

MAINSTREAMING SOCIAL INCLUSION

National Report for the Czech Republic

**Miroslava Rakoczyova
Robert Trbola**

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List of contents

1. Background	3
2. Methodology	5
3. How is mainstreaming social inclusion understood?	9
4. Elements of mainstreaming social inclusion	10
4.1 Public policy	11
4.2 Participation	21
4.3 Monitoring and evaluation	25
4.4 Conclusion.....	28
Annex: Mainstreaming social inclusion of the disabled in the Czech Republic (national case study).....	30
1. Mainstreaming social inclusion across the institutional structure.....	31
2. Mainstreaming social inclusion across public policy.....	33
3. Moravian-Silesian regional plan on the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities: an example of a good practice	38

1. Background

In 2003, the Combat Poverty Agency, along with a number of European partners, undertook a three-year research project to advance the understanding of mainstreaming social inclusion (MSI). The project was funded by the European Commission under the Trans-national Exchange Programme (TEPs). This programme was aimed at promoting the exchange of learning and the best practices between Member States in combating and preventing poverty and social exclusion.

It was envisaged that the knowledge gained through this MSI project would contribute to the successful implementation of EU strategies in tackling poverty and promoting social inclusion.

There were two phases to this project:

- In Phase I (2003) the project investigated the understanding of the term mainstreaming in each partner country or region and identified the key features that constitute mainstreaming;
- Phase II (2004-05) investigated the potential of mainstreaming social inclusion into public policy with the aim of achieving positive outcomes for people experiencing poverty and the benefits that mainstreaming can confer.

Considering that the scope of such a project could be extensive and given the limited time scale, it was necessary for the study to focus on four specific areas –

- a) How poverty and social exclusion issues are taken into consideration in the planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of public policies, including budgetary decisions;
- b) Cross-departmental work arrangements (including formal and informal approaches);
- c) How the participation / involvement of stakeholders (including people experiencing poverty, social partners, NGOs, political actors,

- administrative personnel and service providers) is incorporated into the planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies;
- d) The development of an evaluation framework for measuring the impact of mainstreaming social inclusion and poverty in the public policy process.

To further concentrate the work of the project team, a definition of mainstreaming social inclusion, which could be used in all the partner countries, was agreed as follows:

Mainstreaming social inclusion is the integration of poverty and social inclusion objectives, including an equality perspective, into all areas and levels of policy-making, and that is promoted through the participation of public bodies, social partners, NGOs and other relevant actors.

In 2005 the European Commission issued a new Call for Proposals - VP2005/009 for the Evaluation of the Impact of Inclusion Policies under the Open method of Co-ordination (Budget Line 0404202). The Combat Poverty Agency applied for, and received, further funding for 2006 under this budget. The task was to undertake an evaluation of mainstreaming social inclusion using the framework methodology developed during Phase II of the MSI project¹.

To implement the study, the Combat Poverty Agency, which is an Irish State advisory agency, brought together a group of partners from nine European countries. These included seven EU Member States (Czech Republic, France, Ireland, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovak Republic and the UK), Bulgaria and Norway. The European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) had also been involved in the original MSI project and continued to participate, as an NGO, in this evaluation phase.

The study was designed to test the methodology for assessing Mainstreaming Social Inclusion, developed during Phase II of the MSI project. In doing so, it was the objective of this study to provide a European benchmark (the MSI Scale) for the

¹ Better Policies, Better Outcomes – Promoting Mainstreaming Social Inclusion K P O’Kelly and I Litewska, Combat Poverty Agency, Dublin (2006). See also www.msieurope.eu

measurement of mainstreaming social inclusion into social, economic, environmental and infrastructural policies. As an additional support for OMC, the study also aimed to provide a tool to evaluate the political and administrative commitment to the eradication of poverty and social exclusion, and also to compare the approach of the different levels of administration (national, regional, local) in addressing the challenges of poverty and social exclusion. It attempted to compare how the different governance structures of the participating countries affect the mainstreaming of social inclusion into the design and implementation of public policies. Finally, it seeks to establish what the various actors in public policy-making understand by 'mainstreaming social inclusion'.

It is intended that the findings of this study will provide the European Commission with empirical evidence of what it might set as priorities for future NAPs/inclusion guidelines. It also provides a comparative tool for the measurement of progress in the eradication of poverty and social exclusion across the Member States, thus providing data on 'good practice' and 'achieving greater convergence towards the main EU goals' (Lisbon Presidency Conclusions). The project also provides information on the elements of mainstreaming social inclusion which are considered critical in reducing poverty and social exclusion.

2. Methodology

The units of enquiry for the study were the public sector establishments at the various levels of administration in each participating country – local, regional and national. The data gathered from these establishments were augmented by additional data from outside the public policy arena, based on the observations of NGOs and the social partners in each country.

There are three parts to the study:

- A survey, using the evaluation questionnaire developed as part of Phase II of the MSI project (Appendix 1);
- A series of interviews with selected respondents to the survey, based on an agreed interview guide (Appendix 2);
- A 'good practice' case study from each participating country.

Survey: The first part of the study was a quantitative evaluation survey using the MSI questionnaire, which was translated into the official/working languages of the participating countries. The questionnaire was mailed (electronically or by post) by the national research organisations involved in the project to the following organisational cells:

- Selected ministries and government agencies; ²
- Administrative regions
- Local authorities/municipalities;
- Trade unions and employer organisations;
- NGOs working with people experiencing poverty and social exclusion (identified through the European Anti-Poverty Network);
- Other civil society organisations relevant to social inclusion.

The criteria for the selection of target organisations in each organisational cell are set out in the sampling matrix shown in Table 1.

The survey targeted a range of levels/job categories, from senior and middle management to service providers, within each organisation. The functions of the organisations surveyed in each country were similar, for example, ministries with similar functions/areas of responsibility were targeted, reflecting the policy areas referred to in the Lisbon European Council Presidency Conclusions – e.g. employment, education and training, health, and housing. A number of ministries with responsibilities in non-social policy areas were also included.

Table 1: Matrix of survey target organisations

MINISTRIES/ DEPARTMENTS AT THE CENTRAL/ NATIONAL LEVEL	REGIONAL MINISTRIES/ DEPARTMENTS WITH DEVOLVED/ TRANSFERRED POLICY-MAKING POWERS	LOCAL AUTHORITIES/ MUNICIPALITIES	SOCIAL PARTNERS	NGOs / CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS
Directly Involved in Social Policies: ➤ Employment ➤ Education / Training	Directly Involved in Social Policies: ➤ Employment ➤ Education /	Predominantly Urban ➤ Political	Peak National Employers' Organisation	NGOs working with groups and persons experiencing poverty and

² Where there is an office/unit with a particular responsibility for social inclusion issues in the national, regional and/or local administrations, this office/unit was included in the survey.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Health Services ➤ Housing / Accommodation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Training ➤ Health Services ➤ Housing / Accommodation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ leadership ➤ Senior Administrator 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> social exclusion (e.g. the unemployed; the homeless; single parents; asylum seekers/immigrants; people with disabilities, etc.)
<p>Indirectly Involved in Social Policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Finance/Economic ➤ Environment ➤ Justice ➤ Culture ➤ Transport 	<p>Indirectly Involved in Social Policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Transport ➤ Environment ➤ Culture 	<p>Predominantly Rural</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Political leadership ➤ Senior Administrator 	<p>Peak National Trade Union Confederation</p>	<p>Other Civil Society organisations (e.g. elderly; youth; consumers; gender equality; environment; communities etc.)</p>
		<p>Size by population</p>		

With regard to the regional and local administrations, these were selected, as far as possible, on the basis of:

- A mix of rural and urban administrations;
- Similar relative population sizes (from the largest third and the smallest third);
- Deprivation levels.

