have moved on to a new one.
- However, many of the initiative’s citizens are still outside the labour market and still have mental health challenges or substance abuse problems that require treatment.
- Despite continued vulnerability, the effort has succeeded in helping the vast majority of citizens into housing.



## Key Lessons

- Political will and a strategy for ‘Housing First’ is central to success.
- Clear division of responsibilities and high transparency in collaboration with all support structures and organisations involved is essential.
- Stay loyal to the methods and visions of ‘Housing First’ is crucial.

In the Region of **Navarra, Spain**, a one-stop-shop implemented by the regional Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration, the NGO 'Fundación Secretariado Gitano' and local social services provide Roma families with access to a case manager and a multidisciplinary team to support their multiple needs, draft a joint plan agreed between the family and the professional, and deliver social services accompanying the educational pathways of children within the families. For example, a specialist adviser is in contact with schools and monitors educational itineraries of children in the families.

In **Lyon, France**, the EU Funded Project 'A roof over your head, a job in your pocket' provides integrated access to multiple services such as housing, job counselling, social assistance, training, and internships for young unemployed people who are between 18 and 24 years old. Participants engage in a support programme towards autonomy that is defined jointly with their case manager. A key part of this support programme is the Youth Solidarity Income (RSJ), which functions as a minimum income scheme for young people who have left the education system and have less than 400 euros a month to cover for themselves or cannot be supported by their parents.

**Figure 8: Integrated support for young minimum income beneficiaries in Lyon**



## Types of partners and cooperation across agencies

The respondents to the questionnaire evidenced that in almost all cases the organisations involved in providing support to those in need are public social services, followed by charitable organisations and social employers like those providing protected employment.

The most common form of cooperation is the least structured, where staff signpost users to services they know. But in almost 80% of cases, the respondents highlighted that services were jointly coordinated either for case management or to monitor the beneficiary's progress.

The level of cooperation between services is highly dependent on the type of services involved. While for job counselling and job training well-structured cooperation through joint assessment or in one-stop-shops is common, this is not the case for others, in particular for childcare services, schools, health and addiction support services.

For example, the **City of Ghent, Belgium** embeds social workers from public social services in schools to improve reaching out to the most vulnerable student population.

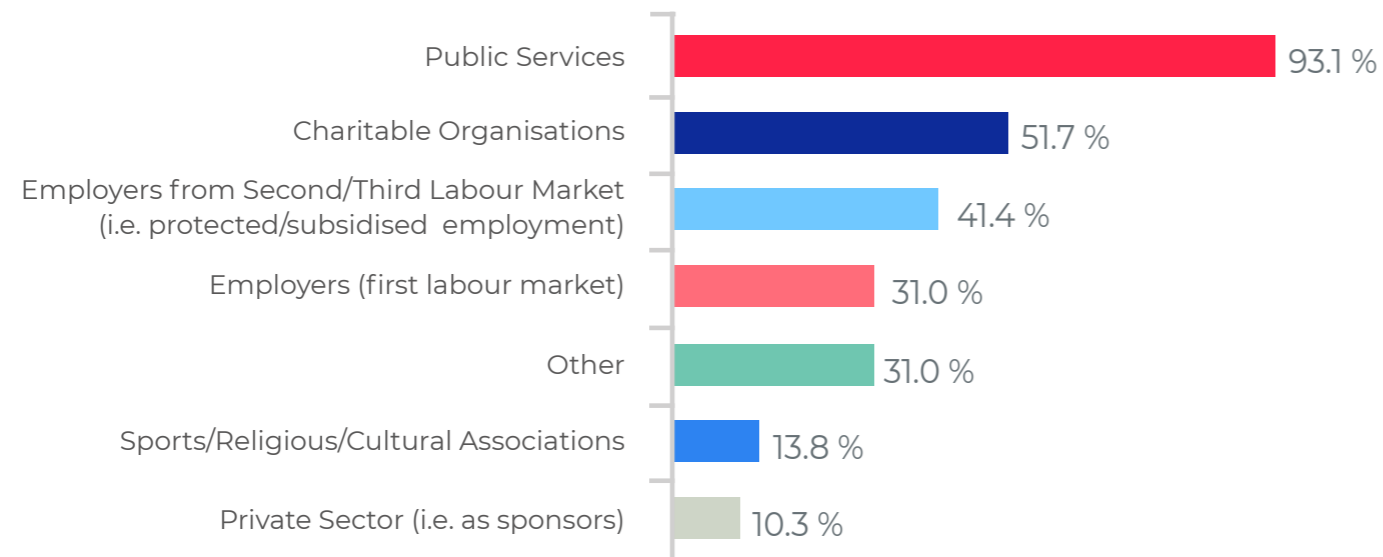
The **City of Linköping, Sweden** works with charitable organisations such as Red Cross, international women's rights organisations, protected and competitive employers, as well as adult education centres providing language courses based on the Swedish for immigrants (SFI) programme.

