



**FOUNDATION FOR  
HUMAN RESOURCES  
DEVELOPMENT**



**AT WORK, BUT POOR AND WITHOUT A VOICE ?**

**European Seminar**

**St Julians, Malta**

**14 - 15 October 2009**

**organised by the  
Council of Europe Directorate General of Social Cohesion  
in co-operation with the Maltese Foundation for Human Resources  
Development**

**Consultant report  
on Empowerment of People Experiencing  
Extreme Poverty**

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## **Introduction**

Poverty, particularly to its most extreme degree, is a major challenge in contemporary society. It manifests itself as a complex and dynamic problem. One of the strategies to combat extreme poverty is empowerment of those who are experiencing poverty in daily life. It focuses on the individual by providing tools and means to strengthen his or her capacity to survive and to tackle and even prevent daily problems. However, empowerment goes beyond the level of the individual. Empowerment concerns as well the construction of an environment which creates opportunities for those who are socially excluded and living on the fringes of society.

Inspired by experiences from different countries, the expert committee discussed during its two years the empowerment of people experiencing extreme poverty and prepared this report. Its main objectives are:

- developing a common language on empowerment in relation to poverty eradication;
- drawing up an inventory of strategies which contribute to the realization of empowerment;
- identifying ‘good practices’, which may support reflection and action;
- formulating guidelines and recommendations for policy making.

In order to elaborate on the meaning of empowerment, we first have to pay attention to the context of persisting situations and processes of extreme poverty and social exclusion. Empowerment is then seen as a strategy in the fight against poverty; it is conceived as a response to the diagnosis that poverty implies a lack of power. Considering extreme poverty in West-European societies, its solutions are meant to be connected with societies’ basic principles of democracy, justice and the welfare state. In that view, poverty is a violation of human rights (Art. 30, Social Charter revised) and government’s efforts to eradicate poverty have to be part of prominent policy plans.

This report contains old and new perspectives on empowerment of people experiencing extreme poverty. It aims to clarify some theoretical concepts and explores different dimensions of “empowerment” and “extreme poverty” (chapters 1&2). Basic principles are detected for policies to enhance empowerment of people experiencing extreme poverty (chapter 3). Concrete examples of empowerment initiatives for people experiencing extreme poverty from a number of Council of Europe countries illustrate the specific steps that have to be taken. Those examples, though, are not unique for one or the other country that is mentioned. The examples are meant as illustrations to specify empowerment by building individual capacity, supporting social networks and raising (political) voices (chapters 4, 5 & 6). At the end, guidelines are formulated as recommendations for necessary steps in the near future of European and national public policies (chapters 7&8). This report serves to enhance the efforts made by any European country in order to tackle extreme poverty in its diverse forms.

## **1. Extreme Poverty and Social Exclusion**

### **1.1 Definitions**

Throughout the report, the concepts "poverty" and "social exclusion" are frequently used. Many definitions exist. In this report, the Committee of Experts uses definitions which are adapted at the international level. For ease of reference, the following definitions are given (Joint report on social inclusion, 2004):

**Poverty:** People are said to be living in poverty if their income and resources are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living considered acceptable in the society in which they live. Because of their poverty they may experience multiple disadvantages through unemployment, low income, poor housing, inadequate health care and barriers to lifelong learning, culture, sport and recreation. They are often excluded and marginalized from participating in activities (economic, social and cultural) that are the norm for other people and their access to fundamental rights may be restricted.

**Social exclusion:** Social exclusion is a process whereby certain individuals are pushed to the edge of society and prevented from participating fully by virtue of their poverty, or lack of basic competencies and lifelong learning opportunities, or as a result of discrimination. This distances them from job, income and education opportunities as well as social and community networks and activities. They have little access to power and decision-making bodies and thus often feel powerless and unable to take control over the decisions that affect their day to day lives.

**Social inclusion:** Social inclusion is a process which ensures that those at risk of poverty and social exclusion gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life and to enjoy a standard of living and well-being that is considered normal in the society in which they live. It ensures that they have greater participation in decision making which affects their lives and access to their fundamental rights.

**Extreme poverty:** Extreme poverty can be said to arise to the extent that the disadvantages listed in the first definition are greater in number and have to be endured for longer. There are no immediate prospects of overcoming this degree of poverty, especially not without external support. Examples of groups more likely to be in that situation are e.g. homeless people, Roma and one-parent families, differing from country to country.

## 1.2 Three premises on extreme poverty and social exclusion

Extreme poverty manifests itself in a very specific way in different countries. Despite that fact, experts seem to agree on some basic elements concerning the fundamental meaning of poverty and social exclusion. This may be summarized by three premises:

- (1) Poverty is relative
- (2) Poverty is multidimensional, structural and dynamic
- (3) Poverty is a violation of human rights

### ***(1) Poverty is relative***

First of all, we state that the concepts of poverty and exclusion are *relative* concepts, as those affected by one or the other are identified as being poor or excluded according to a number of images and standards which define the material well-being and the degree of hierarchical division in each society at any given period (Paugam, 1996). In addition, the Extreme Poverty and Social Cohesion Grouping of the INGOs formulated clearly the difference between indicators for absolute and relative poverty. Indicators of *absolute poverty* are based on the notion of a threshold of monetary poverty below which a person is considered (extremely) poor, his/her income level not being sufficient to cover the basic necessities of life. The World Bank, the United Nations and several countries such as the Russian Federation rely on such absolute indicators for their studies and international comparisons. Indicators of *relative poverty* are also monetary indicators but, instead of relying on a minimum threshold of income, they are defined according to an income level considered representative in society, such as the average income or the median income of households. Such concepts of relative poverty are used by EUROSTAT, the statistical office of the European Union, which sets the poverty threshold at 60 per cent of the median income in each country. In those countries with relatively comprehensive social security systems (e.g. UK, Denmark), it will include those who are outside the network, or cannot engage with it.

These most widely used absolute and relative poverty indicators allow international comparisons, but remain limited to a monetary assessment of poverty. Since they consequently do not reflect the multidimensional aspects of poverty, they provide a partial and incomplete view of poverty (Golle, 2007).

**(2) Poverty is multidimensional, structural and dynamic**

Secondly, we may say that currently a *multidimensional, structural, dynamic view* on poverty (Alcock, 1993) is widely accepted in international organizations and that it is being increasingly used by operators in the field. The NGOs played an important role in widening the scope: “the notion of poverty has evolved from a very narrow concept defined in terms of insufficient income to a broad concept that reflects the multidimensional aspects and the dynamics of poverty. Poverty is now recognized as the outcome of a combination of several kinds of insecurity or handicap that affect several aspects of daily life such as access to employment, housing, health care, education, culture, justice and family protection to name just the main ones” (Golle, 2007).

**(3) Poverty is a violation of human rights**

Thirdly, poverty has to be linked to *human rights* and interpreted as a violation of those rights. Studies at the Council of Europe, the United Nations in Geneva (Human Rights Council and Sub-Commission for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights) and other forums where legal issues are reviewed, have shown that poverty denies those who experience it their fundamental rights. The NGOs report that “the poorest people have taught us to understand the concept of indivisibility of human rights. Extreme poverty detracts from the free exercise of fundamental rights such as civil and political rights and other rights such as the right to housing, health, education, culture and justice, to name but the most important. When these insecurities continue, they impair people’s capacity to fulfil their responsibilities and to win back their rights by their own endeavours. These persons no longer feel that they have rights” (ATD, 2006; Golle, 2007).

The intention of taking measures in the fight against poverty is formalized in, among others, Article 30 of the Revised European Social Charter, that says:

“With a view to ensuring the effective exercise of the right to protection against poverty and social exclusion, the Parties undertake:

- a. to take measures within the framework of an overall and coordinated approach to promote the effective access of persons who live or risk living in a situation of social exclusion or poverty, as well as their families, to, in particular, employment, housing, training, education, culture and social and medical assistance;
- b. to review these measures with a view to their adoption if necessary.”

Although a majority of countries agree on the principles, several governments have not yet ratified the Charter.

## 2. What is empowerment?

To suit the action to the word, we make the transition from defining the problem to designing problem solving strategies. Therefore, empowerment takes a central position in this report. The main challenge is to allow the powerless people living in extreme poverty conditions to live an ‘empowered’ life. But as the problem is a complex, multidimensional phenomenon, so is the way to intervention strategies. Thus, what’s in the name?

## 2.1 Definition

Empowerment is a concept that has been used in many ways. It is related to other, familiar terms as participation, emancipation, autonomy, agency, and self-direction and so on. Conceptual discussions took place in different socio-economic contexts. A wide variety of definitions turned empowerment into a ‘container concept’. Therefore it is important to describe explicitly what we are talking about when we use the term<sup>1</sup>.

Two perspectives on empowerment from completely different actors are highlighted here. Firstly, the International NGO AIC of the Saint Vincent Family defines empowerment “as the process through which each person is given the power to develop on the basis of his/her own resources and solutions, in order to be the agent of any action of personal and social change. Through this process, their freedom of choosing, acting, making decisions – especially those that affect his life – is increased” (AIC- International Association of Charity, 2003).

Another but surprising similar approach is given by the World Bank (Wallerstein, 2006). The World Bank has defined empowerment as “the process of increasing capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes” to “build individual and collective assets, and to improve the efficiency and fairness of the organizational and institutional context which govern the use of these assets” and “the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives”.

To sum up, empowerment has been defined as “a process by which people, organizations and communities gain mastery over their affairs”. With community empowerment as a “social action process by which individuals, communities and organizations gain mastery over their lives in the context of changing their social and political environment to improve equity and quality of life”.

## 2.2 Different dimensions of empowerment

The definitions illuminate several aspects and dimensions of the concept ‘empowerment’. We may summarize those into two categories: *the internal and external dimension*. With the internal dimension, the focus lays on the person or household. Empowerment will provide the skills, confidence, self-respect, and information to be an agent of change. Secondly, besides getting grip of the individuals’ daily affairs, empowerment enables people to gain control over their environment, over the external factors which influence their day to day lives.

Distinction is further made between *material and immaterial goals*. Empowerment can be reached by material means; which consist for example of income, credits, jobs, housing and health care. The immaterial goals imply reaching the point that people perceive themselves as able and entitled to make decisions; the psychological dimension. Another aspect is the political one: people are able to influence politics by participating in information delivery and decision-making processes.