Two types of civil society organisations (NGOs) were surveyed. First, those working with and representing people at risk of poverty and social exclusion and vulnerable groups. For example, organisations working with the unemployed, the homeless, single parents, people with disabilities or with immigrants were chosen.³ Secondly, other relevant social organisations involved with groups such as the elderly, young people, gender equality or community development.

The selected organisations in each category were based on the relative size, in terms of population, of the participating countries. The objective was to survey ten people in each ministry/government agency, six in each of the regional and local authorities/municipalities and one person from each of the social partners and the selected civil society organisations. For the Czech Republic the target number of

³ As immigration is not an issue in Bulgaria, this topic was not included in the questionnaire distributed in that country.

respondents was 124. This was made up of 60 individuals from ministries; 48 from regional authorities and municipalities; eight from trade unions and employers; and eight from NGOs. The Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs mailed (by post and electronically) questionnaires to 180 respondents. Initially, only a small proportion of them were returned. However, after personal/phone contact urging a response, almost 70% of the questionnaires were returned. Thus, the total number of responses collected (126) had even slightly exceeded the target size of the sample. The least likely to answer were respondents from regional and local governments, with a response rate only slightly exceeding 50%. (However, more than double of the target number for these levels of the public sector were approached and thus, the number of responses was actually higher than the target number). Similarly, there was a relatively lower response from ministry officials, with the exception of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Instead of contacting six different ministries and collecting ten questionnaires from each of them, we approached only five ministries. The remaining ten respondents approached were representatives of various governmental advisory bodies who are experts in governmental policies related to individual groups at risk of social exclusion (e.g. Roma, national minorities, the disabled). On the other hand, representatives of NGOs have shown the greatest enthusiasm in filling out the questionnaires. The survey was undertaken from May to July 2006.

Interviews: The second part of the project was a series of follow-up interviews with between eight and sixteen key actors in each country. For the Czech Republic, eight interviews were planned and conducted. The selection of interviewees was dependent on the responses to the survey questionnaire, as it included a question asking if the respondent would participate in an in-depth interview. On the basis of the responses to this question, interviewees were selected across the different levels of administration and civil society organisations and the different policy areas, reflecting, as far as possible, the target population for the survey. In the Czech Republic, only a very few respondents had shown interest in interview participation. At the local and regional government level, there was no interest at all. However, after personal contact, two representatives of the local government and one representative of the regional government agreed to an interview.

The interview was semi-structured and was based on the common interview guide. The guide was designed to further explore the interviewees' opinions on the main topics covered in the questionnaire – political leadership; administrative leadership; resources; structures; involvement and participation; etc., with examples given from within their own organisations. The interviews were carried out throughout July and August 2006, and their duration varied from 30 to 50 minutes.

The submitted national report is based on the analysis of the quantitative, as well as the qualitative part of the study. It is accompanied by the national case study that demonstrates how mainstreaming social inclusion is undertaken in the Czech Republic. The case study focuses on social inclusion of the disabled across the policy areas and policy structures. It also includes the difficulties and shortcomings in the implementation of mainstreaming social inclusion.

3. How is mainstreaming social inclusion understood?

Both mainstreaming and social inclusion are new concepts within public policy in the Czech Republic. The process of social inclusion and related strategies (including its mainstreaming) were implemented mainly in relation to the EU-accession. As such, they have a rather top-down policy character even though inclusive activities at the practical level have been carried out for a number of years. Interest in social inclusion at lower levels (including NGOs) was also strongly shaped by the EU-policies, especially by new funding possibilities from the European Social Fund (ESF).

The level of understanding of what mainstreaming of social inclusion means differs substantially among the interviewees. Most of them have confined MSI exclusively to the 'social agenda', such as social security, social care and social services, employment, housing policy and education. Only a very few respondents identified the possibilities of MSI in other policy areas, such as health care, economic development, information and communication technologies, transportation, justice or crime prevention. This is somewhat contrasting with the results of the quantitative part of the study, in which the following definition of mainstreaming social inclusion was provided in the questionnaire:

Mainstreaming social inclusion is the integration of poverty and social inclusion issues, including an equality perspective, into all areas and levels of policy-

making and that is promoted through the participation of public bodies, social partners, NGOs and other relevant actors.

A majority of respondents (67%) accepted this definition by stating that it has great importance in the Czech Republic. This indicates that the respondents relate mainstreaming to all areas of public policy. Based on the interviews, however, we have identified that the importance of mainstreaming social inclusion is only related to all areas of a broadly-defined social policy. The understanding of mainstreaming social inclusion is therefore incomplete in the Czech Republic.

In addition, a substantial proportion of interviewees expressed difficulties in understanding the term 'social inclusion'; - they pointed out that it is new, unclear or very broad. This appears to be an important obstacle to the effective implementation of mainstreaming social inclusion at all levels of public policy in the Czech Republic. At the central (national) level the concept is perceived as abstract and broad.

'Social inclusion is difficult to handle at the higher levels. Social inclusion becomes understandable and evident as a functioning mechanism, i.e. in the situation of its application on individual or group cases or in the solution of certain local or regional problems. At a level higher than regional ... there are big changes in viewpoints and in the understanding of what different speakers mean...' (respondent from the ministry, member of the NAPS incl. unit).

At lower levels (regional and local) the term 'social inclusion' was similarly described as too general and vague, i.e. inadequately defined. As such, the concept 'disappears' in the agenda. It became clear that one municipality was familiar with the concept due to their long-term co-operation with municipalities from EU-countries. However, they also confirmed that the term is new in the Czech legislation and that they have not used it in practice.

4. Elements of mainstreaming social inclusion

In the following part of the report we will examine the three elements of mainstreaming social inclusion, i.e. public policy, participation and monitoring and evaluation. Among others we will address questions of the political commitment to social inclusion and its mainstreaming. We will also address the extent of the

implementation of mainstreaming social inclusion across all the policy areas as well as across all the levels of public administration in the Czech Republic including the question of resources allocated to this policy area. Furthermore, we will examine the role of institutions outside the Czech public administration in the process of mainstreaming social inclusion.

4.1 Public policy

In the following paragraphs we focus on the subject of mainstreaming social inclusion in the Czech Republic. We identify the areas of public policy which already incorporate issues of poverty and social exclusion/inclusion as well as those where these issues are still very marginal. Mainstreaming social inclusion is a new approach within the public policy in the Czech Republic. In order to introduce it and to implement it successfully, there must be both political will and sufficient resources (financial as well as human). We include these factors into the analysis of mainstreaming social inclusion as they constitute important pre-conditions.

Is there a political will?

As the interviews show, there has been progress in the process of social inclusion in the Czech Republic. It is mainly manifested in several new legal acts which are re-shaping social benefits as well as social services. These new approaches aim at social inclusion (through various means including both supportive and coercive mechanisms) and in general are valued positively by the public administration as well as NGO's representatives. However, many interviewees considered the transformation of social policy to be too slow. The reason lies in the lack of political consensus about the long-term social policy orientation at the central level, and a widespread lack of commitment to social inclusion and its mainstreaming. Social inclusion still does not constitute a significant topic in general political or even public debates; it is mostly restricted to the traditional social agenda. As several respondents put it – mainstreaming social inclusion is not 'a great theme' for politicians. It is not discussed in parliament, nor was it included in the election program of political parties during the parliamentary elections of 2006.