Service integration can be organised and implemented differently. All relevant services can be available in a **one-stop-shop as confirmed by 55% of respondents**, or they can be **jointly coordinated** for integrated needs assessment, case management or to monitor the beneficiary's progress (confirmed by 80% of respondents). In **less structured organisations staff can be called to signpost users to services in other sectors and organisations they know, or share care plans with other organisations**. "Management is shared between multiple organisations through partnerships, for example to connecting data from local social welfare centres and national employment services", explained Katica Lažeta, Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy in Croatia.

Work can also be organised in **multi-disciplinary teams** with professionals from different sectors working together to deliver support, as confirmed by 66% of the respondents. In some cases, they are even in the same building (co-location). Different services may share an information system that allows exchange of data and information on users, as confirmed by 62% of the respondents.

“*Social workers are present in schools to discuss with a child or their family their living situation. Based on the discussion, school social workers refer families to support services that the family wasn't previously aware of, such as food support or support with homework.* **Koen Geirnaert, City of Ghent, Belgium**”

**Figure 9: Partner agencies collaborating in integrated social inclusion programmes**



### One-stop-shops

The most structured type of coordination is in the form of 'one-stop-shops'. Most respondents to the ESN questionnaire are aware of the presence of such services in their countries, in particular in relation to the provision of integrated support for beneficiaries of minimum income.

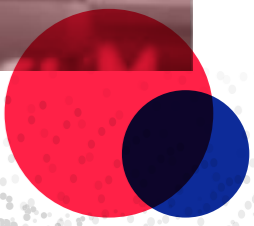
In most cases, the person looking for support meets one professional, usually a social worker, who acts as a case manager and analyses their multiple needs. This case manager contacts the other services to design a personalised

support plan including all the services needed. On other occasions, the person may meet a team of different professionals who analyse the multiple needs of the person and organise an integrated support plan including all the services needed.

The **City of Vienna in Austria** set up the U25 agency for young people. In a one-stop-shop, this agency combines youth and labour market counselling services. To ensure integrated delivery of support, both services moved into a central building in which Viennese young people with social needs receive a holistic needs analysis, including a joint social and labour market inclusion plan.



*When a new person comes to seek our support, they are seen by a case manager for a first needs assessment, and they jointly elaborate a social inclusion plan. More complex cases are discussed within a multi-professional team from employment, social and financial support services. In a joint appointment involving the young person, a social worker and an employment advisor, a tailor-made inclusion plan is drafted. Regular follow-up meetings ensure that sustainable support from the U25 team is in place.* **Marc Herrmann, U25 Vienna**



*One-stop-shops are usually run by public authorities at national, regional or local level. Sometimes they may also consist of public-private partnerships. Generally, they deliver a variety of services under one roof. "The Community Centre is a one-stop-shop. The centres give advice on the government allowances people are entitled to. Citizens can access free support for all aspects of social, work and family life from almost anywhere in the country, thanks to the ambitious network of Community Centres.* **Georgios Vellis, Municipality of Fyli, Greece.**



# U25 TOGETHER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN VIENNA, AUSTRIA

City of Vienna, Department for Social Welfare, Social and Public Health Law, Austria



## Summary

A one-stop-shop for young unemployed persons with social support needs



## Social issues addressed

- The number of young, unemployed beneficiaries of minimum income in Vienna increased significantly in the past years.
- They often face obstacles integrating into the labour market due to the absence of, or incomplete training or qualifications and/or social problems such as homelessness, debt, etc.
- Existing support structures for young minimum-income beneficiaries such as the Job Centre and the municipal youth services were not sufficiently coordinating their help.
- The establishment of a joint contact point (one-stop-shop) for employment, training and social issues should eliminate or reduce existing barriers to employment and social inclusion.



## Objectives

- Reducing the number of young people relying on minimum income benefits.
- Fostering labour market and social inclusion for young people.
- Improving coordination of different support structures for young people.



## Activities

- At the start of the project an in-depth problem analysis was conducted to identify possibilities to coordinate individual case management activities to minimise the risk of people needing long-term financial support.
- Following this, the city created 'U25' - a one-stop-shop merging the city's employment and social services for young people under 25.
- The one-stop-shop provides support on employment, education and social issues to all young people between 15 and 25 years living in Vienna.
- A joint logo and mission statement was established to formalise the collaboration of the involved support services and to show externally that the different services are now working closely together.
- The involved organisations merged their teams to allow for multi-professional support.
- Case managers make an initial assessment of the young person's situation and offer relevant support such as access to housing, debt management, training, internships or jobs.
- The beneficiary and the case manager jointly agree on a social inclusion plan that addresses the needs of the young person.
- The case manager follows up regularly on the development of the social inclusion plan.



## Evaluation

- A survey found that 80% of the participating young people felt they were well or very well supported by the project. Participants also felt that the service had improved and that their support has become more personalised.
- Experience from the planning phase and the first months of implementation shows that the project can be transferred to other cities and other fields of activity, provided that the focus is on clients' needs and requirements.



## Key Lessons

- Integrated working requires an adapted legislative framework.
- Multi-disciplinary teams foster joint case management.
- Joint infrastructure facilitates integrated service provision.

