

B R I D G E S



FOR INCLUSION

**THE LINKS BETWEEN EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL
INCLUSION STRATEGIES:**

**A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS BETWEEN NATIONAL
OVERVIEWS FROM BELGIUM, BULGARIA, FRANCE,
PORTUGAL, SPAIN AND ROMANIA**

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OCTOBER 2008*

Title:

The links between employment and social inclusion strategies: a comparative analysis between the national overviews from Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Portugal, Spain and Romania

Published by:

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Date of publication:

October 2008

Note:

This document reflects the author's opinion. The European Commission is not responsible for the possible use of the information that it contains.



"Bridges for Inclusion" is co-financed by the European Commission (European Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity – PROGRESS 2007-2013)

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INTRODUCTION

This paper is aimed to carry out a comparative analysis of the six national reports presented in the Bridges Project. The objective of this project is to identify the bridges between inclusion and employment strategies. For this purpose, the first step consists in an overview about how these strategies are articulated at the European level. Second, this overview is developed at the scale of the six participant countries. Third, this study analyses how these strategies are projected on three or four experiences of social economy at the local level, in order to conclude with a road map including conclusions and proposals.

This analysis belongs to the second Bridges working paper (W.P. 2). The first paper, already finished and discussed during April and May this year, concluded with several guideline questions and proposed a scheme, debated as well, for the preparation of the national reports. A written draft version of these has been developed in late August and were presented orally at the Porto meeting held in early September 2008. Each country report (for Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Portugal, Romania and Spain) has been carried out by the Bridges' partners themselves or by national experts requested to follow the scheme. Broadly speaking, the reports represent the view of the national, while introducing certain modifications, after the comments sent by the author of the overview on Europe.

Therefore, this comparative analysis has been developed on the basis of national reports and what was presented at the September meeting, even though some qualifications and notes are added in order to enrich the comparison.

On the other hand, this work can be useful for the peer review between pairs of countries (Belgium/France, Bulgaria/Romania, Spain/Portugal) planned to take place on November. It might be used, along with the European overview, as a tool to enhance our knowledge on the national context and the points of convergence or divergences vis-à-vis other countries. Consequently, this document not only highlights the similarities and differences among the six countries, but also at the bilateral level.

The transnational comparative analysis of labour and social policies is not an easy task, and it has generated a vast literature. It is not possible for this paper to review the literature on the subject, but it is worth mentioning that it is been attempted to overcome some of the problems common to these comparisons. For this purpose, it has been essential to count an overview of Europe which provides the backdrop for comparison, as well as a common scheme followed by every country report. What is presented in the present report¹ is aimed to show the contrasts between countries that share concerns in issues such as the bridges linking labour and social strategies.

¹ From this point onwards, countries names will be replaced by their abbreviation. Belgium (B), Bulgaria (Bu), Spain (S), France (F), Portugal (P), Romania (R). An abbreviation followed by a number refers to the page of the national report where the expressed view is presented.

1. History, stages and timing

It seems quite clear that the 1970s crisis had a clear influence over the six countries as a whole. However, the situation at that time, as well as the way to address it and their consequences are different.

Thus, B and F, after the Second World War, had enjoyed a long period of economic growth, labelled “the thirty glorious years”, which allowed the creation of a bismarckian social protection system covering the whole of the national population from cradle to grave, where “the (abundant) work by each one is the path to everyone’s happiness” (F.5), with a marginal level of poverty addressed by public and private assistance (B) created a type of minimal income guarantee, called *minimex*, granted by Public Assistance Public Centres (C.P.A.S.), which assured a monetary benefit to helpless citizens.

P and S lived under longstanding dictatorships, more rural-oriented in the first case, while more industrially-oriented in the second, which had attained a certain level of economic growth from their autarchic point of departure, but still were far from the levels of the welfare states of western democratic countries. Social protection, professional and corporative, did not offer coverage to the whole population or for all risks. Traditional poverty (rural areas, urban districts) remained the most urgent and glaring problems which were alleviated by scarce and control-oriented public charity and, especially, paternalistic private assistance in the hands of the Catholic Church. Remarkable migration fluxes, both within the country (from the countryside to urban areas, from the interior to the coast, from south to north) and beyond its borders (to the most developed countries in Europe) prevented higher unemployment levels.

While Bu and R had spent many years under a “socialism” that guaranteed employment for everyone in the big productive units, from which some social service depended. The will to enhance industrial growth was pervasive, to the point where there was even a scarcity of labour. Social security played the role of regulating and distributing labour (Bu). As in the other four countries, a specific policy against poverty did not exist, and social assistance was in an “embryonic” stage. As stated in the Bulgarian report, a cycle was starting, characterised by growth and employment, without inclusion. Rumania on the other hand highlighted how the present triangle represented by the Active Inclusion Recommendation, recently endorsed by the EPSCO council, is to a certain extent being applied, by which people are provided with employment and the provision of certain services, along with a guaranteed level of survivals. But in the 1980s in Romania social benefits became even more rigid. In Bulgaria, this stage gave way to a stage of employment without growth, in the 80s, and to a stage without employment or growth in the 90s, while nowadays this country would be back into a stage characterised by growth, employment and the lack of inclusion.

On the other hand, the instances of the European Economic Community in which only B and F took part did not intervene in the labour and social policies of the member states. The only exception could be found in the Social Fund, funding some initiatives for professional training and restructuring.

The oil crisis of 1973 forced a reconsideration of these situations, as it generated structural poverty, degrading the labour market and undermining some of the foundations of the welfare state. As in other European countries, the governments in F and B reacted late and poorly, based on the belief that it was a temporary crisis that could be addressed with traditional Keynesian policies. However, it proved much deeper and cast doubts over a model of growth based on the abundance and low cost of raw materials and relations of unequal exchange vis-à-vis producing countries. Unemployment, boosted amongst other factors by the close down of many labour-intensive industries, becomes one of the main concerns for governments. Professional and vocational training were reinforced, with poor results. The concept of insertion was

asserted. Some public policies addressing poverty were initiated. In the beginning, these were emergency exceptional measures, but later they became better structured. Even though social public expenditure escalated, social protection as a whole acted as a security net softening the negative consequences of the crisis.

This was not the case in P and S, where the high levels of protection found in the former two countries did not exist and the complex political transitions (from 1974 in Portugal and from 1976 in Spain) caught most of the attention. Consequently, in spite of the emergency caused by high poverty levels (P and S) and unemployment levels reaching more than 15% of the working population (S), the economic and social concerns were eclipsed by the political debate. The new constitutions and democratic laws tried to bring these countries to the levels of their neighbours, including labour and social policies (social security, health...) implemented by their governments. Nevertheless, these measures were soon to face the limits imposed by the consequences of the crisis. Thus, in early 1980s, the worsening of poverty and the state of the labour market were subject to growing concern. Faced by these problems, the position adopted by different governments was different. The Spanish administration refused to accept the existence of poverty explicitly and, even though this country took part in the Second European Programme (1986-1989) after its admission in 1986, it was done with the highest degree of reluctance. On the other hand, the Portuguese government received and integrated European initiatives with a more positive attitude, becoming a loyal supporter of them.

