



BRIEFING ACTIVE INCLUSION

What is active inclusion?

Active inclusion is an EU strategy which aims to promote the social inclusion and social protection of those furthest from the labour market by tackling issues of minimum income, access to quality services and inclusive labour markets in an integrated way. The objective of the active inclusion strategy is to facilitate the integration into sustainable, quality employment of those who can work and provide resources which are sufficient to live in dignity, together with support for social participation, for those who cannot. As of 2008, Member States have agreed to implement this strategy.

In this briefing we explain the political developments of the strategy, a summary of the European Commission's (EC) Recommendation on active inclusion and guidelines on how members can be engaged in evaluating the implementation of the strategy nationally.

How is the European Union Involved?

On 3 October 2008, after a two-stage stakeholder consultation, to which Eurodiaconia responded in 2007 ([see response](#)), the EC adopted the [Recommendation](#) on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market, containing **common principles** that Member States should implement and **practical guidelines** on a comprehensive strategy based on the integration of three policy pillars, namely adequate income support, inclusive labour markets and access to quality services.

Subsequently, in December 2008, the Council of the European Union (EPSCO Council meeting) endorsed the strategy to be applied within the Member States ([2008 Council Conclusions](#)). Then, in May 2009, the active inclusion strategy received further support through a European Parliament Resolution that endorsed both the strategy and common principles.

The progress of Member States in applying the active inclusion strategy and exchanging good practice between Member States is coordinated on a European level by way of the [Open Method of Coordination](#)¹. In this way, the active inclusion strategy is a key instrument to achieve objectives such as social inclusion and cohesion as agreed by the Member States. Although Member States *have* agreed to implement the active inclusion strategy, the OMC is a non-binding political process of cooperation, and for this reason it is important that the EC and NGOs monitor the implementation by Member States.

¹ (The OMC is an intergovernmental means of governance in the European Union. Member States agreed on this framework of political coordination for the social policy field at the Lisbon European Council in 2000 by which Member States identify and promote their most effective policies in the fields of social protection and social inclusion with the aim of learning from each other.)





The EC is expected to encourage, monitor and evaluate active inclusion policies with support from the PROGRESS programme (the Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity of which Eurodiaconia is a partner). To do this, the EU provides common analytical frameworks to facilitate the evaluation of policies and the identification and exchange of best practices. [The Peer Review in Social Inclusion and Social Protection](#) and the [Assessment by a Network of Independent Experts in Social Inclusion](#) were established to support this process. These are both sub-programmes of [PROGRESS](#). Under the Peer Review in Social Inclusion, (an instrument of OMC), several studies were devoted to the themes of [“promoting active inclusion”](#), and more recently specifically on [Minimum income schemes](#), proposing sixteen suggestions for action at the national and/or EU level to enable the minimum income strand of the EC's Recommendation on active inclusion to become a reality.

What is in the active inclusion Recommendation?

Eurodiaconia welcomed the use of a Recommendation of the EC and Council as an instrument to lay down principles for Active Inclusion. Although non-binding, the political weight of the agreement shows a commitment to promoting social inclusion and quality social services. However, the Recommendation did not take on many issues raised by social NGOs regarding access to quality services. We highlighted the absence of the recognition of the importance of preventative measures, the need for services to be delivered in a timely manner and the need for follow up of the user. We also have concerns as to how the principles will be implemented given that they lack detail.

The EC recommends that Member States organise and implement integrated active inclusion policies in accordance with the following common principles and guidelines for each of the three strands: adequate income support, inclusive labour markets and access to quality services:

Pillar 1: Adequate income support	
Recognise the individual's basic right to resources and social assistance sufficient to lead a life that is compatible with human dignity as part of a comprehensive, consistent drive to combat social exclusion.	Practical guidelines: In particular, when the resources necessary to lead a life of dignity are determined, living standards and price levels by type and size of household in the Member State concerned should be taken into account using the appropriate national indicators. Within an active inclusion framework, an incentive to seek employment for persons whose condition renders them fit for work should be safeguarded and the amounts adjusted or supplemented to meet specific needs.
<i>Combined with:</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Active availability for work or for vocational training with a view to obtaining work in the case of persons whose conditions permit such active availability, or be subject, where appropriate, to economic and social integration measures in the case of other persons; - Policies deemed necessary, at national level, for the economic and social integration of those concerned 	
Pillar 2: Inclusive labour markets	
Address the <i>needs of people</i> excluded from the labour market in order to facilitate their progressive reintegration into society and into the labour market and to enhance their employability	Practical guidelines: investment in human capital; active and preventive labour market measures; financial incentives; demand side policies; in-work support
Take the necessary measures to promote <i>inclusive labour markets</i> in order to ensure access to employment is an opportunity open for all	
Promote <i>quality jobs</i> , including pay and benefits, working conditions, health and safety, access to lifelong learning and career prospects, in particular with a view to preventing in-work poverty	
Tackle labour market segmentation by <i>promoting job retention and</i>	