### Table 3: Most relevant partners of one-stop-shops

Most relevant partners of one-stop-shops are social inclusion services, as confirmed by 58% of respondents. Job counselling and job training services are involved, according to 46% of respondents, which makes them the second most commonly involved services. Other services like children's services, mental health, addiction or housing are less frequently involved. The most relevant partners of one-stop-shops described by respondents can be seen in the following table:

Organisation	Social Inclusion Services	Job Counselling Services	Job Training Services	Child Care Services	Schools	Health Services	Mental Health Support Services	Addiction Support Services	Debt Counselling Services	Personal Mentoring Services	Social Housing Services
City of Vienna, Municipal Department of Social Welfare, Social and Public Health Law, Austria	✓	✓	✓			✓				✓	
Federal Planning Service for Social Integration, Belgium	✓			✓					✓	✓	
City of Ghent, Belgium	✓		✓	✓			✓		✓		
Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, Croatia	✓	✓	✓							✓	✓
City of Odense, Denmark	✓					✓		✓			✓
City of Esbjerg, Denmark	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
German Association for Public and Private Welfare, Germany								✓	✓		
City of Cologne on behalf of Working Conference of Social Welfare Directors of large Cities, Germany		✓	✓								
City of Athens, Greece	✓	✓									✓
University of West Attica - Social Administration Research Lab, Greece	✓	✓								✓	
City of Fyli, Greece	✓										
Basque Employment Services, Spain	✓	✓	✓							✓	
Regional Government of Navarra, Spain	✓	✓	✓								
Barcelona County Council, Spain	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓		
Fundación Secretariado Gitano, Spain	✓		✓		✓						
Barcelona City Council, Spain	✓	✓	✓						✓		
City of Linköping, Research and Development Centre in Care and Social Work, Sweden	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	

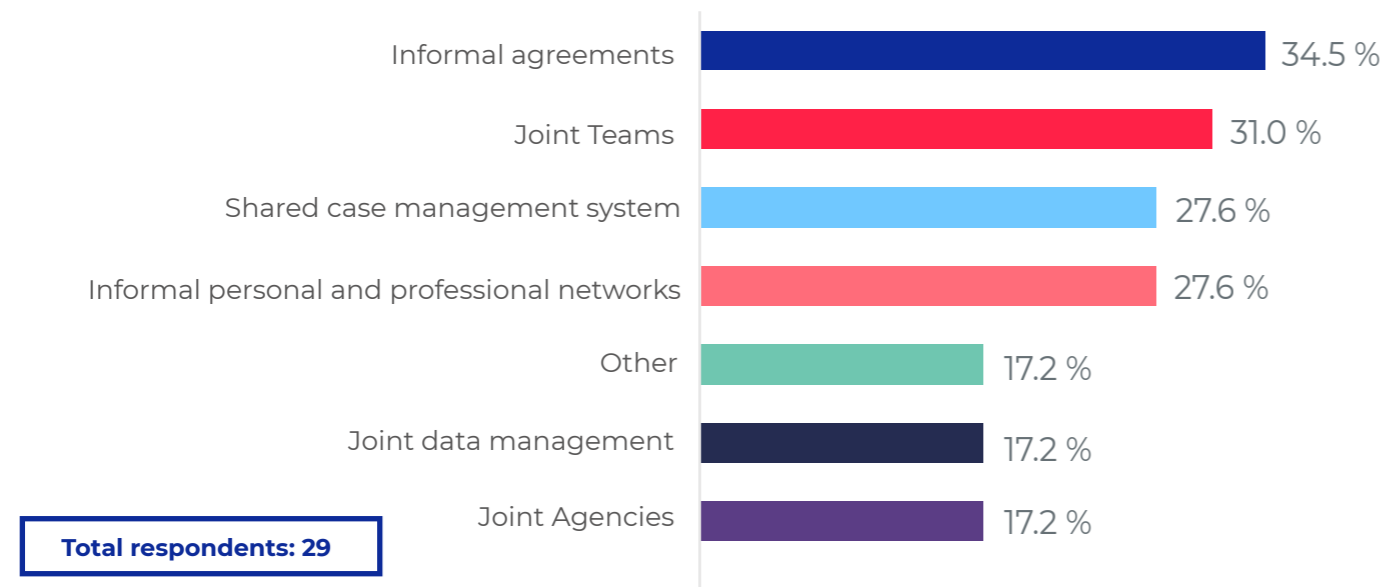


## 4.2.2 Governance models

Apart from highly structured one-stop-shops, where agencies work together to jointly deliver services in joint teams or through shared case management systems, collaboration is frequently based on informal agreements and professional networks.



**Figure 10: How different partner agencies work together**



Integrated social inclusion programmes are much more frequently managed through an organisational arrangement, where one organisation (for example, a local authority or a national agency) leads the process. This happens in 72.4% of cases reported by the respondents. Only in 13.8% of cases does it happen through a **collaborative management approach**, where management is shared between multiple organisations (through partnerships, for example).

Formal agreements on data exchange enable strong collaboration and shared case management by social and employment services. For instance, in Croatia, a data exchange agreement allows joint monitoring of people in need by employment and social services.

In **Navarra, Spain**, the regional government has piloted an innovative coordination approach between social and employment services for the social inclusion of the most vulnerable through the ERSISI project, funded by the EaSi programme of the European Commission.