To realize these goals, the literature mentions *different kinds of tools*. We group those tools under three headings: basic needs, social networks and political participation. For the people experiencing extreme poverty every support needs to start at fulfilling *basic needs* as food, water or clothing. Those are considered as a precondition for further stages in the empowerment process. Furthermore, these basic needs serve individual capacity building, by getting access to labour market and different kind of

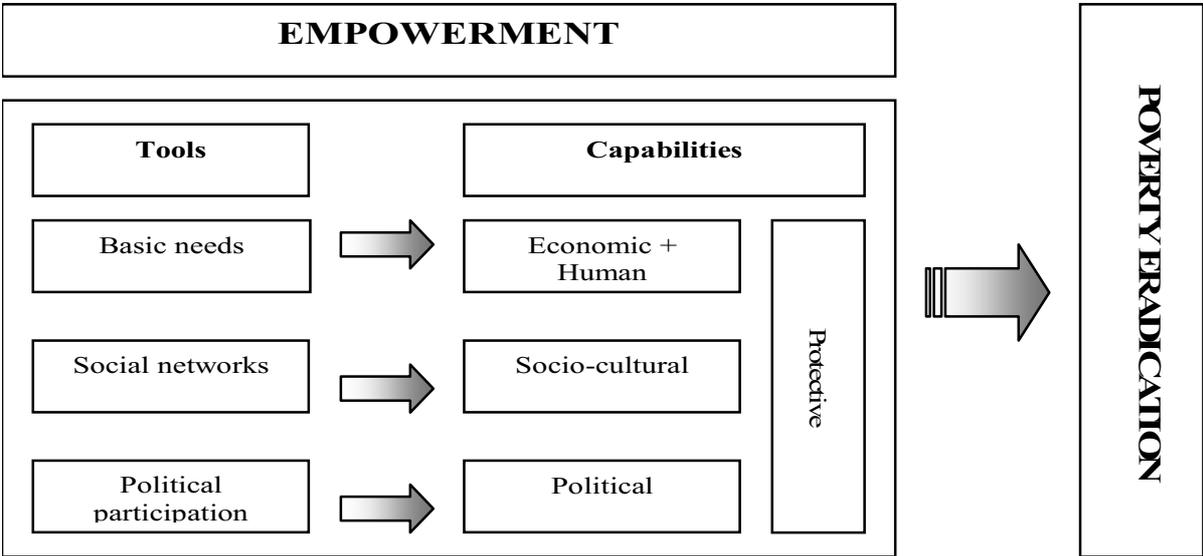
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<sup>1</sup> In their search for conceptually and technically valid indicators for international comparison, Ibrahim and Alkire (2007) collected different definitions on empowerment. In addendum 3, we show this briefly overview.

social services and collective goods as education, energy and health care. Second sort of tools are *social networks*. These provide necessary emotional support, but depending on their composition, social networks give also access to useful information. Negative mechanisms in social relations should be cut off, such as processes of stigmatization and labelling. Thirdly, political participation may contribute to empowerment. People may raise their voice and are heard by those in charge of decision-making.

Those three kinds of tools are each of them related to a specific goal, to strengthen capabilities of those excluded from society. Referring to the typology of capabilities of the OECD (Bonfiglioli, 2003-see Addendum 4), we connect the basic needs to the stimulation of economic and human capabilities; the social networks to the socio-cultural capabilities and the political participation to the political capabilities. Their fifth, protective capability – the ability to withstand economic and external shocks - can be seen as an overall feature, which is realized if the other capabilities are present. The scheme below visualizes this theoretical construction.

Scheme – Tools and capabilities for empowerment in a multidimensional poverty approach



### 3. Towards policies for empowerment of people experiencing extreme poverty

After focusing on the meaning of key concepts, policies on empowerment of people experiencing poverty will be explored. An overview of the variety in policies in several European countries is presented<sup>2</sup>. First we will deal with the basic principles of policies concerning empowerment in the context of poverty reduction. Further the three distinguished empowerment levels will structure the collected data: the level of the basic needs or individual capacity, the social networks and the political participation level. Based on effective and less effective practices, challenges are formulated for the near future at the end.

<sup>2</sup> Through the reportage examples of projects in different countries are given. To respect the origins of the data, the names of the countries are mentioned. This does not mean, however, that the particular country has exclusivity on one or another practice, measure or activity.

Policy principles as foundation for the enhancement of empowerment among people experiencing extreme poverty are connected to the definition of poverty and empowerment. Especially the multidimensionality of extreme poverty functions as a characteristic with large influence on the determination of policy principles. The following four principles are drawn from the analysis of different poverty policies in European countries:

- (1) Extreme poverty is plural, so policies have to be multidimensional;
- (2) Policy intervention should be rights based;
- (3) Coordinated approach is necessary;
- (4) Evaluation and quality protection is key.

On each of these basic policy principles will be elaborated in the next paragraphs.

### **3.1 Extreme poverty is plural**

Extreme poverty is characterized by its complexity. We mentioned the multidimensionality of the phenomenon as one of the premises on poverty (see 1.2). Countries report on significantly different types of exclusion and of marginalization processes that hit several vulnerable groups.

“The risk of poverty and exclusion is largest in the case of families with many children, single-parent families, families where at least one person is unemployed and those who are living in small towns and villages. Income surveys, carried out by the Central Statistical Office, point also on families whose main family income are social benefits. Furthermore, in danger of experiencing poverty are also farmers’ families and social groups whose main incomes are pensions, or more precisely disability pensions”. (Poland)

“Most important actions taken in the case of extreme poverty in recent years are addressed to homeless people, children from families at social risk, people released from imprisonment, drug addicts, and Roma people”. (Lithuania)

“Other factors contributing further to extreme poverty include being a member of a minority group (Roma, Travellers in Ireland), migrants/asylum seekers, people formerly in institutions (former prisoners, mentally ill), people addicted to substances (alcohol, other drugs), homeless people, people living in disadvantaged urban and rural (mainly remote) areas”. (Ireland)

“The most extreme poverty is faced by those with multiple disadvantages, who are either too chaotic to engage with support systems, or whose outlays to maintain addiction to drugs or alcohol inevitably leads to poverty. “ (United Kingdom)

We may thus state that extreme poverty is contingent; it concerns a social problem that varies according to the circumstances or the ‘local’ context. The demographical, socio-economical and cultural situation determines the (spread of) poverty risk over different groups. This variety has to be known when governments want to raise effectiveness of their policies. First, to help them define which partners to invite for participation to help clarify the definitions of the problems. Second, to take measures to empower people experiencing extreme poverty, tailored to their particular needs and circumstances.

The complexity of poverty highlights the importance of an increase in the care for data management. Or as France indicated: “Today, given the disparate character of information in terms of its nature, type or origin, and in view of the many different ways of gathering and using it, there is scope for progress on devising relevant information systems from the shared information perspective”. The need for shared knowledge and observation, the acceptance of a common view of the social situation among all the players derives from the finding that several actors should be involved in policymaking.

## 3.2 Rights-based intervention

Poverty policies have to be linked to *human rights* and interpreted as a violation of those rights. Formulated in a positive way and referring to the ‘Access to social rights’-report, one may define social rights, then, as those provisions, expressed in legal and other forms, which are necessary for the fulfilment of peoples’ social needs and for the promotion of social cohesion and solidarity (Daly, 2002). The approach taken in article 30 of the Revised Charter on “The right to protection against poverty and social exclusion” would appear to be in line with the interpretation that States should work to ensure that benefits and services are granted on the basis that people have a right to them. Therefore, states should be clearly accountable, both nationally and internationally, for the extent to which they comply with the provisions of Article 30.

This general approach has been adopted since 2000 under the European Social Inclusion Strategy. All the (national) plans and action programmes implemented since then have accordingly been along these lines and are based, amongst others, on the principle of guaranteeing everyone’s access to fundamental rights: employment, housing, health care, education, justice, training, and culture, protection of the family and childhood, etcetera. (France)

This approach along life domains could be complemented by more normative goals. In that way, the social protection sector strategy of Albania is based on principles as civil rights, equality and non-discrimination.

“Social protection should be provided to each individual in need, regardless of sex, ethnic origin, religion, age, disability or other factors. Each person in need is entitled to the same social assistance or services as other citizens. Discrimination related to benefiting from these services should be prevented and combated”. (Albania)

Also equal rights are mentioned separately to underline its importance:

“One of the key principles is the provision of equal opportunities for all. To this end, without limiting the principle of equality, specific rights and measures are in place to improve and bring to an equal ground the opportunities of various groups for full-scale participation in public life and the usage of its resources and wealth. Among them are people with disabilities, children, young people, elderly people, and etcetera”. (Bulgaria)

The principles of a rights based approach are being increasingly acknowledged, but this is being accompanied by a balancing emphasis on duties. Examples can be found in the list of people who are not deemed to be persons in material need for the Czech Republic, and thus can not receive support from a particular act, being amongst others:

- “those who do not try to improve their situation by own actions,
- those who are not in an employment or similar relationship, not self-employed or not listed in the register of job seekers (only people who are able to work, not e.g. 65+, people who take care for small children or dependent family member, invalid or temporary ill person, etc.),
- those who do not take up short-term employment or participate in an active employment policy programme without serious reason, and so on”. (Czech Republic)

These kinds of conditions are designed to empower welfare recipients to obtain employment and achieve greater self sufficiency, as well as preventing misuse of government’s social support. However, if they are not accompanied by effective training and other social supports they may result in people being forced to take up poor quality jobs thus keeping the empowerment of vulnerable people at a low level.

The UK policy consists of the idea: “work for those who can, security for those who can’t”. So alongside active labour market interventions, there is ongoing financial support, housing

benefits, and support services delivered through local authorities and third sector organisations.

The Netherlands provide us with an appropriate illustration on this. On the one hand labour participation comes first (provides income, a sense of self-esteem, opportunities for integration and emancipation). Employment is considered as the best weapon against poverty. On the other hand people may as well participate in other ways, e.g. by informal careers and voluntary work (which also contributes to social cohesion). The Dutch policy combines these two approaches. (See also 4.4).

### **3.3 Coordinated approach**

Poverty policies have to reply to the multidimensionality of the problem by a coordinated approach that combines the resources and means of different policy domains, e.g. employment, education and vocational training, housing, health care and access to health services, transport, child protection, integration of vulnerable ethnic minorities, etcetera. The fact that, moreover, realizing social inclusion is considered as a right, coordinated policies are compulsory.

“Bearing in mind that the extreme poverty has multiple faces the Bulgarian government follows a coherent policy for prevention and reduction of poverty and overcoming of the consequences of social exclusion. Therefore, the policy for fighting poverty and for social inclusion in Bulgaria is an important and inseparable part of the overall state policy”.  
(Bulgaria)

A precondition for taking better account of social inclusion in the various policies that help to bring it about, is the strengthening of the interactive process between the ministries involved in the fight against poverty and exclusion.

“In the context of the Institutional Law on Finance Laws, the drafting of a horizontal policy document will enable the social inclusion arrangements managed by various ministerial departments to adopt a global approach. This document is a powerful lever for improving policy guidance and strengthening an integrated approach. Its content is likely to be augmented in the coming years thanks to additional contributions from the institutional partners (local authorities, social welfare bodies, etc) IN addition a budgetary tool makes it possible to show how every department can contribute. An interministerial committee agrees on an action plan and administrative units gather four times a year to gear measure to one another” (France).

