



Cities for Active Inclusion

# COLLECTION OF INNOVATIVE CITY PRACTICES

SOCIAL INNOVATION FOR ACTIVE INCLUSION





European Commission

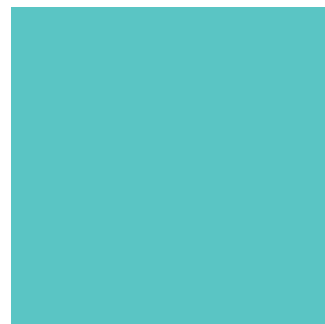
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For more information see: <http://ec.europa.eu/progress>.

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# INTRODUCTION

Social innovation is more necessary now than ever, given the current economic crisis and reduced public finances. With social services under budgetary pressure and the number of vulnerable people on the increase, finding innovative and cost effective ways to resolve social problems is crucial.

City authorities often find themselves with high concentrations of vulnerable people, often facing multiple disadvantages. They constantly have to adapt and develop new ways of implementing active inclusion policies to respond to new social trends and challenges. Social innovation is often developed and tested at local level, as local actors tend to notice emerging social problems more rapidly and directly than, for example, national governments<sup>1</sup>.

Furthermore, the implementation of the European Active Inclusion Strategy<sup>2</sup> requires the integration of strategies on adequate income support, access to the labour market and better access to services for everyone. This often results in innovative practices and new ways of working at local level. Cities can create comprehensive policies and coordinate their actions with the third sector and other relevant actors at local, regional and national levels.

EUROCITIES has brought together this collection of good practices from our member cities collaborating as ‘Cities for Active Inclusion’. In it we present nine innovative examples of promoting active inclusion in an urban context. Our intention is to show how social innovation can contribute to the active inclusion of people into society, as well as to feed into the wider debate on social innovation and active inclusion. The findings can also help facilitate the exchange of good practices amongst cities, national and European stakeholders.

There is no agreed EU-wide definition of what precisely social innovation is. Social innovation tends to be contextual, with the degree of innovation largely depending on the city or country in which it takes place. Nevertheless, some key stakeholders have developed tentative definitions that can be helpful for practitioners. For example, according to the Young Foundation,<sup>3</sup> social innovation means:

*“New ideas that work in meeting social goals. More precisely, innovative activities and services that are motivated by the goal of meeting a social need and that are predominantly developed and diffused through different kinds of organisations whose primary purposes are social.”*

The OECD refers to social innovation as: “a conceptual, process or product change, organisational change and changes in financing, and new relationships with stakeholders and territories”<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The European Commission’s communication on the ‘Platform against poverty’ also recognises national, regional and local authorities as ‘incubators’ of social innovation. COM(2010) 0758 final.

<sup>2</sup> See the European Commission Recommendation on the Active Inclusion of People Excluded from the Labour Market (2008/876/EC).

<sup>3</sup> A UK based foundation promoting social innovation and one of the coordinators of Social Innovation Europe.

<sup>4</sup> OECD Forum of Social Innovations stakeholders, 2010.

This OECD definition was our starting point in developing our methodological approach to selecting good practices. Our Cities for Active Inclusion members identified and described their good practices according to a number of specific guidelines that helped to assess and rate the level of social innovation. These guidelines were:

- the general approach and objectives of the practice or project;
- the key innovative elements in the implementation of the practice or project;
- the main successes in terms of outcomes, results and impact;
- the sustainability of the good practice, its dissemination and transferability.

From the examples presented, we conclude that social innovation for active inclusion at city level can take the shape of:

- stimulating innovative partnerships;
- developing new ways of dealing with social problems and delivering services;
- encouraging new ways of doing things or new attitudes and perspectives.

**Stimulating innovative partnerships:** cities are increasingly involved in new forms of cooperation to promote integrated approaches. In **Copenhagen** a joint strategy between social services and health and employment administrations was prepared. This joint strategy offers vulnerable people single pathways to deal with their health and unemployment issues. In **Birmingham** the Arts Outreach programme brings together all of the city's key arts organisations to offer tailored outreach programmes for people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Participating in arts programmes often contributes to a better sense of self-worth and helps improve social skills.

**Developing new ways of dealing with problems in society or delivering services:** cities are working on solutions to current societal problems and groups of people with particular difficulties, such as homeless EU migrants in **Stockholm**, street children in **Krakow** and people with disabilities in **Sofia**. The practices presented focus on creating holistic approaches to tackle the challenges these people face, combined with motivating them to participate fully into society.

**Encouraging new ways of doing things and new attitudes and perspectives:** cities are supporting bottom-up approaches for the active inclusion of vulnerable citizens. In **Brno**, after consultation with service users, NGOs and public actors, the new social services information centre now provides a free, single access point for all citizens who need specific information on social services. Likewise, following extensive consultation with citizens from disadvantaged neighbourhoods, the city of **Rotterdam** is now investing in community gardens to create green jobs for people at risk of social exclusion, enhance social cohesion and improve the overall environment in these districts. **Roubaix** held consultations on improving well-being in deprived areas by working with groups of local residents from very different backgrounds. **Bologna's** online magazine made for and by young people, gives them the opportunity to learn by doing. This enhances their creativity and communication skills and facilitates their transition from education to work.