The lack of political commitment was also identified by the quantitative part of the study. While more than one third of the respondents stated that the reduction of poverty and social exclusion were high on the government’s agenda, only a significantly lower proportion of them (13,6 %) believed the senior politicians championed and sponsored the issue throughout the central government. At the lower levels (regional and local), the policies against poverty and social exclusion are in general not perceived as a key political priority.

Table 2: Are the policies against poverty and social exclusion a key political priority?

	At the local level			At the regional level		
	No of respondents	%	EU average %	No of respondents	%	EU average %
Not at all	12	9,6	5,8	7	5,6	6,7
Low (To a little/some extent)	95	76	55	103	82.4	66.3
High (To a great/very great extent)	15	12	34,6	12	9,6	27
Don’t know	3	2,4	4,7	3	2,4	6,5
Total	125	100	100	125	100	100

Even though social inclusion and its mainstreaming are not a political priority, political leadership and its ideological background are considered to be crucial for the shaping of socially inclusive policies and their position within public policy. This was particularly stressed during interviews at the local level.

However, there seems to be a universal tendency among the decision-makers of distinguishing (implicitly or explicitly) between ‘deserving’ and ‘non-deserving’ groups at risk of poverty and social exclusion. The political will to support the latter group

appears to be very low, regardless of their party affiliation. It can be noted that the social inclusion of these people is a very complex process due to the accumulation of their problems and that there are no 'easy solutions' at hand:

"...some groups are more acceptable [for the political leadership] than others ... there is a group called the 'socially unadjusted' or the Roma community – it continues to be a rather big problem to integrate the Roma community, as there are many problems, mainly related to housing and employment. It is one of the target groups in our community plan, but it is, I would say, a very unpopular one for politicians across the political spectrum..." (respondent from municipality)

Thus, there are indications that the most disadvantaged face difficulties in gaining institutionalised support in local communities. There is a need to explain the importance of social inclusion for the well-being of the whole community/society and to 'popularise' the topic amongst political representatives. So far, the motivation to implement the concept of social inclusion into the political agenda has been mainly pragmatic. Apart from the requirements related to the integration of the Czech Republic into the political processes of the EU, a strong driving force was the potential access to new EU funding resources. In this respect, it is important that the European Social Fund (ESF) is not perceived only as a financial resource. The conviction that it was a major and irreplaceable tool in the promotion of the principle of social inclusion, was expressed in some of the interviews. Due to the need of co-financing, the authorities are necessarily getting interested in social inclusion.

"...we can't omit the intervention of ESF. That is a revolutionary moment, because in this way some topics are a priori implemented into the discussion ... we are grateful to ESF for that. We are a small entity and as such we have never managed to highlight its [social inclusion] importance even though we have been trying to..." (NGO representative)

One of the interviewees voiced appreciation of the current MSI study. According to him, such initiatives from the European Union have the potential to promote interest in social inclusion in the Czech Republic.

“I am very glad this research project is being carried out also in the Czech Republic. I think it can help make social inclusion a topic of discussion. So far, it is not a priority subject for policy makers but I would welcome the change. There are some European countries that understand that it is an important issue for the health of the society.” (NGO representative).

Resources

Among the resources, the interviews showed a high reliance on European structural funds. They have mainly mentioned the ESF that is directly oriented towards the promotion of social inclusion and the fight against poverty. A positive evaluation of the ESF was common in interviews across the different levels of public administration. It was also highly thought off by the social partners and NGO representatives.

The allocation of resources throughout the government administration towards policies against poverty and social exclusion is important in regards to mainstreaming social inclusion. In total, about one third of the respondents stated that this was being done only to a small extent. The most negative judgements were expressed by representatives of the civil society organisations (excluding employer’s organisations). On the contrary, the most positive reactions were respondents from ministries, and surprisingly also from local governments.

Table 3: Are the resources across all government policies directed towards policies against poverty and social exclusion?

	No. of respondents	%	EU average %
Not at all	0	0	3,2
Low (To a little/some extent)	96	76,2	74,1
High (To a great/very great extent)	21	16,7	19,3
Don't know	9	7,1	3,5
Total	126	100	100

However, it is not quite clear whether respondents related the question to all the government policies or rather to those that they regard as relevant to social inclusion (i.e. social policies). Based on the overall perception of the incorporation of social inclusion into different policy areas, we may assume the results are rather related to policies within the government’s traditional social agenda.

For the successful implementation of mainstreaming social inclusion, human resources are equally important as financial ones. There should be specialists in poverty and social exclusion at all the levels of public administration who have a deep interest in and knowledge of these issues. In order to incorporate the fight against poverty and social exclusion outside the traditional social agenda however, there must also be a general awareness about this topic among the officials. Furthermore, in addition to knowledge and information, personal qualities and interest are also important. The interviewees stressed the importance of communication skills and the ability to explain the problem, personal commitment, organisational and fund-raising skills among those who implement mainstreaming social inclusion.

Regarding the specialists, there is a general consensus among respondents that these are employed at the ministry level. A smaller number of respondents stated that the specialists are employed at the lower levels of public administration – many of them did not know. However, there were only a very few respondents who stated that no specialists are employed in the public administration.

Table 4: Are specialists in the area of poverty and social exclusion employed at the following levels of public administration? (%)

	Opinion at the ministry level	EU average	Opinion at the regional level	EU average	Opinion at the local level	EU average
Yes	58,9	67	46,0	48	32,3	55
No	8,1	9	11,1	16	16,1	14
Don't know	33,1	25	42,9	36	51,6	32

The results indicate that only a few people know about the presence of the specialists at the local level (except of those who are municipal employees themselves and NGO representatives). It is somewhat disturbing that even at the ministry level, two out of three do not know whether the local governments employ specialists in area of poverty and social exclusion. The respondents from the local authority themselves, however, clearly expressed that there are specialists focusing on this area (for more detailed information on answers of the respondents from different organisations see table 5). They may consider, for example, employees of the social department to be experts in issues of poverty and social exclusion. In general, the respondents knew more about the presence of the experts at the level of public administration, where they were employed.

Table 5: Are specialists in the area of poverty and social exclusion employed at the following levels of public administration? (% of positive answers)

Respondents from:	At the ministry level	At the regional level	At the local level
Ministries	62,5 (86,2)	30,0 (75,0)	15,0 (42,9)
Regional governments	61,5 (92,3)	70,7 (87,8)	33,3 (72,2)
Local governments	43,5 (100)	17,4 (44,4)	65,2 (78,9)
Other organisations	63,6 (77,8)	59,1 (92,9)	27,3 (66,7)

Note: Numbers in parentheses express the share of positive answers after disregarding ‘don’t know’ answers.

Awareness about poverty and social exclusion is supposed to grow as the training in this area is given at all the levels of public administration. However, the questionnaire did not reveal whether such training is provided to all the employees from various departments or whether it is rather limited to selected departments (e.g. social departments). The interviews showed that employees of the NGOs are also trained and educated in the area of poverty and social exclusion/inclusion. Among the interviewees, there was one who had personal experience with the provision of the educational program related directly to mainstreaming social inclusion:

“We have an educational system within the organisation, which is open also for people outside. Originally, it was oriented towards our own employees but nowadays about half of the participants are from outside the organisation – from other NGOs, public social service organisations and from the local government.”