In the 1990s, European structural funds played a crucial role in both peninsular countries, which will follow the “stop (1994-1997) and go” pattern of European social and labour policies. Belgium and France were to keep a higher degree of autonomy from such policies. Nevertheless, the four countries hosted the EU experimental programmes (Employment y Adapt. Horizon, Now, Integra, Urban) and received the ideas about new sources of employment and proximity services, the promotion of local development and partnership with several actors. From 1997, regarding employment strategies, and 2000, regarding strategies of inclusion, the four countries followed the community guidelines and their vicissitudes. Consequently, according to the European overview, after a certain period of euphoria, with the revision of the Lisbon strategy, restrictive measures were gradually imposed, active labour and social policies were insisted upon and poverty lost visibility in the plans for reform.

It is worth mentioning that, while certain significant differences existed before 1990s, as time went by, the stages and timing of public employment and inclusion strategies increasingly approached each other and were marked by European guidelines. The more these insist in the need and the benefits of building bridges between employment and inclusion strategies, the higher the probability of such bridges existing at the national level. However, such a trend does not necessarily imply a convergence of the realities of the six countries.

2. Influence of European strategies over their national counterparts

This chapter tries to evaluate the influence of European inclusion and employment strategies over the national ones or, alternatively, to observe to which extent it is the policies of certain countries that set the options at the European level. In other words, this section analyses the mutual influences between both levels.

The underlying hypothesis is that the creation and promotion of bridges between employment and inclusion strategies can be generated either from the top, from the EU, from an intermediate level, from central governmental instances, or from the bottom, from the local level. Therefore, if European instances provide a model to adopt and emphasize the need for an articulation and, on the other hand, their guidelines are followed, the coordination between national and local instances will be easier. It is also conceivable, although much less likely, that positive examples of local coordination are integrated (“mainstreaming”) into national and community policies.

France and Belgium constitutes two examples of mutual influence. Both are among the founders of the European Community, and their institutions and governments have taken part in the European strategies from their beginning to the present time. This has developed both an interactive relationship and a historical responsibility. It is not coincidence that the European Parliament is placed in France and that Brussels is also the site of the Parliament, along with the Commission and other European institutions. Several examples show the influence of these countries over European strategies. First, the notion of partnership, which started to spread through the second and third European Programmes against poverty, although it had already been applied to social practices in Belgium for a long time. Second, it cannot be denied that the approval of the French Minimum Insertion Income was crucial for the passing, months later, of a resolution about minimal resources in the European Parliament. Third, the influence and expansion of the concept of exclusion would be inexplicable without the relevance it previously attained in France and the control exerted by the President of the Commission and the French lobby over the Commission's Directorate General in charge of designing and managing the third European Programme against poverty. Fourth, to a great extent, the start of European conferences for people experiencing poverty is due to pressures from Belgium, a country that, as shown in its national report, possesses an interesting tradition of participation. In all the four examples, the acceptance at the European level has reinforced application at the national level, both in the pioneer countries and in the rest of Europe. Probably much more examples could be found at the level of employment and social inclusion strategies.

It is interesting to read again the two national reports of these countries, as they reflect the aforementioned interaction. They show that, along with a national logic, plus a regional logic in the case of Flanders, there exist some controversies (about poor workers, the existence or not of complementarity between labour and social insertion,...) and, especially, a timing (Luxemburg 1997, Lisbon strategy 2000,...) structured by the European calendar. However, the relevance of European structural funds devoted to experimental laboratories, which are kept apart from national policies (F.7), is less clear

Conversely, in Portugal and Spain, the influence of this kind of funds has been really decisive. From their joint entry in 1986, structural funds, along with convergence funds and, especially, the ESF, have been crucial for funding and designing professional and vocational training in these countries, as well as their labour policies. The efforts to shift from a passive social protection, common to both countries, to a more active one have been inspired by European guidelines. The Portuguese report (P.7) explicitly mentions that entry into the Union represented a turning point regarding labour policies and the fight against poverty. In this field, their national programme adopted the same principles as Europeans, along with the idea of funding projects. Their introduction of minimum income policies constitutes an interesting example of how to make the most of the experiences of other countries and the 1992 European resolution. The Integrar

programme constituted as well a certain articulation of structural funds and experimental programmes in Portugal. Between 2000, the year of the Lisbon summit, and 2007, where a new summit took place in the same city, Portugal adopted the ways and substance of the European criteria in its employment and inclusion plans, even if adapted to its particular conditions.

In Spain, the policies against poverty are a source of controversy in 1980s (admitting poverty, Caritas vs. Government) extending to the introduction of minimum incomes (Basque Country, 1989). At that time, the central government showed a certain reluctance to adopt some of the European criteria. However, step by step, the concepts (relative and extreme poverty, social exclusion), their statistical application and their principles (partnership, integrality, territorial approach, participation, working in networks) are accepted and applied, with more or less zeal. Formally, since the 1997 employment summit, along with the 2000 Lisbon summit, the guidelines set by European institutions are followed.

Bu and R joined the EU a short time ago (2007). Therefore, it is difficult to evaluate the influence held by the Union. While there is some evidence of such influence, as the Phare programme existed before their entry into the EU, structural funds have started to be transferred to these countries, along with the adoption of the bulk of community law. Both countries have had to adapt to the European employment and inclusion strategy. As in other countries in Centre and Eastern Europe, they experienced a debate over the concepts and significance of statistical measurements. The Bulgarian report highlights the governmental reluctance to use the concept of exclusion, replaced by the concept of "social isolation". In Romania the government choose a particular indicator that will inevitably show that the country is doing better in terms of reducing poverty.

The integration of Bu and R in Europe has caused an increased visibility of poverty, the creation of measures against unemployment and the initiation of consultation processes (writing of the Bulgarian report 2008-2010, CASPIS reports in Romania). Even though, as stated in the Romanian report (R.10) those consultations may constitute mere presentations of already designed plans instead of a deep debate on them. ("Joint inclusion memorandum" National plans for inclusion and employment, National reform programme).

Another question deserving attention concerns what is the real impact of these plans on the measures that are taken, as well as on the economic, fiscal, education, health policies and, especially, on unemployment and poverty in each country. It could be suggested, although only indirectly, that to the extent that both situations have not improved but rather tended to worsen, there are good reasons to be sceptical about the actual results of such plans.

In any case, even though a concern exists to promote a better articulation of European employment and inclusion strategies it is not apparent that those have generated a determined and explicit boost in favour of the application of their policies at the level of the analysed countries. In other words, the building of sound and sustainable bridges is still an unfinished task regarding the potential horizontal (at the same level) and vertical (between different levels) coordination of governance and its efficiency in Europe.