The main message of this publication is that cities can promote innovative ideas and projects and act as the key drivers of social innovation.



# BIRMINGHAM – ARTS CHAMPIONS: A NEW INTEGRATED APPROACH TO ARTS OUTREACH



*Arts Champions* is a groundbreaking arts initiative in which Birmingham's world class arts organisations work in an integrated way, in partnership with the city council, to address particular issues of social isolation and exclusion among specific groups of people.

In Birmingham, as elsewhere in Europe, people living in disadvantaged areas are often at high risk of social isolation. In 2001, when Birmingham City Council was looking at ways to improve citizens' quality of life in the 21st century, a key conclusion was that the top arts organisations in the city could act as a catalyst for the development of active, engaged and connected communities.

Using the arts to improve social cohesion is not a new idea, and many of Birmingham's major arts organisations were already running their own outreach programmes. However, these were not designed to be integrated with each other, and many people still felt excluded from the arts, and disconnected from the perceived wealth and success of the city's cultural centre.

Since then, it has been recognised that a more co-ordinated approach would be more effective. So, as part of Birmingham's *Culture on Your Doorstep* programme, the Arts Champions scheme was started in 2004. In this exciting integrated outreach scheme, top quality Arts Champions encourage specific groups of people, aged 16 and over, to participate in arts activities, by becoming creators, leaders, participants and audience members.

The Arts Champions include Birmingham Royal Ballet, the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Birmingham Repertory Theatre and the city's South Asian arts organisation Sampad.

The council works closely with the Arts Champions, to ensure that the scheme reaches into all ten parliamentary constituencies in the city, particularly into deprived neighbourhoods. Council officers in each constituency identify the key problems, objectives and target groups for the outreach work, while the Arts Champions determine the arts activities they wish to use.



## Innovation

The Arts Champions scheme includes a number of innovative aspects:

- it brings all the key arts organisations together in a single coordinated initiative, to engage with residents in all parts of the city;
- specialist arts practitioners work with council officers who understand the barriers preventing specific members of the community from engaging with the arts; outreach programmes can therefore be tailor-made to meet local needs.
- the scheme offers people the chance to work with nationally and internationally renowned artists, and to experience top quality artistic events and performances in the city centre: this helps them to overcome their feelings of exclusion and feel more connected to the city's cultural centre;
- by allocating different Arts Champions to different constituencies every three years, citizens who have previously felt excluded can experience a variety of arts and culture.



## Success

The Arts Champions scheme has already succeeded in helping large numbers of people become more active in their local communities. Between 2005 and 2010, the scheme involved over 33,000 individuals: as participants, audience members and artists.

The following are some specific examples:

- Ikon Art Gallery worked with people in the Erdington constituency on a variety of contemporary visual arts projects: with encouragement from internationally acclaimed artists, local residents created and exhibited their own work and also set up a local arts workshop in an empty retail store, which is now a focus for wider social and multi-generational interaction in the local community;
- Birmingham Royal Ballet and the Ex Cathedra choral group are among the wide range of Arts Champions that have helped people build relationships with other people in different age groups;
- Birmingham Repertory Theatre has successfully established a youth theatre in the Northfield constituency: local people have participated in researching and developing the theatre's community productions, which has helped rekindle a sense of identity and self-worth in an area suffering from the collapse of its car manufacturing industry.



## Dissemination and sustainability

The Arts Champions model has been shared with other local authorities in the UK and Europe, as there is potential for a similar approach to be taken in other cities.

The latest three-year Arts Champions partnerships started in April 2011. The scheme allows for a one year legacy planning in existing constituencies and adequate handover time in the next constituency, to help maximise outputs and ensure sustainability.

The Arts Champions scheme is currently funded by the local constituencies and by the Arts Champions organisations. If further cuts are made to the city's budgets, funding may change. But there is a commitment from all involved to maintain the programme long-term, in order to increase participation and social cohesion.



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# BOLOGNA – FLASHGIOVANI: INCREASING YOUNG PEOPLE’S ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE LIFE OF THE CITY



Flashgiovani.it is an innovative online magazine managed by - and aimed at - young people aged 15 to 29 living in the Bologna area.

For many young people, the transition from education to work can be difficult, resulting in the risk of social exclusion. Through the Flashgiovani.it project, Bologna aims to help in actively including young people as they move from education into work.

Established in 2000, Flashgiovani.it offers an open online space for young people to provide information and advice in an appealing way to others of a similar age, on topics that interest them: from local art and culture, to health and well-being, to volunteering and travel.