The initiatives in the area of social inclusion and its mainstreaming are thus coming not only from the ministry level (e.g. the Ministry of education incorporated the issue of inclusion of certain groups into the educational programs for the teachers).

Key areas of MSI in the Czech Republic

As mentioned, there are only a few policy areas where social inclusion is taken into account. This ‘thematic’ deficiency was identified at the governmental level, as well as at the regional and local level of public administration. While most of the policy areas do involve social inclusion to some degree, only social security and employment policies are, according to respondents, doing so to ‘a great’ or even to ‘a very great extent’. We revealed in the interviews, that employment is considered to be a key step in the process of social inclusion. However, the respondents identified barriers in mainstreaming social inclusion within the employment policy. They mainly emphasised a lack of cooperation between different levels of public administration and the absence of local employment strategies. A strong dominance of the state in employment policies and a lack of cooperation with other institutions were criticised mainly by interviewees representing local governments and NGOs, who consider them to be obstacles for social inclusion of the most disadvantaged.

Among the traditional social policy agendas, housing policy was in general perceived as lacking a social inclusion perspective. This may be related to the process of housing privatisation and long-term ambiguity of social housing in the Czech Republic. The most sceptical were regional government and civil society representatives (NGOs, unions, employers organisations, etc.), i.e. those that have not been directly involved in the above mentioned processes. On the other hand, respondents from the ministries were rather positive with almost one third of them (10 out of 34) stating that social exclusion and poverty are taken into account within the government’s housing policies. (However, they do not differ from the others in the evaluation of mainstreaming social inclusion within legislation relevant to housing – see table 4).

Table 6: Incorporation of poverty and social exclusion into the government policies and relevant legislation (respondents declaring incorporation to a great or a very great extent, %)

	Government policy	Legislation
Social security	61,4	52,1
Employment	37,1	28,1
Education and training	24,2	21,0
Health services	23,6	17,3
Equality	22,4	20,5
Housing	13,5	7,5
Economic development	13,1	6,7
Immigration	13,0	12,5
Justice/crime prevention	12,4	9,3
Transport	5,8	5,0
Information and communication technology	5,0	6,7

Government policies concerning information and communication technologies and transport are, according to respondents, the least likely to incorporate socially inclusive perspectives. More than 20% of the respondents believed that poverty and social exclusion have not been incorporated into these two policy areas at all. In addition, the interviews have revealed a virtual absence of mainstreaming social inclusion at the lower (especially local) level of public administration. At the local level, social inclusion is considered to be exclusively a matter for the social department and NGOs.

Administrative leadership and implementation of policies against poverty and social exclusion

Despite difficulties resulting from the lack of political priority attributed to social inclusion, most of the respondents regard senior managers in their organisation as committed to policies against poverty and social exclusion. There were only four respondents according to whom the senior management is not committed to them at all (three of them were from the ministries and one from a trade union). The most dedicated are, not surprisingly, managers of NGOs directly working against poverty and social exclusion. However, there are also a high proportion of positive responses within the public administration sphere. Almost half (45 %) of respondents from the central government stated that the senior managers are committed to ‘a great’ or ‘a

very great extent' – the same was declared by more than one third of respondents from the regional (35,9%) and local (39,1%) governments.

However, the survey also showed that despite the overall high commitment to policies against poverty and social exclusion, their implementation is generally inadequately co-ordinated. In general, the respondents did not know about units in charge of the co-ordination of socially inclusive policies – a majority of them simply did not know whether such a unit existed or not. On the regional and local level there might be differences among the individual authorities, as they do not have the same structures. It seems that some authorities have such a unit, while others do not. At the ministerial and central (national) level there is a body in charge of the co-ordination of socially inclusive policies – and most respondents knew about it.

The lack of co-ordination was identified particularly at the regional level, which was rated the lowest by respondents from all different types of organisations (including respondents from regional governments themselves). For example, more than half of the respondents from local governments believe that there is no or very little co-ordination at the regional level (the same was also said by more than 40% of respondents from regional governments). The implementation of policies against poverty and social exclusion is perceived the most positively at the central level.

Table 7: Co-ordination of the policies implementation

	Local government			Regional government			Central government		
	No. of respondents	%	EU average %	No. of respondents	%	EU average %	No. of respondents	%	EU average %
Not at all	14	11,3	8,2	10	8,1	11,9	8	6,5	6,3
Low (to a little/some extent)	73	58,9	56,8	85	38,6	71,9	80	64,5	61
High (to a great/very great extent)	15	12,1	22	11	8,9	17,1	13	10,5	26,9
Don't know	22	17,7	12,9	18	14,5	n/a	23	18,5	5,8
Total	124	100	100	124	100	100	100	100	100

There is a relatively strong and statistically significant correlation between the perceived degree of co-ordination at different levels of public administration. In other words, the respondents tend to evaluate them similarly. This is evident at the regional level, which is strongly correlated to both local (Spearman's rho 0,648) and central (0,519) governments, while the relation between the local and central level is less strong (0,285)⁴.

The survey also revealed the lack of mutual knowledge between the central government on one side and local and regional governments on the other side. About one third of respondents from the ministries simply did not know if there is any co-ordination of policies against poverty and social exclusion across the local/regional level or not. Likewise, a significant proportion of local (30,4%) and regional (20,5%)

⁴ Correlations are significant at the 0,01 level.

government representatives did not know about their co-ordination across the central government. This might be a sign of an inadequate level of communication between different levels of public administration and a barrier to mainstreaming social inclusion effectively.

Strategic documents (e.g. NAPS/Inclusion and Decade of Roma Inclusion) were mentioned by the interviewees as important for mainstreaming social inclusion across all the separate levels of public administration and across all the relevant policy areas. They recognise that the central government plays a key role in the formulation of overall strategies. Regarding the strategy of mainstreaming social inclusion, they stressed the importance of the central government's working and advisory bodies, e.g. the Council for National Minorities, the Inter-ministerial Commission for Roma Community Affairs and the Commission for Social Inclusion and NAPS/Inclusion preparation. Their members are representatives of public administration, social partners, non-governmental organisations and other relevant organisations/actors.

4.2 Participation

In the following section we focus on the involvement of various agents outside the public administration in the development of social inclusion policy. We are mostly interested in what type of opportunities people who directly experience poverty and social exclusion have to influence relevant policies, and the position of non-governmental organisations in policy development, as well as in socially inclusive processes.

The interviews have shown that while groups at risk of poverty and social exclusion exist, responses to their problems are divided amongst different institutions or departments without any co-operation. There is a significant lack of networking within the social sector in the Czech Republic. At times, we can observe that the problems of the most disadvantaged are simply transferred from one institution to another.

Participation of NGOs

NGOs are considered to be important actors in the process of social inclusion and as such they are also active in the development of social policies. There appears to be differences between various NGOs in their opportunities to participate actively in

policy-making. In our interviews we encountered two representatives with very contrasting experiences: while the first of them was very positive, the other was very negative. The positive one was a member of the NAPs/inclusion co-ordination unit and also a member of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs' advisory body on the quality of social care and social inclusion.

“... we are dealing with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Health, indirectly also with the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry for Regional Development, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education... and with all the regional governments in regions where we function, and with all municipalities.”
(Respondent from an NGO)

On the contrary, the other organisation's representative assessed its possibilities to participate as absolutely insufficient.

