

WORKSHOP REPORTS

SOCIAL INCLUSION WORKSHOPS

CHAIRPERSON

Ms Roisin McDonough, Chairperson, NICVA
(Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action)

(WORKSHOP 1)

Ms Avila Kilmurray, Director, NIVT
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(WORKSHOP 2)

BACKGROUND

In the draft Guidelines Social Inclusion features prominently as a pathway to reconciliation by encouraging grass-roots, cross community and, where appropriate, cross border cooperation. Suggested target groups for possible funding were vulnerable and disadvantaged groups: children, young people and those caught up with violence, including prisoners and ex-prisoners.

It was suggested that models of action should be flexible and responsive to change and constitute a framework of support for relevant actors (neighbourhoods, communities, youth service, NAVs, grass-roots organisations, women's groups, local authorities etc.), to build their reconciliation package. An emphasis was put on a local and cross-community dimension.

ISSUES RAISED IN DISCUSSION

WORKSHOP 1

RECONCILIATION: THE ULTIMATE TARGET

Social Inclusion, participants suggested should be linked to reconciliation. Sufficient capacity among groups to work effectively and feel confident in their own communities is a prerequisite for effective action and it was felt that adequate technical assistance should be provided in this regard, not least because not all groups would be starting from the same position.

EXCLUSION: A BARRIER TO INCLUSION

It was agreed that a mechanism to secure an equitable distribution of resources was required, thus ensuring that areas not directly associated with the Troubles are not excluded from the Package. Social Inclusion should address those excluded from their own communities, eg. joy-riders and drug-addicts. Criticism was voiced with regard to the retention of the Hurd principles which were considered to be contrary to the spirit of Social Inclusion. It was felt that there was a need to target factors such as trauma and pain so as to ensure that victims living outside areas of serious disadvantage were not themselves excluded from the programme.

It was suggested that the 25% matching fund would discourage many groups from applying for support and that matching funding should be provided by central Government.

WORKSHOP 2

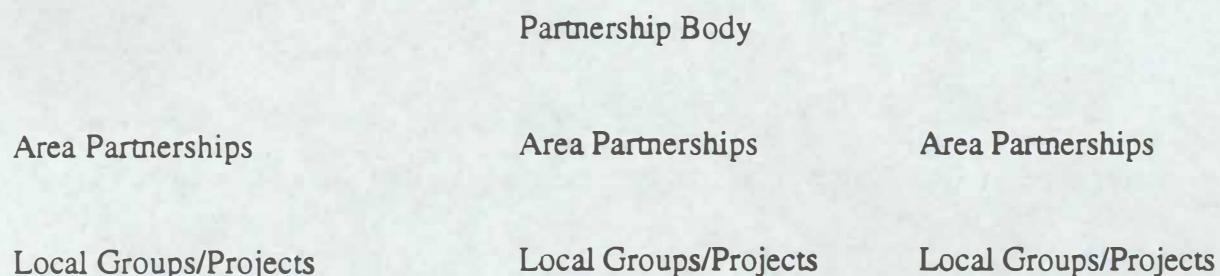
It was argued that a gender balance should be maintained throughout the programme. A Social Inclusion sub-programme should be open to specific expertise to offer opportunities for a cooperative approach between statutory and other sectors to develop innovative strategies with the socially excluded.

VIEWS ON DELIVERY MECHANISMS

WORKSHOP 1

It was considered that Social Inclusion priorities should be articulated through a broad strategic framework and that a comprehensive regional network of support services engaging those bodies and agencies already working with community groups, should be established. Immediate and tangible evidence of impact on the ground was required, but speed of action had to be balanced with the need to allow groups to continue to articulate their needs and develop a sense of ownership.

With regard to the structure of the entire programme, a fusion was suggested between the proposed monitoring committee and consultative forum, thus creating an independent overarching strategic partnership body empowered to allocate, oversee and monitor the entire programme. This body should comprise representation from the Irish, Northern Ireland/United Kingdom Government, MEP's and Social Partners. The process of selection/election to the body should be open to all in the spirit of Social Inclusion.



With regard to global grants, the experience of the area partnerships currently underway in the Republic under the Local Development Measure was cited but it was argued that an exit strategy needed to be built into the various stages of the programme.

It was envisaged that the partnership body receive declarations of interest from area partnerships along with local audits or area plans and that these partnerships would be required to demonstrate representativeness of the key players in areas including relevant statutory bodies.

These partnerships should be accountable to local constituencies.

It was recognised that projects proposed at regional level might need to be handled in a different way but partnerships should also be a hallmark of these. It was also noted that the Charitable Foundation emanating from the consultation exercise undertaken by the NICVA European Unit might also be considered.

