



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.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

This publication has received financial support from the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation 'EaSI' (2021-2027). For further information, see: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/easi>. The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect the position or opinion of the European Commission.