<i>advancement.</i>	
Pillar 3: Access to quality services	
Territorial availability, physical accessibility, affordability	
Solidarity, equal opportunities for service users and employees, and due account for diversity of users	
Investment in human capital, working conditions, and adequate physical infrastructure	
Comprehensive and coordinated services, conceived and delivered in an integrated manner	
Users' involvement and personalised approaches to meet the multiple needs of people as individuals	
Monitoring and performance evaluation and sharing of best practice.	

Member states are recommended to ensure that active inclusion policies maintain the following principles common to all three strands and:

- support the implementation of fundamental rights;
- promote gender equality and equal opportunities for all;
- consider the complexities of multiple disadvantages and the specific situations and needs of the various vulnerable groups;
- take due account of local and regional circumstances and improve territorial cohesion;
- be consistent with a lifecycle approach to social and employment policies so they can support intergenerational solidarity and break the intergenerational transmission of poverty.

Member states are also recommended to:

- Guarantee the relevant resources and benefits; role of Structural Funds;
- Take economic and budgetary constraints, the priorities set by national authorities and the state of public finances into account in order to strike the right balance between work incentives, poverty alleviation and sustainable budgetary costs.
- Ensure information of rights and support available;
- Simplify administrative procedures;
- Organise machinery for appeals;
- Monitor and evaluate active inclusion policies under the Social OMC

Why is active inclusion relevant for you?

As European social service providers, Eurodiaconia members are of great importance when it comes to informing the European Union of the reality on the ground in terms of access to quality social and health services. Our members witness firsthand how difficulties in accessing quality services, inadequate income and high levels of unemployment due to exclusive labour markets leave large numbers of people socially excluded and at risk of poverty. Therefore we want to encourage our members to use their knowledge, expertise and experiences to work towards developing and promoting better and integrated social policy and more efficient strategies in the area of social inclusion and social protection on EU and national level.

Eurodiaconia has been invited by the European Commission to monitor and collect feedback from our members on the concrete implementation of these principles stated in the Recommendation. We certainly hope Member States will live up to their commitments. However, in order to get a quality overview of the situation and to get our common concerns heard, we need our members' input on the implementation of the



active inclusion principles at national level. This is your opportunity as members to get involved in the process and influence policy!

What is Eurodiaconia doing?

Eurodiaconia responded to the EC's consultation in 2007 ([see response](#)), and would now like to further develop its position on active inclusion in order for it to be effectively implemented at national level. Eurodiaconia will therefore write a statement on active inclusion in 2010 which will draw together the initial feedback from members on the implementation of the principles, and will be used to report to the EC. After 2010 we will continue to monitor the implementation of the principles by asking our members to update us on progress made in the relevant policy areas.

What can you do?

- Assess your National Action Plans for Social Inclusion ([in the National Strategic Reports](#)) and look at the [joint report on social protection and social inclusion 2010](#) in which the national reports are assessed by the EC and Council.
- Answer a short questionnaire to assess whether the principles outlined in the Recommendation have been implemented.
- Use Eurodiaconia's statement on active inclusion as a template to demand national governments to follow up on the agreed implementation of the EC's Recommendation.
- Join EAPN's campaign on adequate minimum income: <http://www.adequateincome.eu/>

For more information on this process, please contact Catherine Storry at catherine.storry@eurodiaconia.org

Further information and links

- Eurodiaconia [toolkit](#) on how to get involved at National Level in the OMC process
- [Peer Review in Social Protection and Social Inclusion and Assessment in Social Inclusion](#)
- [Summary of EU legislation](#)
- [Policy & Practice Resources on Active Inclusion, the European Social Network](#)

Key steps for active inclusion in EU policy

- [EC Recommendation on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market](#) (2008)
- [EC Communication \(2008\) 639](#)
- [Council conclusions 17 December 2008](#)
- [EC Communication \(2006\) 44](#) and [COM\(2007\) 620](#): a two-stage consultation
- [Council Recommendation 92/441/EEC](#)

March 2010