WORKSHOP 2

It was suggested that any structures and mechanisms selected should seek to have a strategic, long-term relevance, rather than being short-term and rather ad-hoc in manner. They should be consistent with the need for a Social Inclusion ethos to permeate the entire programme and all elements of the delivery mechanism and structures, should be representative of socially excluded groups.

It was envisaged that structures would be required at two levels - (a) the regional Northern Ireland level, and (b) at a more local level. Where possible it was felt important to place emphasis on locally focused and driven partnerships which would be responsive to the needs of their specific geographical areas.

The point was strongly emphasised by several representatives of statutory bodies that the statutory sector had much to offer to local and regional structures and partnerships.

It was felt that a number of global grants could be made at a regional level to take account of actions in relation to a specific range of excluded groups (for example ex-prisoners, ethnic minorities etc.) It was suggested that where possible existing network and partnership arrangements (such as the Early Years Partnership and the Rural Local Action Groups) should be built on and developed.



The Workshop accepted the need for a strong regional co-ordinating body which would be responsible for both establishing the criteria for the necessary Programme Social Audit, as well as overseeing the evaluation and policy formulation required by the Programme.

PRIORITIES

WORKSHOP 1

Social Inclusion was identified as priority No 1, central to the entire programme and cutting across all other priorities. ("*....the glue that holds everything together*"). Other measures should be audited to determine the extent to which Social Inclusion is a feature.

The priority should be considered complementary to existing programmes under the Single Programming Document, other Community Initiatives and the International Fund for Ireland interventions. While clear linkages exist to the employment priority, it was noted that locally integrated social and economic development should be pursued in its own right.

WORKSHOP 2

This Workshop agreed with Workshop 1 that Social Inclusion was the ethos that should inform the entire programme in a clearly identifiable manner. While, in addition to this, a specific Social Inclusion sub-programme was also required. It was argued that a Regional Social Inclusion Committee should set the criteria for a Social Inclusion Audit, which would then be applied to all the measures and sub-programmes which make up the overall package. It was further suggested that important issues such as childcare infrastructure should be funded under Employment, Rural Development and other relevant sub-programmes.

Both Workshops emphasised the need to focus on:

- capacity building
- development of community confidence
- the active participation of socially excluded people and groups
- development of strategic models of community involvement
- pilot action programmes addressing the needs of deprived areas or socially excluded groups.

A focus on excluded young people; women; ex-prisoners; the victims of 'the Troubles'; deprived children; and ethnic minority groups was felt as being important.

OTHER

- (i) While it was accepted that reconciliation was the ultimate target of the EU Programme, it was felt that the basic developmental work with communities and excluded groups had to be undertaken if improved community relations was to become a feasible option. Thus capacity building within communities was seen to be essential if local groups were to develop the confidence to work together in the future. Adequate technical assistance should be assured in this regard, not least because not all groups would be starting from the same level of organisation.
- (ii) It was agreed that it was essential that any programme mechanisms adopted should ensure an equitable distribution of resources, so that every effort could be made to ensure that those areas directly associated with, and suffering from, the Troubles receive the full benefits of the Programme. Social Inclusion should also address those groups most excluded within their own areas, for example marginalised young people, joy riders, drug

addicts, Travellers, etc.. It was also felt that Social Inclusion funds should be targeted at factors such as trauma and pain so as to ensure that victims living outside areas of serious disadvantage were not themselves excluded from the Programme.

- (iii) Criticism was voiced in both Workshops at the retention of the Hurd Principles which were considered to be contrary to the spirit of Social Inclusion.
- (iv) The issue of the required 25% of matching money would pose difficulties for many community and voluntary groups. It was felt that this should be provided as additional money by Central Government.
- (v) It was emphasised that the focus on innovation should not preclude support for initiatives that build on good quality existing developments.
- (vi) Some concern was expressed as to the short-term nature of the proposed Programme. It was suggested that the experience and expertise gained over 25 years of the conflict in a divided society could serve as an important resource transferable on a transnational basis.
- (vii) It was emphasised that the administration and structure of the Programme should be enabling rather than hindering, and in particular the current inflexibility of the Social Fund, funding arrangements should be remedied.
- (viii) It was held to be important that the Programme should consider exit strategies, in the form of evaluation, policy lessons and transfer.