3. Decentralization and territorialization in public policy. Local development.

In order to compare the potential bridges in the six countries, it is important to refer to the nature of the State and to the degree of territorialization of public policy. Indeed, the hypothesis could be formulated that the higher the degree of territorialization of these policies, the more likely it becomes to build bridges between inclusion and employment strategies at the local level. As stated in the European overview, endogenous local development can provide significant opportunities for such strategies to meet and work together. Nevertheless, one should not forget that without coordination at a higher national level it would be harder for local actors to attain strength and sustainability for building durable bridges articulating sustainable, quality employment creation and anti-poverty policies. Likewise, this effect can work the other way round. That is, local actors can exert some influence in policies of a wider scope, either national, European or international.

It could be asserted that in the last thirty years Europe has experienced a process of territorial de-concentration and decentralization affecting even the most centralized countries. This process has had an influence in several respects, in social policies and, to a lesser extent, in labour policies. The six countries share these processes, although to different degrees and with different consequences.

Undoubtedly, B and S are the countries which have advanced the most in the path of decentralization. The former in a federalization that, in some respects, became almost confederal; and the second through the creation of Autonomous Regions endowed with broad legislative and executive competences in several fields (health, education, housing, social services...). Both countries have a complex system of territorial governance where a central government keeps for itself certain matters and functions. Therefore, in Belgium, for instance, Social Security belongs to the central level even though, as it is stated in the national report, its federalization is subject to the current political controversy between Flanders and Wallonia, not to mention Brussels. In Spain, the core of Social Security (funding, setting of benefits and contributions) is decided by the central State, unlike the whole of non contributively and assistance benefits and social services, are in the hands of regional governments (regional legislation on social services, and on minimum incomes). From the Constitutional Court's 1986 sentence, the central government can also set social plans (*Plan Concertado* or Concerted Plan [1987], plans targeted at the elderly, Roma, equal opportunities, *Plan Nacional de Inclusión* [National Inclusion Plan],...) and specific programmes which are followed to a greater or smaller extent by autonomous (regional) governments. In both countries, the unstable balance of power between central, regional and, sometimes, local governments, drives the negotiations on the budgets, competences and functions (Dependence Act [*Ley de Dependencia*] and the current debate on the funding of autonomous communities in E.2007, periodical agreements in B., held on a regular basis.

In Belgium, both employment and inclusion strategies are developed, implemented and executed at the different territorial levels. What level should be made adequate is currently still the object of debates. In fact, even the assistance dimension of social protection is put in practice in a variety of ways, as its implementation depends on local authorities and public social assistance centres. Federal plans for employment and inclusion cohabit as well with their regional counterparts. The same is true for inclusion in the case of Spain, as almost every regional community has its own plan, while in some of them plans are elaborated even by city councils (twenty in Catalonia). Vertical articulation (from the national to the local level) can only be labelled as difficult in both countries. Their reports focus their presentation in the situation of their respective regions.

In Flanders, from the 1989 restructuring of the Federal Agency of Employment, an autonomous? office was set up (VDAB), which launched the programme Work again, followed by Job Guidance and other labour force activation measures, increasingly

departing from its role of executive office to assume more directive functions. The Flemish government also had a Department of Employment and Social Economy and a Department of Social Welfare, both mirroring those existing at the federal level. From 1999, their competences at that level consisted in completing initiatives at the regional level (cooperation agreements with the regions, opening of negotiations with actors ...). This agreement set the financial means transferred to the regions. The first agreement (2000-2004) for the development of social economy set the bases for labour integration, local and district services and social corporate responsibility. The second (2005-2008), based on the notion of a plural economy, envisages the promotion of economy, equal representation for workers and the creation of 12000 employments in the social economy.

The correspondence between ministries at the central and regional level exists in Spain as well. In the same fashion, there exist mechanisms for the transference of competences and financial resources. From 1980s, every autonomous region has its own legislation on social services, which to a great extent are financed, designed and managed. Minimum incomes and other non-contributory social benefits depend on regions as well, along with active labour market policies.

The Autonomous Region of Castilla la Mancha approved its social services act in 1986, and its Regional Plans for Solidarity in 1990 and 1995. In 1997 the 1st Plan for Social Integration was created, lasting until 2001, when it was replaced by the 2nd (2002-2005), extended until 2007. These plans established the possibility of an integral action coordinating the collaboration by regional social, health, housing, education and employment services. More than 1000 developed projects have opened the door to the creation of insertion companies. However, as stated in the report, priority was given to "pre-employment initiatives, with a poor insertion ability" (E.) and only a single insertion company has been created. Parallel to this second plan, a Regional Agreement on Employment was reached, signed by trade unions and business organizations and financed by the ESF, through which occupational training, ongoing training and career guidance for the unemployed was established in order to respond to the high levels of academic failure in the region (exceeding a 30%). However, these plans have had problems to reach excluded individuals, while some of the proposed activities lack "inclusive" potential (gardening, cleaning), so the former keep dependent on assistance services (E.25)

F and P have in common a long-standing tradition as centralized countries, where the main decisions were and are taken in the centre. The whole of legislative power is concentrated in the national parliament. Nevertheless, from late 1970s in France (1982 decentralization legislation), and a few years later in Portugal, a process took place whereby the central powers tend to a deconcentration, even though the great majority of labour and social policies are still designed and planned in the centre. Employment creation and the fight against poverty are considered national imperatives (F.6; Portuguese Programme for the Fight Against Poverty [1989-199...], and, in France, the legislation on the RMI [1988] and exclusion [1998]).

In Portugal, until 1996/7, most measures consisted in the passive protection of the unemployed (monetary compensation). As a result, mainly from the influence of European guidelines, an ideological debate (P.8) and what has been labelled as the "new generation of social policies", linked to the so-called Social Labour Market were launched. The latter implies an activation of the labour force, as well as the reinforcement of labour insertion, rehabilitation, vocational training and self-employment. Similarly, insertion companies are created, inspired in the French model (intermediary companies in charge of integrating excluded individuals into the ordinary labour market), as well as the minimum guaranteed ("garantido") income (1996/97), in form of non-contributory benefit subject to means-testing and linked to an insertion contract. The localisation of employment policy is also implemented (1998), while a reform of unemployment benefits take place (1999), promoting active measures for

labour insertion. Under the aegis of the IEFP (Institute for Employment and Vocational Training), other initiatives are launched (CPE, UNIVAS, INSERJOVEM, REAGE,...) targeting diverse social groups (like young people, unemployed adults,...). These trends took root after 2000 in the different national programmes for employment (PEPS). Eventually, the revision of labour legislation from 2003 led to a reform of the Labour Laws, and became a subject to a broad debate, as it was criticized by trade unions for increasing flexibility and insecurity implying the weakening of unions and collective bargaining (P.10).

In France, in 1970s, high unemployment, especially among young people (National pact for juvenile employment, 1977), raised the political relevance of employment. However, the debate on labour insertion began with the Schwartz Report in 1983. Some years ago, the first social enterprises had been created as a result of the failure of traditional training, social assistance and labour mechanisms, but the first legal frameworks on the subject were not enacted until the late eighties. The notion of social exclusion continued to dominate, so that in 1988 a new law was passed which established the minimum insertion income (RMI) linked to a decentralizing mechanism, as the State funded the corresponding provisions while the departments were in charge of insertion, leading to the creation of local Insertion Commissions involving various actors. The reform of RMI in 2003, with the Minimum Activity Income (RMA) confirmed the aforementioned decentralization, which does not imply a shared responsibility but the transfer of sets of competences (F.6). The pillar constituted by proximity, provided by the department and the municipal groupings, was joined by the pillar of regional programming. In addition, from 2001 the National Plan for Employment is implemented through local action plans for employment.