The integrated model is based on the role played by the case management team, who work based a person-centred approach, and consists of pair of professionals, one from employment and another from social services. They work with the person to design and test a high-intensity, individualised activation and support programme.

In the ESN questionnaire, participants could rate the prevalence of challenges from 1 to 4, where one meant 'Not a challenge at all'; 2



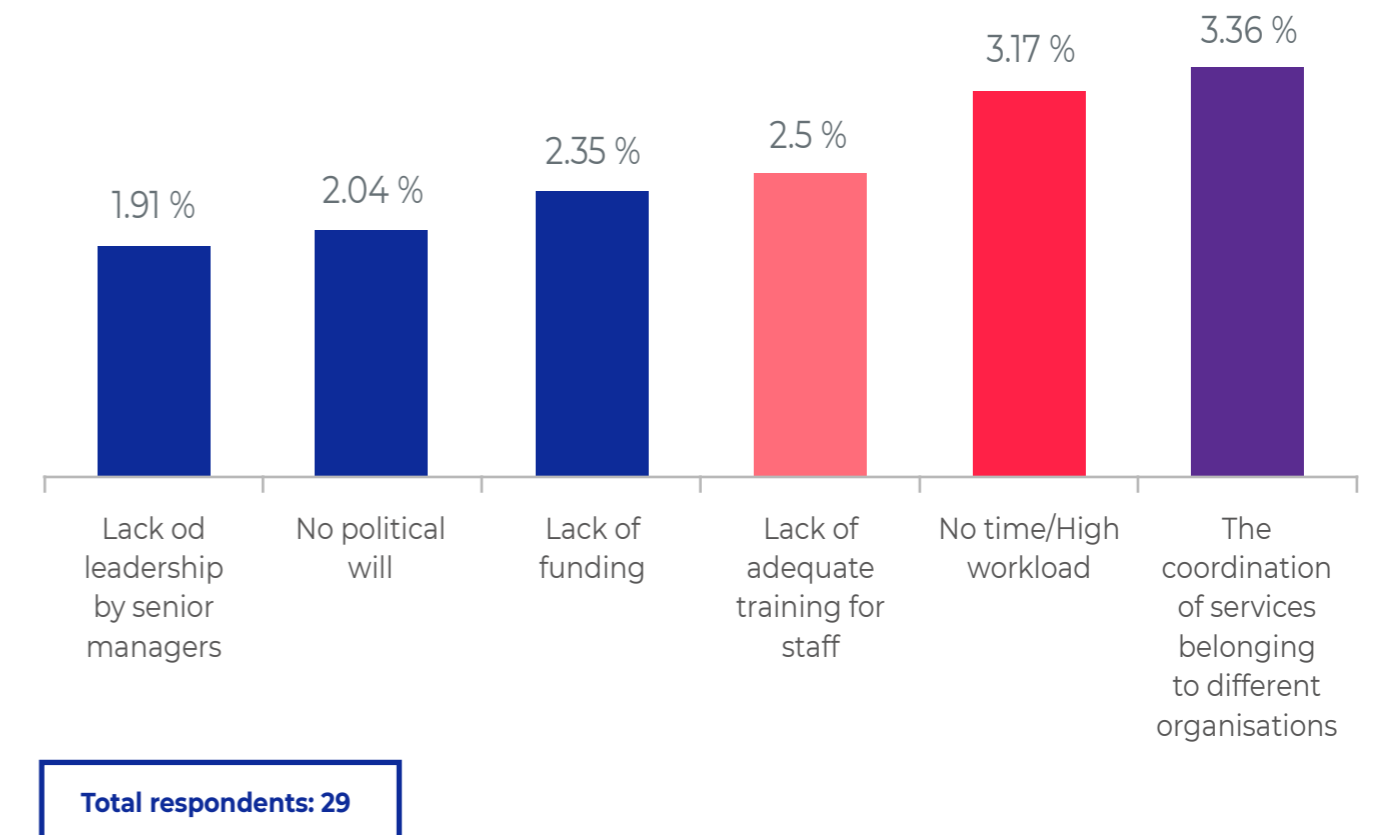
*Following the data exchange agreement, a daily data exchange has been established between social welfare centres and employment services. Only beneficiaries' data of the social welfare system can be exchanged; this includes date of birth, date of last registration in employment, date of last deregistration from employment records and the reason, completed educational programme and date of completion. Katica Lažeta, Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, Croatia.*



'Minor challenge'; 3 'Somewhat of a challenge'; and 4 'Significant challenge'. The main challenges regarding the implementation of integrated inclusion programmes refer to the difficulties in implementing the integration of

services from different organisations. This was followed by the high workload of social workers and case managers in their daily activities and lack of adequate training.