EMPLOYMENT

CHAIRPERSON

Ms Mary Lyons

Chief Executive of Springvale Training Limited

BACKGROUND

According to the draft Guidelines, it was envisaged that the Employment priority should include measures to boost economic growth and employment and enhance the expected growth in sectors such as tourism. It should address and support the redirection of redundant skills, reinforce efforts of tackling the problem of long-term and youth unemployed and provide greater participation by women in the labour force.

A wide range of possible measures was suggested with an emphasis on innovative, locally focused, community based actions designed to tackle unemployment. Specific actions to meet the needs of employed persons were also suggested as were measures to enhance collaboration in R&TD among small and medium enterprises, educational establishments and research centres.

ISSUES RAISED IN DISCUSSION

The workshop preferred a wide approach to the topic of employment and its place within the entire programme.

In addition to other points dealt with below, the workshop considered that the measures set out in the draft Guidelines under this priority involved an excessive emphasis on training. (One participant remarked that funding should not expand the training industry). It was felt that there was a need to address the Initiative to those who are least able to avail of existing Initiatives and that since social security benefits are structured in a way that may constitute a barrier to access to employment, then these perhaps needed consideration.

Given that the real target for this priority were those who did not avail of existing programmes, it was felt that the three year time frame might be inadequate to facilitate their access.

VIEWS ON DELIVERY MECHANISMS

With regard to the structure of the entire programme, a non traditional approach was preferred.

PRIORITIES

It was considered that all five priorities should be funded and that Social Inclusion should also be considered a horizontal theme.

With regard to the prioritisation within the employment priority the reduction of barriers to access was considered primordial. Training as set out in the Guidelines was considered to be unduly emphasised.

Incentives for employers to participate in schemes designed to take on quotas of marginalised target groups were favoured and it was noted that ex-offenders required specific funding to assist with self-employment.

OTHER

It was considered that trade unions and non-Governmental organisations which tended not to be involved in consultation and implementation should now be included in the overall Programme.

It was agreed that benchmarks for evaluation should be set out in advance even if essential goals such as peace and reconciliation were difficult to measure.

URBAN DEVELOPMENT

CHAIRPERSON

Mr Frank Gaffikin

Lecturer on Social and Economic Policy at the University of Ulster

BACKGROUND

It was envisaged in the draft Guidelines that this would involve the promotion of wide ranging local development, involving social and economic regeneration with particular emphasis on the social and physical environment in the worst affected urban areas and towns.

A wide number of measures were suggested relative to urban regeneration including community and local development partnerships and investment to remedy the physical problems of peace lines.

ISSUES RAISED IN DISCUSSION

The Group discussed a wide range of urban problems and considered that the Urban Regeneration Priority within the Initiative should be seen as a chance to bring forward an innovative vision for urban development in the region.

Some groups considered that 25% matching funding could be a deterrent to groups.

VIEWS ON DELIVERY MECHANISMS

The delivery mechanism should involve:

- flexibility and innovation
- a sense of local ownership of projects

No firm consensus was suggested with regard to the overall structure of the programme and suggestions ranged from a unitary body to a three tier structure involving a monitoring committee, a consultative body and local groups on the ground. A hybrid variation of these was also considered. Nevertheless, transparency was considered by many to be an essential feature, as was the need to direct funding to local people to enable them to implement their vision in their own areas.

Partnerships were seen as essential to the delivery of actions. These should be integrated, coordinated and area based in order to ensure optimum use of funding in tackling the problems of deprived areas and communities. This should involve the public, voluntary and private sectors and it was suggested that existing District Council Local Economic Partnerships could be considered. It was equally felt that such partnerships might not be suitable in all areas and there was a need for general flexibility.

Structures permitting a speedy commitment of monies were considered to be essential. It was considered that the Urban Regeneration Priority should be articulated in synergy with other programmes to gain maximum benefit.

Leadership was considered an essential priority in the context of Urban Regeneration and training to promote this was considered important.

EUROPEAN AND
INTERNATIONAL SECTION

12 MAY 1995

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PRIORITIES

A general view expressed was that a theme of reconciliation should be to the fore in all actions. Projects should be favoured according to the extent to which they contributed to a long term (ten year) vision.

It was felt by some that prioritisation could be left to local partnerships as priorities would differ from one area to another.

It was considered that a balance needed to be struck between (people) projects as opposed to physical projects. While there was some opposition to physical projects, it was generally agreed that in many cases a combination of both approaches had been successful.

OTHER

Some indicated that marginalised groups must be involved in the entire Initiative. It was remarked that Government appeared unable to tackle issues which required a joint physical and social input and that public bodies in general had not always been aware of the needs of local communities. Equally it was noted that local communities need to have a better knowledge of what was feasible and what could reasonably be expected from Government departments.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

CHAIRPERSON

Niall Fitzduff

Director of the Rural Community Network

BACKGROUND

It was envisaged, in the draft Guidelines, that this priority would involve the promotion of wide ranging local development as well as social and economic regeneration with particular emphasis on social and physical environment in worst affected villages and rural areas.