The main objectives of the project are to meet the need for information, training and job placements, and to encourage active participation by young people in the life of the city.

Flashgiovani.it offers an integrated network of portals including:

- Flashgiovani.it
- Flashfumetto.it
- Flashmusica.it
- Flashvideo.it
- Giramondo.org
- Codec.tv
- FlashFM

The content for the Flashgiovani.it network is created by an editorial team consisting predominantly of young people, supported by a group of specialists ranging from media production experts to counsellors. Being on the editorial team empowers young people to demonstrate their talents and creativity, and to get involved by researching the numerous initiatives in the Bologna area, while at the same time adapting to the world of work.

## Innovation

The project includes many innovative aspects:

- Flashgiovani.it is based on an innovative philosophy that believes in transforming the wealth of talent and knowledge found among young people into a public service: an online magazine by the young, for the young. This makes it possible for the city of Bologna to provide a concrete opportunity for the educational, social and professional growth of young people.



- By including a wide variety of players, the editorial team represents a new departure for public sector websites, with a mix of young people, representatives of the city's youth project (Progetto Giovani), and professional experts.
- The use of creative workshops run by the city of Bologna to generate ideas and content for the web pages represents an innovative experiment: it marks a shift from the youth-information approach where public sector organisations provide information to young people, to an informed-youth approach, where young people themselves research the information that is relevant to them, and share it with others.
- For the young people on the editorial team, the learning-by-doing approach brings a new educational paradigm that focuses on practical learning rather than theoretical learning.
- Flashgiovani.it has developed a new partnership approach, working with other media, such as radio and tv, to create reportages and documentaries, and also tv commercials for local socio-cultural activities.
- Flashgiovani network offers an innovative continuous online open workshop, linked with other local youth-focused organisations.

## Success

With more than 220 young people involved in the Flashgiovani editorial team since 2000, and with the number of page views per month reaching over 8 million during 2010, it is clear that the Flashgiovani.it project is providing a successful hub for young people.

The young people on the editorial team acquire significant work experience, enabling them to build meaningful skills in areas such as computing, creativity, and communication as well as entrepreneurship, continuing education and self-directed training. It also helps young people feel valued as they become information producers as well as information consumers.

In terms of encouraging creative talent, so far, over 1600 emerging young audiovisual professionals, over 1200 young music groups and almost 200 young artists have become involved with Flashgiovani.it.

The availability of a youth-focused online service is also likely to further reduce social exclusion among young people in the city.

## Dissemination and sustainability

The Flashgiovani.it project offers a high degree of transferability and sustainability. For example, the use of creative editorial workshops has been taken up by other youth projects in Bologna Province as well as by other European youth projects (e.g. Videomakers online – 2004).

Through Leonardo initiatives and agreements with NGOs, universities and other institutions, Flashgiovani.it has involved and hosted numerous young people from across Europe and the world. This helps disseminate project experiences to other organisations wishing to adopt a similar approach.

Funded by the city, the region and the state, Flashgiovani.it will continue to help maximise active inclusion among young people in Bologna.



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# BRNO – SOCIO-INFO CENTRE AND WEBSITE: BARRIER-FREE ACCESS TO ADVICE AND INFORMATION



Brno's innovative *Socio-info Centre* and the associated website provide citizens with easy access to up-to-date information and advice on social services in Brno.

During Brno's initial social services community planning phase, a general lack of awareness of the social services available in the city was highlighted. This was recognised as contributing to the risk of social exclusion for people most in need of assistance.

To help raise awareness of social services in Brno and how best to access them, an innovative two-part solution was developed: a drop-in centre and an interactive website.

Opened in Autumn 2009, the Socio-info Centre is sited at Brno's municipal offices in the middle of the city. The centre offers social services information and advice, both from the staff themselves, and also via telephone links, internet access, and referrals to other relevant organisations. The centre also offers professional help to help people resolve crisis situations.

The interactive Socio-info Website - [www.socialnipece.brno.cz](http://www.socialnipece.brno.cz) - was also launched in 2009. Designed to be attractive for all users, it provides regularly updated social services information. The website also serves as a platform for Brno's social services community planning process and enables close co-operation between public sector organisations and NGO social service providers. It includes a central database of all the social services organisations in Brno.

Right from the start, the information centre and website have been publicised in newspapers and magazines, on the street, and on public transport.



## Innovation

The initiative provides several examples of innovation:

- The community planning process represents an innovative approach for Brno, involving people from eight different groups of citizens, including: families with children, people with physical and mental disabilities, immigrants, senior citizens, and people who are socially excluded through unemployment or homelessness. Some 70 municipal social service organisations and NGOs also took part in the wide-ranging discussions about social service needs, priorities and solutions.
- The two strategic plans drawn up after the community planning consultations are a new departure, based on the views of the community as well as resource-availability, to ensure that the city's social services are responsive to, and are organised around, local needs.
- The Socio-info Centre is a first for the city: a drop-in centre that is barrier-free, with equipment such as an induction loop for people with impaired hearing, and an internet access booth with an adjustable table height.
- The interactive Socio-info Website takes a dynamic approach that is unusual for a public sector website, with attractive illustrations that draw the visitor into the site and keep them entertained while looking for the information they need.