“There is a regular cabinet committee and cross government target to specifically tackle social exclusion, and a joined up operational response – for example Jobcentre Plus staff are based in prisons to help with jobs and employment on release, and third sector specialist organizations contracted to give extra employment support once addicts have established in drug rehabilitation.” (UK)

Coordination should also be installed in a vertical way, this means between governments on different levels. This multilevel governance respects the evolution toward a powerful role for the local councils, but always in connection with governments at higher levels.

An example is given by the Netherlands. In combating homelessness the national government and the four large cities in the Netherlands (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht, and Den Hague) developed a strategy plan for social relief. This plan rests on two central pillars: (1) individual treatment, using tailored, phased programs and personal client managers and (2) seamless co-operation between all the parties and institutions involved at both administrative and operational level.

Not only inter-governmental cooperation has to tighten, also the cooperation with different stakeholders outside government are key in a coordinated policy, e.g. associations of vulnerable groups (of people experiencing extreme poverty, homeless people, people from the traveller community, migrants, people vulnerable to abuse, people leaving prisons, etcetera), trade unions, employers, professionals in different sectors of social care and so on (Ireland, Belgium).

### **3.4 Evaluation and quality protection**

The last basic principle for policies on empowerment of people experiencing poverty refers to the need for monitoring and evaluation of policies and quality protection. Through permanent follow up of policies and their impact, government could recognize that some public interventions could have negative, unexpected (side) effects on the lives of socially excluded groups.

France reports on an independent agency that has to guarantee the evaluation and quality of social welfare work.

“A National Agency for Evaluation and Quality Assurance in the social and medico-social establishments and facilities intended to be a source of independent expertise recognized by the technical community and bringing together the various elements of the sector, it will have the task of identifying the best practices that will serve as benchmarks for the professionals’ daily work and for the internal and external evaluations to be scheduled over the next few years in all establishments and facilities” (France).

The United Kingdom has an established culture of monitoring, but without making use of a specific agency.

“All major policies have monitoring and evaluation research attached to them, with an increasing amount of research developed and contracted co-operatively between different ministries” (UK)

One of the instruments that has been mentioned for years but is developed and installed in only a few countries is the poverty impact report or poverty proofing.

“Aiming at further integration of social priorities into the activities of lawmaking, it is required to expertise of each draft law on its possible impact on social exclusion and poverty” (Lithuania).

Monitoring and evaluation, coordination, rights-approach and the multidimensional approach are the main policy principles for realizing empowerment. More specific initiatives on empowerment in its three dimensions are discussed in the following chapters. It concerns efforts on building individual capacity, supporting social networks and raising (political) voices.

## **4. Building individual capacity**

Empowerment at the micro level is considered to increase individuals’ capacity to deal with daily affairs. It concerns collecting the necessary means to run a household and to develop the individual’s talent and personality.

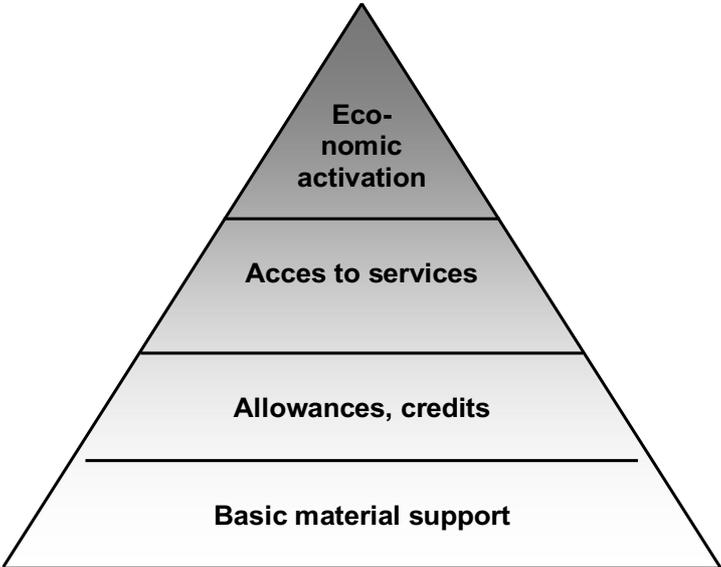
As mentioned before, in the first place, basic needs have to be taken care of. What do we mean by those basic needs? They include certain minimum requirements for private consumption: adequate

food, shelter, and clothing, as well as certain household furniture and equipment. Besides the private consumption, it concerns essential services provided by and for the community at large, such as safe drinking water, sanitation, public transport, health, education and cultural facilities. Although basic needs and the necessary means to 'survive' are common for every human being, the concept of basic needs should be placed within a context of a nation's overall economic and social development.

In addition to the minimum basic needs mentioned above, a decent income is key in developing ones' individual capacity. For those who are deprived and struggling with extreme poverty, different systems exist for the delivery of minimum incomes, wages or allowances. The European Round Table on Social Inclusion of October 2007 dealt with these issues by the title: "Minimum Social Standards: a Strategy for Protection and Empowerment". The progress report - prepared in preparation of the Round table by EAPN - tackles crucial aspects of the income problem (EAPN, 2007c). Rising living costs cannot be met by welfare benefits and recently the working poor became visible as a new vulnerable group.

Building individual capacity requires however more than sufficient material and monetary means. Participation in labour market and access to social services are at least as important in helping the most vulnerable groups towards better living conditions and a higher quality of life. This paragraph will elaborate on the challenges concerning those four distinguished components of empowerment at micro level: basic material support, allowances and credits, access to services, and economic activation policies. In all these components it is important to pay attention to diversity in the population of people experiencing extreme poverty (gender, age, ethnic background, and etcetera).

Scheme 2: Four cumulative levels of building individual capacity for the people living in extreme poverty



#### 4.1 Basic material support

Basic material help is meant to guarantee for every person in society to live a decent life, relatively to the living standard of the country he or she lives in. The minimum interpretation of the term 'decent' is thus contingent. Moreover, in providing emergency aid or aid in kind (food, clothing, etcetera), a particular society shows to what degree it accepts inadequate life conditions.

#### 4.1.1 *Illustrations of basic material support*

In the context of empowerment, this kind of support is crucial; it lifts people out of a situation of survival. Some examples of basic support in the fields of housing, health care and child poverty are mentioned below, to illustrate the importance and variety of these kinds of services.

An illustration of a project in the field of housing, tailored for the most vulnerable groups, is 'Supporting People' (United Kingdom). 'Supporting People' aims to make sure people get the housing-related support they need to live more independently, avoiding life in a care home or hospital, for example, or life on the street. It gives housing-related support to more than 1.2 million people, helping them to make a success of their tenancies, or to move to independent living from other places such as prison or hospital.

Closely related to housing problems, but much more complex, is homelessness. The Polish Ministry of Labour and Social Policy coordinates a program for homeless people or those at risk of homelessness (elderly people, people living alone or people with special care needs). The program is called "Homeless back to society". The object of this program is to ensure the basic needs of living by financial support for housing, food expenditure, and etcetera.

When children are involved, public support for policy initiatives is easily gathered. Children are indeed the most vulnerable group at risk of extreme poverty. Several European countries report yet on their particular interest in and activity on the prevention and alleviation of child poverty. It is however currently a European special focus in the joint strategy on social inclusion. Many examples can be given concerning tackling child poverty.

Hungary has recently expanded the in-kind benefits, such as free or discounted meal and free textbooks for the school. Besides this, several new social services were introduced, e.g. "street children" programs, hospital social work in children's ward (for neglected and battered children), as well as maternity wards (for young mothers, mothers in social crisis). Also day care services were developed in disadvantaged rural settlements for needy (mainly Roma) children.

In Lithuania mobile street service works full 24 hours: if somebody sees a vagrant or a left with no attention child, one call to this service is enough to get help. Social workers arrive immediately, and take care of the child, try to identify where he or she comes from and provides the child with temporary protection (housing, food, etcetera) until the parents are found or permanent institutional protection is ensured.

Some countries have chosen a broader pro-family approach, as is the case in Poland. The social policy favours introducing some new family allowances and increasing the level of financial support (e.g. birth grants and tax allowance for households with children).

Emergency situations can arise at any time, so despite the development of social security systems, basic care remains very important. It is in this kind of basic support that information is stored on permanent or new forms of extreme poverty. In that view, the French Law of 1998 on combating poverty shows an interesting initiative of pointing out the increasing poverty risk.

The French Law of 1998 lays down an obligation to set up a "social watch" scheme in each governmental department. The aim of this is threefold:

- to assess the urgency of the situation of individuals or families in the area;
- to provide an immediate response to citizens in terms of assistance and support;
- to keep an updated list of available capacity within the department".

#### 4.1.2 *Criteria for empowering basic support*

The question needs to be asked: “what makes this basic material support empowering?” It is clear that fulfilling basic individual and collective needs is in the first place a precondition for making any progress in realizing a higher quality of life and building individual capacity.

Furthermore, quality criteria can be formulated by four characteristics:

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| (a) <i>Holistic support</i> : problems can not be divided in small pieces, without taking the integral situation into account. The main feature of extreme poverty is, though, that problems are interwoven and form a complex body. Every intervention has to be based on this insight.  |
| (b) <i>Person-centred support</i> : the person in need has to stay the owner and director of his/her life and his/her situation. Starting point of any support is the capacity of the individual. Without external help, people experiencing extreme poverty can not bridge the gap with the rest of society, but based on external advice, the individual keeps the right to decide about the do's and the don'ts, without any judgment. |
| (c) <i>Preventive support</i> : Early problem detection and formulation of the question for help can avoid the accumulation of problems.  |
| (d) <i>Support that makes people independent instead of more dependent</i> : the individual's capabilities should be strengthened and elaborated. That should lead to more autonomy and less dependency on services or governmental support.  |

## 4.2 Allowances and credits

Different systems of financial support exist in Europe. They are linked to the right of living a decent life with a minimum of income. At the same time, however, allowances are nominated as passive support that should be limited in time for people who have the (even virtual) capacity to work. The right is permanently questioned by the pressure that has been put on society as a place where every individual should contribute economically (see also ‘economic activation policies’).

In most countries, social security systems provide some benefits in case of unemployment, illness, disability, and pension. Allowances can be means tested (or not), are limited in time or last as long their situation remains the same. Other benefits are available for those who cannot engage with the social security system in an organized way, for example those with issues of mental illness, addiction, and those who are seeking asylum.

### 4.2.1 *Some examples of benefits*

Some examples of those benefits are provided by Poland and Bulgaria:

“Temporary – means tested - allowances and family allowances are available to people suffering from any chronic disease or for ex-prisoners, long-term unemployed persons, or for persons with alcoholic problems” (Poland).

“Besides the monthly social assistance benefits under the social legislation various types of other benefits are paid to the most needed persons. For instance, there is “one off benefit” up to the amount of the guaranteed minimum income for issuing of a personal ID documents to persons who do not have such (for example – homeless people, people leaving prisons) as this is a serious obstacle to fully exercise their social rights. Along with that, people who need additional assistance may apply for another “one-off benefit” which is for covering expenses

on incidentally occurring medical, educational, public utility and other substantial need of the persons and families once a year”. (Bulgaria)

The next measure illustrates the turn from passive to active support, which is given colour to the widespread debate on the conditionality of financial support.