A wide range of measures were suggested under Rural regeneration including small rural infrastructure, community and local development partnerships.

ISSUES RAISED IN DISCUSSION

The workshop dealt with the various issues under the headings suggested by the Department and its reflections are given in the rubrics below.

VIEWS ON DELIVERY MECHANISMS

Delivery mechanisms, it was considered, should be cost effective and accountable. Existing structures should, if at all possible, be used and failing this some amended version of them be elaborated.

With a view to a rapid commitment of monies, a decentralised system was considered a possible best option and local action groups (LAG's) were considered a preferential route for monies under the Initiative. To this end it was suggested that their remit be extended to include Social Inclusion and indeed other priorities under the Programme.

On the basis of this model, it could be that certain areas without local action groups could lose out. To this end it was suggested that District Councils may be a suitable vehicle to administer the programme because many already have suitable structures in place to develop economic regeneration plans and systems of accountability.

A functional dichotomy with regard to disbursement of monies was considered in relation to the scale of projects to be funded. It was felt more appropriate that small projects be decided upon and developed locally whereas larger projects, (those dealing with infrastructure) may be best handled by a central body.

While appreciating sensitivities with regard to cross-border proposals, participants agreed that such proposals should be advanced and that special arrangements be put in place to provide consistency and accountability. Potential for cross-border animation and a special small projects programme handled on a cooperative cross-border basis was supported.

PARTNERSHIPS/LOCAL GRANTS

Management of funds should be at the lowest possible level and should use local partnerships for administering global grants where these exist. Skills training, eg. in accountancy techniques should be provided as required.

MONITORING/IMPLEMENTATION

Independence and proof of additionality were considered key elements in any monitoring system. It was suggested that relevant EU officials participating on monitoring bodies may provide the required degree of independence.

A single monitoring committee to oversee the Initiative was preferred and it was suggested that this should involve a wide spectrum of representatives from Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and the European Union authorities along with interested parties as necessary. To avoid an excessive number on this committee, it was suggested that interested groups be asked to decide on a small number of persons.

PRIORITIES

The workshop dealt particularly with the issue of the priorities for the overall programme. They considered the following:

- no clear top priority exists, all five areas should be addressed and a degree of integration should be sought between each
- Social Inclusion and employment should receive high priority. (Social Inclusion was considered also to be the "*glue to all other aspects of the Initiative*" and the condition for overcoming a narrowness in communities and a reluctance to share experiences)
- Employment was considered a high priority with particular relevance to rural areas given that high unemployment forces people to seek work elsewhere
- emphasis was put on local employment creation and economic development. (Action in this area should not be confined to agriculture since 60% of rural areas were in fact non-agricultural)
- it was argued that prioritisation should be sought for each of the five areas by determining the areas, either social or geographical, of greatest need.

Emphasis should also be put on supporting actions which would not have happened if peaceful conditions had not arrived and which are not covered under other EU programmes.

OTHER

The Rural Development workshop argued that technical assistance should be given, taking the form of training particularly if the partnership model is adopted. Training was considered necessary for both existing and any new local partnerships and should be targeted on socially excluded people falling outside current training mechanisms.

CROSS-BORDER

CHAIRPERSON

Tony Kennedy

Chief Executive of Co-operation North

BACKGROUND

Cross-Border development would involve, according to the draft Guidelines, a wide range of measures to exploit the opportunities for increased cross-border development arising from new situations. Suggested actions included enhanced trade, upgrading of infrastructures, joint actions in animal, health, food and forestry actions and co-operation between a wide range of socio-economic actors and local delivery agencies.

ISSUES RAISED IN DISCUSSION

The Workshop came to broad conclusions regarding cross-border development. Firstly, although there should be a specific cross-border measure within the Programme, there should also be a cross-border element built into other measures. Secondly, cross-border actions should involve the whole of Northern Ireland and not just the border "ribbon" area.

VIEWS ON DELIVERY MECHANISMS

There was no clear agreement on the design and administration of the Programme. However, there was a general consensus that the following principles should be borne in mind in formulating the eventual Programme:

- the need for grass roots involvement

- the structure of the Programme should be as simple as possible
- the structure should allow for cross-border actions.

Regarding the possibility of partnerships, the workshop agreed that existing organisation/partnerships/groups should be used or adapted before creating new ones.