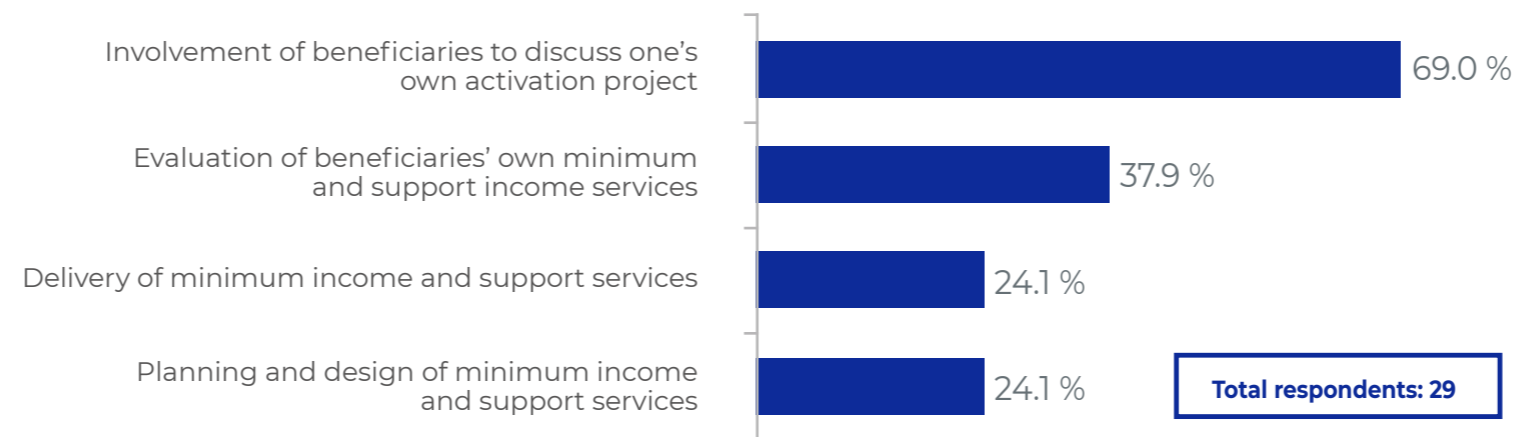
**Figure 11: Main implementation challenges**



### 4.2.3 Involving beneficiaries

Beneficiaries are involved in different stages of the design and evaluation of social inclusion programmes, depending on their personal experience in accessing integrated social inclusion programmes. They are most frequently involved in discussing their personal activation project. When considering the involvement of the beneficiary in discussing the individual activation plan, survey respondents indicated that requirements have to be realistic and viable in practice. Challenges may relate to user attendance, lack of self-evaluation and of self-efficacy and their insecurity on how to act in collaboration with service providers. They may lack trust in the organisations. Additionally, beneficiaries of minimum income schemes often carry burdens, such as low availability and may not be motivated in designing initiatives as they might not consider that their voice, needs and proposals are going to be heard. The motivation of the individual may be low if, for example, one has been unemployed or unwell for a long time.

**Figure 12: How people are involved in local integrated social inclusion programmes**



*The challenge is how to prepare an individual plan based entirely on needs of the users if only pre-designed programmes are available.* Liljana Rihter, Faculty of Social Work, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

In addition to being involved in designing the personalised support programmes, ESN member organisations have described innovative experiences of people's involvement in different countries.

In **Belgium**, the Federal Public Service for Social Integration (PPS Social) has a department of Experts by Experience that is involved on a systematic basis in the planning, design, delivery, or evaluation of the minimum income scheme. Also in **Belgium**, the **City of Ghent** reported the existence of a client survey and a dialogue on the city poverty plan.

In **Denmark**, homeless people have been involved in the process of designing the homelessness strategy by taking part in workshops and partnering in final consultations.

Respondents to our survey underlined that involvement must not be a check box exercise.

As with individual involvement in their inclusion plans, there are challenges with participatory procedures. They require longer processes that are not usually compatible with short-term calls for proposal periods. High workload may also result in difficulties with involving beneficiaries.

Respondents found that for people's successful involvement, everyone should be reminded of the broader framework, vision, and the impact that this involvement in creating the person's programme may have in reducing non-take-up of social benefits through access and information.

*The process starts with an in-depth joint-assessment of the needs and dimensions of social inclusion involved, as well as the degree of employability; in this joint assessment the participation of the person is essential. After this, the personalised programme is agreed between the parties involved.* Andrés Carbonero, Regional Government of Navarra, Spain.

In some cases they are also involved within a broader capacity; for example, to learn from them as 'experts by experience' able to give advice to enhance service design, planning and provision.

In Sweden, organizations (FSS Sweden and the R & D Centre in Care and Social Work, Municipality of Linköping), report that users from the target group are involved from the early planning stage of the project, throughout the entire process of development, testing and evaluation. Also, in Luxembourg (the Local administration of the City of Esch/Alzette), Portugal (Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa), Slovenia, and Spain (Spain Lanbide – Basque Employment Services), users are involved in the evaluation process, by answering questionnaires during periodic follow-ups and meetings about their achieving goals at the beginning of the project and also at its end.

There are also challenges that have to be taken into account when considering the involvement of the beneficiary in discussing their individual activation plan. These may relate to user attendance, lack of self-evaluation and self-efficacy, and their insecurity about how to act in collaboration with the professionals. Users may lack trust in the organizations. Sometimes available support services may not fit the individual needs of a person.

*When a person applies for and receives income support, they participate in making their plan with their social worker. The plan is about how the individual should become self-sufficient and what kind of support they need to get there.*

Maja Bjarneby, City of Stockholm, Sweden.