It is not possible to summarize the huge arsenal of measures to increase employment supply and demand in France. By itself what is labelled Insertion through Insertion Economic Activity (IEA) includes: school-workshops, insertion workshops, insertion associations and companies, intermediary associations, district "régies", ETTI, business groupings (GE), "couveuses", activity and employment cooperatives and collective interest cooperatives. Many of these initiatives have in turn, their own mechanisms of regional and national representation intermingled in multiple nets. The last invention is named "le Grenelle de l'insertion". At the same time, public sector intervention is fundamental. Its services have presence in every corner of the Hexagon, as it finances, promotes, hinders and controls the vast majority of these activities. It is no surprise that partnership has become an underlying principle in this country.

It is interesting that in spite of the top down approach followed in both countries, partly shared with BU and R, local development strategies start to be more bottom-up and, often, inspired by supranational guidelines (OECD, EU). Organizations belonging to the social economy, associations, organized local groups, small entrepreneurs are supported more often by public powers in France than in Portugal, where "autarquias" (city councils) enjoy broad competences but lack the habit and means to intervene in the economic and social arena (P.15.16). In the latter country, the 1997 social networks programme inaugurated a new style, as it gave prominence to local authorities and to partnership with local actors (CLAS), forced the elaboration of a global diagnosis of socio-economic reality and the formulation of a comprehensive plan of social and economic intervention. In France, since 1982, when the neighbourhood social development policies started, several plans have taken place: social urban development in 1988, urban policies in 1992, local plans for insertion and employment in 1998, social territorial projects in 2002. So there is no scarcity of measures giving primacy to the territorial level and to partnership dynamics. Finally, the City Contracts constitute an opportunity for most urban actors to express their point of views on the city and elaborate strategic plans for its development. Cities saw their prominence increased in both countries, along with Belgium and Spain, although in Portugal and, to a limited extent, in Spain, a certain number of local development experiences are held in interior regions of the country and in its most rural areas.

For a long time, Bu and R had a central planning model from which every decision affecting the economic and social life of citizens was taken, which sometimes involved the forced movement of workers. Despite homogenising intentions, the differences between regions, ethnic minorities and towns persisted. With their respective political ruptures with the past and the transition to capitalism, these differences tend to broaden. The main laws regulation local government grant broad competences on social issues to city councils, but the latter lack the means to develop them. Accession to the EU adds pressure in favour of the creation of intermediate levels (counties, regions). But these have a poor intervention capacity and sometimes are little more than a mechanism to distribute European structural funds. It is not apparent that national plans for employment and inclusion are endowed with specific territorialized measures and policies.

In these conditions, in R and Bu, where the main labour and social policies are elaborated and approved in capital cities and local resources are scarce, it is difficult to carry out comprehensive plans for local development. Generally, city councils try to resolve the most emergent problems and are still unaware of their potential economic and social role. Local actors (public agencies, business organizations and trade unions) are heavily dependent from their directors from the capital city and the associative movement weak and poorly coordinated. Forms of concertation and partnership between the public sector and associations are scarce. Conversely, the implementation of projects, sometimes initiated by international funds, working at the local level and with specific groups (young or disabled people, women,...), reaches a remarkable level.

As shown by the experiences captured in the national reports of this two countries and the other four, it is precisely in this local projects and local development, where positive bridges between sustainable job creation and the fight against poverty are created.

4. State externalisation and social economy. Links.

Every country contains a secular tradition whereby society organises itself and tries to resolve its own needs. From 1970s, the two features common to the four western European countries are the externalisation of many services from the State to social economy and the growth of the latter, as highlighted by the four reports. This trend was reinforced by the collapse of dictatorships in S and P and the transitions to democracy in R and Bu. Nevertheless, in the two latter, where cooperatives had almost been state agencies, their numbers decreased to the extent that they had been used by the old regime, while they keep stigmatised and, often, have been unable to face the challenges of the market. Also in France and Portugal, the most traditional production and consumption cooperativism has lost importance in spite of the birth of new cooperative formulas (Fenacerci in P., SCIC in F.). However, such a reduction has not affected the world of associations and social enterprises, which have increased their prominence, strength and functions in every all countries.

Public administration has progressively delegated a great number of the services and functions it used to perform to the private social sector, either by virtue, as it believes in the higher efficacy and efficiency of the private social sector, or by need (limits to public expenditure, expulsion/derivation of the consequences of the crisis). In other cases, the initiative came from people themselves, like disabled individuals or their relatives, professionals, citizens, actors (industrial chambers, trade associations, trade unions, neighbour associations, youth groups,...) who, as their demands and needs were not satisfied by the State or the market, decided to create an association, a cooperative, a foundation, a mutual association or a social enterprise. In most cases, this implied job creation and, as a by-product, social inclusion (Bu).

In Bulgaria, the relationship between State and society has gone through several stages. The first, during the first decade of transition, when the State, dominated by neoliberalism, limited its intervention and treated cooperativism negatively and NGOs neutrally. The latter were granted resources from foreign and international donors, on whom they strongly depended. However, they penetrated the territory of social service provision. After 2000, with the emergence of new social inclusion mechanisms, the growing prominence of social economy and of funds targeted at European actors, the State changed its position, often performed the role of mediator between NGOs and donors and showed a more favourable attitude. Public-private partnerships and social capital were promoted, more prominence was granted to the local level, and to the community approach and mutual support. While problems still exist (financing, taxes,...), the different legal frameworks (1996, 2001-2003, 2003) implied a recognition of non-profit organisations, although the dividing line between profit and non-profit organisation is still fuzzy.

Spain has also experienced a change, although opposite to that of Bulgaria. In fact, after the political transition, and well after the socialists took office, the will to build a welfare state trying to mirror the Scandinavian model implied a determined defence of the role of the public sector, which was attributed every democratic virtue, in social welfare. Almost all social services legislations assigned a subordinate role to organised social initiatives. Even though, during 1980s the third sector expanded, especially in the case of associations and cooperatives, which constituted a collective way to create jobs and to attain personal and professional independence. However, the limits sets on budgets and public intervention (bureaucracy, slowness, political mediation, isolation, estrangement...), along with the pressure and dynamics of the associative and cooperative world have isolated old positions, so social economy as a whole has become an actor indispensable in labour and social policy. Nowadays, big organizations are attaining a growing power, platforms and federations enjoy an increasing importance and there is a certain trend towards developing a more market and business orientated approach in the sector with private sector management formulas. At the same time, a progressive dependence by public administration is developing, while the ability to

diversify, experiment and innovate is growing among the smallest and most local social organisations. Territorial diversity constitutes the dominant feature of social enterprises. Those are regulated by national and some regional laws but, in this case, as in Portugal, public aid is scarce, limited and lacks flexibility.