“...we are not approached [by the authorities]. Our organisation has to make an effort in order to get involved. And it is rather exceptional in any case ... even though our organisation wanted to build a partnership, we haven't found a counterpart neither at the municipal nor at the ministerial level, that would be interested in our opinion...”
(Respondent from an NGO)

This difference is interesting because both non-governmental organisations are nation-wide, well-established and are targeting the same population. In general, the respondents in the quantitative part of the study expressed the belief that relevant NGOs are consulted on policy developments; however, they are less optimistic about the provision of resources to NGOs for such participation, and even less enthusiastic about the NGOs' real influence in this area. We may conclude, that NGOs have their say on policy development in the Czech Republic.

Table 8: The perceived position of NGOs working against poverty and social exclusion in the policy development process (%)

	NGOs are consulted on policy development	NGOs are provided with resources to participate in policy development	NGOs influence on policy development
Not at all	2,9	7,6	3,7
To a little extent	8,7	21,0	20,4
To some extent	47,6	41,0	54,6
To a great extent	27,2	21,9	16,7
To a very great extent	13,6	8,6	4,6

Note: We have disregarded ‘do not know’ answers.

The interviews showed that the NGOs’ involvement in policy-making at the central level is influenced by a number of factors, e.g. their duration, public ‘popularity’, publicity or co-operation with associations representing the non-profit sector. These associations were regarded by the interviewees as particularly important for the NGOs’ participation in policy development. They provide information to the member organisations and enable them to forward their ideas to the policy-making process. This is important especially for smaller or local NGOs. The associations give qualified feedback during the law-making process, thus they have an opportunity to advance their ideas through to legislation. In addition, the representatives of the NGOs are invited to the newly-established working groups and advisory bodies, which enable them to influence the preparation of new strategies and policy documents (such as NAPs/inclusion). This is a very important step in mainstreaming social inclusion. As an NGO respondent put it: ‘The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs opened up and listened to the others... that was a breakthrough’.

At the local level, NGOs are also considered to be an important actor in helping the most disadvantaged. However, their role in the process of social inclusion is subject to ambivalence from the local and regional officials. While some accentuate their innovative and flexible approach to social problems and value their ability to respond to specific needs of at-risk groups, others (mainly at the local level) perceive NGOs only as money-recipients. In such a situation, NGOs are not perceived as equal partners for the local authorities. The main form of involvement of NGOs is meetings

with political leaders in municipalities. These meetings have a rather informative character, but they are also acknowledged by local authorities as an important platform for the articulation of opinions, preferences or problems. This may subsequently be reflected in the decisions taken by the political leadership. At the local level, the participation of the non-profit sector appears to be limited, and in general dependent on the political will of each municipality.

Participation of people directly experiencing poverty and social exclusion

Openness to consultation with people experiencing poverty and social exclusion appears to be a standard procedure for organisations representing civil society (NGOs, trade unions etc.): exactly half of the representatives from such organisations claim that they do consult them to 'a great' or 'a very great' extent. As the interviews show, NGOs in particular have well-established mechanisms of communication with their clients. They range from regular interviews, where clients are encouraged to express their opinion regarding the services, and 'have your say' mail boxes in the institutions, to more sophisticated procedures:

"...a network of speakers for the target group was created. We meet them on a regular basis and we consult them on our plans and intentions. They have - just as all individual participants – the right to submit their suggestions, criticism, etc." (NGO respondent).

Unlike civil society organisations, regional and local governments are the least likely to consult the poor and excluded – 34,5% of regional and almost a half of local governments' representatives have stated that those people are not consulted at all or only to a little extent. However, we can expect that the involvement of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion is increasing, as there is a growing number of regional and local governments introducing community planning of social services. Cooperation of the local/regional governments with the providers, as well as users of social services, lies at the heart of community planning. It is also encouraged by a new law on social service⁵ that mentions mid-term social service development

⁵ The law will be in effect from January 1st, 2007.

planning on the communal, regional and ministerial levels. The users of services are explicitly named as partners in such plans at each level⁶.

Table 9: Position of people directly experiencing poverty and social exclusion in the process of policy development (%)

	They are consulted on policy development	EU average %	They are provided with resources to participate in policy development	EU average %	They influence policy development	EU average %
Low (to a little/some extent)	57,9	53,2	68,4	63,2	75,7	56,7
High (to a great/very great extent)	28	26,9	21,1	17,9	10,3	15,3

Note: 'not at all' and 'don't know' responses not included.

As Table 7 shows, respondents are very sceptical about the real influence of the target groups on policy development. While only about 10% of respondents (most of them from ministries) assumed that the poor and excluded have 'a great' or 'a very great' influence, almost half of them (46,7%) stated the opposite. The least optimistic in this regard are representatives of NGOs working directly with the people in question.

4.3 Monitoring and evaluation

In the following part we will discuss whether poverty and social exclusion are measured in the Czech Republic and whether indicators and relevant targets were set in order to monitor the progress in this area. Comparing indicators and relating them to the policy targets are important elements of policy evaluation, yet there can be different approaches to the evaluation applied. Evaluation in general is therefore another topic we will investigate. However, we will not provide an analysis of monitoring and evaluation. Instead, we will show our respondents' opinion and knowledge about the existence and the extent of poverty and social exclusion

⁶ However there is no obligation for municipalities to create such a plan.

measurements, targets, indicators and regular policy evaluation at the different levels of public administration in the Czech Republic.

Measuring poverty and social exclusion

According to the respondents, poverty and social exclusion are measured at the central level. This means that data is available for the Czech Republic as a whole. As we did not ask our respondents to name or comment on the statistics, we may only conclude that they consider the measurement of poverty and social exclusion to be the most prevalent at the national level. Most of the respondents retorted that the government measures poverty and social exclusion to 'a little' or 'to some extent' (43%). This may mean that while poverty is measured extensively and at regular periods, there is a lack of information about the extent and character of social exclusion in the country. It could also reflect the lack of data on groups at high risk of social exclusion, such as the Roma community, the disabled or homeless people. Valid demographic information does not exist for any of these groups in the Czech Republic.

At the lower levels of public administration, there seems to be a lack of knowledge about data and statistics on poverty and social exclusion. In addition, there seems to be significant differences among individual regional/local governments. As the interviews show, measuring the extent of poverty and social exclusion is often related to community planning of social services, which is currently implemented by an increasing number of municipalities and regions.

Similarly, most of the respondents did not know about the targets and indicators set to measure trends of poverty and social exclusion. They were most positive about the existence of such indicators at the national level. However, this is not a realistic picture of social policy in the Czech Republic. For example, NAPS/inclusion 2004-6 (still in effect at the time of the survey) included only very broadly-defined targets without any quantitative indicators to rate the progress. The use of specific and measurable targets thus far, has not been commonplace in the Czech policy of social inclusion.

Evaluation

Most of the respondents do not know about regular evaluations of inclusive policies in the Czech Republic. In particular, they lack knowledge about evaluation at levels of public administration where they do not work. In the respondents' opinion, a regular evaluation of policies is conducted at the ministerial level; only 3 out of a total of 125 respondents stated that there is no regular evaluation at all, while about one third of them did not know. At the lower levels of public administration (regional and local) there was a higher share of negative answers – about a quarter of the respondents believed that there is not any, or only a very limited, regular evaluation at each level. This was stated by a substantial proportion (about half) of those who expressed any opinion.