“In Belgium, people who do not have any income from paid work or a compensatory allowance from social security, may be awarded an integration allowance if they satisfy certain conditions. This is the ultimate safety net, or a residual right. The law of 1974 which already provided for a mechanism of this type was amended in 2002. Under the new law, the minimum income benefit (or “minimex”) was replaced by an integration allowance, and more emphasis was placed on the process of integration, particularly for people under the age of 25, than on providing an income. Associations of people experiencing extreme poverty see the law reform in Belgium as an attempt to install more of a sense of responsibility, or perhaps guilt, among poor people, without taking account of the root causes of their problems.” (Belgium).

Despite the range of income support regulations economic hardship among vulnerable groups remains real. Especially for those who do not make use of their right to social welfare payments. Several reasons may be mentioned: they lack information and are not aware of the possibility. Some people are ashamed to apply for benefits, their lives are too chaotic (e.g. by addiction) or they fear too much supervision over their private affairs. Therefore it is crucial that attention is paid to dissemination of information and that barriers to get access to these services disappear.

#### 4.2.2 *Criteria for empowering financial support*

An overview of every measure on financial support in Europe would take us too far. More important is to recognize the fact that guaranteeing financial security for every citizen is far from reality. We mention some points on this, which deserve special attention.

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| (e) <i>Attribution of financial support:</i> Some people do have right on social benefit, but are not aware of this. Others cannot manage to collect the forms or official papers they need to complete their personal file. Such skills (or its absence) may not decide about receiving financial support or not.   |
| (f) <i>Financial support:</i> People experiencing extreme poverty are in need. Society bears part of the responsibility in this; answers to the growing income inequality need to be formulated. Therefore, every question for support should first of all be considered as an appropriate, fair question. Mutual agreement on extra conditions, based on respect and equality, may follow.                        |
| (g) <i>Financial support for people with administrative problems:</i> Extreme poverty is experienced by people with lots of problems. Undocumented people, asylum seekers, Roma-people are the groups with less access to support systems provided by government. Choosing to eradicate extreme poverty is willing to install solutions for those living in the margins of our formalized, administrative society. |

### 4.3 Access to social services

To stimulate empowerment processes at the micro level, the access to social rights and services is key. Which services are important concerning the empowerment of people experiencing extreme poverty, though? As extreme poverty is considered as a violation of human rights, all the services that give access to these rights may be considered as relevant: on health, housing, education, mental care, transport or mobility, energy, etcetera. Or as it was defined in the report on integrated social services (Munday, 2007): “Social services include all services that are (a) considered to be of special

importance for society on the whole and where (b) personal interaction between providers and users has a key role”.

#### 4.3.1 *Integrated social services*

The above mentioned report discussed the need for integrated social services as a major challenge; even more important because people experiencing extreme poverty do have almost no access to these services. The term integration was then understood as applying to a range of approaches or methods for achieving greater co-ordination and effectiveness between different services to achieve improved outcomes for service users. These approaches include: service co-ordination, co-operation, partnerships, collaboration, inter-professional and joint working – to name but a few. Therefore, “integration” is conceptualized as a continuum or ladder of integration, with methods chosen to suit specific needs, circumstances and possibilities.

For the people experiencing extreme poverty, integration of services is very important. Those people bear indeed several problems at the same time and these problems are interwoven in a complex way. Effective social services, therefore, have to be holistic and coordinated to realize sustainable support.

Generally, the barriers to social services are reflected in the recent reforms on the social services system in Albania. The reform aims are:

- residential care services to be transferred to local government units and switch gradually to community based services, in accordance with citizen needs;
- to establish new community services related to the existing services of residential care;
- an increase in the variety and geography of services in conformity with the needs;
- an increase in the involvement of the local government and civil society in the planning and delivery of social services;
- an increase of the responsibility of local government for the financing, guaranteeing of sustainability, and continuity of services;
- drafting, implementation, monitoring, and improving of the standards of services for all groups in need to ensure quality and efficient services;
- respect for the rights of groups in need, in particular children, people with disabilities and elderly people, meeting their needs and supporting their integration into social life;
- promotion for the involvement of social businesses in the financing and delivery of social community services, etcetera (Albania).

To sum up, it supports a community based, client tailored, decentralized and participatory approach with involvement of different actors (private-public cooperation included).

In this analysis the geographical dimension of services is very important. Ensuring proximity of services remains a challenge in service planning. On the one hand centralization of services – in the form of a ‘one-stop-shop’ where e.g. all non-contributory social benefits and social – legal protection of children can be offered (see Bulgaria) – is encouraged. On the other hand, one may not neglect the service delivery at rural areas, which implies a spread of services over a larger territory.

We cite a project in Denmark that aims to deal with access problems. Denmark reports on (the expansion of) a programme of contact persons in social support and access to treatment.

“The role of the contact persons is to provide support for vulnerable groups for instance when moving out from a homeless hostel to a dwelling, to provide support in carrying out everyday activities, and to give assistance to contacts with for instance doctors, municipal social workers and other public authorities. Until recently the law defined a responsibility for municipalities to provide contact persons for the mentally ill, and the target group for this type of social support has recently been widened to include also homeless people and people using substances”.

Besides some ‘best practices’, a tendency is noticed towards putting real resources mainly into expanding services that are seen as directly related to getting people into employment, such as childcare. Yet even that focus is limited. Mental health services are relatively neglected in many member states despite the relationship to fitness for employment.

The ‘Access to social rights in Europe’-report (Daly, 2002) analyses the access to social rights with a focus on access to housing, social protection, employment, health and education. It reviews obstacles to access, provides examples of ways to overcome these obstacles, identifies general principles for improving access to social rights, and sets out guiding principles for an intersectoral approach to access to social rights.

#### 4.3.2 *The case of over indebtedness*

Receiving a decent income is no guarantee for absence of financial problems. Having debts is a common occurrence amongst different income groups, but especially those with low incomes, who sometimes need to take on debts to cover their basic needs.

Some policies are developed to help people in those situations. For example, temporary financial support is installed by an earmarked system, as there are heating benefits provided when energy prices are high (Bulgaria, Lithuania). Another example is the support for cold and hot running water, if the costs exceed some percentage of the household budget (Lithuania).

Regularly those (basic) costs are the cause of debts. Once debts arise, the way down into more debts is easier than the return to a situation without any debts.

The Czech Republic invested in two projects to deal with this. Firstly, the Project of Social Need Fund supports people in extreme poverty who are facing over-debt and usury (this is the practice of lending money to people at unfairly high rates of interest). Besides the financial support a project exists on providing counselling for debtors. Furthermore, over indebtedness and usury will be discussed at the 8th European meeting of people experiencing poverty during the Czech Presidency in May 2009 (Czech Republic).

Also Ireland deals with this problem. Therefore a Money Advice and Budgetary Service (MABS) has been installed. It is a free, confidential and independent service for people with debt and money management problems. The key features of the service include:

- An emphasis on practical, budget based services;
- An approach that targets families identified as having problems with debt and money lending;
- A prominent role for local state and voluntary agencies;
- A general advice element for local communities and a national call service for information, guidance and advice.

The Citizens Advise Bureau in the UK provides similar services.

#### 4.3.3 *Empowering social services*

For social services to be effective for people experiencing extreme poverty, the following aspects have to be taken into account:

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|---|
| (a) <i>Nearness of services</i> : Services should be situated near neighbourhoods where a concentration of people with problems live, and should be designed also to be mobile on the streets and in public places where possible clients can be found. |
|---|

- |   |
|---|
| <p>(b) <i>Coordinated supply</i>: Services have to find a balance between specialization and generalization. In fact, to avoid that people have to go ‘selling’ their problems in slices at several places, every social service should be able to do the first intake and exploration of the problem as a whole. Referring a person one time to the correct specialist (instead of three times to the wrong one) should become possible.</p> |
| <p>(c) <i>Participatory approach</i>: To detect weaknesses in the organization of social services, participation/advice of clients can be useful. Also at the level of the individual’s case, a participatory attitude of the social worker may increase the chances on sustainable results.</p>  |

## 4.4 Economic activation policies

There is a growing tendency amongst Council of Europe countries to link poverty and social inclusion policies with employment and the activation of people experiencing extreme poverty. This trend is in line with objectives set at European Union in the areas of employment and social inclusion. Because activation plays an important role in empowerment processes, we will discuss the features and conditions in line with empowerment.

### 4.4.1 Kinds of activation policies

The developed economic activation policies are mostly characterized by their emphasis on the efforts the individual does or does not make to (re)enter (regular) labour market. The Act on Assistance in Material Need (in force since January 2007) of the Czech Republic illustrates this tendency. The Act strengthens the financial incentives for job-search in the welfare system and introduces strict control on eligibility for social benefits. It motivates people to find work and take on any job, even a part-time or lower paid job or to work voluntarily and obtain some skills which allow getting a better job. Social work, counselling and special programs are included.

Considering people with a vulnerable profile, a policy strategy of control and of applying for any vacancy implies, however, some risks. It simplifies reality and does not take into account the obstacles people experiencing extreme poverty are facing. In the first place, when considering the people experiencing extreme poverty, it should be taken into account that they are usually lacking basic and professional skills. From this point of view, they are still far from mainstream forms of employment.

The levels of income support and access to basic services that may be lost if employment is taken up, may have the effect of excluding people from taking up employment and moving on to acquire the confidence and skills required to maintain employment (e.g. literacy, numeracy, vocational training). Other barriers may include lack of education and skills, of child care and elder care, and of transport especially in rural areas<sup>3</sup>.

A good practice to overcome this trap can be found in Ireland. Schemes have been introduced to help people make the transition from being jobless to employment or self employment through, for example, a ‘Back-to-Work’-allowance or the ‘Part-Time-job’-incentive scheme. This enables recipients to maintain entitlements to benefits at a gradually decreasing level, and access free of charge to essential services for up to three years until they are established in employment. If they fail to get established, they can revert to the level of benefit and access to other services they had before they took up employment. Also Albania reports on removing barriers to reintegration to work for the people with disabilities.

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<sup>3</sup> In 2003, the Commission published a Communiqué on ‘making work pay’ in which it addresses the question of unemployment traps (where an unemployed person’s income would fall if he/she took a job) and obstacles to the integration of people living on labour market benefits.

In the UK, short periods of work experience can be arranged by Jobcentre Plus whilst remaining on benefits, and the risk that some employers may try and exploit the offer is managed carefully. Housing benefits can continue whilst people are in low paid work.