# 5. GUIDANCE FOR INTEGRATED SOCIAL INCLUSION PROGRAMMES

## European Commission

### Foster integrated support

**What?** ?

Ensure member states invest in integrated support for people at risk of poverty and social exclusion such as beneficiaries of minimum income.

**How?** ↓

Through Recommendations provided in the framework of the European Semester policy coordination cycle, national programmes funded by EU Recovery Funds, and programmes supported by the European Social Fund Plus.

### Implementation of EU policies

**What?** ?

Ensure member states implement latest EU policies such as the upcoming Council Recommendation on adequate minimum income.

**How?** ↓

Creating a robust monitoring system to support effective policy implementation, through the Social Protection Committee and relevant country specific recommendations issued by the European Commission to national governments.

The Commission should also look at promoting monitoring frameworks that assess the situation holistically covering at least three pillars: social rights legislation, economic investment, and coverage along the lines of ESN's proposed 'Rights-Economic Investment-Coverage (REC) Index'.

### Reducing (perceived) barriers to data exchange for integrated inclusion

**What?** ?

Integrated support requires data exchange between different organisations involved in social inclusion programmes, but the fear of breaking data protection rules prevents involved organisations from doing so.

**How?** ↓

Clarifying impact of data protection obligations under EU legislation on collaboration and data exchange between authorities and services responsible for providing support for people at risk of poverty and social exclusion, such as beneficiaries of minimum income.

## National Governments

### Implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights

**What?** ?

Pillar 14 of the European Pillar of Social Rights grants the right to minimum income for people in need. National governments in collaboration with sub-national authorities, are responsible to ensure this principle is implemented in their country.

**How?** ↓

Putting in place national programmes which are aligned to the European Council Recommendation on adequate minimum income, which includes proposals on integrated support for minimum income beneficiaries through adequate income support, inclusive labour markets, and access to quality services.

### Provide adequate Minimum Income

**What?** ?

Provide persons in need access to minimum social support to lead a life in dignity.

**How?** ↓

Establishing procedures to determine the adequacy of minimum financial support required for a life in dignity, taking into account the increasing costs of living, for instance by considering providing some form of indexation.

### Foster take-up and accessibility

**What?** ?

According to estimates, the rate of non-take up of social support in Europe is about 40%. Governments should ensure people in need are supported to be integrated in society.

**How?** ↓

Proactively informing potential beneficiaries about available minimum income support.

Reducing complexity of application procedures to minimum income schemes.

Running media campaigns that address societal bias against minimum income beneficiaries. Providing support for filling in application forms through public social service front offices.

Reaching out to potential beneficiaries through campaigns, invitation letters, proactive home visits and collaboration with third sector organisations.

Establishing a network of referral professionals across sectors for citizens and, for example GPs, who can refer potential clients to social services.

### Digitise access to benefits

**What?** ?

Paper based applications for benefits or the requirement to claim benefits in person may refrain people from applying for social support for example as they may be ashamed to be seen by others while going to social authorities' offices. Limited open hours of social authorities may also be a barrier to apply for social support.

**How?** ↓

Digitisation can support the accessibility of the application procedure. For instance, a national platform could be used to by applicants to file their request.

Digital application procedures can be supported through digital helpers such as chatbots, but onsite services should remain available for those unable to use online application forms. Investments in automatic detection of needs i.e. through data exchange on payment defaults of private households and proactive provision of social benefits and social services can increase the take-up of benefits.

## Access to enabling services and personalised support

### What?

Beyond the requirement to provide each person with a minimum standard of living, it is vital to link financial benefits to a personalised social inclusion plan, where labour market activation is one pillar of a wider support plan to have people fully included in society.

### How?

Providing access to enabling services such as social work, education, childcare, health, and housing, and offering individualised support, based on needs assessment, and assisted by a case manager, are considered key to improving social inclusion.

## Improve governance between administrations

### What?

National authorities are usually responsible for the design of minimum income programmes, while regional and local authorities' departments for social services are responsible for implementation. It is important that national authorities collaborate closely with regional and local social services to ensure beneficiaries receive support in an integrated manner.

### How?

Setting up programmes improving coordination of minimum income, social and labour market support programmes.

Strengthening the operational capacity of authorities responsible for income support, employment services and social services and enhancing their cooperation through data sharing while also promoting further integrated service models across administrations.

For this to happen effectively, national governments should develop a legislative framework that enables collaboration and joint working between authorities across administrative levels.

## Improve data exchange

### What?

Integrated recording of data can allow for the centralisation of all relevant information to support beneficiaries. This helps professionals access all information and avoids beneficiaries having to retell their story multiple times.

### How?

IT solutions that enable at least professionals in public employment and social services access and update data of jointly supported beneficiaries.

They should create a legislative framework that allows for data exchange between authorities providing minimum income, social services, and labour market integration support.

## Collaboration with local services

### What?

National authorities are usually responsible for the design of minimum income programmes, while regional and local social services are responsible for implementation.

### How?

It is key that national authorities collaborate closely with regional and local social services to ensure beneficiaries receive support in an integrated manner. This means for example that local authorities are involved in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of minimum income and social inclusion programmes.