The Belgium report confirms the gravitation of social enterprises towards market criteria while, at the same time, profit-oriented companies grow increasingly interested in the notion of corporate social responsibility, even though this could be considered a fashionable trend or a way to improve their social image (B. 25).

The Portuguese constitution established the subsidiary character of the State vis-à-vis society. The insufficiency of its welfare state has forced the formulation of the so-called providence society. The traditional *Misericordias* were joined by mutual associations, cooperatives, foundations, volunteering associations, local development associations, parish-based social action and, especially, the many IPSS (Social Solidarity Private Institutions), legally recognised in 1979, when the State distributed its regulatory functions. The new statute, enacted through a decree-law in 1983, broadened their functions in the sociomedical, vocational training and housing fields. At the present time, IPSS are granted a remarkably high percentage of their funds through cooperation protocols established with Social Security public centres and targeting the elderly, children and young people. Their degree of autonomy from the public sector is very relative (P.6).

The Romanian report points out that the transition towards the end of dependence on foreign donors, as well as the ability to count on European funds and financing from the national and local administrations, can be the best way for local development and the sustainability of NGOs (R.13). Although some problems persist, as in the case of the National Health Service contracts for home care for patients discharged from hospitals. Other sources of difficulty are found in the financing of projects according to selection criteria driven by political objectives. These problem forces social organisations to adapt to such objectives or to “sell their products”: often they have to modify their initial purpose, to sacrifice quality in exchange for quantity, to expand the number of beneficiaries and to give up their general approaches. An example of this fact can be found in the agreements between local employment offices, where an incompatibility exists between job demand and the needs of an intervention for “social inclusion”. These problems arise from the fact that the transition from foreign donors to partnerships with local administration has not yet taken place.

The French report states that the social question has been historically dominated by public management. This document explains how political evolution has influenced and conditioned the various implemented social policies. Often, the different social and labour policies propose responses through information circulars with subsidies and conventions for insertion initiatives, making the latter very vulnerable to changes in political priorities (F. 16.18). On the other hand, the remarkable French social economy has created representation mechanisms (CNLAMCA), has issued defining declarations (1980) and has entered into public policies (Interministerial Delegation for Social Economy, State Secretariat 2000,...). From 1980s, a new generation of actors, devoted to the creation of socially useful activities and jobs, has risen in the world of social economy and have endowed the latter with a political dimension (F.7). However, the 1998 Local Pacts Manifesto highlights many dysfunctions: problems for grassroots initiatives to find support from institutions, multiplication of administrative coordination where each one is confined to its role, lack of links between services, intermediary structures unable to resolve fragmented administrative procedures,...(F.8). Ten years later (2008), these problems persist. However, social clauses, one of the formulas regarding social cooperatives initiated in Italy in 1991, whereby public administrations introduce social criteria in their tenders and grant purchases or activities to social enterprises, remain, in spite of the limits set by European rules, an open door for collaboration (F.22).

Regarding this chapter, it is worth emphasizing that there would be three potential kinds of bridges. First, the coordination of public policies for employment and inclusion from the central to the local level. Second, the articulation between public strategies and the social economy. Third, social economy as a receptacle for public policies and as a promoter of inclusion and job creation. The first bridge is heavily conditioned by political will and the need to overcome the obstacles generated by the institutional and administrative fragmentation. The second depends on the relationships (based in parity, subordination, complementarities,...) between State and society. The third is based on the capacity of social economy to build a space where economic sustainability, social and labour insertion and political perspective are combined.

5. Legal framework, political orientations and their distance from reality

In the Iberian Peninsula, a broad consensus exists when it comes the time to declare that the laws, as well as many plans and programmes are well formulated and packed with good intentions. Nevertheless, there is a huge gap between those intentions, the implemented measures and practices and reality. As the saying goes, “the road to hell is paved with good intentions”. Another really significant popular saying goes: “every law has a loophole”. That is, a remarkable portion of the population tries to find a way to evade the law. A legal framework, or a social guideline, may establish that it is necessary to implement certain measures (for instance, to coordinate certain ministries or to promote the local articulation of territorial State services hand in hand with local actors). However, in this context these norms could be either left unimplemented, applied as a mere legal requirement, without subsequent implications, or used for purposes unrelated to the original objectives of the law. To what extent is this true for the national plans for employment and inclusion?

Both Iberian reports highlight the fact that policies and plans are far from being completely implemented (P.25) and that, often, the results are distant from the initial objectives. The gap between what is established by political, labour or social guidelines and reality become obvious in the Bulgarian report (Bu.9.12). This document states: “‘bureaucratic’ reports and, among them, National Plans for the Fight Against Poverty, show a clear preference for giving good news and there exists a growing discrepancy between the way citizens describe their problems and official interpretations on the subject”. In a subtler way, the Romanian report also highlights the gaps between objectives and measures (R. 9). In France, where the weight of legislation is huge, the report underlines the fact that law blocks some innovative processes (F.16) and describes the deepening of the separation between norms and realities and procedures (F. 13), between facts and values (F.28), between rights and the means to enforce them. Finally, the only exception to this general picture is found in Belgium, even though sometimes it is mentioned that results are not as expected (B. 9.24).

The lesson to derive from this chapter is that building artificial bridges can be a danger. That is, believing that law, policies and plans suffice to make it possible to build sustainable bridges, as well as durable bases contributing to articulate employment and inclusion strategies, can lead to errors. Consequently, it is necessary to analyse which are the necessary precise conditions that make these developments possible and feasible to implement.

6. Close realities: the degradation of the labour market and the deepening of poverty

An attentive reading of the six reports shows a remarkable resemblance between the state of the labour market and poverty. Figures and approached may vary, but processes are very similar.

All of them ascertain a dualization and segmentation of the labour market whereby a category of salaried workers, covered by social protection and enjoying a relatively stable job, coexists side by side with another category of workers characterized by precarious or seasonal employment, poor protection or not protection at all and poorly paid. The latter has a higher incidence among young people, the least skilled, women and older unemployed workers. Poor workers, that is, those with a wage inferior to poverty thresholds, are present, to a smaller or greater extent, in every country. Unemployment increases in all countries, even in those where traditionally it has been lower, like P and B. A third category is formed by the informal economy, which, as highlighted in the Bulgarian report, grows and is nourished by those expelled from other labour markets or those which cannot enter into it, becoming a true inclusion mechanism (Bu.15). A fourth category is formed by those who find difficulty in accessing work or for whom work (particularly full-time work) is not a realistic possibility: retired, people with disabilities, sick or those excluded from employment and inclusion policies that tighten accessibility criteria. The Belgian report refers to undocumented immigrants, homeless people, lone mothers, single parent families and inhabitants of rural areas. The Spanish report mentions early school leavers. The Romanian report mentions the Roma community.

Beyond these specific groups, what is ascertained is a deepening of poverty. This process stems not only from the degradation of the labour market, found in the three latter employment categories, but also from the worsening of all living standards (housing, health, services) and the growing limits set on the access to and the use of social protection services and benefits. It is worth mentioning, as done by the reports on the two last countries entering the EU, that official statistics and indicators (relative poverty, absolute poverty,...) do not capture these processes (migration, informal sector, self-production for consumption, means testing, ...) properly and can offer a picture too far removed from reality.