Preventive measures envisage an early identification of individual needs of unemployed people and the formulation of concrete measures and steps with the individual approach in view of shortening the period of unemployment and prevention of long-term unemployment occurrence and/or dropping-out from the labour market. The early identification of individual needs of unemployed people is and will continue to be carried out through different strategies as there are for example in Bulgaria:

- Development of an individual action plan for each unemployed person, based on a comprehensive assessment of individual needs, incorporating particular measures and services aimed at a job placement of the unemployed person;
- Individual and group professional orientation and consulting in support of an independent and conscious choice of a profession and/or pathway to obtain professional qualification matching the individual characteristics of the unemployed persons and labour market needs;
- Assessment of individual needs of each unemployed person (education, skills, professional qualification, physical condition, etc.), aimed at determining the manner and duration of support;
- Labour mediation in finding a job through guidance to suitable for them vacancies;
- Carrying of preventive information campaigns among employed people, threatened to lose their jobs; and among schoolchildren at risk to drop-out from school;

Employment alone, however, does not necessarily solve the problem of poverty or prevent people from becoming poor. Although many people experiencing extreme poverty may contribute a high importance to work and employment, there might be more pressing issues for them in the short term, such as access to housing or adequate health care.

In addition, the growing number of “working poor” demonstrates the need to develop integrated poverty policies of which employment is one element amongst others, including housing, health, debt counselling and social support.

Also the quality of the jobs are here at stake, which is defined by the European Employment Committee, through a set of ten indicators which include such measurements as skills; equality; health and safety; inclusion and access to the labour market and flexibility and security<sup>4</sup>.

An example for a policy that aims to combine social inclusion objectives and integration into the mainstream labour market can be found in Poland:

Poland introduced so-called social contracts with social workers. It is a program for the long-term beneficiaries of social assistance who are in working age. This program is dedicated particularly to persons with alcohol problems, homeless people, and families with disabled members or with children in need of special care. Nevertheless, this program can also cover families experiencing problems with proper child upbringing or with taking care for their elderly. The family members are offered a vocational training or even granted a job, while the social worker is giving the care service to their family dependants.

#### *4.4.2 Empowerment by economic activation policies*

As discussed in the chapter on building individual capacity, starting at the top of the triangle (with economic activation policies) for people experiencing poverty may not always be the best point of departure. Basic needs, financial support and access to services are often more urgent for them. That

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<sup>4</sup> More on the barriers can be found in the report of the Expert Committee on Low Income Workers (CS-LIW) of the Council of Europe, 2008.

does not mean that activation policies are irrelevant. Activation policies can then be a next stage towards empowerment. Some insights on activation policies in view to empowerment are detected:

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|-----|--|
| (a) | <i>Preventive work and early detection of needs</i> is important   |
| (b) | <i>Quality of jobs</i> : Emphasize on the individuals efforts, is only accepted by taking into account the quality of the jobs (physical security and minimal health risks, reasonable flexibility, job security or long term perspectives, taking up employment should ensure that it effectively opens the way for further career development, preventing people from being trapped in low wage/low quality jobs and recurring periods of unemployment (see Task Force Employment, 2003 <sup>5</sup> ) |
| (c) | <i>Meaningful occupation</i> : The most important goal is to provide people with a meaningful occupation instead of work as such;  |
| (d) | <i>Services and advantages may be lost by taking a regular job</i> ; This should be taken into account in activating people.   |
| (e) | <i>Duty of the state</i> : The individual has responsibility in searching for and willing to take a job, but not without the duty of the state or the authorities to do everything to provide jobs and remove all the barriers towards the regular labour market for the most vulnerable people;   |
| (f) | <i>Eradication of child poverty</i> is also about helping families, help them to get to work and show role models to the children. It may help to cut off the unemployment from generation on generation.  |

## 5. The power of social networks

Social networks can play a vital role for creating a supportive framework for empowerment. Social networks provide information and social support; it enables people experiencing poverty to hang on in difficult times or to make sustainable progress in life. Network theories mention the importance of weak ties between people and/or groups. Weak ties can be seen as the links between people from different socially defined groups. They have a positive effect on division of information, mobility opportunity and community organization (Granovetter, 1973). Strong ties - with relatives, friends and/or acquaintances living in similar situations – are particularly useful for direct emotional support and common recognition of severe living conditions.

A more recent approach of this topic is made by Friedmann. Friedmann's empowerment model (1996) identifies eight 'bases of social power'. A combination of those powers determines the overall quality of the livelihood resources at people's disposal. Two of those power bases are in particular relevant here. First, *social relations* (extended family, friends, and neighbours) are important variables in the production of household livelihood over time. "Households that are at war internally, or that have broken with family and friends, or that are shunned by neighbours, or that fail to take part in community organizations, are poorly equipped for self-empowerment. To be fully part of the moral economy requires household members to fulfil certain social obligations, give evidence of reciprocal affections, and make time commitments for socializing and community work. Failure to make these 'investments' will leave a household economy increasingly vulnerable" (p. 166-167).

Secondly, *civil associations*, from churches and sports groups to neighbourhood improvement associations, play a crucial role. The density of such organizations can be taken as a measure of civil society. The more such organizations exist, the stronger will be the community in its collective

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<sup>5</sup> Jobs, Jobs, Jobs. Creating more employment in Europe Report of the Employment Taskforce, November, 2003.

struggle for livelihood, while household participation in these organizations will support its own struggles for livelihood (Friedmann, 1996).

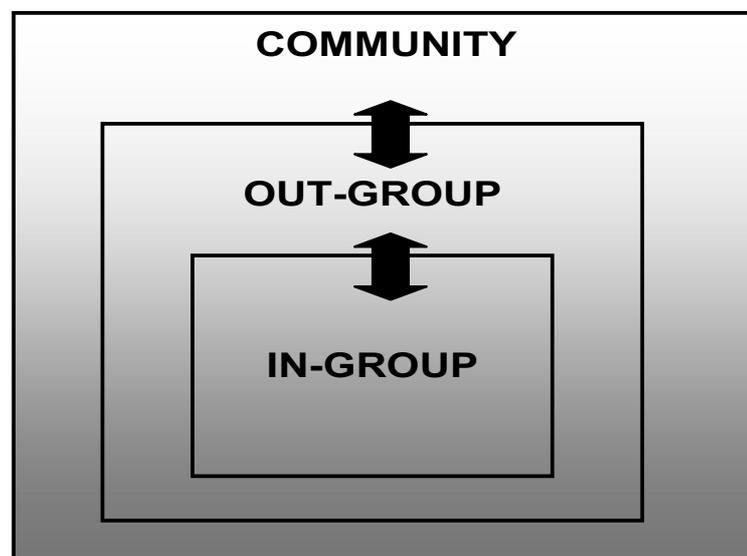
The importance of the group level lays as well in the prevention of, or struggle against, negative labelling and stigmatization. EAPN warns in its report of the European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty 2007: “From the point of view of those concerned, the largest obstacles in the fight against poverty and social exclusion are discrimination, stigmatization, racism and xenophobia (...)”(EAPN, 2007a:30). In sum, awareness raising and provision of information on the meaning of living in poverty may have a large impact on the empowerment on the group level.

Empowerment at the group level should deliver or strengthen socio-cultural capabilities; this means “the ability to participate as a valued member of a community. These capabilities refer to social status, dignity and other cultural conditions for belonging to a society that is highly valued by the poor themselves” (Bonfiglioli, 2003). At this level, empowerment is considered to be generated from:

- (1) the escape of isolation and finding support from meeting people experiencing the similar problems (*In-group solidarity*);
- (2) positive experiences in meeting society, the dissemination of information on poverty and its causes so that people become aware of the mechanisms and stigmatization processes end (*out-group solidarity*);
- (3) strengthening local communities, particularly in areas where socially excluded people are concentrated (*community development*).

The scheme below visualizes these three levels of supportive social networks.

Scheme 3: Supportive social networks divided in three different levels.



## 5.1 In-group solidarity

In fact, in-group solidarity refers here to organizations of people experiencing poverty. Those organizations are mostly founded by volunteers and they provide the necessary conditions for people to meet and discover that one’s situation is not unique, that others carry similar burdens with them.

“In France, this community dimension is to a large extent a result of the voluntary network, which works over the long term to help the most isolated with their reintegration process.

Those who provide this support are the best equipped to deal with the social problems these individuals face and their difficulties in obtaining jobs, and they forge close relationships with them. The associations, made up of committed men and women, give a human face to the fight against poverty: they are a forum where the individuals in question can meet others who have experienced similar difficulties and regain confidence. An example of this is the work done by the accommodation and social reintegration centre run by ATD-Fourth World.” (France).

Also Albania reports on organizations where people meet and “identify and report suspected maltreatment; assist other members of the family; organise in groups in order to help each other and to behave as good neighbours; contribute to the cost of services provided when they have sufficient resources to do so, work as volunteers, etcetera.” (Albania)

In the United Kingdom the “Off the Streets and Into Work”-project is one of the projects that support homeless people, where clients are part of the governing board – and many of the staff are former clients. (UK) In the Netherlands the national government subsidizes the national association for homeless people.

In Belgium, associations in the French Community are subsidized on the basis of a decree on the work of associations in the continuing education field, which is aimed not just at associations which people experiencing extreme poverty consider to represent their interests but also more generally, at those which work in working-class settings.

“This system is appreciated by those associations which work more particularly with the people experiencing extreme poverty because they, as they rightly point out, do indeed belong to the working-class community, from which it is crucial not to cut them off, even if they seem excluded from it at certain times.”(Belgium)

Poland presents in this context the ‘Social Co-operatives’. Those are social and economic institutions, set up by unemployed people. “They help people who have difficulties with social and professional life (mainly on the labour market). These kinds of institutions are alternative workplaces for people who need social reintegration. Social co-operatives can run social, educational, cultural activities for their members. These actions can also be conducive to the development of local areas.”<sup>6</sup>

Initiatives on in-group solidarity raise questions on the disintegrative effects of bringing people of the same category, with similar problems together. The risk exists that people are cut off from society, while they are cocooned in the safe company of people living in the same situation. In the context of empowerment, this argument holds. But of course people have to regain self-esteem and trust before they are able to move on in a context where threats of being rejected are present.

One of the most successful stories of empowerment of drug addicts in Lithuania is the establishment of the Mano Guru Bar in Vilnius. For that purpose, Vilnius City Municipal Government initiated the incorporation of the public body Socialiniai paramos projektai, which runs Mano Guru salad bar. Former drug addicts work there together, and this helps to build their in-group solidarity as well as to restore the contacts with the rest of society. Since August 2004, some 60 persons addicted to drugs from six rehabilitation centres from all over Lithuania have participated in the programme. Only nine participants had to withdraw due to relapse (abuse of narcotic substances). Others found a job or continue to work in Mano Guru.

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<sup>6</sup> Program of Supporting Institutions for the Development of Social Cooperatives and the Social Cooperatives – consulting, educational and financial services for the new created social cooperatives. There were ca. 146 social co-operatives in 2007. Some of them were financed by Ministry of Labour and Social Policy

### **Empowerment and in-group solidarity**

- + Supporting and organizing gatherings of people experiencing the same problems, is important to realize a basic feeling of self-trust, what gives people the energy and courage to put a step forward;
- + In-group solidarity can be realized by activities in different fields: by employment, culture, sports, care, etcetera. It is crucial, though, to consider the goal of self-support as dominant.
- + The risk on cocooning in a 'poor' social network is real and has to be avoided by mentioning the temporary membership and the perspective on 'breaking out'.