The interviews revealed more about the role of monitoring and evaluation in the area of social inclusion. Its growing importance is often related to requirements on programs co-financed by the ESF. Monitoring and evaluation were stressed by an interviewee from the ministry. In his opinion, monitoring is an integral part of the policy at the central level, as well as at the level of separate program initiatives: “Monitoring is part of everything. When we finance a project via ESF, there must be monitoring. When we work on our own system project, there must be monitoring. Now, when we develop new NAPs/inclusion, a whole separate chapter on evaluation and monitoring of the previous period must be included. I just simply do not know of any activity without monitoring.”

However, many interviewees had problems relating monitoring and evaluation to a specific program. At the local level, monitoring was mentioned as part of community planning. The examples provided, however, were more related to need assessment or the monitoring of target populations (see above); further, the evaluation of policy implementation or its results was very rare. As NGOs are involved in community planning and are also running programs co-financed by ESF, their representatives also provided examples of monitoring and evaluation. One of them was a study evaluating the effectiveness of programs addressing homelessness. As the study was international, there was room for mutual learning.

4.4 Conclusion

The results of the survey together with the qualitative interviews show that there is a gradual development of mainstreaming social inclusion in the Czech Republic. It is mainly advancing in the context of new legislation in the field of social policy, and it is also manifested by an increasing involvement of civil society organisations (mainly NGOs) in the process of social inclusion policy-making. The incorporation of the Czech Republic into the structures of the European Union and especially the financial incentives related to ESF, play a positive role in the implementation of poverty and social inclusion issues across various policy areas and across different levels of public administration. However, several negative factors are still hindering full implementation of the principle of mainstreaming social inclusion in the Czech Republic:

- imperfect understanding of the concept of social inclusion and the principle of mainstreaming social inclusion
- low priority of the problems of poverty and social exclusion and their solution in general and especially at regional and local levels of public administration; lack of commitment and political will
- lack of coordinating mechanisms focusing on implementation of the issues of poverty and social exclusion into all areas of public policy – again at local and regional levels

In general, the problems of poverty and social exclusion are limited to the area of social security, social services and social care. In addition, the interviews showed that the problems are to a certain degree perceived as relevant topics for employment, education and housing policies and health care. The understanding of mainstreaming social inclusion is therefore incomplete and restricted to a broadly-defined social policy in the Czech Republic. Furthermore, the degree of its implementation is relatively low even in the above mentioned areas. Within governmental policies, the issue of poverty and social exclusion is incorporated to the greatest extent only in the area of social security. In other areas they are reflected only to an average extent (employment) or low extent (training and education, health and education, equal treatment). The fight against poverty and social exclusion is only marginal in the remaining policy areas in question – housing, immigration, transportation, justice and information and communication technology.

The research also shows that there is a lack of knowledge about the functioning and practice at the levels of public administration where respondents are not personally active (it was particularly obvious in the area of social inclusion and its mainstreaming).

Annex: Mainstreaming social inclusion of the disabled in the Czech Republic (national case study)

Introduction

Disabled people represent a large and heterogeneous social group with a variety of specific needs. At present, there are no statistics of the numbers and profile of this population in the Czech Republic, but the estimates refer to approximately 1 million disabled people, which is 10% of the Czech population. Beyond physical handicaps, there are other features that differentiate this social group from the majority; in particular, the educational and age structure of the group as a whole. The proportional rate of highly educated people amongst the disabled is just half of the rate in the majority. Moreover, this social group is also specific in its age-class distribution. There is a high percentage of elderly people among the disabled – less than a quarter of them are under 45 years old (in the whole Czech population this share represents about 50%). This means about 50 % of the total population is under 45 in the age group 15+. ⁷ Their position in the labour market is due to an accumulation of handicaps characterised by a low economic activity rate and a high rate of unemployment.

Social inclusion politics for disabled people in the Czech Republic was markedly developed after 1989. During the socialist period, disabled people were marginalised and a number of them were completely excluded from society – e.g. by segregation in inpatient care facilities, collective placement in special schools⁸, or as a result of physical and communication barriers. Up till 1989, there was only one state supported organisation for disabled people. The development of democracy along with market transformation constituted significant changes for disabled people. The integration of disabled people into society became a part of the state's social agenda. Non-governmental organisations developed their activities in the field of assistance to disabled people; in addition, an informative process concerning the living conditions and the needs of the disabled in society got started. During the 1990s, three national plans regarding the full integration of the disabled into society were set up. These

⁷ We take into account people over the age of 15 years old.

⁸ In the government decrees from the beginning of the 1990s.

plans formed the cornerstone for the enforcement of the principle of mainstreaming social inclusion of the disabled. Considerable progress was achieved in many of the fields, and in the integration of the disabled, the principle of mainstreaming became one of the most developed aspects of public policy in the Czech Republic. However, the full implementation of this principle and the true realisation of social inclusion of the disabled remains a goal for the near future.

The following text deals with the implementation process of the above principle in the context of public policies. The final part of the study is devoted to the “best practice case study”, presented as a case study of the successful performance of the implementation of social inclusion of the disabled, and the principle of mainstreaming social inclusion at the regional level of public administration.

1. Mainstreaming social inclusion across the institutional structure

There is not a specific enactment regulating the inclusion of the disabled into society in the Czech Republic. Instead, the issue is covered by a number of legal acts, which sometimes do not respond to the current needs of the disabled and do not provide the basis for the provision of comprehensive rehabilitation.

Social inclusion of the disabled is, to a certain extent, the responsibility of all the departments implementing measures towards the disabled within the fields of their competency, at the governmental as well as regional and local levels. For the effective mainstreaming of social inclusion of the disabled, therefore, the co-ordination of separate actors at various levels of the public sector is very important. In the following paragraph, we will briefly identify the main actors involved in policies of social inclusion of the disabled in the Czech Republic.

Public administration

The Government Board for People with Disabilities is an advisory and co-ordinating body of the central government. One of its main activities is the co-ordination of all public actors, whose activities directly affect the life of the disabled. The Board’s endeavours to connect activities of different governmental departments and its co-ordinating functions are crucial for mainstreaming social inclusion of the disabled in the Czech Republic. The Board is also intensively co-operating with

NGOs and organisations for the disabled. The Board is able to reflect on the needs of the disabled in program documents expressing the government's political decisions.

At the central level, five ministries are implementing the most important measures related to the inclusion of the disabled within their policies: **Ministry of Health** (medical rehabilitation), **Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs** (social and employment rehabilitation), **Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports** (educational rehabilitation), **Ministry for Regional Development** (barrier-free housing) and **Ministry of Transport** (mobility of disabled).

At the regional level, rehabilitation of the disabled falls in the sphere of activities of the regional authorities. Their departments implement measures promoting inclusion of the disabled into separate spheres of social life. However, due to the absence of co-ordination and control bodies, mainstreaming social inclusion of the disabled is often fragmented and without any mutual interaction between different departments. A regional co-ordinating institution of different departments (similar to the Board at the central level) is needed, and its establishment is currently becoming a subject of discussion.

Similarly, at the local level, inclusion of the disabled is administered by various departments. The level of their co-operation differs among municipalities and depends on their size. Larger municipalities usually pay some attention to networking social services for the disabled. Small municipalities, however, fulfil only to a very small extent the definition of Mainstreaming Social Inclusion of the disabled.