## Success

“Finally, a place where I received full assistance and where they really tried to help me.”  
Socio-info Centre client.

The Socio-info Centre has become an important and popular advice point, helping the citizens of Brno and the surrounding area to deal with difficult situations in their lives. It is now the primary place for people in Brno to go for up-to-date social services information and advice. The most frequent visitors to the centre have been retired senior citizens and people who have financial problems. Most clients prefer personal face-to-face contact rather than using the centre's telephones or internet access.

Since it opened, the centre has helped an increasing number of clients. During 2010, staff at the centre handled a total of 2,284 client enquiries. In 2011, a similar number of enquiries (2,118) were handled in just the first six months. The increasing interest in the centre and its services, together with the changes in social services legislation mean that staffing levels may rise from two people to four or five.

The Socio-info Website is also proving successful. The number of visits to the site is increasing, with an average of some 400 visits per month in 2009, to more than 600 visits a month during 2011.

Following a recent presentation on the centre's work, the city's politicians expressed appreciation of the centre's role in providing high quality information and advice.



## Dissemination and sustainability

Information about Brno's experiences in developing a successful community planning process, and in setting up the Socio-info Centre and Website could be shared with other cities across Europe wishing to consider a similar approach.

Brno municipality will continue to fund the Socio-info Centre and Website into the future. This will ensure that people in Brno and the surrounding area have access to the social services information and advice they need, thereby helping to increase social inclusion.



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# COPENHAGEN - JOINT STRATEGY: THREE SEPARATE ADMINISTRATIONS WORKING TOGETHER



The Joint Strategy delivers ground-breaking cooperation between three entirely separate local authority administrations in Copenhagen. This enables them to work together to offer vulnerable, uninsured and unemployed people a set of integrated welfare-related services to help them into employment.

Since the 2007 reform of local government in Denmark, public interaction between the city of Copenhagen and its citizens has been carried out through seven specialised administrations. These are overseen by their own political committee, each with distinctive and separate roles and jurisdictions. The seven administrations broadly cover: social services; health and care; employment and integration; children and youth; culture; technical and environmental; and finance.

For Copenhagen's uninsured and unemployed citizens who are at high risk of social exclusion, it has proved difficult to resolve their problems by having to access the right services from each administration. Although they currently receive welfare benefits of between €420 and €1790 per month, they need help from various free public services if they are to move into work.

Given the link between unemployment and chronic health problems, the city needed to find a new way to provide uninsured and unemployed people with the vital services they are in most need of: social services; health and care; and employment and integration.

The three administrations therefore decided to collaborate together to develop a Joint Strategy for helping the most vulnerable people in Copenhagen and thereby reduce social exclusion.

The Joint Strategy focuses on the following broad objectives:

- improving the health of people with chronic illnesses;
- improving the health of young people;
- improving health and employment in the city's 10 recognised areas of deprivation;
- helping people with chronic health problems to find and retain work.

The Joint Strategy includes the following targets for 2012 (compared with 2010):

- a 20% reduction in the number of people receiving welfare benefits who are unavailable for work for two weeks or more due to illness;
- an improvement in health for at least 20% of young people on welfare benefits;
- a 5% increase in the number of young people on welfare benefits with a social services case file moving into work;
- at least 68% of people new sickness benefit claimants to come off sickness benefit within 6 months, including people with chronic illnesses;
- 75% of those coming off sickness benefit to move into work.



## Innovation

There are two key innovative aspects of the Joint Strategy cooperation between the three administrations.

Firstly, for three administrations to collaborate is a first for Copenhagen, involving significant adaptation by each administration.

Secondly, the process of generating the Joint Strategy was also innovative. The initial step involved the three administrations collaborating to analyse research on the connection between long-term unemployment and health problems. The results of this analysis were then used to formulate the Joint Strategy for working together to help solve these problems: this includes various specific initiatives, each with their own benchmarks and targets. The next step will be to evaluate the outcomes against the targets. This evaluation will feed into a continuing cycle of further research, a new strategy, new initiatives and targets, and further evaluation.



## Success

The Joint Strategy means that Copenhagen's social services, health and care, and employment and integration administrations are successfully working together to offer a seamless set of services to vulnerable people.

For example, instead of having contact with multiple administrations, a person with diabetes who is homeless and unemployed can now obtain help through a single pathway. This enables them to obtain the treatment and health advice they need to manage their diabetes; the housing they need before they can look for a job or improve their health; the help they need in arranging unemployment benefits; and assistance in finding work.