## **5.2 Out-group solidarity**

Out-group solidarity refers to restoring contact between socially excluded groups and other groups in a more accepted, central (socio-economic) position. Goal is to contribute to social cohesion, to create goodwill and understanding for people in need. By connecting vulnerable groups with others, ingrained prejudices can be put aside. Processes of stigmatisation can be cut off.

Several kinds of activities in different domains (e.g. culture, work, education) may contribute building up out-group solidarity.

Armenia reports on 'Poverty Reduction within a Cultural Development Concept'. First, one says that "to prevent the self-isolation of the people experiencing extreme poverty and to increase their access to information, cultural units are created in communities with special attention to areas populated by refugees of a mixed community of locals and refugees. The Cultural Development Concept states further that by organising national celebrations and festivals a significant impact in the establishment of social equality will be realized". (Armenia)

The attempts to bring different people together are by the Netherlands described as their 'friendly turn'- projects. "

These should prevent social isolation and create social networks. Volunteers are 'adopting' socially isolated people (e.g. psychiatric clients) to do things together (go to the movie, shopping et cetera)".

In the Czech Republic poor people are taking part in a special theatre company. "Actors are people who faced extreme poverty, which means homelessness. Their plays inform the audience and deliver for the actors some money, contact with peer or majority, and exchange of experiences".

Another illustration of out-group solidarity in the Czech Republic is the initiative of some NGOs to include consumers of social services in NGOs activities. Consumers cooperate then in providing assistance to others (e.g. they work in collection and distribution of clothes and furniture programs or in a food bank).

This initiative may be compared with the idea behind the social drop-in centres in Denmark. People who have to deal with lots of barriers to integrate in society find there a place to start by the inclusion into daily social activities with other people, for instance by participating in activities at social drop-in cafés or learning projects. (Denmark)

Besides those kinds of initiatives, we may not forget that lots of organisations exist and initiatives are organised without governmental support. Voluntary work activities, in the field of care but also in culture, sports, youth work and leisure time, take a lot of this goals on their expenses. Especially the role of faith communities should be mentioned. They provide basic help (food, clothing, etcetera), but

also meeting places by which possibilities are created to meet others in need or people of other socio-economic classes.

**Empowerment and out-group solidarity**

- + Solidarity between different groups in society should be stimulated by government. ‘Mixed’ networks promote social cohesion and help vulnerable people to get access to useful means and tools.
- + Reaching this goal is a long term project. The processes take lots of energy, negotiation, patience and money. Besides providing time, space and funding, criteria have to be developed to measure progress.
- + A final remark to put things into perspective: “Everyone likes to cocoon. Don’t ask them what we don’t want to do ourselves.”

**5.3 Community development**

Empowerment by community development aims to strengthen communities, particularly in areas where socially excluded people are concentrated. Deprived neighbourhoods, without any constructive atmosphere, constrain people in their individual and collective development. People living in extreme poverty are forced to live in those dirty, dangerous and desolate areas, because rents are low and/or they are attracted to other people living on the streets.

How to stop the downward spiral? To illustrate empowerment by community development two examples of micro-projects are given.

In Bulgaria the Social Investment Fund finances micro-projects fulfilling concrete needs of socially vulnerable communities. These projects “aim at creating alternatives and conditions of sustainable employment, generation of income, improvement of access to social and technical infrastructure and strengthening the capacity of local communities to define priorities and to manage investments and initiatives of local significance. They are oriented mainly to the needs of socially vulnerable and excluded groups of the population that have lost positions on the market as a result of restructuring of the economy, that are affected by the process of impoverishment and experience difficulties in their access to social services” (Bulgaria).

Hungary presents the UNDP–SZMM Cserehát Programme, supporting micro-projects. As a consequence “local interest in the development programmes has raised, has awakened people’s hidden self-confidence, and has brought many new local project ideas to the surface. It has helped local people to realize the importance of creating partnerships, and it has brought partners together. The coaches mobilized people to take part in decision-making, planning, and project implementation. In this way their aim was to build people’s motivation, self-esteem and sense of empowerment” (Hungary).

Another perspective of community development is not a spatial one. It concerns investing in communities that lead a nomad existence or without a particular spatial anchor, like for example Roma people.

**Empowerment by community development**

- + Community development has to be conducted with involvement of the citizens, in particular with the most deprived inhabitants of these communities. Specific methods need to be handled to organize effective participation.

- + Investors, urban planners and other experts need to agree on a social clause, that guarantees that the most deprived groups can benefit from development projects (e.g. by getting employed in the projects, by volunteering, by participation in preparation and/or implementation).
- + Temporary budgets make that promising programmes are shut up. This has to be avoided, moreover because of the vulnerable people involved, which are dropped and left behind.

## 6. Raising (political) voices

The third level illuminates political empowerment. This dimension concerns the political processes allowing people to express their political voice. It is related to the external dimension of empowerment; to the goal of getting grip on the external situation or circumstances that influence daily life.

Lots of applications of empowerment in the European (social policy) context are related to this political or participatory dimension. Different target groups formulate their own strength and weakness analysis: women (AIC, 2003; Fagan, e.a., 2006), homeless people (FEANTSA, 2005), youth (Colley, e.a., 2007; YEPP, 2007), elder people (Age, 2007) and (undocumented) migrants (see e.g. the EU-MEET-project: Migrants-Employment-Empowerment-Training).

For example FEANTSA nominates the value of this participation with view to empowerment of vulnerable people. “Participation is about seeing vulnerable people as full citizens with a place in society and about bridging the democratic divide that can cut off marginalized groups from the decision-making that affects them and impacts on their lives. Participation is about recognizing the fact that homeless people and poor people should be able to express their views and opinions on the very situation that they have lived and that their first-hand knowledge of the issues impacting on homelessness and poverty is very valuable if real progress in policy-making is to be achieved in the long-term” (FEANTSA, 2005).

This quote mentions two kinds of added value: the democratic aspect – considering people as full citizens – and secondly, the efficiency of policies. Knowledge about people living in bad conditions may increase the success of policy measures based on that knowledge.

Another advantage of political participation is situated on the individual/ psychological level. In the collective process of participation it is acknowledged that poverty is no individual problem, but a societal one with many causes. People living in poverty who engage in these processes can thus rid themselves of feelings of guilt about their situation. In this manner, participation can contribute to their (individual and collective) emancipation and empowerment (Dierckx, 2007b).

Participation in policymaking and in monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of this policy is an important strategy to reach this goal.

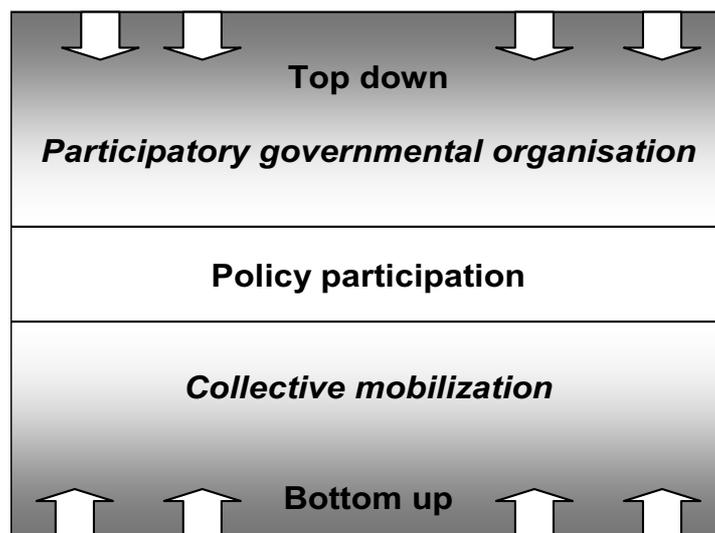
One of the main principles of the social protection sector strategy of Albania may be used as overall statement concerning empowerment at the political level.

“Individuals are responsible for their lives. They should be encouraged to take decisions with regard to their way of life according to the norms of society. They should be encouraged to express their own opinion on social services and on how they could best be assisted to preserve or regain their independence, to have the right to complain and the right of follow-up on their case. Providers of social services should respect the rights, dignity and opinions of

beneficiaries as well as the specificities of beneficiaries from planning of services up to their delivery.”(Albania)

This statement stresses that policies, not only at governmental level but also at the level of (public or private) services, have an important impact on the lives of the beneficiaries. This is even the case for policies in other institutions as schools, hospitals, prisons, and community centres. In focusing on empowerment at this third level, we should take these different dimensions into account. In the following we distinguish participation as a bottom up process, participation as instigated by government and finally the participation structures and methods.

Scheme 4: Conditions for policy participation



## 6.1 Bottom up participation

It can be difficult to get people experiencing poverty involved at the political and institutional level. For them managing from day to day is a full time concern, and they may lack the skills and the confidence to effectively get involved. In Ireland virtually all vulnerable groups are represented by NGOs and as far as possible involve the people they represent in their work. These organisations are generally, in part at least, funded by the State and given support by a Government agency for combating poverty, and by other appropriate State agencies (Ireland).

Also in Belgium associations are funded to give political voice to people experiencing poverty. The Flemish Community, for example, specifically subsidises associations recognised as “giving a voice to the people experiencing extreme poverty”. Six criteria for support are listed in its decree on combating poverty. The consequence of this decree is that Flanders has a highly organised, well structured array of associations with a high profile among the authorities (Belgium).

Not all, but several of those organizations in different countries are members of networks, that are linked to the European organization EAPN. An example of a national network is the Hungarian Anti-Poverty Network, aiming to be the most significant joint effort and serving as the lobby organization of Hungarian civil organizations involved in the anti-poverty struggle. Excerpts from the mission statement of the Hungarian Anti-Poverty Network uncover their activities:

- (a) They keep the issue of poverty and social exclusion on the front burner;
- (b) They monitor the anti-poverty activities of the prevailing government;

- (c) They enable the expression of opinions and the ability to influence relevant decisions and participate as full members in society, by those who are poverty stricken or excluded from society;
- (d) They intend to start and implement joint projects targeting the elimination of poverty and societal exclusion (Hungary).

Organizations that bring vulnerable people together and initiate advocacy are not generally present in all European countries. As Poland indicates, their social NGOs are still “new” actors in the social welfare sector in Poland. Therefore the financial support for their tasks is limited so does the area of their activities (Poland). Armenia even states that NGOs, associations and unions, are very weakly manifested.

“This lead to the dissolution of the general socio-cultural domain, which might otherwise have served as the place where the poor people would have participated in general discussions and debates, the elaboration of community opinions, and the preparation of decisions as well as public hearings of the people experiencing extreme poverty” (Armenia).