Local authorities should have sufficient financing to provide enabling social services that complement financial support made available through national minimum income schemes.

They should have access to relevant national data through a common framework to address the multiple needs of minimum income beneficiaries.

## Local Authorities

### Implementation of EU policies

#### What?

EU policies are implemented at all levels. Local authorities often have the responsibility and statutory duty for key services involved in social inclusion programmes.

#### How?

The EU provides a number of funding programmes such as the ESF+, which can be used by local authorities to experiment with new ways of working. Local authorities can tap into EU funding to test and introduce integrated social support programmes. The EU regularly consults with local authorities and other key stakeholders on the implementation of EU social policies. Local authorities should participate in such consultations.

### Set up local integrated support strategies, programmes and partnerships

#### What?

Local authorities can promote integrated working through strategies, programmes and partnerships bringing together different services in the support of a person in need.

#### How?

Through the creation of one-stop-shops, joint needs assessment and case management by different public authorities involved such as youth, social, housing, and employment services. Mapping all available support services & creating or re-designing the network of partnerships with key agencies such as training bodies, employers, providers, local services.

### Case Management

#### What?

It is key to have a professional responsible for following the person's pathway. This

professional should have an overview of what support is provided and have access to all information about the beneficiary's support.

#### How?

Use case managers/case workers to support each person and help them to navigate the system. The case manager, usually a social worker, should work as a professional of reference who can accompany beneficiaries to navigate the support system.

### Joint teams & training

#### What?

Joint teams whose members have different professional backgrounds (social work, job counselling, health) and work for different organisations involved in the support of a person are a key element of integrated working.

#### How?

Establishing joined-up teams of multiple professionals from different services who meet and train together.

Joint training of the different professionals involved can increase the ownership of staff in relation to integrated working. It can also foster team spirit and bring staff closer together.

### Formalise collaboration between agencies

#### What?

Our research found that integrated working often depends on informal arrangements, making integrated support highly dependent on individuals' willingness to collaborate. By formalising collaborations between organisations, integrated support can be sustained for longer.

#### How?

Through joint partnership agreements. Partners of integrated social inclusion

programmes should clearly define their responsibilities regarding the integrated provision of support for minimum income beneficiaries. Such partnerships could include agreements on which data can be shared between organisations and how it should be stored. This can facilitate the exchange of data required to jointly support beneficiaries.

## Joint Vision

What?



Create a joint vision/identity for the organizations and professionals/services involved.

How?



A joint mission statement of all organisations involved and signed by representatives of each organisation can lead to a sense of togetherness for organisations that were initially separate entities.

Management should clearly communicate to staff how new integrated working methods will be implemented.

A joint programme logo can also show externally that the different organisations now work jointly for a common goal.

## Co-design and Co-production

What?



To make sure integrated support programmes are effectively addressing people's needs, it is central to involve the beneficiaries and experts by experience in the design, implementation and evaluations of integrated social support programmes.

How?



Putting in place a consultation and engagement plan of the integrated programme with all relevant stakeholders from employment and social services, including beneficiaries in relation to planning and design, delivery and evaluation.

Support beneficiaries, as experts by experience, can help public social services design more effective services.

When considering the involvement of the beneficiary in discussing the individual activation plan, requirements and agreed goals have to be realistic and viable in practice.

## Outreach to potential beneficiaries

What?