Non-governmental sector

NGOs are partners with the public administration in the social dialogue related to the development of social inclusion of the disabled in the Czech Republic. The supreme body representing these organisations (mainly civic organisations) is **The Czech National Council of the Disabled**. The Council is a non-governmental organisation focused on the co-ordination, promotion and fulfilment of the rights of the disabled. It co-operates with state authorities, regional and local governments, as well as with international organisations. It functions as an advisory body to the **Governmental Board for People with Disabilities** and in this way is involved in the process of

policy making in the field of social inclusion of the disabled in the Czech Republic. For example, the Council has markedly influenced the preparation of “**The National Plan for the Support and Integration of People with Disabilities 2006 - 2009**” by the provision of current legislation and a comprehensive proposal of the rehabilitation of the disabled.

2. Mainstreaming social inclusion across public policy

In 2004, **The Government of the Czech Republic** approved “**The Intermediate Concept of the State Policy towards People with Disabilities**” which imposes on members of the government the implementation of particular conceptual measures towards disabled people. This document became an initial source for “**The National Plan for the Support and Integration of People with Disabilities 2006 – 2009**”. In its measures this plan respects the philosophy of **The UN Standard Rules** for equalized opportunities for disabled people. A compact public policy conception of the rehabilitation of the disabled is reflected in this plan. A coordinative process has been created that aims for the integration of the disabled into the common life of society. Particular objectives, tasks and measures designed in the plan are defined as interconnected activities across the complex rehabilitation spectra for disabled people, whereby medical rehabilitation, social and employment rehabilitation, educational rehabilitation and barrier-free housing and mobility of the disabled appear to be fundamental. Besides these fields of rehabilitation, educating society and discrimination prevention is taken into account. The system complexity of the integration process is fulfilled by the participation of disabled people in common social life and in the process of measures creation and their implementation within policies.

Medical rehabilitation

The main actors creating the medical rehabilitation conception and consequently implementing this field of policies in the CR are **The Ministry of Health, The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs** and **The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports**. In the field of medical rehabilitation, numerous measures have been designed – some of which were fulfilled recently – and others are being continuously implemented. The physical and financial availability of health care for the disabled

seem to be the pivotal factor affecting the life of disabled people. Subsequent care for this group of people is fundamental; therefore, the measures call for securing a closer interconnection of medical and social rehabilitation, including a retraining scheme for the disabled in occupational rehabilitation centres. A very important inclusive measure towards the disabled in the field of medical rehabilitation is the networking of early care facilities, corresponding with and ensuring their interconnection with special-pedagogic consultancy centres. During the past years, 14 medical rehabilitation centres have been established, but the lack of their specialisation calls for targeted improvements. In order to ensure adherence to the measures, distribution of information summarising rehabilitation service networks has begun. This should ensure awareness among medical staff and the general population as well.

Social rehabilitation

Social inclusion of the disabled is being harmonised under the integration conceptions implemented by **The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports** and **the Ministry of Health**. Within the context of new legislation related to social services (1st of January 2007), a new system of social services including the principle of social rehabilitation complexity will be introduced. The proposed measures reflect the new social services standards. Focusing on the effective interconnection amongst the social services and medical and social rehabilitation, a new informative system has been introduced and under the operation of NGOs, new informative and consultative centres have been established. At the same time, the process of lifelong learning for social workers has begun. The issue of institutional security of practical co-ordination in the field of complex rehabilitation continues to be on the programme. Within the programme of state endowment subventions for social services, the priority is given to those that focus their activities on the support of homecare. In connection with this strategy, i.e. for the most effective conditions for personal assistance as an alternative to inpatient care facilities, the financing of educational systems for personal assistants and an investment supporting sheltered housing is being implemented.

Educational rehabilitation

The integration of disabled and mentally handicapped children into the common educational system, together with children without handicaps, is a priority. As such, optimal legislative and financial conditions to support the care for disabled children, is being implemented. Public actors have been exploring the sources of financing transport service costs aimed at mobilising heavily disabled children, as well as their personal assistant, guide, etc. The implementation of the measures reflect the need and importance for a barrier-free environment at educational institutions, as well as the creation of conditions that ensure special technical utilities, special learning materials and educational programmes for disabled pupils and students. During the last period, the basis for educational and occupational skills consultancy has been provided for disabled students, which focuses on problems related to their activities in the labour market. In the study programmes of high schools and universities, there have been created new special study fields centred on creating skills for the future generation of workers in the social services, closely specialised according to a variety of disabilities. Alongside this process, the university study conditions for disabled students are being developed.

Employment rehabilitation

The conditions for employing disabled people were defined in a couple of documents designed by the government, such as “**The National Employment Plan**”, “**The Strategy of the Human Resources Development**” and “**The Collective Memoranda about Social Inclusion**”. New measures designed in the above documents have been reflected in new legal acts concerning employment policy (**The Labour Code and the Employment Code**). In particular, emphasis is put on space formation for mutual communication between groups of handicapped people and actors in the labour market. There was a call for the establishment of professional work groups at employment offices, whose activities aim at initiating the process of occupational rehabilitation for the disabled with difficult positions in the labour market. Nowadays, a co-operation system between schools and employment bureaus is being developed to support new disabled graduates seeking their first employment. An connection between the educational and occupational system has been fulfilled. Measures that implement the fulfilment of an obligatory proportion of disabled people in employment, are regularly evaluated and new forms of promotional programmes to

support employers in the employment of the disabled are being sought. Within the last few years, a number of protected working places and workshops have been created. Further possibilities of the creation of social corporations should be analysed. Support for disabled people seeking employment has been implemented within legislation.

Barrier-free environment and mobility

A barrier-free environment and barrier-free access to information and communication technologies seem to be one of the basic presumptions of the social inclusion of the disabled. In the process of enacting a barrier-free environment, several sectors of public policy have been meeting (environment, transportation, industry, social policy, regional development policy, security and health protection, and information society).

“**The New Building Act**” has introduced an obligation to equip newly constructed public buildings with barrier-free access. The elimination of the existing barriers at public institutions is becoming a reality. The endowment policies are providing ten percent of newly constructed houses and flats with barrier-free access. In co-operation with **The Government Board for People with Disabilities** and various NGOs, “**The National Development Programme for the Mobility of Everyone**” is being designed. The real problems regarding the mobility of the disabled, especially while using traffic infrastructure, are taken into account in this document. In accordance with this document and the difficult situation of the disabled in transportation, new endowment programmes are being developed; particularly the funding of a new city transportation system that is accessible for the disabled, new specialised complementary traffic system (traffic lights and information systems for deaf people, acoustic apparatus for blind people, etc.)

In the sphere of barrier-free availability to information, principal attention is placed on measures of social inclusion of the disabled that are focused on enabling effective communication between disabled people and public administration clerks. As such, educational programmes for clerks, as well as the internet portal about social services (including a statistic information system), became the basis for the implementation of integration principles. Amongst other integrating measures realised in this field are: compulsory news in sign language on public TV, modern didactic technological progression, expansion of audio books, Braille print, etc.

Cultural self-realization is also an important part in the life of disabled people. Consequently, museums, galleries, libraries and other accessible facilities have been supported. In addition, special museums (for example, a museum for blind people) and sports grounds have been funded in order to sufficiently satisfy the cultural and sports needs of the disabled. Such activities increase the application of the inclusive potential of culture and sports in the lives of the disabled.

Prevention of discrimination and community education

There is a proposal to implement a measure that prohibits the discrimination of the disabled into the current **Bill of Rights** of the Czech Republic. Consequently, legislation concerning the protection of the rights of disabled people is being formulated. In order to support legal understanding in the area of the prohibition of discrimination in society, an informative campaign and systematic instruction have been introduced. Within the scope of “**The National Plan of Measures to Reduce the Negative Effects of Disabilities**”, a number of the respondent’s staff work on the possibilities for the active participation of the disabled in the common life of society has been published.