## Dissemination and sustainability

The idea of a collaborating between the three Copenhagen administrations and creating a Joint Strategy was partly generated through sharing experiences of earlier collaboration between two Copenhagen administrations. Experience of the successful Joint Strategy approach for collaboration will be disseminated to other organisations across Denmark and the EU.

Overall, the Joint Strategy programme is currently funded to run until 2014, although funding for some of the initiatives runs until 2013. Unless the Danish Parliament votes to change Copenhagen's local government structure into a unified administration, it is likely that this cross-administration collaboration will continue in one form or another to support active inclusion in Copenhagen.



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# KRAKOW - RAKOWICKA 10: TRANSFORMING THE LIVES OF STREET CHILDREN



Krakow's *Rakowicka 10* project provides a social work team to work with street children, plus a drop-in centre where they can enjoy a range of activities and receive help and advice.

Like many urban areas in Europe, Krakow has growing numbers of street children. They are under the age of 18 and they spend a high proportion of their waking hours unproductively in public places such as transport hubs, shopping centres and public squares. Although most of them attend school at least some of the time, and have a home where they sleep, many have multiple issues in their lives. Unsupervised by responsible adults, they are at high risk of developing dysfunctional behaviours such as drug and alcohol abuse, begging and prostitution, and are therefore at high risk of social exclusion.

In 2006, *Rakowicka 10* was set up by PARASOL, a prevention and social education organisation in Krakow, to help street children overcome their problems.

*Rakowicka 10* aims to:

- minimise street life among children and young people;
- reduce street children's consumption of substances such as alcohol, drugs and nicotine;
- raise the social skills of street children;
- help street children rebuild positive relationships with adults;
- represent the interests of street children (e.g. mediating with their families, residential home staff, school and police).

Central to the project is a team of highly trained social workers. They work on the street to establish and maintain contact with street children in their own environment. They also run the *Rakowicka 10* Centre. In the heart of Krakow, this opens three days a week and attracts some 20 street children a day.

*Rakowicka 10* offers street children more constructive ways of spending time, such as creative workshops and sporting activities. They are also offered psychological help, meals if necessary, and information about other services and activities in the city.

The project can also help street children's families, for example, by helping parents to reduce domestic violence and overcome addictions such as alcoholism.



## Innovation

To ensure that Rakowicka 10 maximises its impact in transforming the lives of street children, it has a number of innovative aspects:

- the project actively focuses on addressing new problems such as begging and juvenile prostitution;
- a new holistic methodology ensures that all aspects of each child are considered together: relationships with their family, their school situation, and their psychological and emotional health;
- the project works with all those involved in each child's care: their families, guardians, care workers and school teachers;
- new partnerships with a wide range of local and international organisations help in sharing best practice and raising funds;
- the project is unusual in having a permanent facility that every street child can attend;
- the centre uses new methods of working with children through creative activities such as photography, jewellery-making and psychodrama techniques;
- the street children help run innovative new projects and events e.g. photographs taken by street children have been exhibited in a local store;
- Rakowicka 10 regularly evaluates the progress of each young person who takes part in the activities;
- the project's website has a dynamic interface, designed to be attractive to young people.



## Success

Rakowicka 10 changes the lives of an estimated 80% of young people who take part. It also benefits their families. In 2010, the field workers offered help to 424 street children: 366 of these joined in with Rakowicka 10 activities, 120 took part in relationship therapy, and 50 received individual therapy. These young people have benefited by gaining new social and practical skills, rebuilding their trust in adults and institutions, rebuilding their relationships with adults and family members, and improving their emotional health, economic situation and school attendance.

## Dissemination and sustainability

Staff often share information about the Rakowicka 10 project with other interested professionals, by making presentations at local and international conferences. Information about the project is also disseminated in print and via the Rakowicka 10 project's website and Facebook page.

Funded mainly by the state, the municipality and the United Way NGO, Rakowicka10 is also supported by other sponsors such as the Krakow Lions Club, the International Women's Association and private companies.

The positive contribution made by Rakowicka 10 is underlined by the sponsors' constant support for the project. It is hoped that funding can be maintained, despite the economic situation, to continue to increase social inclusion for street children.



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# LILLE MÉTROPOLE-ROUBAIX – SPIRAL: CITIZENS FULLY INVOLVED IN IMPROVING WELL-BEING IN THEIR AREA



*SPIRAL* is a new initiative by the Council of Europe. It provides municipalities and other organisations with a clear template for ensuring that citizens living in a particular neighbourhood are fully involved in deciding what well-being means for them, and in taking responsibility for the necessary actions to improve well-being. Roubaix is using the *SPIRAL* method to improve well-being for people living in Roubaix's most deprived neighbourhoods.

Many people in Roubaix's western neighbourhoods are increasingly socially isolated and socially excluded. They also experience tensions that can build up among people living in areas of deprivation. Contributing factors include long-term unemployment, illness, family break-up, and ineffective social policies that lack a holistic approach to social inclusion.