The causes of the degradation of the labour market and the deepening of poverty are not to be found exclusively in the lack of employment, but also the type of employment on offer as well as the failure of redistribute mechanisms, as they are two structural, accumulative and simultaneous processes requiring an improvement and integration of the strategies intended to face them. Hence the need and advantage of building bridges between them. Such a strategy should enhance their effectiveness and achieve better results.

7. The predominance of economic and labour considerations. The increasing invisibility of poverty

The European overview already pointed out that economic growth and the integration of markets constitute the fundamental objectives pursued with the creation of the EU. The remaining objectives are sacrificed for them, a policy unchanged over time. However, arguments in favour of social policies offsetting economic decisions have been present to a certain degree in the different stages of the evolution of the EU. Indeed, one could formulate the hypothesis that these arguments have been taken into account to a greater extent in times of economic expansion. The motto, non-explicit although predominant during the last fifty years, could go “growth is first, distribution is second”, as seldom has been considered that growth could go hand-in-hand with redistribution and economic growth could be a necessary though not sufficient condition.

From this perspective, labour policies and the state of the labour market have been the source of concern to the extent that they could represent an obstacle for economic growth. These considerations make the former dependent on economic policy. The revision of the Lisbon Strategy in 2005, aimed to make employment policies deliver to macro and micro economic goals. The current National Reform Programmes reflect these trends But what about social policies and the fight against poverty?

If economic policy is the locomotive, while labour policy is placed in the third carriage and social policy fills the tail-end wagon. It is often neglected, so it is only taken into account when the train is about to derail. But failure to tackle social inclusion, as seen in the current economic crisis, is likely itself to derail the train, through increased social unrest undermining vital social cohesion.

In fact, regarding the six analysed countries, every report shows, more or less explicitly, this kind of hierarchy. It is very significant that, even though they do not know each other, the authors of the S and F reports use the same terms to describe social policies and the world of associations, respectively: “coche escoba” and “voiture balai” (in English, “chase car”). That is, the car at the end of the race, collecting the wrecks produced by others. With such a design, it is not possible that this “policy car” reaches the same speed of the rest of the others in order to attain an equal status. A good example of its subordination can be found in the Portuguese report, when it states that the PNEmprego (Employment National Plan) enjoys a higher importance than the el PNAInclusao (National Plan for Inclusion) (P.14). Similarly, the Spanish report explains that economic development would have had place while social development was suffering a setback (E.18). Also the mercantilization of the social economy would also be significant, as it is the myth of the connection between economic growth and employment creation, denounced by the Bulgarian report (BU. 11). According to this document, there is a growing inconsistency between demands for an increased efficiency and economic competitiveness and the maintenance of a certain level of employment (BU.16). Moreover, the reduction of employment and labour costs (lower salaries, lower social expenditure) would contribute to restrict the role of the labour market as a crucial social inclusion mechanism.

As stated in the French report, if the construction of Europe is exclusively conceived as a space for competition, it would move away from citizens, or even show hostility towards them. An economic development exclusively exogenous makes them even more vulnerable (F.29). These trends become more apparent now, in a period of rapidly advancing economic recession and financial crisis. The integration of labour policies, as well as the scarce or inexistent references to inclusion in the National Reform Programmes suggest that poverty is increasingly invisible, although its presence may actually have expanded.

In the context of this predominance of economic policy and its criteria (competitiveness, productivity,...), the increased functions and importance granted

to labour policy and the subordination of social policy generate objective obstacles for the building of bridges between them. The existence of such bridges is endangered when it is stated that the best social policy is employment.

8. The role of social economy and social enterprises

This section is not intended to reproduce the quantitative evidence presented in national reports, but to highlight common and divergent characteristics about the role played by social economy and social enterprises.

Thus, it must be noted that there is no general agreement on the concept of “social economy” or the initiatives comprised in this concept, even though definitions have improved significantly at the European (CEP-CMAF) as well as at the national level. In Southern Europe, the concept of “social economy” is widely used and recognised, differentiating itself from the Anglo-Saxon term “non-profit economy”. In fact, in B, S and F, the meaning of “social economy” has been delimited by laws, bills, requests of Public administrations and programmatic declarations. In Portugal (P.18), many legal formats have consolidated the initiatives that can be designated as social economy. In general, the notion of a third sector is more often attributed to the associative sphere. Reports from Portugal, Bulgaria and Spain describe the historical burden of their respective dictatorships, which tried to hold control of it through the administration (“quasi-state agencies”), and to provide a paternalistic and welfare character. The Rumanian report (R.19), following European distinctions, differentiates between a market oriented sector - which includes cooperatives, friendly societies, entrepreneurial groups controlled by the later and public limited companies- and a less entrepreneurial sector, which would include associations and foundations.

The French report (F.14) mentions that, besides a historical and more institutionalised social economy (big friendly societies, foundations and associations), in 1980s a new generation emerged whose impulse was to fight exclusion and that gradually describes itself as solidarity economy. It is defined by the willingness to bring democracy into economy, using all the available resources in a plural economy (domestic, public, commercial) and with a project of political transformation, given that it intends to modify regulation modes between the state and the market (F.15). In the wide Flemish definition (VOSEC) of social economy it could also include entrepreneurial organizations or entities (Savings banks) that do not reward capital or reinvest profit (B.20), which renders it necessary to distinguish this typology from the social responsibility practices of ordinary private companies. The Bulgarian report (Bu.29) also invites us not to mistake social economy for informal economy.

That decade, 1980s, also witnessed the emergence of social enterprises. These enterprises produce goods and services to be sold in the public or private markets; they incorporate previously unemployed or excluded workers; there is no remuneration to capital and they articulate economic sustainability with a social and labour inclusion function. Although their spatial distribution is heterogeneous, their importance and number is growing in all countries, primarily through labour insertion of disabled people (B. S. Bu. R. P.). Such growth is mostly due to their functionality in social and labour insertion; to their articulation with local development and to their full adherence to active labour market policies (they cut expenses in social security, lower the number of dependents and increase the number of contributors). In addition to this features, they may increase social capital and social participation, become active tools for solidarity, deepen economic democracy, improve life and job standards at a territorial scale, generate jobs and social insertion and, thus, build bridges between employment and inclusion strategies.

All reports agree in pointing out positive aspects of social enterprises, but it is also useful to gather the criticism drawn by them. There are external critics; entrepreneurial organisations argue that social enterprises falsify competition since they receive public subsidies, and trade unions, although more favourable (F.23, B.25), point to the dangers of a dual labour market, and the potential for worse working conditions and lower salaries in social enterprises. Other criticisms made are: 1) the “écreimage” (creaming effect (F.22, B.24), according to which only those who are closer to the labour market

would be incorporated, leaving aside those excluded or residents in rural areas (E. ,B.24), 2) permanence in the insertion process and failing to make the transition to the “normal” labour market., 3) difficulties in finding initial and stable financial sources, which would lead to the emergence of initiatives aimed to take advantage of European Structural Funds (R.22, Bu.), 4) the need to combine entrepreneurial efficiency and flexibility with social functions and internal democracy, 5) the lack of coincidence between the growing demand for quantitative results and the need for an individualised and quality insertion process(B.24), 6) the limited results of insertion in regular labour markets (B.24,P.21), 7) the lack of correspondence between exclusion itineraries and time devoted to insertion, 8) institutions that are interested only in satisfying internal demands(P.21), 9) excessive dependence on the political context, which would leave social enterprises to the role of making up for malfunctions (Bu.29).