In addition, the concept of global grants was fully endorsed by the workshop. It was felt that partnerships be based on:

- both specific geographical areas [such as District Councils]
- on a Northern Ireland wide basis to organisations, dealing with specific measures.

PRIORITIES

The overriding consideration concerning priorities for funding should be that proposals make a positive contribution towards achieving "Peace and Reconciliation". Administrators of the Programme would ensure this "special" money is not just used as a "top-up" to other existing funding. In addition, the majority of delegates agreed that the Programme should have "*an immediate and visible impact on the ground*".

Regarding "likely actions" to be funded under the Special Initiative, the general consensus was that Social Inclusion should not only be a theme across all funding priorities, but should be retained within the Programme as a spending priority in its own right.

It was suggested that a Social Inclusion audit/impact assessment be built into the selection process across all measures/actions, with the result that not only would all project proposals make a positive contribution towards peace and reconciliation, but also help achieve Social Inclusion in its broadest sense.

PRODUCTIVE INVESTMENT/INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

CHAIRPERSON

Mr George Mackey

Chief Executive Laganside Corporation

BACKGROUND

According to the draft Guidelines, this priority would aim to enhance existing facilities to promote productive investment and industrial development services particularly in the small and medium enterprise sector. Suggested measures would involve support to marketing and R&TD, access to seed and venture capital and improved linkages between large and small firms to promote local supplier networks. It was generally considered that the priority of interest rate subsidies to small and medium enterprises would be a significant part of this measure and that loans would be supplied by the European Investment Bank.

ISSUES RAISED IN DISCUSSION

Social Inclusion should be a feature of all actions.

Equality of opportunity should be evident across all measures.

VIEWS ON DELIVERY MECHANISMS

The overwhelming opinion was that the traditional approach to delivering funding would be inappropriate to this Initiative. While wishing to guard against over-administration, the group was in favour of the more innovative approach, as it was considered to be more responsive to community needs.

It was felt that there could be merit in a hybrid model - a synthesis of local and central input.

Whatever model is chosen it should build on the local economic development activities being undertaken under the aegis of District Councils.

The group endorsed the value of partnerships but considered disbursement need not be exclusively through partnership. Technical Assistance should be available to facilitate development/capacity building at local level.

Global Grants were favoured, but it was felt recipient bodies should be credible and have a widely recognised role.

Allocations to specified areas - say District Council areas - were favoured but these should be dependant on some assessment of need and standard indicators of need should be agreed.

It was felt that exceptional arrangements may have to be made for the Belfast area.

The view was expressed that representation on monitoring committees was still not wide enough. Consideration should be given to monitoring on two levels - local and strategic, but emphasis should be on accountability and workable mechanisms.

The majority of the Group articulated the need for another tier outside the traditional Monitoring Committee, which would be a formal mechanism. One possibility would be a Steering Group to incorporate local and regional interests and to oversee implementation and ensure best practice.

There was general consensus on the need for a broadly based consultative mechanism.

PRIORITIES

The Productive Investment/Industrial Development priority was considered to be the prime recipient for funding as:

- it had a positive, read-across effect on the other priorities for funding (viz, employment, urban/rural development, social inclusion cross-border development)
- there was potential for a significant leverage on private sector funding
- it was self-sustaining.

30-50% of available funds was considered to be a valid bid for this priority.

The productive investment workshop considered all five priorities to be important, though feared that the 15% "quota for cross-border development" might lead to the acceptance of inadequate projects in this area.

It was argued that the Productive Investment priority had the greatest potential for self-sustainability and could lever further investment from the private sector.

The workshop was also conscious of the advantages of improving linkages between the various actions particularly in terms of industrial clusters for marketing and networks at local level.

Emphasis was placed on education and training linkages, on the need to enhance quality service.

The group decided against a prioritisation within its own area of Productive Investment/Industrial Development but the following activities were proposed:

- Development of a network of overseas Trade Development Centres Monitoring - linking small companies with growth potential to larger companies
- Education - Industrial links, awareness of the importance of education/guidance
- Exploitation of R&D opportunities
- Strategy to target areas of greatest disadvantage
- Seed and development funding. Seed fund for small business start-up (£5k-£15k)
- SME's encouraged to become more marketing orientated/customer aware
- Industrial clusters: networking: information flows
- Complementarity UK/ROI structures for allocation of EU funding
- UK/ROI encouragement of parallel structures to facilitate oversight of local development opportunities
- Tourism - quality issues, training, customer care
- Community Bank - experience, knowledge etc
- European Investment Bank - interest relief grant
- Inclusiveness at workplace.