Despite the municipality's efforts to improve social cohesion and well-being over recent years, Roubaix's western neighbourhoods are in crisis. Roubaix has therefore decided to adopt the Council of Europe's new *SPIRAL* template: an innovative new approach, based on the experience of various cities, to get residents directly involved in solving the problems in their areas.

*SPIRAL* helps municipalities to work with citizens to:

- consult everyone involved in the neighbourhood, including residents, social welfare organisations, politicians and local businesses;
- create and agree a set of indicators to measure well-being in the neighbourhood;
- assess the effectiveness of current policies;
- determine what actions residents and other stakeholders must take to improve well-being for all, including future generations;
- agree co-responsibility for these actions and for ensuring they are carried out;
- regularly monitor and assess progress in achieving the goal of well-being.



## Innovation

Roubaix's use of the SPIRAL template is innovative in several ways:

- Roubaix is one of the first municipalities in Europe to use the SPIRAL method;
- SPIRAL creates a new form of partnership between Roubaix's citizens and public sector institutions, giving ordinary people a say in the goals and actions to improve well-being in their neighbourhood;
- SPIRAL's bottom-up approach gets everyone to go beyond the ties and concerns of their own group: it promotes dialogue, raises awareness of community needs, builds a shared vision of the future and ensures shared responsibility for the well-being of all.



## Success

Already, Roubaix's SPIRAL project is making a positive impact in its deprived western neighbourhoods. Specifically, the SPIRAL project has so far:

- created a local co-ordinating group of 15 people;
- held consultation meetings with 166 people, in groups of eight or so at a time, from 21 single-profile groups: ranging from council housing tenants, outdoor workers and religious representatives to parents, pupils and service staff from local schools through to senior citizens and a sample of residents from a block of flats;
- identified 1,987 criteria for well-being;
- created ties of solidarity and co-operation between various, sometimes opposing, groups in the neighbourhood;
- defused some of the tensions between different groups of people;
- enabled new leaders in the neighbourhood to emerge, who are determined to continue the SPIRAL approach and improve life in their neighbourhoods;
- restored credibility and legitimacy for Roubaix's traditional municipal organisations in the eyes of the local population;
- four residents have already started a campaign to ban the use of quad-bikes in the streets, creating a petition and collecting at least 30 signatures;
- seven residents have opened a shared family garden, with help from Roubaix's environmental services.



## Dissemination and sustainability

The Council of Europe's SPIRAL method is fully transferable. It can be used by any institution or administration anywhere, in order to involve citizens: on a local, regional, national or pan-European basis. It can be used to address any policies affecting community life: e.g. economic policies, town and spatial planning, health and hygiene, social affairs and culture.

At a later stage in the Roubaix SPIRAL project, Roubaix's practical experience of implementing the SPIRAL method can be shared with other local authorities across Europe.

In terms of sustainability, SPIRAL is a cyclical self-perpetuating process: after the initial cycle of consulting stakeholders, agreeing indicators, reviewing policies, agreeing actions and measuring outcomes, the cycle can begin again. Roubaix initially partnered with the University of Lille 1 to train four students in the SPIRAL consultative method. The city was then given an annual grant by Nord-Pas-de-Calais the Regional Council which funds a co-ordinator to oversee and maintain the consultation process into the future, to continue the SPIRAL process and achieve measurable improvements in social cohesion and well-being.



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# ROTTERDAM – SOCIAL GREENING: JOB CREATION AND SOCIAL COHESION THROUGH SMART INVESTMENT



Rotterdam's *Community Gardens* project is an innovative example of social greening: smart investment is making it possible to create urban green spaces in deprived neighbourhoods, both to provide jobs and to increase social cohesion.

Like many former industrial cities and ports in Europe, Rotterdam is evolving into a service-based economy. Many people who worked in traditional industries are now long-term unemployed. In addition, they live in deprived areas of the city and experience social isolation. They know relatively few people in the area, and only mix with others of a similar age and background.

Rotterdam has benefited from many social greening initiatives, both by the public sector and the private sector. Until now, these have mainly been developed to improve the environment, create new spaces for leisure, and reduce food miles by growing vegetables. However, over the past few years, the city has recognised that social greening can deliver additional social benefits.

With a need to cut unemployment and social isolation in deprived areas, Rotterdam's Social Affairs and Employment Department decided to use active inclusion funding to establish the Community Gardens project. This involves working with the local community to create two green spaces in two of the most deprived neighbourhoods in Rotterdam: Schiemond and Oudeland.

One of the key requirements of the active inclusion funding is to create jobs. So the project has been designed to provide local unemployed people with paid work and skills training: in gardening, agriculture and maintenance.

At the same time, the project aims to increase local social cohesion. So people living in the area have been actively invited to have a say in what they would like in the gardens (e.g. a stage for performances and vegetable plots), through discussions and workshops, and also to help maintain and manage the gardens.