Evaluation and Monitoring

The effective implementation of measures concerning social inclusion of the disabled relies on their participation in the decision-making process of policy making. The active presence of organisations including the disabled in the legislative process is being continuously ensured. Campaigns focused on effective forms of support for the disabled, and a research project on their quality of life, are being launched.

Monitoring and evaluating the implementation of measures of “**The National Plan of Support and Integration of People with Disabilities for the period of 2006 – 2009**” is part of the integrative process, and the plan is actualised once a year.

The measures under the national plan are not mandatory for implementation at the regional level. This document serves rather as a directory of information and methodical support for inclusive activities towards disabled people at regional and local levels of public policies. The social inclusion conception is in varying degrees and qualities covered by all regional authorities in the Czech Republic. Regarding the evaluation of the representative of **The Government Board for People with**

Disabilities, we would like to use the social inclusion conception of the Moravian-Silesian region (MSR) as a good practice example of the implementation of the principle of mainstreaming social inclusion of the disabled.

3. Moravian-Silesian regional plan on the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities: an example of a good practice

The disabled constitute a significant minority in the Moravian-Silesian region (MSR). Their proportion of the total population is estimated to be around ten percent. Reflecting on the multi-dimensional character of the process of social inclusion of the disabled, the regional government of MSR decided to develop a single document. The document draws together all the measures targeting the group and formulates a comprehensive strategy towards their inclusion, i.e. **“The Moravian-Silesian Regional Plan on Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (‘Regional Plan’)”**. The document follows the structure of **“The National plan on the equalisation of opportunities for persons with disabilities”**. It aims for a comprehensive approach and a good quality of living conditions for the disabled. The formulation of the Regional Plan reflects the principles of mainstreaming – the disabled were actively involved in the process. Accordingly, a **Council Committee for the disabled** was established in order to represent civic organisations of the disabled in the process of planning, as well as in the implementation of long-term strategies aimed at the equalisation of opportunities for the disabled in the context of public policies. The following text is a summary of the Plan’s key measures.

Medical Rehabilitation

Access to health care services and their relationship with other types of rehabilitation were identified as the main problems related to medical rehabilitation. The Plan therefore supports professional and physical access to health care for the disabled, regardless of the type of their handicap. In relation to that, an information campaign targeted at professionals was carried out. It consisted of seminars for health-care providers and the distribution of information brochures among general practitioners, who represent a primary contact for the disabled. Issues such as specialised medical practices and techniques, social and legal counselling and other types of services for the disabled were covered. A network of specialised health centres (e.g. hospices

and spinal units) was mapped out and strategies for their development were formulated. In addition, an analysis of the need for counselling for the disabled was conducted. Currently, the actors are investigating the possibilities of a relationship between medical rehabilitation and social rehabilitation.

Social Rehabilitation

Empowerment and skills development which lead to the activation of clients, are important aims of social service providers in the Moravian-Silesian region. They are promoted by the individualisation of social services, the development of various types of social service stations (e.g. daily care centres, respite service, personal assistance, etc.), and by increasing the variety of care services in order to cover all the different areas of help to the disabled. For the purpose of reaching the targets, a study monitoring the supply of services in the region was carried out in 2004. It identified the services, their accessibility, as well as the sufficiency of individual care institutions. Consequently, a plan for the development of different types of services was formulated by the end of 2004. A year later, a study was conducted on the development of an early care system and its implementation. As part of the study, a brochure was published aimed at informing people about this type of service and why such a service is needed.

Educational rehabilitation

The integration policy of the MSR is directed at the inclusion of disabled children into common educational institutions. Special-needs schools are supported only in order to meet the educational needs of the most severe disabilities. Support for an integrated educational system is one of the key policy goals. The policy also facilitates the development of special pedagogical centres and the advancement of special-needs assessment of children with disabilities. Following the measures of the integration policy in the area of education, an information system for the pedagogical staff was created during the period of 2004-2006. This system provides educators with information on school placement of disabled children. In addition, an analysis of accessibility of educational institutions was conducted. Its conclusions involve a proposal to establish at least one barrier-free school in each town that has a population size over 1000 of the region. The NGOs focusing on lifelong learning for the disabled are given priority within the grant schemes.

Employment rehabilitation

The regional strategy in the area of employment rehabilitation includes several targets, e.g. identifying the real situation in the area of employment of the disabled, its regular monitoring, and increasing the knowledge and motivation of employers in order to promote the employment of disabled people in the regular labour market. A brochure reporting the basic facts about the employment of the disabled and its legal and economic aspects has been produced. At the same time, a database of safe jobs and workshops was created. In addition, regional analysis of the fulfilment of the obligations in the area of employment of the disabled was carried out. There was also a proposal to increase the employment of the disabled in state organisations. The regional authority and the labour office have jointly monitored the situation of disabled school-leavers in the labour market, and have dealt with identified problems in this area.

Barrier-free environment and mobility

The main role of the regional authority in the process of barrier-free accessibility to public places lies in the methodical guidance of the building control department, which approves newly constructed buildings. The regional plan also includes measures aimed at the gradual elimination of existing barriers in older buildings. The regional authority is cooperating with two NGOs, which are specialised in increasing the accessibility of buildings for people with limited mobility and for the visually handicapped. For example, together they conducted a study of the accessibility of public buildings, offices, schools, post offices, etc. in 2004.

The regional plan also addresses the problem of accessibility of public transport for people with disabilities. Following “**The National Development Programme Mobility for Everyone**”, the regional authority defined priorities in the process of making transport accessible for the disabled. In addition, a system of specialised complementary transportation has been developed since 2004.

Regarding barrier-free access to information, public sector employees are being trained in communication with the disabled. Currently, barrier-free access to the

regional authority's web pages is being provided. The disabled thus also have the possibility to communicate with the regional authority online.

The Regional plan also reflects the inclusive potential of sports and culture. Therefore, it promotes barrier-free accessibility to sports and cultural facilities, and the participation of the disabled in these areas in general. The regional authority commissioned an analysis of leisure time activities of the disabled and the financing of such activities. They also organise sports activities and competitions for the disabled.

Evaluation and monitoring

The issues of the disabled are relevant to most of the regional department's activities in a cross-discipline manner. Measures controlling the principle of co-operation and co-ordination of all concerned parties (i.e. regional council, competent regional departments, and organisations of people with disabled) are being enforced. An effective monitoring and controlling system of implementation measures in the Moravian-Silesian region has been created. **The Council Committee for the Disabled**, in its controlling activities, co-operates closely with **The Moravian-Silesian Regional Board of Disabled**. Twice a year the implementation of measures and their financing is negotiated. The regional plan is being actualised according to the period it has been provided for. The process of actualisation ensures the continuous progression to the implementation of new measures. If a new plan is set up, the original measures are revised and the objectives are adjusted and supplied. New measures are designed in conformity with the preferences introduced in integration documents, such as "**The Social Services Conception for The Moravian-Silesian Region**", "**The Programme of the Regional Progress**", a strategic document called "**The Way Ahead**" and the "**Long-run Design of Education and Educational System Development in The Moravian- Silesian Region**".

The Moravian-Silesian region is among the institutions that effectively exercise the principle of mainstreaming social inclusion of disabled. Therefore, it is considered to exemplify a good practice for other public institutions as well as for NGOs.