Collective mobilization by NGOs is thus needed and has proven its merits in several countries, for example in Ireland.

“Institutionally NGOs have access to politicians and officials at both national and local level to put their case on behalf of the vulnerable groups they represent... Each year there is a pre-budget forum at which they put their case for policy developments and more budgetary resources directly to the Minister for Social and Family Affairs. There is also an annual Social Inclusion Forum where in workshops they discuss and debate necessary and desirable future development. This is addressed by the Minister and expert speakers, and a comprehensive report is drawn up for circulation to Government Departments and Agencies”. (Ireland)

International comparison shows a common development in participation in public policies. It seems that a bottom up approach is guaranteed for a majority of ‘powerful’ categories (like trade unions or pensioners), but that the participation of the most vulnerable groups does not exist if government does not invest in organizing them. Those movements of groups with more power are at the end expected to defend the interests of the weakest groups. In reality, the voice of the poorest people disappears.

## **6.2 Top down participation**

When participation is instigated by government, by politicians and/or administration, a top down approach comes into view. This may reveal itself in the *formal obligation* to involve and consult certain actors in policymaking processes.

For several national strategies on social inclusion, protection, and assistance formal obligations are available to involve relevant stakeholders.

In the Czech Republic, the Act on Social Services states that policy plans on the medium term development of social services within different regions should be constructed in a participatory way.

“The plan will be developed in coordination with the regional municipalities, with representatives of the social service providers and representatives of the recipients of the social services. This is a significant way how to use a social capital of people and how to allow people to express their voice” (Czech Republic).

In Denmark, in most social services it is both a requirement of the law and generally common-place to aim at user-involvement.

“A recent evaluation of user-involvement on homeless hostels showed that both users and staff find that user involvement is mainly achieved on aspects close to the everyday life of the users such as making individual action plans, whereas user-involvement on more organisational

aspects of running the services is less widespread”. An important finding is that it is not the ‘organized and measurable user influence that enhances the residents’ empowerment, and their satisfaction with their daily lives, but rather an atmosphere of acceptance, respect, and reciprocity in which staff are motivated to take their lead from the residents’ own wishes and needs.” (Burmølle & Laurberg 2007: 49-50).

The evolution to interactive policy making is also present in France and the United Kingdom.

“The users’ role in drawing up and evaluating public policies is central to the French government’s thinking in this area. Under the Law of 2 January 2002 on the reform of social and medico-social action, there are already a number of initiatives to take greater account of the users’ expertise. As regards social inclusion, local forums have been organized on an experimental basis since 2005 by voluntary regional and department agencies operated by the social services. They meet the need to undertake, together with people living in poverty and the professionals that assist them, a review of the social inclusion situation, especially with regard to access to fundamental rights”. (France)

“UK mentions good examples such as the development of the National Action Plan for social exclusion, where client forums were specifically recruited, and the Ethnic Minority Advisory group (chaired by a Minister) where membership was advertised in the national and specialist minority press” (UK).

Participation instigated by government may take shape in *advisory boards*. As illustration we mention some boards where representatives of different groups participate in consulting or monitoring bodies such as the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Children Rights (Albania, Bulgaria) and the National Committee on Minorities (Albania).

Processes of consultation or participation may be started by government but that does not mean that other actors may not evolve to co-owners of the process. The Agora-dialogue in Belgium illustrates that.

The “Agora” dialogue group on youth support group (Belgium, French Community) aims to interpret the decree on youth support with a view to avoiding poverty-related placements. At the request of the Minister for Youth Support of the time, it brings together representatives of the government department for youth support, professionals from the state youth support services, two associations representing poor people, a member of the private office of the minister concerned and a member of the Agency to combat poverty, who meet about once a month (ten times a year). Despite the fact that it was initially a political initiative, which had no legal basis, it has never been interrupted when governments have changed (since 1998, there have been 3 different Ministers for Youth Support) because the department directors are so closely involved in the process. There is no pressure, and no deadlines are set for results to be achieved. From the beginning, the department also agreed to work on the basis of a text drawn up by the associations with the help of the Agency to combat poverty and has always been content to alter agendas according to the wishes of the associations (Belgium).

An advantage of all those formally embedded participation processes is that generally important conditions for political participation are fulfilled. Indeed, agreements, task and responsibility division and institutional entities ensuring the partnership are success factors and might avoid that participation processes become ‘empty boxes’. A formal legislative framework is not in every context essential. There can be extensive consultation and dialogue when that is the normal method of developing policy, like in the United Kingdom.

## 6.3 Participation structures and methods

Participation is only successful if attention is paid to the methods and structures that are used. Especially for people experiencing extreme poverty participation is not easy and leads to frustrations if not well organised and prepared.

### 6.3.1 Structures

Participation structures may be helpful to support participants and to ensure that the outcomes of participation processes are implemented.

Bulgaria has so established the State Agency for Child Protection (SACP) that it takes a leading role in guaranteeing not only children's rights but also in the control on their actual implementation.

“To the SACP National Council for Child Protection was established. In line with the rule that each child-related policy has to be founded on the fundamental principle of child participation to the council was established Children's Council. Representatives of the Children's Council are involved in the elaboration of various policies. Thus by means of real involvement of the children and children's organisations in planning, development and implementation of policies is guaranteed that children's needs are taken into consideration and the children feel owners of the policies towards them”. (Bulgaria)

Belgium has a support structure in the Agency to combat poverty, financial insecurity and social exclusion.

“The Agency is one of the mechanisms that the Regions, Communities and Federal State have set up to combat poverty, financial insecurity and social exclusion together. It draws policy-makers' attention to the observations, appraisals and proposals stemming from the consultations it organises between all those concerned, including associations which poor people consider to represent their interests, Public Centres for Social Welfare, unions, professionals from various sectors and administrative services. It forms part of the Centre to promote equal opportunities and combat racism, which is an independent public body”. (Belgium)

Even closer to the core of policy making, is the structure that organizes a Permanent Consultation on Poverty in the Flemish Community in Belgium.

“Under Flanders' Decree on combating poverty, “permanent vertical consultation” must be held in all political spheres. Each minister must decide how this consultation will function in his or her own sphere, discussing the matter with the Flemish Network of Associations, through which poor people can express their views. The consultation group meets at least twice a year. Its role is to test political initiatives in the light of the target audience's experience and make proposals to bring measures into line with its findings, where appropriate”. (Belgium)

Another example is the Council for Socially Marginalised People, set up by the Danish Government in 2002. Its members are appointed personally by the Minister for Social Affairs by virtue of their special insight into and practical experience of the marginalised groups. The members consist both of people with extensive professional expertise and people with their own experience of social marginalisation. The government consults the Council on matters regarding marginalised groups, and the Council prepares an annual report on the situation of the weakest groups and present proposals for improved initiatives aimed at them, including proposals for how the civil society can continue its involvement in solving problems.

### 6.3.2 Methods

Although good examples of participation structures exist, often the challenge remains to find adequate methods to organize the dialogue between different actors, especially the most vulnerable people. Without paying attention to those methods socially excluded people will not be involved.

Ireland has some tradition in participation of people experiencing poverty, but still it reports: “A main weakness in the overall system relates to the relative low participation of people experiencing poverty and there is a need to focus on ways of improving more meaningful and effective participation on their part”.(Ireland)

The same experience occurs in the Netherlands. By implementing the Social Support Act (since 1 January 2007) participation of all citizens to all facets of society (on a local level) is intended. Despite the fact that municipalities play an important role, “it is known recognized by the national government that participation of homeless people and people with a psychiatric background is often forgotten and more difficult or sometimes even forgotten, by which their voice is not heard”. Therefore a national project was developed with pilots in different regions and a manual on how to reach different difficult target groups is disseminated to all municipalities. (The Netherlands).

The lack of adequate methods is partly caused by the fact that some decision makers are not convinced of the added value of participation.

“The main areas to focus on in order to ensure that these approaches extend beyond the discussion stage are: convincing decision-makers that individuals can provide genuine knowledge and expertise that can be combined with the know-how of the professionals, getting the various institutional players to take account of what the users say, keeping a watch on laws and regulations to ensure that users are represented on the bodies that affect them, measuring the impact of new provisions on the situation of individuals, and developing know-how and communication”. (France)

Furthermore, a number of constraints to the participatory process emerged. These constraints vary among different countries and include elements on attitude, time for preparation, agenda setting, language use, consultation of backing, etcetera. In some situations constraints refer to more fundamental items, such as lack of knowledge on fundamental democratic values and their alienation in communities; the inactive mid-level governmental structures; the prevalent reluctance in the attitude of governmental bodies toward public participation; inadequate skills among some community governments, few or no initiatives from the public, and difficulties of accessing information (Armenia).

Overcoming these challenges requires urgent action and the implementation of long-term policies.

#### **Empowerment and policy participation**

- + Empowerment of people experiencing extreme poverty is not only about the individual, but especially the (organization of) society is a factor of importance in shaping the opportunities and conditions.
- + Participation of the vulnerable groups has a mission in bringing in knowledge on how it is to live in extreme conditions, to live a life of misery. They can identify – together with other stakeholders – why certain measures do not reach the people, who need it the most. Together with other actors, people experiencing extreme poverty can reflect and formulate recommendations.
- + Qualitative and quantitative research into the needs of clients and the effectiveness of interventions can support the voice of the most disadvantaged and inarticulate people.
- + Government has to organize itself in order that the output of participation processes can be followed up by effective policy measures.

- + Collective mobilization of the people experiencing extreme poverty needs (financial) support and creativity in methods for finding and inviting them to sit around the (policy) table.
- + To avoid frustration, it is crucial to organize the participation processes with respect to the vulnerable, powerless groups: This needs time, adjusted language use, preparation, feedback and explanation of the decision-making cycle in public policy.
- + The development and elaboration of a civil society as such, and NGOs that are involved in poverty eradication are key success factors.
- + The private sector (social partners, third sector) needs to be activated to contribute in poverty eradication and the realization of empowerment.

## 7. Conclusion

Achieving empowerment of people experiencing extreme poverty is a major challenge. It concerns investments in trying to solve a persisting problem with multiple facets. Moreover, the problem and definition of who is extreme poor varies from country to country, from region to region. Nonetheless, this report has delivered lots of common insights on how to tackle extreme poverty.

It is clear, though, that there is no absolute but a gradual difference between poverty and extreme poverty. People experiencing extreme poverty are in a living situation that significantly impacts on their physical and mental well-being. People experiencing extreme poverty are usually not able anymore to change their life situation without external support. They are usually unable to access mainstream support services due to personal (e.g. experience of a life crisis), institutional (e.g. long and bureaucratic procedures, inadequacy of support) and societal barriers (e.g. discrimination and stigmatization, lack of services). Finally, the experience of extreme poverty usually results in social exclusion and isolation of an individual which makes it particularly difficult to engage with this group (hence the need for an empowerment approach to tackling poverty).