## Innovation

Rotterdam's Community Gardens project benefits from several key innovations:

- smart investment is the most innovative element of the project: the use of active inclusion funds from Rotterdam's Social Affairs and Employment Department not only to improve social inclusion by creating jobs, but also to improve social cohesion;
- extending the policy arena of the Social Affairs and Employment Department beyond its traditional role is further innovation: its focus has been extended to urban greening, use of public space, health issues and the environment, which points to a new way of implementing the city's policies;
- using a new bottom-up approach is also a relatively new departure, to ensure local people are involved in the decision-making process right from the start: this creates new partnerships between citizens and the municipality, new ways of planning, and new types of user involvement.



## Success

The project is still at an early stage. Actual outcomes will be evaluated during the next stages, but it is expected that the following key benefits will be achieved:

- local people who have been unemployed will be given jobs in the local service team, providing a range of services such as graffiti removal and year-round maintenance;
- social cohesion will improve as people of different ages and backgrounds in the community build stronger ties, through working together to design and maintain the gardens, and to grow fruit and vegetables to eat;
- the gardens may help people who are particularly affected by the tough economic climate to cope with their situation: through feeling less isolated, through an increased awareness of the environment, food production and healthier lifestyles, and through living in a more attractive neighbourhood.



## Dissemination and sustainability

Rotterdam is continually learning from the experiences of greening projects elsewhere: locally, nationally and internationally. For example, the city has taken into consideration the experiences of projects in Germany (e.g. Gottingen), the UK (e.g. London) and the USA (e.g. Milwaukee, Detroit, New York City).

In 2009, to bring together local knowledge and ideas on greening initiatives, Rotterdam established an urban agriculture think tank. It involves representatives of all city departments, including the Social Affairs and Employment Department, and advises on the city's greening projects. Issues that are taken into account include: the environment, the quality of public space, reducing thermal heat-stress in hot weather, air quality and reducing food miles.

Once the outcomes of the Community Gardens project start to be evaluated, the project's experiences will be shared within the city's urban agriculture think tank, and with other organisations, both locally and internationally. This will help promote social greening and best practice in improving social inclusion and social cohesion.



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# SOFIA - ASSISTANCE FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING: AN INNOVATIVE SERVICE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



Sofia's *Assistance for Independent Living* is an innovative personalised social service provided by the Sofia municipality. It offers people with disabilities up to 300 hours' help a month by up to five personal assistants. This allows them to participate more fully in society.

Until Assistance for Independent Living was introduced, social services care in Sofia was mainly restricted to care in the home. Other assistance had to be paid for privately. Many people with disabilities have limited funds: they cannot afford private care and have been at risk of social exclusion.

Assistance for Independent Living pays for up to five personal assistants: they are selected by the user and can be family members or friends.

The service is available to all adults and children aged five years and over who have certain levels of disability that put them at high risk of social exclusion. In particular, this includes significant difficulties with ordinary day-to-day life such as daily care, mobility and social activities.

Clients can be helped by one personal assistant at a time, and they have the freedom to determine the times they would like help and the way they wish to be helped. If the work of an assistant does not meet the required standards, service users can end a contract by writing to the municipality.

All the Personal Assistants are paid by the municipality. Each year, Sofia allocates the necessary funds, based on costs for the previous year and on forecast demand for the year ahead. This means that increasing numbers of people are being helped.



## Innovation

The success of the Assistance for Independent Living service is based on several key innovations:

- the service is completely free of charge, regardless of a person's income;
- Personal Assistants can help not only with home care, but with all kinds of other activities e.g. journeys to school and college, excursions to see friends, grocery and other shopping, and visits to the doctor: Sofia is the first municipality in Bulgaria to offer this approach;
- application documents are easy to access on the municipal website;
- service users are given the opportunity to freely put forward their recommendations, requests and expectations through group discussions and anonymous surveys;
- before any changes are made, an inclusive consultation process means that proposals are published on the municipal website, and views and comments are taken into account;
- several key organisations have taken part in the consultation process:
  - National Council for the Integration of People with Disabilities (involving c.20 organisations);
  - Agency for Disabled People;
  - Public Council for Social Policy.

“This is the only service that allows families to breathe: to live a little more like everyone else. It is of great importance to us that the service continues in exactly the same way, managed by Sofia Municipality.”

Client, Assistance for Independent Living, Sofia.

## Success

In Sofia, Assistance for Independent Living is widely recognised as vital in transforming the lives of service users and their families. Since the service was introduced in 2008, the number of service users has almost tripled. It gives people more chance of being treated equally, as well as the ability to live, learn, work and develop according to their desires and ambitions, and a real opportunity to play their part in society.