The social economy, and more specifically Work Integration social enterprises (WISE), in the attempt –often not free of contradictions- to find a spot between public and market economies, have become a tool for the fight against poverty and unemployment, and could provides an added-value to the bridges built between both if certain conditions are fulfilled to ensure their function as a valid pathway to sustainable quality work.

9. Positive experiences

The above mentioned added-value must be confirmed. That is the aim of this brief presentation of positive experiences in the six countries. All reports specifically show that it is possible to build bridges even if all of them point out the multiple difficulties and obstacles to be surmounted.

For the time being, there does not seem to be an intense coordination between the political bodies in charge of social and employment national policies. In some cases, the existence of inter-ministerial commissions is mentioned, and this would be a first step, but according to the reports, results are not straightforward, a fact that is also shown by the parallelism and compartmentalisation of national employment and inclusion plans. The regional level arouses higher hopes, as recalled in the Belgian and Spanish reports. The Flemish decree on the fight against poverty (March 2003) and the recent program "CoWeZo" (B.16), whose function is to harmonise both policies, and the existence of the First and Second social Integration Plans in Castilla la Mancha –comprising a comprehensive perspective (E.24) and the articulation of several policies: employment, housing, education and health) - are positive signs of that point at the building of bridges. French decentralization laws have granted competences (urban and rural planning, economic development and vocational training) to regional General Councils, which may have an impact (F.24) on labour markets and social inclusion. The IRIS initiative (Regional Initiative for Insertion and Solidarity) in the Poitou-Charentes region is organised along a horizontal partnership in order to diagnose the set of needs and to provide answers. In the same region, the CISTE, a meeting point for entrepreneurial organisations, trade unions and other actors, helps to draw projects about transportation, housing and living conditions. Also, the Departmental Councils of Insertion in Economic Activities (CDIAE) provide possibilities in this sense. However, according to the national report, it seems that other stimulating experiences are to be found at the local and metropolitan level. In Mulhouse (F.30), participation by different citizenship categories and by groups has allowed the formulation of integral indicators of welfare, as well as the introduction of improvements for the observed needs.

The location of answers and its advantages is mentioned also in other reports. In Belgium, the program for the development of services for districts has enabled the emergence of networks among those in poverty, provided that they create and provide the services themselves. The Leren Ondernemen association has created 20 jobs by offering childcare, culture and education and energy saving services. The Romanian report contributes with three experiences from the local social economy (Bacova, Blaj, Dej), combining social inclusion and job creation for people in difficulties. The Bulgarian report also (Bu. 34) pleads for a better use of the local economic activities and their potential, giving the example of apiculture. The Portuguese report, conscious of their limitations, acknowledges the ability to build bridges between employment and inclusion that insertion enterprises have. At the same time, the implementation of the minimum guaranteed income (*rendimento minimo garantido*) through the creation of Local Commissions has brought about an increased territorial and partnership intervention (P.22). Anyway, the Redes Sociales program, created in 1997, may constitute the most important impulse in this sense, since it implies the establishment of Local Social Action Commissions (CLAS), with the participation of public and private actors, and whose function is to formulate a socio-economic diagnosis of the territory and to design –and later put in practice- a plan for local development.

It does not seem that the national coordination have made an important progress. Some regional initiatives arouse higher hopes. But the common trait is that less bigger is the size of the territory more is possible to found positive experiences. Many of them at local level show that it is feasible and profitable to build bridges between social and labour dimensions.

10. The most important debates

This section will review the main debates that have emerged in the Bridges meeting or that have been mentioned in country reports.

10.1 Social inclusion/labour insertion. Employment is not the only path to inclusion.

An important discussion that has taken place in the Bridges meetings and that has been reflected in the reports concerns the relationship between social inclusion and labour insertion. It has been acknowledged that at the European as well as the national level, there is a growing pressure to consider that social inclusion means getting a job – any job, taking for granted that everybody can find a job; that low paid, precarious, isolating, “indecent” jobs do not exist, and that well paid and stable jobs are not becoming scarcer and harder to find. This before the current economic meltdown with threatened mass unemployment. It is assumed that the decision to work is taken individually and does not depend on collective factors (labour market supply and demand imbalances, vocational training, spatial location, family structure and caring needs, alternative benefits as well as capacities, individual situations...), assuming also that active policies may influence that decision rendering work attractive or by penalising those who do not work.

Even though labour continues to be an important socialization agent, studies show that it is gradually acquiring an instrumental character in the process of social inclusion, when considered together with other factors. The educational and health systems, housing patterns and family or friend networks or supportive social participation strategies can be other paths leading to social integration. Therefore, some jobless people may be perfectly well socially included whereas other working individuals may be excluded from their environment. Thus, social and labour exclusion processes, as social and labour integration itineraries, are not identical, nor should they be merged unconditionally, although they can often be complementary.

For the poor and jobless, professional insertion which might lead to social inclusion are goals to be achieved, for which they fight day by day in a struggle for survival. In order to reach these objectives, work integration social enterprises (WISE) play a very important role, which is reinforced if they couple social and labour insertion. The Bridges project has a stimulating task to undertake: finding out which criteria have to be met, and how, for the unemployed and poor to find a decent job and a place in society through the social economy.

10.2 A real dynamic of participation and partnership

For bridges not to be artificially or weakly built, they must be wide, they need to have solid bases, and people who cross them must be interested on going to the other side; that is, there must be a willingness to walk through employment and inclusion strategies, and to become an active part of them.

Several country reports insist on the effective active participation of the poor and unemployed in an “Empowerment” perspective; this is so especially in the Belgian case. In this country, the 1994 General Report on Poverty was a milestone, not only because it showed that many people lived in the margins of society, despite a generous social protection, but also because it meant the beginning of a dialogue with them and their representative associations. Since then, in this country, the main social dialogue and consultation processes following this path, although at times it is hardened by bureaucratic traditional planning procedures (B.11). It is thus no coincidence that the conclusions of the country report insist on the courage and the conditions of participation of those who live in poverty (B.29).

The French report states that, when trying to solve the problems, the voices of those who suffer the consequences are not taken into account; and that associations would be suffocated by financial difficulties, accused of inefficiency, a restrictive acknowledgment and ignorance of their role (F.13). But at the same time, an enormous number of partnerships is reported (F.13.26).