By formulating the basic policy principles and recognizing empowerment as a multiple layer process, the Expert Committee states that empowerment may not be reduced to an individual assignment. Empowerment of people experiencing extreme poverty is impossible without the involvement of stakeholders as government, NGO's, private sector, and the target groups. Together they have to design the strategies on the different levels of (a) building individual capacity, (b) strengthening social networks and (c) organizing policy participation for the most vulnerable groups. Furthermore, it is said that poverty is a structural problem (see addendum 4), where society and its organization have to be questioned concerning its (subconscious) exclusion processes.

On the individual level, empowerment should be strengthened by, amongst others, a permanent observation and signalization of emergencies and needs for basic care. It may be clear, in addition, that conditionality of social allowances may violate the basic right to a minimum income. More than average attention should be paid to the dissemination of information, so that barriers to get access to these social allowances disappear. Concerning social services, a balance between centralization of services and covering a large territory has to be found. Economic activation policies, finally, have to take into account the quality (security, sustainability, decent payment) of the jobs they want people to take up. Social services should work outreaching (people experiencing extreme poverty don't know their way and are often not inclined to ask or seek for help).

Concerning the social networks as power sources for the most excluded groups, the stimulation of in-group solidarity is necessary to regain self-esteem and to take individual responsibility in the future. Initiatives in domains as culture, labour, and education, can give people the opportunity to expand

their social networks what opens doors for upward social mobility. Dissemination of information on living in poverty should be stimulated in order to avoid any further stigmatization and marginalization. Strong local communities should be used to increase more and better opportunities to escape from poverty.

On the participation of people experiencing extreme poverty – raising (political) voices - , two major conditions are formulated. First, the opportunity for collective mobilization should be present. That means that the target groups have to be reached and supported to come together and formulate their view on a better society. It requires special investments in participatory methods. On the other hand, participation in policies contains the high risks of collecting even more frustrations and disappointments than people already have. Therefore, a participatory governmental organization has to be built, that enables a fast follow up of the output of advisory boards, etcetera. A major challenge remains: adequate methods have to be developed to organize the dialogue with socially excluded groups.

## 8. Recommendation (incorporated at a later stage)

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## **Addendum 1 — Participants**

The Committee of Experts has met four times: 5-6 July 2007, 27-28 November 2007, 6-7 May 2008 and 19-20 November 2008.

The composition of the Committee was the following (the figures after the names indicate attendance at the respective meetings):

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## Addendum 2 – Overview of definitions of empowerment

Table - Definitions of Empowerment (Ibrahim, Alkire, 2007)

Study	Definition or Concept of Empowerment
Albertyn (2001)	Effective empowerment must occur at each of 3 levels: micro (attitude, feelings and skills), interface (participation and action immediately around the individual) and macro (beliefs, action and effects)
Alkire (2005)	Empowerment is an increase in certain kinds of agency that are deemed particularly instrumental to the situation at hand. Thus I am choosing to assume that empowerment is a subset of agency, and that increases in empowerment would be reflected in increased agency (but not necessarily vice versa)
Alsop (2006)	Empowerment is defined as a group's or individual's capacity to make effective choices, that is, to make choices and then to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes
Appleyard (2002)	Empowering people to make their own decisions, rather than be passive objects of choices made on their behalf. It focuses on empowering all people to claim their right to opportunities and services made available through pro-poor development (Bartlett, 2004, 54)
Bartle (2003).	Having the capacity to do things that community members want to do and going beyond political or legal permission to participate in the national political system
Bennet (2002)	Empowerment is used to characterize approaches based on social mobilization. A key element in most social mobilization approaches is helping poor and socially excluded individuals realize the power they gain from collective action. Often social mobilization approaches work "from below" to create voice and demand for change among diverse groups of poor and socially excluded citizens (Bartlett, 2004, 54)
Brown (2003)	Providing empowerment opportunities as necessary prerequisites to altering a person's potential reality and giving people the means to better themselves
Chambers (1993)	Empowerment means that people, especially poorer people, are enabled to take more control over their lives, and secure a better livelihood with ownership and control of productive assets as one key element. Decentralization and empowerment enable local people to exploit the diverse complexities of their own conditions, and to adapt to rapid change. (Bartlett, 2004, 55)
Craig and Mayo (1995)	Empowerment is about collective community, and ultimately class conscientization, to critically understand reality in order to use the power which even the powerless do possess, so as to challenge the powerful and ultimately to transform the reality through conscious political struggles (cited Oakley 2001, 4)
Friedmann (1992)	An alternative development involves a process of social and political empowerment whose long term objective is to rebalance the structure of power within society by making state action more accountable, strengthening the powers of civil society in the management of their own affairs and making corporate business more socially responsible (cited in Oakley 2001, 3)
Gootaert (2005)	Empowerment falls in three categories: - making state institutions more responsive to poor people - removing social barriers - building social institutions and social capital
Grootaert (2003)	Expanding assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives
Jackson (1994)	The process by which people, organizations or groups who are powerless (a) becomes aware of the power dynamics at work in their life context, (b) develop the skills and capacity for gaining some reasonable control over their lives, (c) exercise their control without infringing upon the right of others and (d) support the empowerment of others in the community (cited in Rowlands, 1997, 15)
Kabeer (2001)	Empowerment ... refers to the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them. (Bartlett, 2004, 57)

Lokshin and Ravallion (2003)	Taking actions that selectively empower those with little power to redress power inequality
Malena (2003)	Enabling or giving power to (whom) to do (what)
Malhotra (2002)	Enhancing assets and capabilities of diverse individuals and groups to engage, influence, and hold accountable the institutions that affect them
Mayoux (2000); DFID	Women's empowerment is defined as 'individuals acquiring the power to think and act freely, exercise choice, and to fulfil their potential has fallen equally to members of society'
McMillan, et al. (1995)	Gaining influence over events and outcomes of importance
Moser (2003)	Expanding assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives
Moser (1991)	While the empowerment approach acknowledges the importance for women of increasing their power, it seeks to identify power less in terms of domination over others and more in terms of the capacity of women to increase their self-reliance and internal strength. This is identified as the right to determine choices in life and to influence the direction of change, though ability to gain control over crucial material and non-material sources. It places less emphasis than the equity approach on increasing women's status relative to men, but seeks to empower women through the redistribution of power within, as well as between, societies (cited in Oakley, 2001, 4)
Narayan (2005)	The expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives
Oppenheim, Mason, Smith (2003)	Extent to which some categories of people are able to control their own destinies even when their interests are opposed by others with whom they interact
Oxaal and Baden (1997)	Empowerment cannot be defined in terms of specific activities or end results because it involves a process whereby women can freely analyse, develop and voice their needs and interests, without them being pre-defined, or imposed from above, by planners or other social actors
Oxfam (1995)	Empowerment involves challenging the forms of oppression which compel millions of people to play a part in their society on terms which are inequitable, or in ways which deny their human rights (Oxfam, 1995) in (Oxaal and Baden 1997, 2).
Rowlands (1997)	Empowerment is more than participation in decision-making; it must also include the processes that lead people to perceive themselves as able and entitled to make decisions.
Spreitzer (1995)	Intrapersonal empowerment as the component of psychological empowerment that deals with cognitive elements. Other components are interactional (thinking about and relating to the environment) and behavioral (taking action and engaging issues)
Strandburg	Empowerment can overall be defined as all those processes where women take control and ownership of their lives. Control and ownership requires an array of opportunities to choose among and this understanding of empowerment overlaps with the concept of human development when defined as "a process of enlarging people's choices". Both concepts describe processes, but where human development entails enlarging choices, empowerment is the process of acquiring the ability to choose among these enlarged choices... (Bartlett, 2004, 59)
Van Eyken (1991)	Empowerment is an intentional and ongoing dynamic process centred on the local community, involving mutual dignity, critical reflection, caring and group participation, through which people lacking a valid share of resources gain greater access to and control over those resources, though the exercise of an increased leverage of power (cited in Oakley 2001, 16)
WDR (2000/2001)	Empowerment as the process of 'enhancing the capacity of poor people to influence the state institutions that affect their lives, by strengthening their participation in political processes and local decision-making. And it means removing the barriers- political, legal and social- that work against particular groups and building the assets of poor people to enable them to engage effectively in markets'.

## Addendum 3 – Typology of poverty perspectives and capabilities

### 1. An explanatory scheme for poverty

A definition of poverty may not hide the many different perspectives on poverty and its causes. Vranken (2001), based on its theoretical framework, distinguishes six perspectives, presented in the table below.

Table - Six perspectives on poverty and exclusion

	<b>Internal cause</b> (inside the individual, the institution or society at large)	<b>External cause</b> (outside the individual, the institution or society at large)
<b>Individual</b> (Micro)	<b><i>Deficiency model</i></b> (the person him/herself is responsible)	<b><i>Accident model</i></b> (accidents happen to everyone)
<b>Institutional</b> (Meso)	<b><i>Institutional deficiency</i></b> (physical and social thresholds of a service)	<b><i>Social status of institution</i></b> (Stigmatisation of some social services)
<b>Societal</b> (Macro)	<b><i>Structural model</i></b> (the way society is organised)	<b><i>Cyclical model</i></b> (rapid social change, economic cycles)

Distinction is made by the level on which poverty is perceived and analyzed. On the other hand models differ by the internality or externality of the causes of poverty. Is the individual guilty of their own poverty? (deficiency model) Can we explain poverty by accidents which can happen to almost everyone? (Accident model) Is the economy the problem? (Cyclical model) Does poverty persist by the way our society is organized? (Structural model). And so on. It is clear that each of these models is related to other public interventions in the struggle against poverty and social exclusion. Policies with empowerment as a goal should not emphasize the model where the individual bears all the responsibility for its situation. By acknowledging the structural model as most adequate explanation of the persistence of poverty in society, individuals are given the power to take own responsibilities in gaining more grip on their own lives and the external factors that influence their lives.

### 2. Multidimensional deprivation

A second typology we want here to be mentioned is the one on multi-dimensional deprivation (Bonfiglioli, 2003). The OECD distinguishes five kinds of capability fields on which deprivation may appear.

Table - Poverty as multi-dimensional deprivation

<b>Capabilities</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
Economic	Ability to earn income, to consume, to have assets and access to food, security, material well-being and social status
Human	Based on health, education, nutrition, clean water and shelter (core elements of well-being as well as crucial means to improving livelihoods)
Political	Human rights, a voice and some influence over public policies and political priorities; deprivation of basic political freedoms or human rights is a major aspect of poverty
Socio-cultural	The ability to participate as a valued member of a community. These capabilities refer to social status, dignity and other cultural conditions for belonging to a society that is highly valued by the poor themselves
Protective	Ability to withstand economic and external shocks

Source: OECD/DAC, 2001:26

It is obvious that in response to this holistic understanding of poverty and social exclusion, a corresponding consensus has to be developed on the poverty-reduction strategy as a holistic and multi-dimensional approach. Each of the capability fields should be kept in mind while designing intervention strategies.