Regular surveys confirm that Assistance for Independent Living provides a high quality service that makes a positive difference to clients' lives. This is underlined by the latest research results:

- almost 80% agreed it is the most useful social service for disabled people;
- 74% said it enables them to be actively included in society;
- over 90% said that their lives have become easier;
- over 95% want to continue to use the service;
- on average, they rated the quality of the service at 7.6 out of 10 i.e. high quality;
- on average, they rated the quality of the assistants' work at 9.7 out of 10: i.e. almost perfect.

“For many of us this service is our only salvation and I hope it will continue.”

Client, Assistance for Independent Living, Sofia.

## Dissemination and sustainability

Information on the key factors in the success of the service could be shared with other towns and cities, to help other organisations set up a similar service. Assistance for Independent Living has proved highly successful in Sofia. It is expected that the service will continue to be funded, to reduce social exclusion for people with disabilities and significantly increase their levels of participation.



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# STOCKHOLM – CROSSROADS: INFORMATION AND SUPPORT FOR EU MIGRANTS



Stockholm's *Crossroads* project provides a welcoming drop-in centre for EU migrants who are unemployed and destitute. It provides essentials such as food and daytime shelter, as well as advice and training opportunities.

In Stockholm, it is currently very difficult for people who are low skilled, or who don't speak Swedish, to find a job. At the same time, housing costs are high. In addition, for people who are EU citizens but not Swedish citizens, and who don't have a regular job or the correct paperwork, government assistance is very limited and can be hard to access.

Increasing numbers of EU economic migrants who move to Stockholm to find work are ending up in extreme poverty. Some are from the EU accession countries in Eastern Europe; others are from deprived areas in other EU countries. Although they have the right to live in Sweden, they cannot support themselves and they may not have the money or motivation to return to their country of origin. Many of them end up homeless.

The innovative *Crossroads* project, run by the City Mission NGO in Stockholm, helps reduce social exclusion and homelessness among EU migrants. Opened in March 2011 in the centre of Stockholm, *Crossroads* provides meals, showers, laundry facilities and space to sit and rest, plus information, training courses and counselling services. It also arranges discussion groups so that clients can share experiences. All these services free of charge, and are designed to help homeless EU migrants to turn their lives around.

The centre is run by five full-time employees and many volunteers, including interpreters, lawyers and counsellors.



## Innovation

Crossroads is designed to support clients as effectively as possible through the following innovative approaches:

- an innovative combination of:
  - high quality information about living in Swedish society, including advice on housing, employment, training and legal aspects;
  - an understanding of clients' cultural backgrounds, making it easier for staff to provide relevant advice and counselling;
  - language skills, so staff can interpret for clients as well as giving them the chance to learn Swedish and English;
- a new form of collaboration in Sweden: between the public sector and the voluntary sector;
- new ways of working with homeless EU migrants: Sweden's own welfare services had no experience of working with this target group, and although some of the project's initiatives are based on similar work in other European cities, there are relatively few other projects to learn from;
- an unusual client focused approach with inbuilt flexibility to adapt to clients' needs: e.g. when only a few clients expressed a wish to go back to their home country, the focus shifted to improving the situation for the target group in Stockholm;
- a new empowering approach: clients are encouraged to develop their own individual action plans.



## Success

The centre has helped significant numbers of people since it opened. The following results show that clients are already making progress and are motivated to take positive steps to improve their situation:

- some 90 clients developed their own personal action plans in the first three months of the project;
- many clients attend several training courses: this represents a total of some 300 course-attendances per month, 230 of which are to learn the Swedish language.



## Dissemination and sustainability

Crossroads aims to publicise the problems faced by EU migrants, in order to start a debate about the issues and influence policy.

Widespread media coverage has already been achieved in Sweden. Newspaper articles and radio programmes have described the plight of this new group of homeless people, and describe Crossroads as providing vital help in moving clients towards employment. An immediate result is that many people have volunteered to help at the centre.

The project is also sharing experiences and best practice with other organisations and cities working with homeless EU migrants across Europe. Stockholm's City Mission is cooperating with other City Missions across the Nordic countries and elsewhere, to disseminate information about the project.

Crossroads is a three-year project co-financed by the European Social Fund, the National Public Employment Service and Stockholm City, working with the City Mission and Salvation Army. If there is still a need for Crossroads after the end of the funding period, the City Mission plans to find the funds to continue, in order to support active inclusion for EU economic migrants looking for work in the city.



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## **Cities for Active Inclusion**

Cities for Active Inclusion is a dynamic network of nine European cities – Birmingham, Bologna, Brno, Copenhagen, Krakow, Lille Métropole - Roubaix, Rotterdam, Sofia and Stockholm – each with a local authority observatory (LAO) within its administration. Their aim is to share information, promote mutual learning and carry out research on the implementation of active inclusion strategies at the local level.

The observatories are coordinated by EUROCITIES, the network of major cities in Europe, and supported by a partnership between the European Commission (DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion) and EUROCITIES.