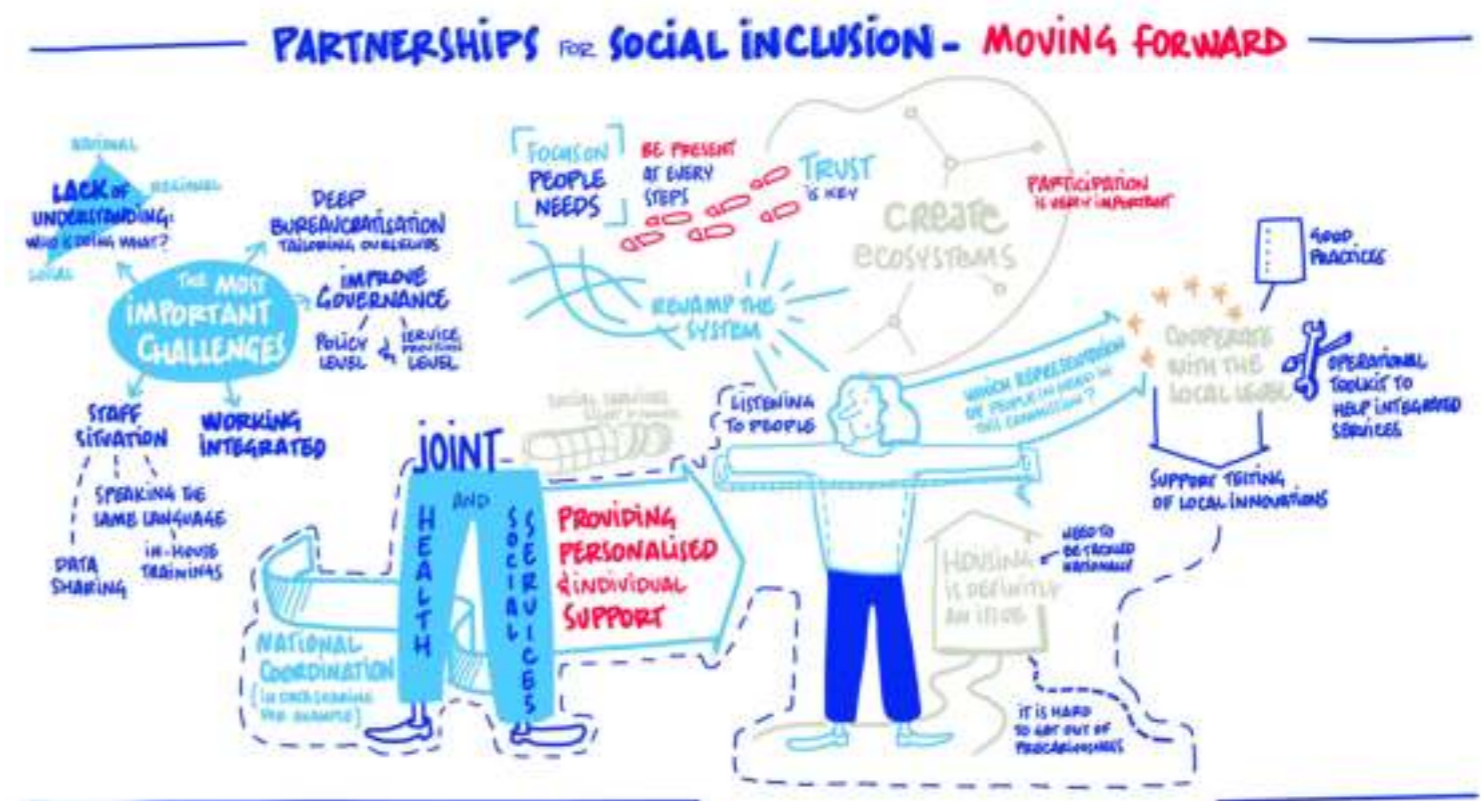


Non-take-up of social support is a widespread an issue. The rate of non-take-up of social support in Europe is estimated at 40%. Early detection of needs can help to avoid bigger social costs in the longer term.

How?



Supporting professionals to visit (potential) clients in their homes, based on a previous needs assessment. This can be done through mobile units of professionals who leave centres and go into the communities.



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# ANNEX Respondents

Organisations that completed the questionnaire on integrated minimum income and social services programmes.

Country	Type of Organisation	Organisation
<b>Austria</b>	Public authority-regional	City of Vienna, Department of Social Welfare, Social and Public Health Law
<b>Belgium</b>	Public authority-national	Federal Planning Service for Social Integration
	Public authority-local	City of Ghent
<b>Croatia</b>	Public authority-national	Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy
	Public authority-local	City of Zagreb, Office for social protection, health, war veterans and persons with disabilities
<b>Denmark</b>	Public authority-local	City of Odense
	Public authority-local	City of Esbjerg
<b>Finland</b>	Public authority-national	National Institute for Health and Welfare
<b>France</b>	Public authority-local	Seine-Maritime County Council
<b>Germany</b>	Third sector/NGO	German Association for Public and Private Welfare
	Public authority-local	City of Cologne for the Working Conference of Social Welfare Directors of large Cities, Germany
<b>Greece</b>	Public authority-local	City of Athens
	University/Research Institute	University of West Attica - Social Administration Research Lab
	Public authority-local	City of Fyli
<b>Italy</b>	Public authority-local	Local Consortium of Social Services, A5 Atripalda, Campania Region
	Public authority-local	Bolzano Social Services Agency
<b>Luxembourg</b>	Public authority-local	City of Esch sur Alzette
<b>Portugal</b>	Third sector/NGO	Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa

Country	Type of Organisation	Organisation
<b>Romania</b>	Public authority-local	City of Cluj-Napoca, Department for Health and Social Welfare
<b>Slovenia</b>	University/Research Institute	Faculty of Social Work, University of Ljubljana
	Public authority-national	Centre for Social Work of Skupnost
<b>Spain</b>	Public authority-regional	Catalan Association of Municipalities
	Public authority-regional	Regional Government of Castilla La Mancha
	Public authority-regional	Basque Employment Services
	University/Research Institute	SIIS Applied Research Centre
	Public authority-regional	Regional Government of Navarra
	Public authority-local	Barcelona County Council
	Public authority-local	Barcelona City Council
	Public authority-local	Madrid City Council
	Third sector/NGO	SAMU Foundation
	Public authority-local	Ministry of Social Affairs and Sports of the Balearic Islands Government
	Third sector/NGO	Fundación Secretariado Gitano
<b>Sweden</b>	Association of Directors of Social services	Association of Social Services Directors
	Public authority-local	City of Linköping, Research and Development Centre in Care and Social Work
	Public authority-local	City of Stockholm, Social services Department

# European Social Network



8th Floor  
Avenue des Arts 3-4-5  
1210 Brussels, Belgium



Tel: + 32 (0) 251 110 939



[info@esn-eu.org](mailto:info@esn-eu.org)



[www.esn-eu.org](http://www.esn-eu.org)



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