In Portugal and Spain, participation dynamics of society as a whole were closely related to democratic political transitions. Those years witnessed the emergence of many neighbour's associations, cooperatives, and self-management experiences in private companies and rural areas. Nevertheless, democratic normalization channelled this participative wave into the mechanisms of political representation. Somehow, the hope for participation was gradually confined to the social sphere. In that field, participation of people in poverty is often discussed, but real experiences are partial and reduced, although a certain increase has been acknowledged in the last years (actions at the district level, local and community development, youth groups, users' associations, networking...). In both countries, National Inclusion Plans have established formal mechanisms of consultation with the main associations and federations.

According to the Bulgarian report (Bu.17), the most remarkable void is found in the lack of civil participation in the economic structure and its dynamics, provided that the basis for inclusion is participation. The latter would not have developed enough its economic dimensions, and neither would the economy implement participative dimensions. However, there are three levels where it would be possible to undertake participation dynamics: design and diagnosis, political decisions and specific implementation (Bu.32).

10.3 The main problems across national reports. The path to exclusion.

The Romanian report highlights the contradiction that emerges between a state that establishes passive measures through subsidies and benefits but that, conversely, does not promote the experiences of the associations or their sustainability in active inclusion. (R.14.15). In the Belgian case, the strict interpretation of activation (Bill on the Right to Social Integration 2002) leads to the requirement and obligation to find a job, without taking into account job quality, the necessary steps to obtain it, or the vulnerability of those who live with the fear of having to take up any job, not being able to do it right and losing their benefits (B.16.17). The Portuguese report also refers to those who lose their job, "ashamed poverty", and their entitlement to certain benefits (P.14). The Bulgarian report remarks that economic growth is the only instrument taken in consideration in order to fight poverty and exclusion, and that low labour costs attract national and foreign investors. At the same time, "spontaneous" survival strategies, such as self-employment, farming cooperatives, small and medium enterprises and production for self-consumption (as well as undeclared work or grey economy) do not get any support from the State and may be penalised. (Bu.12). In this sense, the French report shows the increasing number of people and groups living in precarious conditions, as well as the aggravation of social exclusion due to the absence of social mediation and the inadequacy of formative mechanisms (F.13). Additionally the Spanish report informs on early school leaving and vocational training, as well as on the difficulties encountered when bringing the generous resources of the ESF to excluded people. Such resources provide monetary payments for attending courses, but instead of increasing the chances of integration, attendance on such courses stigmatises the person and makes it harder to break dependency from social services (E.25).

In order to prevent the growing number of people who are left on the margin of employment and social inclusion policies, it is fundamental that they are given the chance to participate, to have their voices heard and to take part in decision making. It is also a fundamental right. Both policies must be integrated and coordinated. Finding a job and being an active member of society are two complementary processes but one must not be mistaken for the other.

11. Conclusions and recommendations

The purpose of this section is not to conclude the document, but to present the conclusions and recommendation of the country reports in a comparative manner. Some synthetic conclusions have been highlighted in bold along this document.

These conclusions and recommendations are derived from the reports and can be grouped by levels and topics.

11.1. European level.

Most reports show the increasing importance that European level decisions have on everyday life (B.27), and how national, regional and local policies are becoming more dependent on that level. Therefore, the reinforcement of the European social model: the advancement of social rights (F.), the positive coordination of labour and inclusion policies, the enlargement of social and civil dialogue, the application of effective subsidiarity whilst reinforcing social standards from an EU framework and a strong impulse -through precise recommendations- to coordinate labour and inclusion strategies would have positive effects on the other levels.

This entails the need to strengthen the networks, platforms and federations that express civil society, social economy and social enterprises, so that they can become more active interlocutors at this level. Additionally, channels and mechanisms should be established, so that positive experiences under development at the local or regional scale can be formally recognised and, most important, incorporated to European social and labour policies.

With the increasing subordination of employment policies to the macro and micro economic framework as illustrated by the revised Lisbon Strategy and the National Reform Programmes, this makes the task of positive connection between employment and social inclusion policies all the more complex.

11.2 National level

Reports show a clear mistrust towards national policies, most visible in the Bulgarian report, which argues that the State can not create inclusion (Bu.36) and that when it is more active it creates exclusion. Other perspectives propose significant modifications of state interventions. The common feature is that, in any case, the state can create conditions that foster social and labour inclusion and the bridges between them. These conditions are: rationalising and concentrating measures (F.P.); fostering anti-poverty strategies; enlarging dialogue (R.) with civil society and the social economy; making requirements for non contributory benefits (minimal rents) more flexible (P.); defining and increasing social standards (R.,B.); abandoning vertical models and moving towards shared responsibilities (F.); integrating contents, budgets and measures and building positive but not unconditional bridges between national employment and inclusion plans. The Belgian report stresses implication and political willingness in fostering the non symbolic participation of those affected (B.29) and in the promotion of quality, sustainable employment.

11.3. Regional and local level

All of the reports state that by now, bridges are being built at this level. Finding new unsatisfied needs and new employment sources; implicating local authorities to a higher extent; achieving more realistic partnerships; building social capital and networks; promoting a wider and more effective participation; opening spaces and economic activities that create employment and inclusion is possible and feasible at this level. This is what happens with certain plans and regional programs, with the new integral strategies of urban growth, social economy projects and socioeconomic local development.

Although it must be noted that, if these initiatives are to be sustainable in the long run, there must be a correspondence between these and those undertaken at other levels of decision making and planning.

From a conceptual and thematic point of view, we may start by suggesting the need to continue the debate on terms and concepts. Finding the accurate translation is a complex task, and additionally, many of the words of common use in this field have a versatile meaning. Some of the terms that need more precision are: insertion, incorporation, integration, inclusion, social economy, social enterprise, civil society, social private... Furthermore, the need emerges to make more accurate diagnoses and more coherent planning, and to develop more rigorous tools to verify and evaluate policies, measures and experiences. Local observatories may be of great help.

One of the most recent words to have entered the European Lexicon is active inclusion. The interpretation of this concept is twofold. In one more personal sense, it insists on the effort that each individual must make in order to be part of the social environment. In a second sense, it can be considered that society must set the basis for that participation. This is the sense that has been developed at EU level by the Commission in the Active Inclusion Recommendation, which is now endorsed by the Council - integrated approaches to ensuring adequate income, access to services and to decent work. However, at a national level, active inclusion is more often translated as mere activation: the single meaning of individual job search, often combined with "incentives" to work based on conditionality and fear of losing benefits, this ignores the other social dimensions that complement the world of labour, and also that finding a precarious and low quality job does not mean social integration.

Another word that comprises divergent meanings is **participation**. Its content can be political, institutional, social, economic and even pragmatic, when it is considered a requirement for policy effectiveness. Thus, it is argued that participation of those who get the consequences increases results. However, it seems that the reports do not share that vision. In fact, they link participation to the realisation of rights (F.); to the expression of needs: to qualification, organization and empowerment of those who live in poverty (B) and to self inclusion as a result of the economic activity of the excluded, as highlighted by the Bulgarian report (B.36).

Finally, it is worth noting that, despite debates about the definition of social and solidarity economies and social enterprises, there is a unanimous acknowledgement of their positive role and their added value in the building of bridges between employment and inclusion strategies.